

ROSA LUXEMBURG
Selected Political
and Literary Writings

Revolutionary History Volume 10, No 1
Socialist Platform Ltd
MERLIN PRESS

Revolutionary History

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Socialist Platform ISBN 0 9551127 4 5, ISSN 0953 2382

Merlin Press ISBN 978 0 85036 693 8

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Published by Merlin Press, 6 Crane Street Chambers, Crane Street, Pontypool NP4 6ND, Wales www.merlinpress.co.uk

in association with

Socialist Platform Ltd, BCM 7646, London WC1N 3XX

Typeset by voluntary labour

Printed in the UK by Imprint Digital, Exeter

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EDITORIAL

THE majority of the articles by Rosa Luxemburg presented in this issue of *Revolutionary History* have never previously appeared in an English translation, and they have been published as a small memorial to one of the greatest Marxist revolutionaries. This year of 2009 is the ninetieth anniversary of her murder at the hands of the proto-fascist Freikorps.

The following remarks give a short, very short, account of her life and politics, together with an indication of where much more material can be found for further study.

The Polish-German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg (1870/1871-1919) was, with Karl Liebknecht, one of the two best-known leaders of the Spartakusbund, a left-wing group expelled from the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) because the latter had supported the Kaiser's government in the First World War. She was a major theoretician, a leading writer and an inspiring speaker. Before 1914 she was a leading figure of both the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL), and the SPD. At the time of her murder she was regarded, alongside Lenin and Trotsky, as one of the leading Marxists in the world.

Luxemburg was born in Zamość, near Lublin in present-day Poland, then Russian Poland, not far from the border with the Hapsburg Empire. She came from an educated, liberal middle-class Jewish family, and, whilst experiencing the anti-Semitism that was rife in Poland and the Russian Empire, never gave this issue special precedence above that of the proletarian class struggle. While still a schoolgirl she joined the Proletariat Party and helped with a local general strike. It was defeated, the leaders hanged, and the party disappeared. Fleeing Poland in 1889, she studied at Zurich and founded, with her long-time partner Leo Jogiches (1867-1919), the SDKPiL, of which they were the leading theoreticians. She eventually gained German citizenship in 1898 and moved from Switzerland to Berlin where she took a leading part in the anti-revisionist controversy, sharply attacking the views of the revisionist leader, Eduard Bernstein. At about this time she became noticed internationally so that in 1896 even the notorious English misogynist Belfort Bax could make a kind remark about the misspelled 'fräulein Luxembourg' for her sharp attack on Bernstein.

From then onwards until her murder Luxemburg represented and led the

most left-wing elements in German Social Democracy, although Jogiches may have been the main theoretician. In 1908, she broke personally, though not politically, from her partner Jogiches. (Many of her letters to him have survived but not his to her. She evidently destroyed them.) She was frequently sentenced to short prison terms for her views. She broke with Karl Kautsky (the Pope of Marxism) in 1910, correctly sensing that Kautsky's left stance was hedged with qualifications. Thus, unlike Lenin, she was not so surprised by the surrender of the SPD to chauvinism in 1914, even though she was equally appalled by it. Her bitter and principled opposition to the First World War led to her spending a long period in prison.

Luxemburg was a most warm and broadly cultivated human being, as the 'Biographical and Literary Comments' in this issue show. As the actress Barbara Sukowa, who played her in the film *Die Geduld der Rosa Luxemburg* (1986, directed by Margarethe von Trotta, in German and Polish, subtitled in English), said about her:

People think she was a militant for hysterical materialism — as opposed to Marx's historical materialism — a suffragette, a steely revolutionary. But when I got to know her via her writings, I was surprised: she was completely different from what I imagined... Rosa wanted to be a complete person — an ardent lover, a mother, an intellectual, a political leader, and someone with a relationship to the natural world of animals and plants.

This tribute is all the more weighty as it comes from someone who is far from being a Marxist, and who only became aware of her in a rather non-political way.

Politically Luxemburg had differences with Lenin, and some of these appear in this selection of articles. In reaction to the prevailing Polish nationalism of her home country, she argued against the right of self-determination of all the nations of Russian Empire, and on this she differed from Lenin. She felt that the main struggle was against capitalism rather than for independence, and in any case even Polish independence was impossible without a workers' revolution in Russia. She also had some disagreements with Lenin on party organisation, as some of the documents published here show. She also criticised the behaviour of the Russian Bolsheviks after they had come to power when they took hostages and carried out reprisals against the reactionaries, as well as for their dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. There has also been a dispute among Marxist economists over her work presented in *The Accumulation of Capital*. But all these matters can be studied in detail at far greater length in material that is available in English, and we do not have space for all that could be said on any and all of them. It is the responsibility of our readers to follow them up.

A great deal of Luxemburg's material that has been translated into English can be found at the Marxist Internet Archive at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/index.htm>, indeed most of her translated articles that were still in copyright are there, thanks to the kind permission of their publishers, apart from the collection by Peter Hudis and Kevin B Anderson, *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader* (Monthly Review Press, 2004), and *Letters of Rosa Luxemburg* (Humanities Press, 1998). However, as is pointed out on the MIA, none of the interesting and informative background material in the introductions to a number of these and other selections of which details are given, is on the MIA, and readers will have to find them in print, not electronic, form. The most important work in English missing from the MIA is *The Accumulation of Capital* (translated by A Schwarzschild and introduced by Joan Robinson in 1951, republished by Routledge Classics in 2003). It is in German on the MIA.

The standard and best biography is probably that by JP Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg* (Oxford University Press, 1966), and an excellent earlier study by Paul Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Her Work* (Gollancz, 1940, and Pluto, 1972). There is also a short critical assessment by Tony Cliff in the Cliff section of the MIA. Her entry in Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Luxemburg, is also very worthwhile consulting. There is also a fascinating article on her last days by Ottokar Luban entitled 'Rosa At A Loss', in *Revolutionary History*, Volume 8, no 4, derived from recent archival research.

In German, her collected works were published by Dietz Verlag, Berlin, GDR as *Gesammelte Werke*, five volumes, 1970-75, together with *Gesammelte Briefe* (*Collected Letters*), six volumes, 1982-97. There is, however, a gap in her bibliography since many of her Polish and Russian works have not been translated into German — although there is a project to do this — let alone English, including many on the national question. At the time of writing, we are aware of a number of proposals to translate further articles by her into English from the German, and these are due to appear in 2009.

Finally, we give our thanks to Mike Jones, who coordinated the assembly of this issue of *Revolutionary History*, and our translators Ian Birchall, Colin Gill, Chris Gray, Cecily Hastings/Bennett, Esther Leslie, Ben Lewis, Einde O'Callaghan and Mary Phillips.

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of two of our Editorial Board members, Pete Glatter and Cyril Smith, and of a friend of this journal, Brian Pearce. We send our condolences to their family, friends and comrades. This issue contains obituaries of Pete Glatter and Brian Pearce, and one of Cyril Smith is being written for our next issue.

Editorial Board

Revolutionary History

Selected Writings of
Rosa Luxemburg

Biographical and Literary Comments

Rosa Luxemburg had a great love for art and literature, and, although her essays on these topics comprise but a relatively small proportion of her collected writings, they are nonetheless well worth reading. Here, we present her assessments of the Adam Mickiewicz and Lev Tolstoy, her review of a biography of Johann Schiller, along with an appreciation of Ferdinand Lassalle.

I: Adam Mickiewicz

'Adam Mickiewicz.' Translated by Cecily Hastings/Bennett for *Revolutionary History* from Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, Volume 1, Part 1, pp 302-07. Originally published in *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, no 298, 24 December 1898. © Cecily Hastings/Bennett and *Revolutionary History*.

Adam Bernard Mickiewicz (1798-1855) was born into a noble family in Zaosie, near Nowogródek, now in Byelorussia. He joined the Philomath Society, which called for independence from the Russian Empire, whilst studying at Wilno university. Arrested in 1823 for political activities, he was exiled to central Russia in 1824, and later moved to Germany and then to Italy, settling in Rome. He then moved to Paris, and was appointed in 1840 to the chair of Slavic studies at the Collège de France. In 1853, he travelled to Istanbul to help organise Polish troops to fight against the Russians in the Crimean War. He died of cholera, which he contracted whilst in Turkey. His two most famous works are *Dziady* (*Forefathers' Eve*), with the title referring to an ancient Slavic feast commemorating the dead; and *Pan Tadeusz* (*Master Tadeusz*), a portrait of Lithuania on the eve of Napoleon's venture into Russia. Other works include the *Sonety Krymskie* (*The Crimean Sonnets*); and *Konrad Wallenrod*, a poem describing the battles between the Teutonic Knights and the Lithuanians, with obvious parallels with the relationship between Poland and Russia. His works continued to be relevant, for in 1968 the Polish authorities interpreted the account in *Dziady* of the Tsarist authorities' actions in Poland as a provocation against the Soviet Union, closed a production of the play in Warsaw, and thereby provoked considerable anger and unrest. Luxemburg became greatly enamoured of Mickiewicz's poems at an early age (as did Isaac Deutscher a generation later), and they continued to be amongst her favourite literary works throughout her life.

IF the poet whose hundredth birthday Poland is celebrating this 24 December were the one and only name in her canon, she would still have a perfect right to an honourable place among leading nations in the realm of world literature.

Adam Mickiewicz is not only Poland's greatest poet, and one of the greatest in the world, but also one whose name is most intimately bound up with the national and spiritual history of Poland. In Poland, the name Mickiewicz stands for a whole epoch.

Partition¹ plunged Poland into a totally new political situation, but intellectual and cultural life continued, through the first two decades of our century, to be only a prolongation of the final period of the old republic of the nobility. The nobility remained the ruling class, with the magnates as intellectual leaders of a society whose material basis was an agricultural economy run on forced labour. Intellectual and political life was not yet concentrated in the towns, but in the open countryside, on the hereditary estates of the nobility.

But for such of the magnates and higher nobility as found themselves in the Russian section, this period was a very happy one. Most of the ancient institutions had remained, including serfdom (in Lithuania), while all public offices, even, in many cases, in Russia, were occupied by Poles. In the words of a contemporary, Kajetan Koźmian:²

The general opinion was: We are in certain respects better off than in the days when Poland existed; we have most of what the fatherland gave us, but without the burdens, and free from the danger of peasant revolts; without Poland we are still in Poland and still Poles.

The ancestral seats of the nobility are still the centres of intellectual and literary life. The magnate is still the patron of the arts, and art, meaning literature, is still either a leisure-hours pastime for the 'well-born' dilettante, whether sword-bearing or soutane-clad, or else a form of courtiers' toadyism.

Obviously the intellectual life thus described would show little enthusiasm for the nation's past. Its chief bent, its whole character was, rather, an imitation of foreign models. Napoleonic France was the chief source on which the Poland of that time drew. But what was happening in France itself at the time was a powdery, stilted pseudo-classicism, and all that got transplanted to Poland was a washed-out copy of that pseudo-classicism, its hallmarks being a smooth, stiff, hollow form and a total lack of individuality, inner feeling or deep thought.

But within the womb of this society there had been, from the first moment, a revolution in preparation. In 1807, Napoleon abolished serfdom in the Duchy of Warsaw³ (though not dealing with forced labour or matters of land

ownership); the *Code Civil* was introduced; a start made on manufacturing industry; agriculture was transformed by the introduction of crop rotation; there was a new bureaucratic system of administration and a huge increase in taxation with the establishment of a fiscal monopoly — all these various factors were what started a ferment within society and prepared the ground for new forms of class conflict. While the magnates, controlling the whole machinery of government, and the current representatives of capital remained loyal to the established order, which meant loyalty to Russia, a vigorous opposition began to arise among the bulk of the lesser nobility, especially the landless gentry, an opposition which was naturally bound to take on the character of a national movement and look to the past as its ideal. The ground was prepared for the 1831 rising.⁴

At the same time, the underlying factors in intellectual life were also changing. With the shattering of the old patterns of living, the lesser nobility found itself compelled to seek new occupations. The new bureaucracy meant that professional training had become a means of making a living; schools and journalism acquired a new significance for the nobility; a new stratum of society appeared in Poland — *the nobility as intelligentsia*. They are no longer, as in the circles dominated by the magnates, producing literature as a leisure pursuit or as service at court, but as a profession. Economically, politically and in terms of their objectives the two levels of 'born' society (as it would be called in Poland) were in conflict with each other, so the intellectual current representative of the lesser nobility, the new intelligentsia, was bound also to have a totally different character. Whereas the official literature of the governing class of magnates fed on classical motifs imported from France, the lesser nobility's literature of opposition turned to national motifs; while the classical school glorified the present, the nationalists turned to a mystically transfigured past and found their appropriate forms and models in German *Romanticism*.

Classicism versus Romanticism: such was the antithesis which, with its roots in art and literature, reached its climax in economics and politics and was soon to reverberate in the clashing swords and rattling gunfire of rebellion. But if victory on the battlefields of Grochów and Praga⁵ went to the representatives of the established order — the Russian government — they yet had to draw the short straw on the battlefield of the spirit. While the classicists could offer only shelf upon shelf of a grey mass of mediocrities and soulless manipulators of form, Romanticism, overnight as it were, conjured up whole constellations of glittering young talent from the womb of society, and, as the most brilliant star of this dawn twilight, the mighty genius of Adam Mickiewicz arose in the firmament of Polish literature.

As choirmaster and mouthpiece of his whole generation, he was — as required

by whatever current of thought it might be for which he was speaking — a master at once of lyric and epic, both the bard of national love and yearning and the objective portrayer of the nation's past.

The two masterpieces in which he created his most imperishable monuments to these spiritual currents are *All Saints' Day (Dziady)*⁶ and *Master Thaddeus (Pan Tadeusz)*. Never before and never since have such power of emotion, such depth of soul, such audacity of spirit been expressed in the Polish language as in *All Saints' Day*, in which the poet, all-powerful in virtue of his love for his fatherland, summons the Creator to the bar of judgement. And neither before nor since has the old Poland of the nobility been painted, in all its many-coloured richness, in such a consummately perfect masterpiece as *Master Thaddeus*. The poet himself, in his modest naivety, thought he had created something in the nature of Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*, which he had initially taken as his model — at which the reader can but smile, for Goethe's epic might as well be compared to the *Iliad* as to *Master Thaddeus*. To the *Iliad*, indeed, Mickiewicz's masterpiece does bear a relation, while also having a great deal in common with *Don Quixote*. The society which it mirrors is not, like Homer's, in exuberant good health, basking, at peace with itself, in the sunshine of the peak of its development, but one in decline, a society of the *morituri*. Hence, notwithstanding the masterly objectivity and serene classicism with which the work is presented, the delicate efflorescence of melancholy irony, of a humour both satirical and yet not condemnatory, plays across the whole immense picture like the rosy beams of a setting sun.

No wonder Mickiewicz's poetic debut affected Polish society like a revelation. After his very first works — especially after his splendid 'Ode to Youth', in which, in an ecstasy of youthful enthusiasm and in verses falling like hammer-blows, the poet calls on his whole generation to unite all its forces and 'lift this mouldering world off its hinges' to steer it into new courses — he immediately became the centre of the whole movement and an object of universal veneration: only to the younger generation of course, the generation to which he and that moment of Polish history belonged. Even in neighbouring Russia his genius had such a powerful effect that when he was exiled to Russia the intellectual community there took him to their hearts, and he became close friends with a number of the future Decembrists.⁷

But while Romanticism glorified the past, reality pursued its way in the present regardless, a way which diverged more and more from the ideals of Mickiewicz and his school. Reality had its own dull task to carry out, laid upon it by history. Suffering under the increasingly brutal blows of reality, Romanticism, if it was not going to surrender entirely, had no resource but to plunge deeper still into the realm of fantasy, to go still further in substituting imagination

for reality. After the defeat of the nationalist movement, the logical next step for Romanticism was *mysticism*. Thus Mickiewicz, like several others of the poetic fraternity, finally came to rest in the haven of a dreary, fleshless religious mysticism. It was the logical conclusion to his intellectual orientation, and the bankruptcy of his poetry. Soon after the rising was defeated, the nightingale of Polish nationalism fell silent, and throughout the last 20 years before his death in 1855 Mickiewicz produced practically no poetry. *Master Thaddeus* remains his last completed work.

It was also the last great monument to Polish nationalism. After the second defeat in 1861-63⁸ came that revolution in the whole of Poland's social life that we have seen, brought about by the eclipse of agriculture and the introduction of heavy industry. As though by the waving of a magic wand, the whole of Poland's life, interior and exterior, changed in short order to the point of becoming unrecognisable. Today's Poland has little more in common with the Poland in which Mickiewicz wrote, let alone the one of which he sang, than with some foreign land speaking a different language. The level landscape, the green woods and meadows which were the setting for Romantic poetry, the nobility which provided the characters for the action it portrayed, have all faded into the background. Today's Poland is the bourgeois Poland of the big town. And today's ceremonial unveiling of the Mickiewicz monument in Warsaw — erected by gracious permission of the Tsar of All the Russias, by the historically appointed grave-digger of Polish nationalism, the Polish bourgeoisie, in their industrialised, de-nationalised Warsaw — can be only a striking proclamation to the world that for official Polish society, for the bourgeoisie, the nobility; the mass of the petit-bourgeois population, nationalism has finally become Romanticism, the politics of national independence is turned at last to poetry. In Wilno, where Mickiewicz grew up and sang and worked — the statue of Maravyov;⁹ in Warsaw, where Polish society has just gone on its knees to accept and venerate the Tsar — the statue of Mickiewicz. 'So ended the last poet of nationalism': thus does History, paraphrasing Mickiewicz's refrain for the 12 books of *Master Thaddeus*, add a thirteenth as epilogue.

In the Poland of today; where the German-Jewish-Polish bourgeoisie presents the most extreme type of an international and anti-national capitalist class; where the highest nobility are either assimilated to the bourgeoisie or reduced to uncivilised idiocy, where the peasantry is crushed below the level of any culture; the only section of society in whose interest it is and for whom the social possibility exists to become the *cultural* guardians of a politically bankrupt nationalism is the *class-conscious industrial proletariat*.

What Polish socialists usually do is to try at all costs to derive evidence from Mickiewicz's writings for his socialist views. This is not an attractive enterprise.

The streak of utopian socialism which can be found in Mickiewicz belongs to that unhappy period in his life when his poetic genius was already shrouded and overcast by a veil of religious mysticism. The enlightened proletariat is surely intellectually mature enough to love and honour this great poet for his poetic genius without needing any inducement from the unclear mystical-utopian social imaginings of his period of decline. The class whose goal is the renewal of the world can have no such narrow horizon. During the period of his brilliant creativity Mickiewicz was of course whole-heartedly a *democrat*: such was the whole ideology of the first rising. But he was not nor could he have been a representative or forerunner of the modern working class and its class struggle. He was the last and greatest singer of the *nationalism of the nobility*, and also, as such, the greatest carrier and representative of Polish national culture. And it is *as such* that he now belongs to the Polish working class, as such that that class — the only one with the right to do so — takes possession of him as the greatest spiritual treasure inherited from Poland's past. In Germany, the class-conscious proletariat is, as Marx said, the heir of classical philosophy. In Poland, thanks to a different historical context, it is the heir of Romantic poetry and hence too of the greatest coryphaeus of that poetry: Adam Mickiewicz.

II: Review: Mehring on Schiller

'Rezension' ('Review': Franz Mehring, *Schiller: A Portrait of his Life for the German Worker*, Leipzig, 1905, pp 119). Translated by Esther Leslie for *Revolutionary History* from Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, Volume 1, Part 2, pp 533-36. Originally published in *Die Neue Zeit* (Stuttgart), Volume 25, 1904/05, Second Volume, pp 163-65. © Professor Esther Leslie and *Revolutionary History*.

Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, born in Marbach, Württemberg in 1759, was a German poet, philosopher, historian and dramatist. He was still at school when he wrote his first play *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*), about a conflict between two aristocratic brothers, Karl and Franz Moor, that brought class questions into view. A performance of this play in Stuttgart in 1781 led Schiller to be barred from publishing any further works in Württemberg. In 1789, he became a Professor of History and Philosophy in Jena, but returned to writing plays at Johann Goethe's suggestion, and he subsequently wrote several others, including *Kabale und Liebe* (*Intrigue and Love*, referred to as *Luise Millerin* in the article, *Luise Millerin* being the tragic heroine), the *Wallenstein* trilogy, about Albrecht von Wallenstein's involvement in the Thirty Years' War, and *William Tell*. He died in 1805.

Franz Erdmann Mehring (1846-1919) was a liberal journalist, literary critic and historian who moved to the left and joined the Social Democratic Party of Germany in 1891. On the left wing of the party, he was subsequently a founder

member of the Spartakusbund and the German Communist Party, and died of pneumonia shortly after Luxemburg's assassination. His best-known work is his extensive biography of Marx, *Karl Marx: The Story of His Life*, which appeared in the original German in 1918, with an English translation first appearing in 1936.

'A PORTRAIT of his life': this is the title that Mehring gave his pamphlet on Schiller, and this is what it is in the truest sense of the word. It is not a biography, that commonly accepted chronological collation of facts about a life. Rather this is a genuine *portrait*, a vivid, harmonious tableau, which with its clear sketches and extraordinarily fine gradation affords pure aesthetic pleasure from start to finish.

Mehring's study has appeared at just the right moment. It comes as a welcome gift to the German working class, delivering an image of the great poet free of the distortions prevalent in both the biased bourgeois version and the biased Party version. Schiller's poetry exists now not merely as an eternal component of classical German literature; it has also become part of the intellectual household gods of the enlightened, combative proletariat in particular, the words and phrases that he coined became the form in which the German working class delights in bringing its revolutionary thoughts and its idealism to rousing expression. The spread of Schiller's poetry across the proletarian layers of Germany has, without doubt, contributed to its intellectual elevation as well as its revolutionising, and to that extent it has, in a way, played its part in the work of the emancipation of the working class.

However, there is no doubt that Schiller's role in the intellectual growth of the revolutionary proletariat in Germany is not so much rooted in what he himself imported into the working-class struggle for emancipation through the content of his poems, but rather the reverse: it consists in what the revolutionary working class deposited in Schiller's poems based on its own world-view, its striving and its feelings. A peculiar process of assimilation took place, in which the working-class audience did not appropriate Schiller as an intellectual whole, as he was in reality, but rather picked through his intellectual work and fused it unconsciously into its own world of revolutionary thought and feeling.

But we are considerably beyond that phase of political growth, when the fermenting enthusiasm, the dim striving after the airy heights of the 'ideal', signalled the dawning of the intellectual rebirth of the German working class. What the working class needs today above all is: to grasp all manifestations of both political and aesthetic culture clearly, and in their strictly objective historico-social contexts, as elements of a general social development, whose

most powerful mainspring today is its own revolutionary class struggle. Today too the German working class can and must confront Schiller in scientific and objective terms as a powerful manifestation of bourgeois culture, rather than subjectively merging with him or, more accurately, dissolving him into its own world-view.

So precisely this moment then, the occasion of the centenary celebrations, provided a most suitable moment for subjecting to revision both Schiller's position *vis-à-vis* the German working class and the understanding of his poetry from the perspective of Social Democratic thought.

However, precisely those circles who, at any other moment, are bravely prepared to participate in all possible revisions of the 'sore points' of Marx's doctrine, do not exhibit the tiniest desire to revise the customary uncritical judgements of Schiller. In any case, it is simply much easier to take up Schiller on behalf of the proletariat along the lines of the worn-out old schema, whereby he appears as a great apostle of the bourgeois revolution who has been disowned by the bourgeoisie. This, however, merely displays an equal lack of understanding for the historical content of the March revolution as for Schiller's poetry.

Celebration of Schiller as a *revolutionary poet par excellence* reveals itself to be a regression from the concept of 'revolutionary', as deepened and ennobled by Marxist doctrine, by dialectical historical materialism. It regresses into its petit-bourgeois conceptualisation, which sees a 'revolution' in *every* protest against the existing laws, that is to say in the external appearance of protest, irrespective of its inner tendency, its social content. Only from such a standpoint can one come to see in Karl Moor the precursor of Robert Blum,¹⁰ in *Luise Millerin* 'a revolutionary tragedy of collapse' and in *William Tell* 'a revolutionary drama of fulfilment' — well the Gods may know what this raving nonsense means. The same conception leads one then to construe an artistic contradiction between the 'revolutionary idealism' of Schiller's dramas and his reaction to the Great French Revolution, between his 'revolution of trade' and his flight into the 'aesthetic tutelary state'. And finally to explain this supposed contradiction at the heart of Schiller's intellectual life by discovering a breach, a deep cleft, which is derived from Schiller's 'courtly assimilation' by petty state despotism.

This latter theory is, indeed, also a type of 'materialist conception of history', but a just as superficial and exaggerated version of the same as the conception of 'revolution' corresponding to it. Accordingly, the deep inner structure of Schiller's whole worldview and life work is not explained by the historical and social misery of the Germany of the time — a misery, of which the 'courtly petty-state despotism' was only an external abscess, even if it covered the entire body of the nation — but rather the alleged revolutionary 'collapse' of Schiller at the height of his powers and life is explained via the direct personal pressure

exerted by the Stuttgart and Weimar courts.

In contrast to this 'materialist' misuse by a rhapsodic enthusiasm, the creator of *Wallenstein* finds vindication in the cool-headed 'orthodox' materialist Mehring, who points out, already in Schiller's first work, the *Robbers*, that deep cleavage, that dualism of world view that permeates Schiller's entire life and production and finds a perfectly logical conclusion in the 'aesthetic state' — the flight from social misery into the sovereign world of art at the end of an intellectual career that began with the escape into the forest of a powerfully resourceful brigandism. 'Revolutionary idealism', once it is released from its foundation on the *materialist* world view, on which it rests today, for example, in classic form in the modern proletariat, is precisely a rather ambivalent thing, and in order to understand Schiller as a philosopher, one must first understand, above all, Karl Marx.

If one considers Schiller's poetry from this angle, it is not even necessary to seek, by means of a compelling construction, the basic unifying element of drama in the various manifestations of historical revolution. Schiller was above all a true *dramatist* on a grand scale, and as such he needed and sought powerful conflicts, massive forces, maximum impact, and consequently found his materials in the struggles of history, not because and in as much as they were *revolutionary*, but rather because they embodied tragic conflict at its highest potency and effect. Mehring solved this whole problem in two sentences, by saying: 'As poet he needed historical material' and 'as dramatist Schiller was also a great historian'. The Great French Revolution, which precisely as *revolution* repelled him, would have certainly, had he been able to see it from the perspective of one or two centuries, gripped his dramatic vein as a powerful spectacle, as a grand battle of the historical spirit, and then, as a *dramatist*, led by simple artistic instinct, he would probably have done it just as much justice as the historical role of the Friedländers or the struggle for independence of the Swiss peasant democracy, even though spiritually he had just as little to do with bourgeois revolution as *Wallenstein* or *William Tell*.¹¹

In order to grasp Schiller and his work in relation to his psychic idiosyncrasy, his particular mixture of philosophical and poetical elements, yet to understand his philosophy in its interactions with his political-intellectual milieu, the reader finds hints and suggestions everywhere in Mehring's study. Mehring's work will therefore render the most important service to the reading public, which matters especially now with party literature: it will stimulate readers at every turn to reflect and read further. Thus, at the same time, in his shielding of the reader from uncritical adulation and any sort of cult of Schiller, Mehring parades all the more graphically before the eyes of the German working class the genuine sublime beauty of his great lifework.

III: Tolstoy as a Social Thinker

'Tolstoi als sozialer Denker' ('Tolstoy as a Social Thinker'). Translated by Colin Gill for *Revolutionary History* from Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, Volume 2, pp 246-53. Originally published in *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, no 209, 9 September 1908. © Colin Gill and *Revolutionary History*.

Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy (1828-1910) was born into a noble family. An unsuccessful student, he started to write literature with the short story *A History of Yesterday* in 1851, and the novel *Childhood* in 1852. He wrote of his experiences of the Crimean War in *Sevastopol Sketches*, whilst serving in the Russian army. Tolstoy rejected the idea of Western-style development for Russia, and his dismay at European bourgeois culture was expressed in several of his subsequent works. He was greatly interested in the education of children, and he set up an experimental school for peasant children in Yasnaya. He continued to write extensively, including major works of fiction — most notably *War and Peace* (1869), *Anna Karenina* (1877) and *Resurrection* (1899) — short stories, tales for children and many pieces on the Christian pacifist anarchist outlook that he adopted during the 1860s, and which is investigated in this article.

Tolstoy's political views were critically assessed by left-wingers at the time, including Lenin and Trotsky, see Tamara Deutscher (ed), *Not By Politics Alone: The Other Lenin* (London, 1973), pp 136-48; LD Trotsky, *On Literature and Art* (New York), 1972, pp 127-47.

Selections of Tolstoy's political and educational writings have long been available in English translations, including *Essays and Letters* (Oxford University Press, London, 1903); *Tolstoy on Education* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1967); *I Cannot Be Silent: Writings on Politics, Art and Religion* (Bristol Press, Bedminster, 1989); *Government is Violence: Essays on Anarchism and Pacifism* (Phoenix Press, London, 1990).

FROM the very beginning, alongside the untiring artist inhabiting today's most brilliant novelist, there has been an untiring social thinker. The fundamental questions of human existence and relationships and of social conditions have always deeply occupied Tolstoy's innermost being; his whole long life and work were at the same time a ceaseless brooding over the 'truth' in human existence. The same restless search for truth is also usually attributed to another notable contemporary of Tolstoy, Ibsen.¹² But, whereas in Ibsen's dramas the great present-day struggle of ideas is grotesquely expressed in the showy and barely understandable puppetry of dwarfish figures, in which Ibsen the artist lamentably succumbs to the inadequate efforts of Ibsen the thinker, Tolstoy's thinking is incapable of harming his artistic genius. In each of his novels, the

task of thinking falls to somebody who, among the bustle of exuberant figures, plays the somewhat clumsy, slightly ridiculous part of a dreamy grumbler and seeker after truth, such as Pierre Bezukhov in *War and Peace*, Levin in *Anna Karenina* and Prince Nekhlyudov in *Resurrection*. These individuals, who always give expression to Tolstoy's own thoughts, doubts and problems, are generally depicted very weakly and schematically; they are more observers of life than active participants in it. But Tolstoy's creative power is so strong that he himself is incapable of botching his own works, however much he may maltreat them with the carelessness of a divinely inspired creator. When with time Tolstoy the thinker was victorious over the artist, it did not happen because the artistic genius of Tolstoy was exhausted, but because the profound earnestness of the thinker prescribed silence. When, in the last decade, instead of magnificent novels, Tolstoy has frequently written artistically bleak treatises and tracts about religion, art, morality, marriage, education and working-class questions, it is because his brooding and thinking have led him to conclusions that made his own artistic work seem a frivolous diversion.

What then are these conclusions, what ideas has the aged poet championed and will he go on championing right up till his last breath? Briefly, the tendency of Tolstoy's ideas is, as is well known, towards a renunciation of existing conditions, including social struggles in every form, to a 'true Christianity'. At first sight this spiritual direction seems reactionary. Tolstoy is, however, defended from the suspicion that the Christianity he preaches would have anything at all to do with the existing official creed by the public excommunication of him by the established Russian Orthodox church. But even opposition against what exists radiates reactionary colours when clothed in mystical forms. A Christian mysticism, however, appears doubly suspicious when it rejects any struggle and the use of any kind of force and preaches 'no retaliation' in a social and political environment like that of absolutist Russia. In fact the influence of Tolstoy's doctrine on the young Russian intelligentsia — an influence that in any case was never extensive, affecting only some small groups — was expressed in the late 1880s and early 1890s, that is, when the revolutionary struggle was at a standstill, in the spreading of an indolent ethical and individualist current, which could have become a direct danger for the revolutionary movement, had it not remained a mere episode both in time and in space. And finally, faced directly with the historical drama of the Russian revolution, Tolstoy openly turns against the revolution, as he has already positioned himself bluntly and expressly against socialism, and in particular has fought Marxism as a monstrous delusion and aberration.

It is true that Tolstoy was and is not a Social Democrat and has not the least understanding of Social Democracy and the modern labour movement. Yet it is

a hopeless procedure to want to approach a spiritual phenomenon of Tolstoy's stature and individuality with wretched and rigid scholastic rules and judge him by them. The standpoint of rejecting socialism as a movement and an educational system may, under circumstances, result not from the weakness, but the strength of an intellect, as it does in Tolstoy's case.

On the one hand, he grew up in Nicholas I's old feudal Russia, at a time when there was no modern labour movement in the Tsarist Empire nor the necessary economic and social precondition for it, a powerful capitalist development. Then, at the peak of his manhood, he witnessed the failure firstly of the feeble beginnings of a liberal movement, followed by that of the terrorist organisation 'Narodnaya Volya'.¹³ It was not until he was almost in his seventies that he experienced the first powerful steps of the industrial proletariat and finally, in advanced old age, the revolution. So it is no wonder that for Tolstoy the modern Russian proletariat with its intellectual life and ambitions does not exist and that for him the peasant, that is to say, the formerly deeply religious and passively tolerant Russian peasant, who only has *one* longing, to possess more land, once and for all represents the whole of the people.

On the other hand, however, Tolstoy, who has experienced all the critical phases and the whole painful development of Russian public thinking, belongs to those independent, brilliant intellects who have much more difficulty in accommodating to alien forms of thinking and ready-made educational systems than those of average intelligence. So — a born autodidact so to speak — not with regard to formal education and knowledge, but to thinking — he has to go his own way with every thought. And if the ways are mostly incomprehensible for others and the results bizarre, then the bold individualist attains thereby views of overwhelming breadth.

As with all such intellects, Tolstoy's strength and the depth of his thought lie not in positive propaganda, but in the critique of what already exists. And it is here that he attains a versatility, thoroughness and audacity that recall the old utopian classicists of socialism, Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen.¹⁴ There is not one of the traditional, sacred institutions of the present order of society that he has not mercilessly pulled apart, and demonstrated its mendacity, perversity and rottenness. Church and state, war and militarism, marriage and education, wealth and leisure, physical and intellectual degradation of working people, exploitation and oppression of the popular masses, the gender relationship, art and science in their present form — he submits them all to a ruthless and devastating critique, and this always from the standpoint of the collective interest and the cultural progress of the great masses. Reading the first sentences of his *Working-Class Question*, for example, we might think we were holding a popular socialist agitational paper:

There are more than a hundred million, a billion workers in the whole world. All the cereals, all the commodities of the whole world, everything that people live from and that constitutes their wealth, is the product of working people. Not just working people, however, but also the government and the rich enjoy everything that they produce. Working people, however, live in perpetual need, ignorance, slavery and contempt from all those they clothe and feed, for whom they build and which they serve. The land has been taken from them and it is the property of those who do not work, so that workers must do everything that the landowners demand of them to be able to live from the land. But if the worker leaves the land for the workshop, he becomes a slave of the rich and for his whole life must perform 10, 12, 14 hours a day and more of alien, monotonous work that is often a danger to life. But even if he can settle down on the land or in alienated labour and is able to live only in want, they do not leave him in peace, but demand taxes from him, conscript him for three or five years military service and compel him to pay special taxes for the war effort. If he should want to use the land without paying rent, start a dispute or stop those willing to work from taking his job or refuse to pay taxes, they send the soldiers against him, who wound, kill and force him to carry on working and paying... And that is how most people in the world live, not just in Russia, but also in France, Germany, England, China, India, Africa, everywhere.¹⁵

The sharpness of his critique of militarism, patriotism and marriage is hardly surpassed by socialist criticism, and it moves in the same direction. The originality and depth of Tolstoy's social analysis can be shown, for example, by comparing his view of the significance and the moral value of labour with the view of Zola.¹⁶ Whereas the latter, in genuine petit-bourgeois spirit, raises work as such onto a pedestal, which has earned him the reputation of a socialist of the first water among many prominent French and other Social Democrats, Tolstoy comments calmly, hitting the nail on the head in a few words:

Mr Zola says that work makes people good; I have always noticed the opposite: work as such, the pride of the ant in its work, makes not only the ant, but people too, cruel... But even if diligence is not defined as a vice, it can in no way be a virtue. Work can just as little be a virtue as can feeding oneself. Work is a need that, if it is not satisfied, becomes suffering and not a virtue. Raising labour to a virtue is just as false as raising feeding oneself to an honour and virtue. Work was able to gain the importance given it in this society only as a reaction against leisure, which has been made

the characteristic of the aristocracy and is still held as a mark of honour among the rich and the poorly-educated classes... Work is not merely not a virtue, but also in our falsely organised society to a large extent a means for deadening moral sensitivity.

To which a couple of words from *Capital* form the concise antithesis: 'The proletariat's life begins where its work ends.' The above contrast of the two judgements on labour also shows up the relationship of Zola to Tolstoy in thought as well as in artistic work: that of a worthy and talented artisan to a creative genius.

Tolstoy criticises everything that exists, he declares that everything deserves to perish, and he preaches the abolition of exploitation, the general duty to work, economic equality, the abolition of compulsion in the organisation of the state and in the relationship between the sexes, and the full equality of people, the genders and nations and the fraternity of nations. But what will lead us to this radical overthrow of social organisation? The return of humanity to the single and simple principles of Christianity: love your neighbour like yourself. We see here that Tolstoy is a pure idealist. He wants through the moral rebirth of humanity to reshape its social conditions, and he wants to achieve the rebirth through public preaching and through example. And he does not tire of repeating the necessity and usefulness of this moral 'resurrection' with a tenacity, a certain insufficiency of means and a naïvely cunning art of persuasion that vividly recall Fourier's continual turns of phrase about people's self-interest, which, in various forms, he tried to involve in his social plans.

Thus Tolstoy's social ideal is nothing but socialism. But if we want to discern the social kernel and the depth of his ideas in their most compelling fashion, we must not only look at his pamphlets on economic and political questions, but also at his writings *on art*, which even in Russia are among his least known ones. The thought process developed here by Tolstoy in splendid form is as follows. Art — contrary to all aesthetic and philosophical scholastic opinions — is not a luxury product for releasing feelings of beauty, joy or the like in beautiful souls, but an important historical form of social communication, like language, between people. After an enjoyable slaughter of all the definitions of art from Winckelmann and Kant to Taine¹⁷ has led him to this genuinely materialist and historical criterion, he approaches contemporary art with it in his hand, and he finds that the criterion does not match reality in any sphere or any respect. The whole of existing art is, with very few small exceptions, incomprehensible to the great mass of society, that is to say, to working people. Instead of concluding from this with the customary view that the great masses are intellectually coarse and need to be 'raised' to understand contemporary art, Tolstoy reaches the

opposite conclusion: he declares existing art to be 'false art'. And the question how it can have happened that for centuries we have had a 'false' instead of a 'true', that is, a popular art, leads him on to a further audacious insight: there was a true art in ancient times, when the whole people had a common world-view — Tolstoy calls it 'religion'; from this arose such works as Homer's epics and the gospels. However, ever since society has been split into a great exploited mass and a small ruling minority, art only serves to express the feelings of the rich and leisurely minority. Since today these have lost any world-view, we have the decline and degeneration characteristic of modern art. A 'true art' can only arise, according to Tolstoy, when, instead of its being a means of expression of the ruling class, it becomes again a popular art, that is, the expression of a common world-view of working society. And his strong fist smashes down into the damnation of 'bad and false art' the greatest and smallest works of the most famous stars of music, painting, poetry and — finally — all his own magnificent works. 'It falls, it collapses, the beautiful world, destroyed by a demigod.' He has only written one final novel since then — *Resurrection* — otherwise only finding it worthwhile to write simple, short popular stories and pamphlets, 'comprehensible to everyone'.

Tolstoy's weak point — his conceiving the whole of class society as a 'mistake' instead of as an historic necessity joining the two endpoints of his historical perspective, primitive communism and the socialist future — is obvious. Like all idealists, he really believes in the omnipotence of force and declares all class organisation of society to be the simple product of a long chain of naked acts of violence. But there is a truly classical greatness in Tolstoy's thinking on the future of art, which he sees at the same time in the union of art as a means of expression with the social experience of the working population and in the practice of art, that is, the artistic career, with the normal life of a working member of society. The sentences in which Tolstoy hammers the abnormal present-day artist who does nothing else but 'live his art', have concise force, and there is a real revolutionary radicalism when he smashes the hopes that a reduction in working hours and improving education among the masses will create understanding of art, as it is today:

That is what all defenders of contemporary art love to say, but I am convinced that they don't themselves believe what they say. They know very well that art, as they understand it, is necessarily based on the oppression of the masses and that it can only be sustained by sustaining this oppression. It is essential that masses of workers should exhaust themselves in working, in order for our artists, writers, musicians, singers and painters to attain the level of perfection that permits them to offer us

pleasure... But even assuming that this impossibility is possible and that a means can be found of making art, as understood, to be made accessible to people, a consideration forces itself upon us that proves that such art cannot be universal: that is to say, the circumstance that it is completely incomprehensible to people. In earlier times poets wrote in Latin, yet now the artistic products of our poets are just as incomprehensible for normal people as if they were written in Sanskrit.

The response will come that the fault lies in the normal person's lack of culture and development, and that our art will be understood by all when he has received a satisfactory education. That is again a senseless answer, as we see that the art of the upper classes has always been only a simple pastime for these classes themselves, without the rest of humanity having understood any of it. The lower classes may become ever so very civilised, but art that from the start has not been created for them will always remain inaccessible to them... For thinking and sincere people it is an indisputable fact that the art of the upper classes can never become the art of the whole nation.

The writer of this is every inch more of a socialist, and an historical materialist too, than those party members mixing with the latest artistic crankiness, who want, with thoughtless zeal, to 'educate' Social Democratic workers to an understanding of the decadent daubings of a Slevogt or a Hodler.¹⁸

Thus Tolstoy, in both his strength and his weaknesses, in the deep, sharp sight of his critique, in the bold radicalism of his perspectives and his idealistic belief in the strength of the subjective consciousness, must be placed in the ranks of the great utopians of socialism. It is not his fault but his historical bad luck that his long life extends from the threshold of the nineteenth century, where Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen stood as *precursors* of the modern proletariat, to the threshold of the twentieth, where he stands as an individual incomprehensibly facing the young giant. But the mature revolutionary working class can, in its turn, with a knowing smile, today shake the hand of the great artist and bold revolutionary, and socialist in spite of himself, who wrote the good words: 'Everybody arrives at the truth in his own way, but there is one thing I must say: what I write is not just words, but how I live, that is my good fortune and I will die with it.'

IV: Lassalle After 50 Years

'Nach 50 Jahren' ('After 50 Years'). Translated for *Revolutionary History* by Einde O'Callaghan from Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, Volume 3, pp 208-11. Originally published in *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, no 116, 23 May 1913. © Einde O'Callaghan and *Revolutionary History*.

Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864) studied philology and philosophy and was greatly influenced by Hegel. Active in the revolutionary period of 1848-49, he was jailed for a year in 1849. A member of the Communist League during that period, he was subsequently the founder and initial President of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein (General German Workers Association). The ADAV fused with the Social Democratic Workers Party of Germany in 1875 to form the Social Democratic Party of Germany. Lassalle was mortally wounded in a duel with a rival over the affections of Hélène von Dönniges.

Lassalle was often the subject of sharp criticism within the socialist movement. Although Marx praised him for having 'reawakened the workers' movement in Germany', he condemned him for his élitism, his lack of theoretical vigour and his opportunist relationship with Bismarck, whom he advised on political matters, and considered him to be 'a theatrically vain character'. Luxemburg's assessment, as can be seen, was considerably more positive. Two other appreciations of Lassalle by Luxemburg, 'Lassalle and the Revolution' and 'Lassalle's Legacy', appeared for the first time in an English translation in the *Weekly Worker*, 15 January 2009.

While the German lapdogs à la Schultz-Delitzsch... believed that every social thought had died out and been buried — it was a question of letting socialism suddenly emerge as a political party as if by magic. (Lassalle to Moses Hess)¹⁹

Without wishing to discount the services of Marx and the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, I believe I can truly say that now for the first time a social party exists in Germany that has political significance and represents a mass. (Lassalle)²⁰

FOR the ruling classes, which have their greatest achievements, struggle and ideal behind them, historic anniversaries are only a means to praise complacently the past and to transfigure the *status quo* with an aura borrowed from the past. For a revolutionary class such as the modern proletariat, which still has its greatest deeds to come, such commemorative occasions are not an opportunity to state with a glance at its own past 'how wonderfully far we've already progressed', but above all an occasion for self-criticism, for testing what has been achieved and agreeing on what has to be done.

When on 23 May 1863 the General German Workers Association (ADAV) was founded, the class party of the German proletariat was indeed launched 'suddenly... as if by magic'. It was a bold decision and a speedy act on Lassalle's part which fathered that world historic moment, and the working class of Germany owes him eternal gratitude for alone finding the energy for this

immortal deed even against the cautions of Marx.

The formation and growth of Social Democracy as the enlightened and resolute vanguard of the fighting proletariat is admittedly not an accidental product, not an arbitrary creation of individuals of genius. It is rooted in capitalist relations themselves. When Lassalle began his fiery agitation, he was already met halfway by the best elements of the working class. It was the Leipzig élite of the German proletariat which was already independently attempting to free itself from the tutelage of the liberal bourgeoisie and was groping for the correct road. Their call to Lassalle remains an imperishable claim to fame of the Leipzig working class.

How little capitalist relations alone suffice for the emergence of a viable socialist workers' party is best proved by England. There capitalist development celebrated first and in classical manner its triumphal march. Marx lived and worked in England for decades, and his main scholarly work was much more moulded by English relations rather than those in Germany. Nevertheless, the English workers' movement is to this day stuck powerlessly in the antithesis between a socialist sect incapable of any fruitful active politics and a reformist working-class politics incapable of fruitful guiding ideas. In Germany, Lassalle through his Caesarean section separated the workers' movement from the Progress Party²¹ once and for all and gave it what was to serve henceforth as its armour in all later struggles: an independent political party organisation with a fruitful and lively programme of action. One might, in Lassalle's passionate struggle against the Progress Party, feel some exaggeration embarrassing, one might still today regret a certain unnecessary rapprochement with feudal reaction, where, in his struggle against the liberal bourgeoisie, he had allowed himself to be carried away. Despite these mistakes and through them also, in two years Lassalle saw the need to dig such a chasm between the German working class and the bourgeoisie that nothing in the world was able to bridge it again, nothing was able to lead the working class back into the political and intellectual yoke of liberalism again.

Only such a strong independent class party of the proletariat so placed could gradually become the living realisation of Marx's theoretical insight, could become what German Social Democracy is today.

For the last 50 years, the politics and the whole public life of Germany has revolved around Social Democracy. It is the powerful driving wheel of social progress in the Empire; it is the refuge of free scholarly research and art; it is the only attorney for the equal rights of the female sex; it is the protector and awakener of the popular youth; it is the bulwark of international peace, the resurrection of millions from the deep pit of material and spiritual misery to which capitalist exploitation has banished them. But it is all this only because of

what it brought with it as its historic birth certificate: an uncompromising party of revolutionary class struggle for the realisation of the final goals of socialism. And it is all this only so long as it continues to be such a party. 'The working class must constitute itself as an independent political party',²² as Lassalle wrote in his 'Open Reply' to the Leipzig Central Committee.

The organisation of Social Democracy has grown large and powerful in the 50 years that have passed since then. The couple of thousand who followed Lassalle's banner have grown into a host of one million. 'The representation of the working class in the legislative bodies of Germany — this alone is what can in political terms satisfy its legitimate interests', continued Lassalle in the 'Open Reply'.²³ Today the representatives of the working class in the German parliaments number hundreds and their voters number millions. Lassalle's programme of action has been carried out brilliantly in the half-century of great efforts and sacrifices, and has proved itself brilliantly in the present size of the party.

But Lassalle's programme of action was the product of a specific political and historic situation. This was its greatness and its rousing power; this also gives it its transiency, its historic limits. In Lassalle's time 50 years ago, in the infancy of German parliamentarism, in the youthful period of German capitalism, the creation and development of the Social Democratic Party organisation in and of itself and the entry of the working class into the legislative assemblies alone were already enormous, a fertile action programme and a political offensive.

Today in the imperialist final phase of the rule of international capital, today in the period of deepest decay of bourgeois parliamentarism, continuing to concentrate on developing party organisation and parliamentary activity alone would not be an action programme for the working class, but a programme of passivity, of indolence, would mean treading water politically in spite of external numerical growth. Today the most powerful party organisation cannot be an end in itself, it must prove itself to be an aid to the revolutionary mobilisation of the great mass of the people. The most brilliant victories in parliamentary elections today can only be regarded as a pledge and an obligation for the working class to emerge from the decade-long defensive and gradually to go over to a powerful offensive against the ruling reaction.

Today there is no Lassalle, who with a ringing voice and a bold arm would sweep the German working class along with him into storming the bastions of class domination. The time of towering individuals, of leaders rushing boldly ahead, is past, for today the masses themselves are called upon to be their own leaders, standard bearers and assault troops, to be their own Lassalles. 'From the high peaks of science you see the dawn of the new day earlier than down below in the hurly-burly of daily life. An hour in the natural spectacle of the day

is the equivalent of one or two decades in the far more impressive spectacle of a world-historic sunrise.' Lassalle and Marx led the working class up to the peaks of science.

And now, as the capitalist sun is beginning to set and is colouring the heavens with a blood-red sea of flames, as even in the valley itself the first approach of a new day is already more and more perceptible, it is time for the masses of the enlightened workers to become aware of the fact that in the five decades they have come of age and become powerful and mature. Power and maturity, however, oblige them to take up a politics which in its boldness, far-sightedness and greatness would be worthy of the man who a half-century ago launched the General German Workers Association.

Notes

1. Following unsuccessful actions by the Poles against Russian forces during 1768-72, about 30 per cent of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, containing about one-third of its population, was partitioned amongst Russia, Prussia and Austria by means of an agreement signed in Vienna in 1772. Continued resistance within Poland led to further Russian and Prussian appropriations of Polish land in 1792-93, and, in the wake of Tadeusz Kościuszko's unsuccessful uprising against Russian forces in 1794, what remained of Poland was partitioned amongst Prussia, Russia and Austria in October 1795. The area within the Russian Empire, known as Congress Poland, enjoyed a limited degree of self-government. A further partition occurred after the fall of the Duchy of Warsaw (qv).
2. Kajetan Koźmian (1771-1856) was a Polish poet, writer and literary critic and an official in the administration of the Duchy of Warsaw and Congress Poland.
3. The Duchy of Warsaw was formed by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1807 from Polish territory obtained from Prussia. It was a formally independent state allied to France and linked with the Kingdom of Saxony. It annexed territory from Austro-Hungary in 1809. It fell with Napoleon's defeat in Russia in 1812, and its territory was divided amongst Austro-Hungary, Prussia and Russia.
4. A military revolt on 29 November 1830 in Warsaw turned into a popular uprising against Tsarist Russia. With the capture of Warsaw by Tsarist troops on 7 September 1831, the uprising was crushed.
5. Grochów is a town situated to the east of Praga, itself an eastern suburb of Warsaw. It was the scene of battles between Polish and Russian forces in April 1809 and February 1831, the latter during the unsuccessful Polish uprising against Russian rule. Praga was sacked by Russian forces in April 1794.
6. The *Oxford Companion to English Literature* translates *Dziady* as 'Forefather's Eve'.
7. The Decembrists was the name given to the radical army officers who in December 1825 refused to swear allegiance to the new Tsar, Nikolai I, and called for the army to swear allegiance to the idea of a democratic constitution. Isolated when other officers in St Petersburg refused to side with their rebellion, they were soon overwhelmed. The leaders were either hanged or sent into exile.

8. Tsar Alexander II's reforms and his declaration of an amnesty for Polish prisoners from the uprising of 1831 encouraged in Poland a revival of nationalist sentiments, which were intensified by the harsh Russian response. An attempt in January 1863 to conscript Polish youth triggered an outbreak of guerrilla warfare and the establishment of a clandestine Polish government. The Russian authorities managed to dissuade the peasants from supporting the insurgents, the revolt petered out, and a new round of repression and Russification ensued.
9. Mikhail Muravyov, Governor of Lithuania and Byelorussia during 1863-65, was known as 'the Hangman' for his repression of the January rising in Lithuania.
10. Robert Blum (1807-1848) was a German playwright and poet and a radical liberal activist in Saxony. He joined the National Assembly in 1848, and was executed after he was arrested for his involvement in street-fighting in Vienna in the October of that year.
11. Albrecht Wenzel Eusebius von Wallenstein (1583-1634) was a Bohemian soldier and politician who became the supreme commander of the armies of the Habsburg Monarchy and one of the major figures of the Thirty Years' War of 1618-48. He was suspected of treachery, charged with treason, and duly executed. The enduring image of William Tell, whose actual historical existence is highly doubtful, is of an heroic fighter for Swiss independence from the Habsburg Empire in the fourteenth century. Schiller's play portrayed him through the focus of the French Revolution.
12. Henrik Johan Ibsen (1828-1906) was a leading Norwegian dramatist whose plays often challenged existing concepts of social and personal morality.
13. Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) emerged from a split in 1879 of the Russian populist movement Zemlya i Volya (Land and Freedom). It aimed to overthrow the personal rule of the Tsar through conspiracy and individual terror. The organisation was destroyed by the Tsarist regime after it assassinated Alexander II on 1 March 1881.
14. Claude Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Charles Fourier (1772-1837) and Robert Owen (1771-1858) were pioneering exponents of utopian socialism.
15. See LN Tolstoy, *The Working-Class Question*, Berlin, 1901, pp 5-7.
16. Émile Zola (1840-1902) was a leading exponent of naturalist literature, and his works did not hide the seamier aspects of French society. He played a key role in opposing the French authorities during the Dreyfus affair.
17. Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) was a German archaeologist and pioneering historian of the art of the ancient world; Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the German idealist philosopher, wrote extensively on art and aesthetics; Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) was a French art and literary critic and historian, and pioneering theorist of the naturalist school.
18. Max Slevogt (1868-1932) was a German impressionist painter and illustrator, best known for his landscapes. He was one of the foremost representatives in Germany of the *plein air* style. Ferdinand Hodler (1853-1918) was one of the best known Swiss painters of the nineteenth century.
19. Ferdinand Lassalle to Moses Hess, 27 August 1863, in Carl Grünberg, *Archive für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, Volume 3, Leipzig, 1913, pp 131-32. Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch (1808-1883) was a liberal economist and a member of the Progress Party (see note 21 below) who advocated cooperative

societies and savings banks for the working class as an alternative to class struggle, for which he was strongly criticised by Lassalle.

20. Lassalle to Hess, 27 August 1863, in Grünberg, *op cit*.
21. The German Progress Party (Deutsche Fortschrittspartei) was founded by the liberal members of the Prussian Lower House in 1861. It called for the unification of Germany with power centred in Prussia, representative democracy, the rule of law and larger responsibility for local government. In 1884, the party merged with the Liberal Union to form the German Radical Party, with a programme calling for the regroupment of liberal forces on the basis of free trade, civil liberties and increased powers for parliament.
22. Ferdinand Lassalle, 'Offenes Antwort-Schreiben an das Central-Komitée zur Berufung eines Allgemeinen Deutschen Arbeiter-Congresses zu Leipzig', in Edward Bernstein (ed), *Ferdinand Lassalle's Reden und Schriften. Neue Gesamt-Ausgabe, mit einer biographischen Einleitung*, Volume 2, Berlin, 1893, p 413.
23. *Ibid*.

Current Politics

Rosa Luxemburg's writings on current politics need no general introduction, as she was a political commentator *par excellence*. Here we present the text of a pamphlet which undermines the common misconception that she was insensitive to manifestations of national oppression, a strong appeal for women's rights that includes a sharp criticism of bourgeois feminism, and a stirring appeal against the impending world war, sentiments to which, unlike many others in the international labour movement, she was to remain true.

I: In Defence of Nationality

'Zur Verteidigung der Nationalität' ('In Defence of Nationality'). Translated by Cecily Hastings/Bennett from Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, Volume 1, Part 1, pp 810-28. Originally published as a pamphlet, Rosa Luxemburg, *Wobronie narodowości*, Poznań, 1900. © Cecily Hastings/Bennett and *Revolutionary History*.

In this piece, Rosa Luxemburg defends the right of schoolchildren in Posen (now Poznań) to be taught religion in Polish. The Prussian authorities responded to this pamphlet by charging her with insulting the Minister for Culture, and fining her 100 marks. Although in 1815 Friedrich Wilhelm II had promised to respect the national rights of the Poles who had been incorporated into Prussia, by the latter half of the century a process of Germanification had set in, particularly after Bismarck's campaign against the Catholic church, the *Kulturkampf*, was launched in 1872. In 1873, an administrative order was issued that barred teaching in Polish for all subjects except religious education. Over the next decade, German became the sole language in government offices and law courts, the use of the Polish language was prohibited in Municipal council debates, and many place names and family names were Germanised. These measures were relaxed somewhat after Bismarck's dismissal in 1889, but were subsequently reintroduced and reinforced as part of the growing assertion of German nationalism.

Luxemburg's pamphlet appeared after the Prussian Education Minister Heinrich Konrad von Studt, a leading Prussian bureaucrat and tireless advocate of the Germanification of the Poles in Prussia, had ruled in late July 1900 that

religious education be taught in German, thus eradicating the last vestiges of Polish from school teaching. She takes up the role of the catholic Centre Party, which failed to defend Poles, who, at the time, were flocking into the Silesian iron, steel and coal industry, and also into the Westphalian and Rhineland regions. This article examines an important aspect of the class structure of the Reich and the tensions both within it and amongst the Polish parties in Prussia. Subsequent to Luxemburg's article, the deepening process of Germanification resulted in further measures being introduced against the Poles. In 1906-07, Polish schoolchildren staged strikes against Germanification firstly in Posen and then in Breslau (now Wrocław), with as many as 60 000 taking part.

H H H

i: The System of De-Nationalising

THE government of Prussia has made a fresh attack on the Polish people! By order of Minister of Education, Studt, the last remains of the Polish language are being eliminated in Posen schools; religious instruction, hitherto the one and only lesson still given in Polish, is henceforth to be taught in German! Our children, who spend half their day in school, are not, throughout that time, to hear a single word spoken in the language of their people, the language of their fathers and mothers. Education, the intellectual nourishment for their whole lives which they are supposed to be taking in at school, is being presented to them in a totally alien and, to them, unintelligible language! Is this not something utterly outrageous? Schools were founded, people send their children to school, for them to acquire the light of knowledge and grow up to be intelligent, educated people, for their own good and the good of their country. Whereas in Posen, schools are not to serve the education of children, but to turn them into intellectual cripples, ignorant of their own nationality and language: all this to further, not the growth of knowledge and civilisation, but the forcible expansion of German-ness.

This is not the first attack by the Prussian authorities on our language and national identity. For more than 20 years this government has, step by step, been eliminating the Polish language from Posen schools, getting rid of the Polish element in officialdom and public life, spending hundreds of millions on 'colonisation', that is, the Germanising of our neighbourhoods by forcibly planting German farmers and artisans on Polish land — all with a persistence and determination worthy of a better cause.

What are they trying to achieve? Clearly, the disappearance of the Polish language and Polish nationality within Prussia. Three million Poles are to forget that they were born Polish, and are to transform themselves into Germans! Children are to forget the language of their fathers and mothers, their

grandchildren are to forget that their grandfathers once lived on Polish soil!

It is hair-raising to think of what is being attempted here, and one clenches one's fists in despair at seeing such things being done over decades, in the full light of day, before the very eyes of all Europe and the whole civilised world, while not a single one of those who wield power takes any notice, no one withstands the overpowering force of Germanisation; the Hakatists' simply laugh at our helplessness and go serenely on with their uprooting of all that is Polish, as though they were doing the most honourable and justifiable work in the world. So it is a crime to speak your own language, the language you sucked in with your mother's milk, and a crime to belong to the nation within which you came into the world.

Truly, it is high time for the Polish people to shake off their apathy, give full rein to their fury, and go into battle against Germanisation. How this battle is to be fought, what is the most effective way to defend our Polish identity — these are questions which call for serious consideration.

ii: Whose Fault Is It?

First of all, who are really to blame for this policy of oppression which Poles in Prussia are having to endure? Whom are we to see as responsible for the crimes of Germanisation? The usual answer is: 'The Germans are to blame, the Germans are oppressing us.' So we read in our Polish newspapers in Posen province. But can we really throw the blame on the whole German people, all 50 million of them? That would be not only a grave injustice, but also, more importantly, a gross error, from which we ourselves would suffer the most. It is absolutely necessary to have a clear idea of where the real cause of our oppression lies if we are to make any serious and successful defence of our threatened national identity.

What is clear as daylight is that the author of Germanisation is the *Prussian government*. It is they who have, for several decades, been single-handedly pursuing a policy of oppression against the Poles. Prussian Ministers of Education issue decree after decree for the expulsion of the Polish language from schools, Prussian Ministers of the Interior order the police to break up Polish meetings in Upper Silesia and other provinces, Prussian Presidents and district council chairmen think up dozens of nasty tricks of their own with which to torment the Polish population. But behind the Prussian government there stands, like a wall, the government of the German Empire, whose Chancellor happens to be the Prime Minister of Prussia, so that which reigns between the national and Prussian governments is normally the most perfect harmony, especially as regards anything to do with persecuting the Poles.

But though the authorities do have powerful resources at their disposal, they

would have no power at all if they were being opposed by influential sections of German society. Neither the German government nor, still less, that of Prussia would dare to persecute the Poles with such grim determination against the publicly-expressed disapproval of people in such circles. No government can carry on for long if its policies are genuinely and energetically condemned by the whole of society. So the government's Germanisation policy must look for reliable support in certain sections of German society — and really finds it too. We know them well, those Hakatist gentlemen, stirring up anti-Polish feeling as they would set a dog on a rabbit, setting up organisations specially for uprooting all that is Polish, not because anyone asks them to, but simply out of their own malicious will. Most of these really determined instigators of Germanisation belong mostly to the German land-owning and industrialist class. It is true that only a small handful of this class in Germany has rallied to the shameful banner of Hakatism. But how do the broad majority behave in face of Hakatist attacks and the Germanising measures of the government? Do they protest, are they indignant, do they try to obstruct this policy? For the answer, best take a look at the German press and at the attitude of the various parties in the Reichstag and the Prussian Landtag.

Whether in their newspapers, in parliament, or in the Landtag, the attitude of almost all the German parties is either favourable to Hakatism, coldly indifferent to the anti-Polish persecution, or, at best, just able to produce a faint muttering in face of actions against which any decent human being would be launching thunderbolts. The Conservatives and the National Liberals² — the parties of the great land-owners and the industrial millionaires — take every opportunity to gnash their teeth at the Poles and to applaud each of the government's Germanising measures. The so-called 'liberals' of various shades and colours (the representatives of trade and finance) are divided between those in favour of the destruction of everything Polish and those who (for dear honour's sake, since not in vain are they to be called 'liberals') now and again grumble about Hakatism in some minor newspaper or other. The government, of course, takes as much notice of the grumbling as of a yapping dog.

Finally, the catholic party, the so-called Centre,³ to which the Poles in Prussia have been clinging for decades like a drunk to a lamp-post: the most that the Centre has done to protect the Polish people is to say a few vaguely disagreeable things from time to time in its newspapers about the government's efforts at Germanisation or about the Hakatists. At bottom, however, these Centre Party critics are usually what are known as 'bleeding hearts', and the government, of course, simply laughs quietly at them. If the Centre Party really, honestly cared about defending the Poles, it would find the means to do it! It is after all *the strongest party* in parliament, with the largest number of deputies, 107 in total.

No law of any importance can get through parliament against the opposition of the Centre. This is what happened, for instance, over the recent proposal to expand the navy, on which the government was so determined. So long as the Centre Party, nose in air, maintained that it did not approve of laying this new burden on the backs of a long-suffering nation, the government's plan hung by a thread, and ministers were lobbying the Centre Party, doing every possible thing to placate them and persuade them to agree. Suppose the Centre Party had said at that point: 'We are not going to approve naval expansion unless the government solemnly promises to discontinue all persecution of the Poles.' The government would have had to give in and the catholic party would have proved that it does really care about what happens to the Poles.

But the Centre didn't give a thought to the Poles. It made a different condition: it would agree to the doubling of the fleet if the government would promise to raise the tolls on grain and other foodstuffs! Thus it has been shown that this 'catholic' party has no concern for freedom of conscience or the national character of three million Polish catholics, but only for the financial interests of a few thousand large land-owners in Germany, for whom raising the price of agricultural produce by levying tolls means more money in their pockets. That the same price rise forces the tears of misfortune from thousands of fathers and mothers among the poor population is of no concern to the Centre Party.

How can one, in fact, believe in the friendship of the Centrists for the Polish people, or expect from them any genuine defence of Polish life against oppression, when the Centre Party, especially in Prussia, consists mainly of large land-owners and the so-called coal barons, that is, nobility and millionaires, just like the other parties, the Conservatives and National Liberals? To expect any defence of the oppressed Polish people from the German nobility or from millionaires would be sheer lunacy. As we know, most of the Centre Party members of parliament were elected in Upper Silesia, the Rhineland and Westphalia, the areas with the big coal mines and iron and steel works. These 'catholic' counts make millions from their mines and from those who are working in them day and night in suffocating darkness, to increase the wealth of their lordships of the Centre Party! The poor Polish people! In Upper Silesia, hundreds of thousands of Polish miners and steel-workers labour in the sweat of their brows for Messrs Ballestrem, Donnersmarck and others; in Westphalia and the Rhineland thousands more languish under that same yoke of mines and steel works.

The catholic counts heap up their millions from the work, the misery, the ill-treatment of this Polish people, paying the Polish miner only just enough to allow him to eat, keeping him in misery and dirt, in conditions worse than they keep their pigs and cows. How can one expect these 'catholic' counts to care

about the oppression of the Polish people when they themselves are living on the injustice that they are doing to this same people? Why should these counts of the Centre Party care whether a Polish child can say his prayers in his mother tongue when they are keeping Polish people in such misery that they have neither bread nor clothing to give to their children?

Polish hopes for help from the Centre Party stem from earlier times, when Bismarck was subjecting German catholicism to a brutal persecution and thus forcing catholics to unite in defence of their faith. In those days of the *Kulturkampf*⁴ 10 to 15 years ago, the Centre Party was not so strong as it is today and was unable, faced with the superior power of the National Liberals (the Protestant capitalists) to wield much influence in parliament. Bismarck's persecution united catholics of very different classes under the banner of the Centre: Silesian and Upper Silesian magnates, Rhineland craftsmen, Bavarian peasants and even a part of the working class. Hence the catholic party became to some extent representative of the labouring social classes in the population, and under pressure from them took on a certain democratic and progressive character.

In those days, the catholic party stood up against the government, against oppression of the people by high taxes, tolls and military conscription; and also against all attacks on freedom of conscience, language and nationality. In those days, even the Polish cause was more zealously defended by the Centre, because, as the saying goes, a hungry man understands a hungry man best and a beaten man a beaten one best. When German catholics were made to feel the meaning of governmental persecution, repression and injustice themselves, they came to sympathise with the oppression of the Poles.

But times have changed; the devil made off with the 'Kulturkampf' along with its creator, Bismarck. The government grasped the fact that persecuting the catholics merely resulted in uniting them, strengthening them and making enemies of them. Today the catholic party is, as we have said, the strongest in the German parliament, the government has to dance to its tune, persecution of catholicism has ceased, and newspapers are hinting that the Jesuits will soon be allowed back into Germany.⁵

But because of all this, what a change in the catholic party! When the repression of catholicism ceased, so that their own skins no longer smarted, the injustice being done to foreigners also ceased to interest the Centrists. In that rainbow mixture of social strata and classes of which the catholic party had consisted, it was the magnates and industrialists, in other words the parasites and reactionaries, who came out on top. The whole political stance of the Centre took on a new shape. Compassion and concern for the poor working population have disappeared; so has concern for the Poles. Today the catholic

party in parliament votes to increase the tolls, which means to raise the price of food; itself invents new taxes to lay on the population; votes to enlarge the army and navy in our 'beloved German fatherland'. As for the Poles, it has practically forgotten them, only turning a friendly face towards them now and then so as to bring them into line and make sure that Polish members of parliament will, as before, take their orders from the Centre. For the Centre today, the defence of catholicism is just faded lettering on a signboard, an empty phrase; it has finally become plain that a party consisting of magnates, counts and industrial millionaires cannot be the protector of the oppressed and the weak. *The Centrists were once enemies of the German government and friends of the people. Today they are friends of the government and enemies of the people.* Our Polish nation ought to recognise this at last, and stop knocking at the catholic party's door in reliance on past times which will never come again.

So we are not going to find any protection from any of the German parties that we have named. When the German government and Prussian ministers permit themselves to persecute the Poles so blatantly, when the Hakatist rabble boldly and loudly abuse us, the responsibility rests on all classes of the German people who effectively reinforce the pressure of Germanisation through their applause, their silence or their hypocritical 'defence' of things Polish. It is their fault that the government dares to treat three million German citizens as second-class creatures not so much as allowed to have their own language or, as it is said, to praise God in their own way! Against the Polish people the German government stands united with the nobility, the magnates, the factory owners, the bankers, the mine owners — this whole class of the rich, the possessing class, who live off the labour of others' hands and the exploitation of the poor. Whether Protestant, Catholic or Jewish, they are all the same for us, and one with the Prussian government which is robbing us of our nationality.

There is nothing strange about this. People such as the nobility, the industrialists and the capitalists have only one political aim — profit; their idol is the golden calf, their faith is exploitation. Any other values which their various parties proclaim, any other slogans they use, such as 'patriotism', 'the catholic faith', 'liberalism', 'anti-Semitism', 'progress', are just cloaks of various colours and shapes to cover one and the same goal: profit-seeking and greed for self-enrichment. If Prussian conservatives and liberals are such fervent German patriots that they want to turn Poles into Germans by force, then it is only happening because the 'Germanisation business' stinks of profit. How delightful it is for the young sons of the German bourgeoisie to be able to settle in comfortable situations in Posen as civil servants, teachers, journalists, shopkeepers and craftsmen, and finally satisfy some of its peasantry with slices of Polish land! It would all have been lost, it would all have had to remain in Polish

hands, but for the discovery that it was necessary to turn Poles into Germans. So long live the beloved 'German fatherland', for once more allowing itself to be used as a milch cow, and watch out, you Poles!

But if it should just happen that patriotism doesn't pay, our Prussian conservatives swing round like a weather-vane in the wind. It is well known, for instance, that German peasants are flocking west out of Prussia to the industrial towns because they are no longer willing to endure hunger and thrashings on Prussian estates. But the poor Polish peasant from beyond the frontier in the Kingdom of Poland⁶ will put up with anything, being ignorant and hence as meek as a lamb. And these same German magnates, who want to wipe out every trace of anything Polish in Prussia, who constantly talk of their 'beloved fatherland', let thousands of Polish peasants come in from the Kingdom, because they are cheaper and stupider, because it is easier to pull the wool over their eyes, and they put up with the whip. When rooting out everything Polish pays off, hurrah for Hakatism! When a Polish influx is just what the estate needs, welcome, stupid Polish peasant! Just so long as it pays!

As has already also been said the Centre Party, the German catholics, who use phrases about defending the faith and being friends of the Poles, are at the same time growing fat on the labour of Polish catholic miners and steel-workers in Upper Silesia. For them too profit is the only creed, while justice, defence of the oppressed, freedom of speech and conscience are just phrases, to be proclaimed or trodden underfoot according to 'what business requires'.

Such is the top layer, the ruling stratum of German society. It is neither better nor worse than in any other country, but in no other country today is it dealing with such naive people as here in Posen, people who look to these sections of the nation for protection for the weak and oppressed, who expect the wolves to protect the lambs.

iii: Our Allies

There is only one party in Germany which is genuinely on our side, one which not only speaks out, loud and clear, against Germanisation as against every other injustice, but raises a clenched fist against it as well. It is the Social Democratic Party, the party of the German workers.

These are, first of all, people who cannot get any benefit from the persecution of the Poles, unlike those upper classes of German society whose members come amongst us chasing after profits and good jobs. The German worker, like our Polish worker or artisan, is not living on injustice done to others but on his own hard but honest work. He is not an oppressor, but, very certainly, one of the oppressed, and he feels and understands our oppression because he is oppressed himself, and by those very same people who are tormenting us Poles

— the German government and the parties that we have been naming.

Just as, for more than 20 years, one decree after another has been issued against the Poles, so their own German government has for decades been conducting a campaign against the German workers — ever since, that is, German working people began to lift their heads, give themselves an education, and start defending themselves against injustice and exploitation. Against us, their weapons are mostly decrees at the administrative level, whereas 22 years ago, in 1878, the working people of Germany were *effectively outlawed* by the so-called Law of Exception passed against the socialists. Although the German Constitution guarantees to all German citizens equality before the law and freedom of the press, speech, conscience and association, socialist workers could neither print newspapers for their own enlightenment, nor speak of their affairs at meetings, nor organise unions, on pain of imprisonment. This outlawing of German workers lasted for 11 years, during which thousands languished for years in prison and hundreds were forced to escape from persecution by leaving their homeland, subjecting their wives and children to hunger and misery while they sought in some foreign land a hospitable roof, civil liberty, and equality before the law.

And who was principally responsible for this persecution? That same Bismarck who initiated the extermination of everything Polish by founding the Colonisation Fund⁷ and Germanising the schools in Posen, and those same German aristocrats and industrialists who actively or passively support Hakatism. And who ultimately betrayed the working people of Germany? That same catholic party, the Centre Party, which has also consigned the Polish question to oblivion and changed from being a fighter for civic equality to being a supporter of the government and its oppressive policies.

Thus German workers have in their own country precisely the same enemies as we have and suffer under the same oppression; so they are our natural allies, our friends. The Social Democratic Party knows no distinctions of language or faith, it sees every victim of oppression and discrimination as a brother, it condemns every injustice and seeks to eradicate it. This party alone stands between the ordinary people and the nobility and capitalists, it alone stands between oppressed nations and their persecutors.

From time to time, some nonsense about Social Democracy appears in the Polish newspapers in Posen: that it is the greatest of all dangers, worse than the Hakatists, because the socialists want to establish anarchy, to turn the world upside down, to abolish religion and introduce the socialisation of women, to share the property of the rich among themselves, etc. It is all sheer rubbish, and those who disseminate it are either idiots or slanderous liars seeking to throw dust in the eyes of simple people.

Socialists are not in the least thinking of turning the world upside down, for it is upside down already. Is it not a topsy-turvy order of things when millions of ordinary people work from dawn and far into the night in the sweat of their brows — in workshop or factory, in field or coal mine — and get for it barely a mouthful of bread and a wretched hole to live in? Whereas the gentlemen of the nobility and industry, who never do a stroke of work all their lives, pocket the profits, ride in coaches, drink champagne and live in palaces! What socialists want is to put the world the right way up and establish an order of things in which people who work honestly will get an abundant return for themselves and their families, but idlers, those who like to grow fat on other people's work, will get nothing.

Equally absurd are those whose story is that socialists want to abolish family life and establish general immorality. Isn't the family life of millions of workers being destroyed here and now by the fact that the wife and mother is forced to go out to work, giving her no time to look after the children, and that she often does not know how she is going to feed and clothe them? Are there not at this moment hundreds of poor seamstresses in Posen being forced out of sheer necessity to trade in immorality? And who is responsible for this? Not the socialists, but the factory owners and outfitters who keep the poor girls sitting all day over their stitching and don't pay them enough even to keep them alive. Yes, the socialists do indeed want to bring this exploitation to an end and assure every honest woman of an ample reward for her work so that she will not become a prostitute!

Finally, it is said that socialists want to do away with religion! Anyone who believes this impudent fairy tale must really be somewhat stupid, since no one has done so much to abolish religion as Bismarck and those who joined with him in declaring war on the catholics. Whereas the socialists were, on this very issue, as over other breaches of law the most deadly enemies of Bismarck and his allies, saying always and everywhere: 'Let everyone hold the faith and convictions in which he believes, no one has the right to violate the human conscience!' The clearest proof that socialists defend complete freedom of religion and other convictions is that the Social Democratic Party in parliament always votes for the return of the Jesuits to Germany.

And again it has been Social Democracy that has been the first, and so far the only, party to stand up in defence of our persecuted nationality. Immediately after Minister Studt's most recent attack, the Social Democrats called a huge meeting in the Lambertsaal in Posen on 15 August 1900 to protest against this latest piece of Germanisation. Only on 8 September did the Polish bourgeoisie, shamed by the socialists' energy, manage to organise its own meeting.

Moreover, at its Congress in Mainz in September 1900, the German Social

Democrats dealt with the Polish question on the very first day, expressed their extreme indignation at the actions of the government and *unanimously* passed the following resolution, proposed by the delegates from Posen:

The Congress calls on the members of the Party in the Reichstag to raise there the matter of the latest measures taken by the Prussian government against the Polish language in schools in the province of Posen and to oppose with the utmost vigour all treatment of the Poles as second-class citizens.

Of all the political parties, Social Democracy was the first, and so far the only one, to act in parliament to brand the government's Hakatist system for what it is and to call for a reckoning with those operating it.

This party is therefore the only one in German society on which we can rely and on whose help and friendship we can count. Not insignificant help either, for the Social Democrats already have 56 deputies in parliament and are the strongest party in the state. They got two-and-a-quarter million votes at the last election. The party has swelled like an avalanche in the last year; everyone who is exploited, oppressed or discriminated against is flocking to its banner, while the government, the nobility and the capitalists gaze in terror at the growing power of working people. It is to this party that Polish workers too must have recourse; from it alone can they expect brotherly aid and protection from the tyranny of the German government.

iv: The Nobility, the Bourgeoisie and the People in Posen

When the Social Democrats in Posen led the way in defending religious instruction in Polish, confronted Herr Studt, and organised a huge mass meeting at which they called on the entire working population to fight in their own defence, what were the other parties in our society doing? Our 'national élite', the nobility, the land-owning class, did not so much as make themselves heard. They, the ones who always call themselves the leaders and heads of the nation, who are supposed to look after the national interest, who are forever proclaiming their patriotism — where were they, where are they when the people and its mother tongue need to be defended? They are not there! When it's a question of picking up seats in the Reichstag or the Landtag, the Kwiletskis, the Chłapowskis, the Czartoryskis, the Radziwiłłs, the Kościelskis are all on the spot making 'civic' and 'patriotic' speeches. Making a show in the capital, in Berlin — they like that! But what becomes of all that talk about 'civic consciousness' and 'patriotism' when these gentlemen, elected by the votes of the people, take their seats in parliament? What good have they done for the

Polish people by their activities as elected representatives? Exactly nothing! In the Reichstag and the Landtag, our Polish members sit like Egyptian mummies; they have achieved neither power nor influence nor respect. When throughout the year bitter fighting goes on between the different parties in parliament over vital questions affecting the nation — laws to protect factory workers and craftsmen, civil rights for peasants, tolls on grain and meat — our Polish members are never to be heard or seen. When the people need to be protected against price rises, taxes and governmental tyranny, our Czarlinskis, Radziwiłls and Kwiletskis are simply dumb. Once a year they pipe up to say a few words against Germanisation... but even this is done quietly and feebly, quite without salt and pepper, so that the ministers don't even turn round to look at them. The Social Democrat deputies stand up in defence of Polish interests in a very different fashion, though up till now there isn't a Pole among them. It is thanks to their efforts that if someone states in court that he does not have sufficient command of German, he has to be given an official interpreter; and year after year they reproach the government with the lack of schools in Upper Silesia!

But this is still not the worst. What finally reveals the degree of hypocrisy in the patriotism of our sword-bearing parliamentary deputies is the vote on the expansion of the army and navy.⁸ Thus in 1893 our Polish deputies voted for the strengthening of the German army, the strengthening of the armed forces of the government which persecutes the Poles, the strengthening of the noose around the neck of the Polish people! Surely, in face of this, the government must regard the patriotic grumblings of the Polish deputies as a joke. And in face of this is it not obvious that the Polish people has been sending its *enemies*, not its protectors, to represent it in Parliament? Even this year, at the most recent doubling of the German fleet, the only object of which is to subject the Chinese to the same repression⁹ as we have to suffer — even on this, barely half our members managed to bring themselves to vote *against* the government. The other half of these 'Poles' disappeared from the chamber and, as befits brave men, hid in holes and corners so as to avoid, God forbid, voting against the government!

Well, what else could one expect of them? Our Polish deputies are all, to a man, sword-bearing magnates of whom the people were singing a hundred years ago 'Honour to you, ye princes and prelates, for our slavery and our chains; honour to you, ye counts and princes, you scoundrels, for our country stained with our brothers' blood.' Just as then their only fatherland was personal profit and the people, for them, nothing but a footstool on which to climb to higher positions, so it is still today. They are almost all owners of great estates and so are living on the toil of Polish peasants, just like the German land-owners. Almost all of them, just like the German magnates, keep and feed 'their co-brothers, the dear

peasants' worse than they keep their pigs; just like them their first concern is to sell their grain, their cattle, the schnapps they distil, as dear as possible, so they want tolls to be high, never mind how the people suffer from price-rises and alcoholism. At bottom, they are the same sort of people as the German nobility and German capitalists; one is as bad as the other. Though one is all for Hakatism, while the other, being Polish, defends things Polish, yet the common bond of greed for profit binds them together more strongly than nationalist hatred divides them. As for the German, so for the Polish land-owner or factory-owner, the exploitation of the people who work for them is the most important element in the whole 'fatherland'. But a crow does not peck another crow's eyes out, so our deputies, who were sent there to defend the Polish people, are fundamentally at one with our bitterest enemies: the government and the German ruling classes. No wonder Hakatism keeps getting stronger while the Polish people suffers defeat after defeat!

The so-called *People's Party*, meaning our bourgeoisie, has not done much more to protect the Polish people. This party has been active in Posen for a fair number of years now; it disposes of several newspapers and can call public meetings, since the owners of the halls don't turn it down, as they do the socialists. And what are the results? That the same old sword-bearers as ever sit in parliament, that the 'People's Movement' doesn't so much as scratch them, that Hakatism continues to make more and more progress while the Polish people remains sunk in the same poverty and ignorance as before.

The 'People's Party' may have good intentions, but what inefficiency, what muddle, what political backwardness! One gets the clearest picture of this party from the way it acted after Studt's latest assault. It dithered helplessly over starting any sort of protest movement until the Social Democrats pre-empted it with a public meeting in Posen. Shamed by this example, it did at last manage to call a meeting, but what did it decide at the meeting? Instead of branding the Polish deputies for their helplessness, instead of pillorying the catholic party for their hypocritical 'defence' of things Polish, instead of unmasking the true character of the government and its allies and calling the people to arms for a bitter struggle against them, the meeting sent a whining request to the Archbishop to take 'our children' and religious instruction in the schools under his protection! Hang on to the clerical cassock with both hands, such is the sum total of the wisdom of this 'People's Party'. Do everything with the priests and through the priests: this was the *policy* long ago, and the aristocracy in the former Polish republic followed it steadily until it brought them to destruction.

The helplessness and backwardness of the 'People's Party' is most clearly demonstrated by the fact that, while they are allegedly fighting against the aristocracy and seeking to arouse the people to an independent political life,

they themselves cling fast to clericalism, just as the aristocracy did.

Not without reason. This party calls itself the 'People's Party', but the welfare of the real people, the working people, Polish craftsmen, workers, farm-hands, is not what they really care about. To open the eyes of the people and show them their enemies — capitalist exploitation, the power of the nobility, the partisan character of the government — that is not what this party wants. When, several years ago, the Polish workers and craftsmen in Posen began to organise themselves into trade unions in order to fight the capitalists for better wages and a better life for their wives and children, the 'People's Party' scowled severely and used their newspapers to dissuade the craftsmen from this project. Members of the People's Party are very ready to attack the German oppressor in every way possible, but hearing a few bitter truths about our own Polish oppressors and exploiters is not at all to their taste. Their fear is that the people may become wiser, so they want to bring them into line with the help of the priests. But this simply makes nonsense of all their defence of things Polish, for if the fight against Hakatism is going to be reduced to handing out little calendars and sending deputations to the Archbishop there is no hope for our nation. The clergy, like our bourgeoisie, are less concerned with defending the Polish people against Germanisation than with protecting Polish factory-owners, bosses and land-owners against the just demands of the disinherited working population; it is not so much Hakatist ignorance that they want to repel but rather the light of socialism. It is interesting and significant that the Archbishop, in his long answer to the deputation and the 'humble prayer' of the bourgeois meeting of 8 September, said a great deal about upholding religion but *not one word about defending the Polish language*, as though the whole affair had nothing to do with the Polish language. But he warned the deputation 'to resist temptation':

I appeal to you in the words of the Saviour, watch and pray '*that you enter not into temptation*', for the enemy of our souls will make use even of our deepest feelings and our pain as he seeks to lure you with seductive slogans *to the overthrow of the divine and social order.* (*Goniec Wielkopolski*, no 207)

So this is the clergy's watchword in face of the threatening avalanche of Hakatism — fear of, and a grave warning against, Social Democracy, that is, against the one party that genuinely defends everything Polish and is an implacable enemy of the government and the Hakatists! We see from this what the 'patriotism' of the 'People's Party' is worth. Now we see that we can expect effective protection against Germanisation neither from the Polish nobility and its deputies, nor from the party of the bourgeoisie, the 'People's Party', nor from

the clergy. Our bourgeoisie, like the nobility, makes every effort to convince the working population that the repression of things Polish is the only evil we have to suffer, that the Germanisers are our one and only enemy and the battle against Hakatism our one and only political task. Whereas Polish craftsmen, workers and farm-hands are suffering from a thousand other ills and have a thousand other cares to plague them!

The capitalists exploit the craftsman and the worker, the nobility and the land-owners suck the life out of the farm-hands, the government ruins the entire working population with high tolls on foodstuffs and the high prices they bring about; the selfsame government impoverishes us with taxation, bullies us with conscription, and adds the further injustice that the money taken from the people is not spent on schools or anything that benefits the people, but on guns and warships. This is our greatest injury, these are our enemies: *exploitation* by the capitalists and the nobility, and a government whose policy is totally in the service of the capitalists and nobility, while to the people it says: 'Pay your taxes, do your military service, and hold your tongue.'

As already said, our Polish bourgeoisie and land-owners share in this exploitation and in this policy as much as their German equivalents. Does a Polish factory-owner or land-owner pay or otherwise treat a Polish worker in the slightest degree better than a German one? Doesn't a Polish clothier ruin Polish craftsmen and seamstresses just like a German one? They are as alike as two peas in a pod; whether their names end in 'berg' or in 'ski' there is not the slightest difference between them as regards their dealings with Polish working people.

This is why our bourgeoisie competes with our nobility to convince us that Germanisation is the only thing oppressing us, that we have no enemies but the Hakatists. It is simply a political manoeuvre designed to throw dust in the eyes of working people, to direct their attention exclusively towards their German enemies and away from their enemies here at home. These 'leaders of the people' want to have the people thinking exclusively of their language and their catholic faith, and not of the emptiness of their stomachs; that they should fight exclusively against the Hakatists, not against exploitation by their own parasites nor the government's political, toll and military oppression.

Hence we have to see the whole 'patriotism' of our Polish upper classes as a vile betrayal of the people! We must not march behind them, these land-owners and bourgeois, but *against* them; we must not seek salvation for our nationality in company with them, but look to defend both our livelihoods and our mother tongue *in conflict* with them. The Polish people can count only on itself and on the one class whose suffering is equal to its own: the German workers. Let the Polish craftsman, the worker, the miner rouse himself to fight, let him unite

his efforts with those of his German comrades in misfortune, and the German government and the Hakatists will have a power to reckon with. Polish working people must flock to the banner of Social Democracy, the only refuge for freedom and justice. There they will find protection for their livelihood, their family life, their civil rights and their mother tongue.

The land-owner, the factory owner, the capitalist, whether German or Polish, is our enemy; the German worker is our ally, for he suffers exploitation by the capitalists and oppression by the ruling classes exactly as we do. Following the example of working people in Germany, our Polish people must take up the struggle for their material and spiritual well-being and organise for that end; they must join the *trade unions* so as to offer united resistance to the capitalists; they must read the workers' newspapers and pamphlets to educate themselves and understand their needs and their tasks. But above all, when it comes to parliamentary elections, our workers must vote *only for Social Democracy and its worker candidates*, so that no enemy of the people, no sword-swaggering parasite or bourgeois simpleton, shall ever again be sent from Posen, West Prussia, Mazuria or Upper Silesia to take a seat in parliament. Unity with German workers against exploitation by the German and Polish ruling classes and governmental tyranny — that is our slogan!

II: The Proletarian Woman

'Die Proletarierin' ('The Proletarian Woman'). Translated for *Revolutionary History* by Mary Phillips from Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, Volume 3, pp 410-13. Originally published in *Sozialdemokratische Korrespondenz* (Berlin), no 27, 5 March 1914. © Mary Phillips and *Revolutionary History*.¹⁰

An immediately striking feature of this article is Luxemburg's brusque dismissal of bourgeois feminism and the suffragette movement. Although the term suffragette was in use in Germany at the time, including in the title of a controversial film,¹¹ it is worth speculating whether her sharp words aimed at the suffragette movement were the result of a connection between her and the British socialist Dora Montefiore, who was a member of the Social Democratic Federation (later the British Socialist Party) and had fought a sharp factional battle within the Women's Social and Political Union against the anti-working-class attitude of its leadership. Montefiore, Luxemburg and the latter's friend and party comrade Clara Zetkin were all delegates to the Congress of the Second International in Stuttgart in August 1907. Montefiore met Zetkin there, and it is possible that she met Luxemburg as well. It certainly seems that when Zetkin came to Britain she stayed with Montefiore at her house in Hammersmith. Luxemburg, Zetkin and Montefiore marched together at the Basle Peace Congress in November 1913, to which they were delegates, just a

few months before this article was published, and all three were subsequently active opponents of the First World War, unlike many representatives of bourgeois feminism. Montefiore left the WSPU for the Adult Suffrage Society, which campaigned for universal adult suffrage, rather than a mere extension to women of the existing system of restricted voting rights, or as she put it in *Justice* (1 May 1909), fighting for 'the political emancipation of women, but... on the basis of a class war, as opposed to a sex war', a standpoint close to that of Luxemburg in this article.

Luxemburg's standpoint on the question of women's emancipation has received an uneven range of coverage over the years: An early account by Mary Beard which enthusiastically portrayed her role as a woman in the revolutionary movement, placed her and Clara Zetkin alongside August Bebel and Karl Kautsky as leading figures whose political work helped laid the basis for the legal equality of women in Weimar Germany, but omitted her criticism of bourgeois feminism.¹² Neither Ethel Manning's sympathetic account of Luxemburg's political life nor Paul Frölich's full-length biography made any reference to her views on the question of women.¹³

The huge increase of interest over the last few decades in the history of the women's movement and of the historical experience of women has inevitably led to attention being focussed upon Luxemburg's writings and activities in this area. In his exhaustive biography, Peter Netti promoted what is probably the classic portrayal:

Rosa Luxemburg was not interested in any high-principled campaign for women's rights... Like anti-Semitism, the inferior status of women was a social feature which would be eliminated only by the advent of socialism; in the meantime there was no point in making any special issue of it.¹⁴

This has been echoed by other left-wing writers.¹⁵ Hal Draper and Anne Lipow rejected Netti's statement as 'quite false', declaring that Luxemburg did make a special issue of the question of women's rights, by way of her writing several articles on the topic. However, they also claimed that Netti's assertion contained 'a kernel of truth' in that in the article published below Luxemburg 'grossly underestimated the appeals of abstract feminism' and made sweeping statements as a result of her tendency towards 'abstract deduction' in her political analyses.¹⁶

Some accounts are more inventive. In her attempt to recruit Luxemburg to her brand of socialist-feminism, the Marxist-Humanist Raya Dunayevskaya cited Luxemburg's stirring call for women's rights and suffrage in 'Die Proletarierin' whilst carefully avoiding her acidic blast against bourgeois feminism.¹⁷ Some aim

to write her off altogether as a fighter for women's rights. In a lengthy history of feminism, Marlene LeGates was content to borrow from Richard Evans' own work on the topic — 'The famous German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg, dismissed female emancipation as "old ladies' nonsense".' — which, irrespective of whether these were her actual words, is hardly an accurate overall portrayal of her actual attitude.¹⁸ On the other hand, Rosalind Miles happily cited Richard Grunberg's peculiar description of Luxemburg's recruitment to 'a feminist élite' that ranged from her and Zetkin on the far left to women in the nationalist parties who, it is averred, helped to shape post-Wilhelmine Germany.¹⁹

THE day of the proletarian woman opens the Week of Social Democracy.²⁰ The party of the disinherited places its female column in the vanguard, while it sets off to the strenuous week's work, in order to sow the seeds of socialism on pastures new. And the call for *equal political rights for women* is the demand raised while setting out to recruit new layers of supporters for the demands of the whole working class.

The modern wage-earning proletarian woman thus today enters the public stage as the champion of the working class and at the same time of the whole female sex, the first time for thousands of years.

From time immemorial the women of the people have worked hard. In the primitive horde she carried loads, gathered provisions; in the primitive village she planted grain and milled it, and made pottery; in ancient times she served the ruling class as a slave and suckled their offspring at her breast; in the Middle Ages she laboured at the spindle for the feudal lord. But for so long as private property has existed, the woman of the people generally works separated from the large workplace of social production, and therefore from culture, cooped up in the domestic confines of an impoverished household existence. Only capitalism has torn her out of the family and clamped her under the yoke of social production, driven onto alien fields, into workshops, onto construction sites, into offices, into factories and warehouses. As a bourgeois woman, the female is a parasite on society, her function consists only in consuming the fruits of exploitation; as a petit-bourgeois woman she is a beast of burden of the family. Only as a modern proletarian do women become human beings, for only struggle makes the individual contribute to cultural work, and to the history of humanity.

For the propertied bourgeois woman her house is the world. *For the proletarian woman the whole world is her house*, the world with its sorrow and its joy, with its cold cruelty and its brutal size. The proletarian woman travels with the tunnel workers from Italy to Switzerland, camps in their shacks and sings while drying

her baby's laundry, beside dynamited rocks hurled into the air. As a seasonal land worker she sits in the din of railway stations on her modest bundle, with a scarf covering her simply-parted hair, and waits patiently to be relocated from east to west. Between decks on the transatlantic steamer she migrates with every wave that washes the misery of the crisis from Europe to America, in the motley multilingual crowd of starving proletarians, so, when the backwash of an American crisis froths up, she returns to the misery of the European homeland, to new hopes and disappointments, to a new hunt for work and bread.

The bourgeois woman has no real interest in political rights, because she exercises no economic function in society, because she enjoys the finished fruits of class rule. The demand for women's equal rights is, where it arises with bourgeois women, the pure ideology of weak groups of individuals, without material roots, a phantom of the contrast between woman and man, a quirk. Thence the farcical character of the suffragette movement.²¹

The proletarian woman needs political rights, because she exercises the same economic function in society, slaves away in the same way for capital, maintains the state in just the same way, is sucked dry and held down in just the same way as the male proletarian. She has the same interests and needs the same weapons in her defence. Her political demands are rooted deep in the social abyss which separates the class of the exploited from the class of the exploiters, not in the contrast between man and woman, but in the contrast between capital and labour.

Formally the political rights of the woman are accommodated quite harmoniously in the bourgeois state. The example of Finland, the American states and individual communities shows that women's equality neither overthrows the state nor encroaches upon the rule of capital. But as today the political rights of woman are actually a purely proletarian class demand, so for the capitalist Germany of today they are a trumpet call of doomsday. Like the *republic*, like the *militia*, like the *eight-hour day*, a woman's right to vote can only either be won or defeated together with the whole class struggle of the proletariat, can only be championed with proletarian fighting methods and means of power.

Bourgeois women's rights activists want to acquire political rights, in order to participate in political life. The proletarian woman can only follow the path of workers' struggle, which in the opposite way achieves every inch of actual power, and only in this way acquires statutory rights. At the beginning of every social advance was the deed. In political life, proletarian women have to gain a firm footing through their activity in all areas, for only in this way will they lay the foundations for their rights. The dominant society denies them entry to the temples of its legislation, but another great power of the time opens the gates wide for them — the *Social Democratic Party*. Here, in the rank and file of the

organisation, a huge incalculable field of political work and political power is spread out before the proletarian woman. Only here is the woman an equal factor. Through Social Democracy she is introduced to the workshop of history, and here, where Cyclopean forces hammer, she wins for herself actual equality, even if she is denied the paper rights of a bourgeois constitution. Here by man's side, the working woman shakes the pillars of the existing order of society, and before it concedes to her the appearance of her rights, she will help to bury this kind of society in its own wreckage.

The workplace of the future needs many hands and passionate enthusiasm. A world of female misery awaits deliverance. Here the wife of the small farmer groans, almost breaking down under the burden of life. There in German Africa in the Kalahari Desert the bones of defenceless Herero women bleach, driven to a cruel death from hunger and thirst by German soldiers.²² In the high mountains of Putumayo on the other side of the ocean, unheard by the world, death screams die away of the martyred Indian women in the rubber plantations of the international capitalists.

Proletarian women, poorest of the poor, those with the least rights, hurry to the fight for the liberation of the female sex and the human race from the terrors of the rule of capital. Social Democracy has offered you the post of honour. Hurry to the front and the trench.

III: Peace, the Triple Alliance and Ourselves

'Der Friede, der Dreibund und wir' ('Peace, the Triple Alliance and Ourselves'). Translated for *Revolutionary History* by Chris Gray from Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, Volume 3, pp 476-79. Originally published in *Sozialdemokratische Korrespondenz*, Berlin, no 85, 28 July 1914. © Chris Gray and *Revolutionary History*.

This article, written on the eve of the First World War, between the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo and the actual outbreak of hostilities, shows Luxemburg's optimism in respect of a positive attitude being held by the working class and the socialist parties to the impending conflict. It is not surprising, therefore, that Luxemburg was deeply distressed when the news emerged that the Reichstag fraction of the Social Democratic Party had voted to support the war, an act of betrayal that was imitated by most of the parties of the Second International, including the French Socialist Party, whose anti-war declaration, to which she refers at the end of the article, was ignored by the leadership once war had broken out.

The Triple Alliance mentioned in the title of this article was formed in 1882 when Italy joined the mutual defence pact between Germany and Austro-Hungary that had been agreed in 1879. The latter agreement specified mutual

assistance in response to an attack on either state by Russia, and benevolent neutrality should one or the other state be attacked from elsewhere. The Triple Alliance agreement contained a complex array of conditions which broadly obliged mutual defence against an attack on Italy or Germany by France, and which also, at Italy's insistence, ruled out action against Britain. The Triple Alliance was subsequently joined by Romania and Turkey. The Triple Alliance should not be confused with the Triple Entente, which was formed when France and Russia, linked by a mutual defence pact signed in 1893, were joined diplomatically but not militarily by the United Kingdom in 1904. Italy, which, despite its adherence to the Triple Alliance had also subsequently signed secret pacts with Russia and France, abandoned the Triple Alliance for the Triple Entente in 1915.

Luxemburg made the pertinent point that the system of alliances, drawn up by the imperialist states in order to maintain a peaceful balance of power amongst themselves within Europe, presented the distinct possibility that a conflict between members of rival alliances might — and in this case was to — result in a much wider war breaking out.

EVENTS have given Social Democracy's international policy a glowing testimonial. Today even a blind man can see that the ceaseless arms race and imperialist diplomatic exchanges have led inexorably to an eventuality against which the party of the class-conscious proletariat has tirelessly and energetically warned — to the brink of a terrible European war. Even those social strata which had allowed themselves to be seized with hatred at the behest of militarist chauvinism now recognise in consternation that the incessant war preparations were not a guarantee of peace but the seeds of war, with all its accompanying horrors. Precisely the grotesque nature of the immediate conjuncture, as a result of which over the whole of Europe the torch of war may now burst into flame, shows in the clearest possible fashion how the imperialist states in their blind striving have conjured up powers which at a given moment will escape their control and drag them into their whirlpool. Furthermore, it emerges with obvious clarity that the military alliances, which, according to the mendacious official description (on which naïve spirits have come to grief), were supposed to be pillars of the European balance of power and of peace, prove themselves on the contrary to be the perfect mechanism for drawing all other powers into a local conflict between a mere pair of states and thereby the precipitation of a world war. The Triple Alliance has shown itself just as powerless to avert an Austrian attack as it was to hold back Italy from its bloody adventure in Tripoli.²³ The obligations of the alliance members to each other did not extend

so far as first of all to obtain the participation and consent of the German government — not to mention the elected representatives of the people — in the Austrian ultimatum²⁴ that unleashed the war. But they are now turning, as a result of Austria's arbitrary war provocation also into a German 'duty' to plunge headlong into the bloodbath as soon as Austria's criminal actions will have enticed the Russian bear onto the battlefield. In like measure, the people of France are to be sent to the slaughter as soon as and in consequence of the fact that Russian tsarism, under the lash of the Erinyes of revolution within and the Furies of imperialism in its foreign policy,²⁵ will seek salvation or destruction on the field of battle.

Of course, if one asks whether the German government is ready for war, the question can with good reason be answered in the negative. One may safely concede to the impetuous German political leaders that in this moment any other perspective appears in a more pleasing light to them than that of taking upon themselves the burden of all the horrors and risks of war with Russia and France, or even in the final analysis with England, for the sake of the Habsburg beard. But this reluctance to go to war is far from being a factor conducive to reconciliation or respect in the eyes of the popular masses, but much more yet another reason to bring the actions of the irresponsible controllers of German destinies before the severest popular tribunal. For what has made a greater contribution to the current state of war than the senseless preparation for it than the monstrous armed forces bills which have succeeded each other at regular intervals over the last few years in Germany? What has done more to whet the imperialist appetite in southern Europe, stacked up the tinder, and sharpened up the contradictions than Germany's frivolous intervention in the Moroccan conflict,²⁶ which first encouraged the Italian predatory incursion and which subsequently let loose the Balkan War,²⁷ finally paving the way for the present war? When those who for years have wantonly played fast and loose with the lives and property of millions while indulging in jingoistic sabre-rattling, and have stoked up the fire, are overcome with horror as a consequence of their own actions, then millions of proletarians who stand on watch in the interests of peace between the peoples by no means welcome the German government's 'desires for peace' in a spirit of solidarity and respect, but reject them with icy indifference and wrathful scorn. Politics does not depend on feelings and intentions, but on actions and their consequences. As far as real action in defence of peace in Europe is concerned, the tactics of the ruling circles and those of the class-conscious proletariat are diametrically opposed.

There are in fact two approaches to the maintenance of peace in Europe at this time. The line of official policy — also represented by the *Berliner Tageblatt's* Mosse liberalism²⁸ — consists in scaring Russia away from intervening in the

conflict between Austria and Serbia via the firm expectation of Germany's loyalty to the Triple Alliance and its resolve on its part immediately to strike the Russian bear on the paws. From this perspective, the possibility even suggests itself that an attempt will be made to cast suspicion on German Social Democracy's anti-war activities as directly encouraging the warmongers in Russia since they threaten to paralyse the perhaps necessary military action of Germany in advance. Meanwhile, against this *Berliner Tageblatt* line of argument, the proletariat, quite unconcerned, can reply that it absolutely does not give a tinker's cuss for an approach which involves expelling the Russian war devil by means of the German war Beelzebub. The class-conscious proletariat has another more effective approach, which is more consonant with its international class standpoint, namely to make hell hot for both the Russian and the native war devil. And this is to counterpose the decisive resolve for peace of the popular masses to the government's desire for war. Fundamentally, this is the approach which, in its own way and under its own conditions, the Petersburg proletariat has been employing so illustriously for some years. If there is now still a hope that, in spite of everything, the Russian bear will perhaps shrink from the dangers of military adventures at the last moment, then it is only the beautiful fire of the beginning of the revolution in its own house that can exert this magical effect on the ruling camarilla on the Neva.²⁹ If the peace of Europe can be preserved this time, it will not be thanks to the Triple Alliance, but thanks to the heroic Russian proletariat and its inexhaustible revolutionary energy. Likewise the only real guarantee of peace for Germany and for France consists in immediately setting in motion all the latent power of the proletariat, to organising such emphatic mass action against the war, so that the tepid 'desire for peace' of the government can be transformed into a terrifying fear of the incalculable consequences of war. The governments and the ruling classes must be shown that nowadays *without the people and against the people* wars can no longer be waged. They must be shown that those who dare on whatever pretext to conspire to wage a world war against the express will of the mass of the people are risking life and limb. The French working class in an extraordinary congress of the Social Democracy³⁰ has just recently clearly and distinctly declared its readiness to employ the most vigorous mass action in this sense. The German working class must likewise be on its guard by means of its readiness to employ action against the war with increasing an increasing intensity.

Notes

1. The usual name for members of the Ostmarkenverein (Eastern Marches Association), a society started in 1894 on Bismarck's initiative, aimed at increasing the German element in the Polish provinces. The name was taken from the initials of its founders Ferdinand von Hansemann, Hermann Alexander Kennemann and

Heinrich von Tiedemann. It had large sums of money at its disposal with which it generously subsidised German merchants, shopkeepers, artisans, lawyers, doctors, etc, who settled in the Polish provinces.

2. The German Conservative Party was founded in 1876, and mainly represented Junker land-owning and Protestant interests in Prussia. It was a strong supporter of the monarchy, and opposed political reform. It was dissolved after the fall of the monarchy in 1918. The National Liberal Party was founded in 1867 by Prussian liberals who backed Bismarck's foreign policy. It was Bismarck's main support during 1871-79, and avidly backed the *Kulturkampf*, but broke with him when he turned to protectionism. It came to represent the interests of big business in Germany. It disintegrated in 1918, with factions joining various liberal and conservative parties.
3. The Centre Party emerged from the call made in 1870 for unity amongst Catholics in Prussia to defend the rights and autonomy of the church. Its secular demands included a strengthening of German federal structures, taxation reforms and policies amenable to the middle classes. A party based upon this programme soon appeared in the Prussian parliament, and similar parties emerged in other parts of the Reich, working on a federal basis as the Centre Party. It tended to be pragmatic, supporting a wide range of policies so long as the interests of the church were defended. Later on, the Centre Party was a mainstay of the Weimar republic, and it dissolved itself in July 1933, after Hitler had signed a concordat with the Vatican.
4. In 1872, Prince Otto von Bismarck initiated a campaign against the anti-Prussian influence of the Catholic Church, which reached its climax in the May Laws of 1873. From 1878 onwards Bismarck had to seek a compromise with the clergy, since his measures had not only failed in their aim but had actually strengthened the Catholic Church. On 23 May 1887, Pope Leo XIII officially ended the *Kulturkampf*.
5. The Jesuits (the Society of Jesus) had historically played a role in combating Protestantism in Germany. They were barred from Prussia in 1872 under the *Kulturkampf*, and their schools were incorporated into the state system. The laws barring them were repealed in 1917.
6. That is, the part of Poland within the Russian Empire, also known as Congress Poland.
7. On 7 April 1886, the Prussian parliament passed the 'Law to encourage German settlement in West Prussia and Posen'. One hundred million marks were made available for German settlers to buy Polish land holdings. Much bigger sums became available for this purpose after 1900.
8. On 15 July 1893, the Reichstag passed a Defence Bill which was voted against by the Social Democrats, the Centre Party, the National Liberals, the Welfs and the Alsatians. The Polish members of the Reichstag voted for the Bill.
9. A popular anti-imperialist uprising broke out in northern China in 1899, which was cruelly suppressed by the armies of eight imperialist states under the command of the German General Alfred Graf von Waldersee.
10. A different translation of this article is included in Peter Hudis and Kevin B Anderson, *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 2004).
11. A film, *Die Suffragette*, was released in Germany in 1913. It starred the Danish film actress Asta Nielsen as a militant British suffragette who resorted to violent action,

- placing a bomb in Parliament.
12. Mary Beard, *On Understanding Women* (New York, 1968, original edition 1931), p 496.
 13. Ethel Manning, *Women and the Revolution* (London, 1938), pp 169-76; Paul Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work* (New York, 1972).
 14. Peter Nettle, *Rosa Luxemburg* (London, 1969), p 415.
 15. See, for example, Stephen Eric Bonner, *Rosa Luxemburg: A Revolutionary For Our Time* (New York, 1987), p 71; Mary Alice Waters, 'Foreword', *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (New York, 1970), p 5).
 16. Hal Draper and Anne G Lipow, 'Marxist Women Versus Bourgeois Feminism', *Socialist Register 1976* (London, 1976), pp 210-11.
 17. Raya Dunayevskaya, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Theory of Revolution* (New Jersey and Brighton, 1982), p 95.
 18. Marlene LeGates, *In Their Time: A History of Feminism in Western Society* (London, 2001), p 212; Richard Evans, *The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America and Australia, 1840-1920* (New York, 1977), p 161; Evans cited the last three words from Karen Honeycutt's PhD on Clara Zetkin without indicating where she found them.
 19. Rosalind Miles, *The Women's History of the World* (London, 1988), p 220; Richard Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich* (London, 1971), pp 322-33.
 20. In 1914, International Women's Day on 8 March stood as a sign of the fight for women's right to vote and for equal rights. With this Social Democratic women's day the 'Red Week' of the party during 8-15 March was initiated, serving agitation for Social Democracy and its press. As a result, a significant growth in membership and an increase in subscriptions for the press could be noted.
 21. In Great Britain the fighters for women's political equality, primarily the supporters of women's right to vote, were described as suffragettes.
 22. In the campaign of 1904-07 to crush the Hereros in South-West Africa, the German colonial troops had driven the native people into the desert and away from sources of water. General Lothar von Trottta had given orders to take no prisoners and to shoot the women and children, so the Hereros suffered a gruesome end.
 23. In September 1911, Italy provoked a war with the Turkish Empire. Utilising the disunity among the imperialist powers over Morocco, in October 1912 Italy succeeded in annexing Tripoli and Cyrenaica.
 24. On 23 July 1914, in connexion with the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Serbian nationalists, Austria-Hungary delivered an ultimatum. This demanded concessions from the Serbian government such as to constitute interference in Serbia's internal affairs in contravention of her national rights. The refusal of this ultimatum was used by Austria-Hungary as an excuse to declare war.
 25. Erinyes and Furies are avenging spirits of the Greek myths.
 26. In the spring of 1911, French imperialism attempted to extend its rule to the whole of Morocco and consolidate it. German imperialism used the occasion to declare that it no longer felt itself bound by the Treaty of 7 April 1906 that guaranteed Morocco formal independence but in fact consolidated French influence in the country. On 1 July 1911, the German government sent two warships, the *Panther* and *Berlin*, to Agadir and thus provoked an immediate danger of war. British

intervention on France's behalf forced the German colonialists to give way. France and Germany agreed a compromise.

27. The first Balkan War of 18 October 1912 to 30 May 1913 and the second one of 29 June to 30 July 1913 led to an increase of international tension. The collapse of Turkish rule in the Balkans resulted in Austro-Hungary and Russia variously sponsoring or opposing existing and newly-established states in the region, thus raising fears of the other members of the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente being drawn in.
28. Rudolf Mosse was the publisher of the *Berliner Tageblatt* and also of the *Berliner Volkszeitung*. He was closely associated with the Freisinnige Vereinigung, a liberal political organisation.
29. A reference to the government of Tsar Nicholas II, whose official residence, the Winter Palace, stood on the bank of the River Neva in St Petersburg.
30. The Special Congress of the Parti Socialiste was held in Paris on 14-16 July 1914.

Problems of Party Organisation

Rosa Luxemburg's disagreements with Lenin in respect of the organisational practices of a revolutionary party have been comprehensively covered in biographies of both Luxemburg and Lenin, and in histories of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. However, what is often overlooked is that Luxemburg's criticisms of Bolshevism were not matched by any softness towards the Mensheviks. Indeed, the pieces that we present in this section demonstrate that her appeals for party unity were not only equally critical of both the major factions in the party, but her upbraiding of the Mensheviks could be considered as more political in nature, as she accused them of moving away from a revolutionary orientation, whereas her criticisms of the Bolsheviks were more concerned with organisational matters. It is interesting that she did not spare Trotsky, and she sharply denounced his own campaign for unity as insincere.

Also included in this section are two pieces which demonstrate both Luxemburg's critical attitude towards the growing accommodation to revisionism within the mainstream of the German Social Democratic Party prior to the First World War, and her assessment of the various currents which emerged during the war within the SPD in opposition to the party leadership's support for German imperialism.

I: Russian Party Disputes

'Russische Parteistreitigkeiten' ('Russian Party Disputes'). Translated from *Revolutionary History* by Einde O'Callaghan from Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, Volume 1, Part 2, pp 592-94. Originally published in *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung* (Dresden), no 142, 23 June 1905. © Einde O'Callaghan and *Revolutionary History*.

RECENTLY, one of the two factions, into which, unfortunately, our Russian fraternal party has been split for about two years, held its congress under the name of the Third Congress of Russian Social Democracy.¹ The other faction grouped around Axelrod, Plekhanov and Zasulich,² whose organ is the well-known *Iskra*, did not take part in this more or less general congress because, as they state, the congress did not allow all active local committees of Russian

Social Democracy to participate, obviously something one would have expected in any case of a unification congress, but adhering exactly to the letter of the organisational statute,³ the source of the dispute in the party and which a large number of the organisations were unwilling to recognise, excluded the latter from active participation in the congress.

After attempts to reach an understanding with the organisers and participants of the congress and to carry out some sort of common deliberations had failed, this faction now held a conference of its own,⁴ at which they also made decisions and adopted resolutions on questions of tactics and organisation. We are thus now confronted with the fact that the Russian party is still split into two camps, which, *since both parts stand on the basis of the same programme and by and large on the basis of the same tactics, naturally belong together.* And even if we regret this fact and feel such deep resentment about it, it is nevertheless necessary to accept the split as a fact. Least of all will the regrettable and deeply saddening dispute be resolved by one of the two factions posing in any case as *the Party*, as the official representative of Russian Social Democracy, and attempting to present the other as merely a bunch of irredeemable malcontents.

The Congress faction (the so-called Leninists) have acted in precisely this manner by publishing their decisions and resolutions in German as the results of the official Third Congress and presenting them to the German public. Incidentally, how our party publishing house in Munich came to place itself in the service of one of the factions in dispute is actually unclear, but probably rests on inaccurate information about the situation in the Russian camp. Whatever the case may be, one of the two groups in the Russian party is attempting in this way to do one of the most ill-advised things it could possibly do in the current situation, namely by forcefully sidelining its rival, so to speak, to enforce its place and recognition in the International. That this somewhat Cossack-like manner of resolving a party dispute — which unfortunately somewhat characterises the practice and outlook of the faction in question — is not suitable for improving Russian relationships, but rather, on the contrary, will only add fuel to the fires, is perfectly clear to everyone. It was therefore, in our opinion, a wise and praiseworthy act of Kautsky's that, as recently in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*,⁵ on the basis of his knowledge of the personalities and situation in Russian Social Democracy, he warned the party press against unintentionally complicating and aggravating the situation within the ranks of our Russian comrades by the acceptance of an unintentionally absurd commentary on the quasi-official decisions of the Russian factional congress.

However a droll response then appears. In the *Frankfurter Volksstimme* of 17 June, a Comrade 'Gr'⁶ comes forward to inform German comrades of the decisions of the quasi-general Russian party congress during which he

indignantly dismisses Kautsky's suggestion while ascertaining that it is not at all a question of two factions, but on the one hand the party as a whole and on the other merely three cranks — Plekhanov, Axelrod and Martov — who are making a fuss. All this is proven incontrovertibly by 'Gr' — precisely from the report of the one faction that denies the existence of the other. But there's the snag! For Kautsky it was a question of warning the German comrades against taking at face value the factional presentation of the situation without reservation. By doing so Kautsky did not want to say — nor do we wish in the slightest to suggest either — that the details given in the pamphlet published at Birk in Munich are in some way a deliberate distortion of the facts. We do not wish to make an evaluation of the facts of the dispute at all. But it is a well-known distinct psychological phenomenon which arises in every intense party dispute that *each* of the parties in dispute sees and presents things in its own subjective light, in the course of which it can with absolute honesty and complete conviction come out with the greatest distortions of the objective facts. It is thus not a case of disapproving of the manner of presentation and the outlook of *one* faction, but rather of abetting *neither* of them in the one-sided presentation of the *actual* relationship of forces. Whoever wants to reconcile two parties in dispute obviously cannot start by declaring in advance that one of the two does not exist at all. But helping the Russian factions to achieve reconciliation is without doubt an aim to which the German party must do its utmost to give a hand. And Comrade 'Gr' in the *Frankfurter Volksstimme*, who also polemicalises against Kautsky on the issue by maintaining that possible mediation by German comrades is completely superfluous, will perhaps be pleasantly surprised to know that even leading comrades of that Russian party faction which he thinks is the only one, *also* do not consider this possible mediation superfluous — indeed even *after* their congress.

II: On the Split in the Russian Social Democratic Duma Group

'Zur Spaltung in der Sozialdemokratischen Duma fraktion' ('On the Split in the Social Democratic Duma Group'). Translated for *Revolutionary History* by Einde O'Callaghan from Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, Volume 3, pp 356-57. Originally published in *Vorwärts* (Berlin), no 306, 21 November 1913. © Einde O'Callaghan and *Revolutionary History*.

WE have learned that on the 14th inst, Comrade Rosa Luxemburg submitted the following resolution to the International Socialist Bureau on behalf of the Social Democracy of Poland and Lithuania, which she represents in the Bureau:

We request that the following topic be placed on the agenda of the next session of the International Socialist Bureau in London on 14 December

next: *The question of restoring the unity of the Russian Social Democratic Party.*

The urgency of this issue appears to be justified not just by the chaos and the faction fight, which is capable of compromising and damaging the mass movement that has been vigorously awakened for the last two years, but also by the following facts:

- a. The split in the Social Democratic Duma group, the last organ of Social Democratic unity in Russia, which has just been brought about in a flippant manner.⁷
- b. The systematic fuelling of the split by the Lenin group also in the ranks of other Social Democratic organisations such as the Social Democracy of Russian Poland and Lithuania.⁸
- c. The irregularity of the Russian representation in the International Bureau, which is based on the fact that both Social Democratic representatives were elected in 1910 by the Central Committee of the united party to represent the unity of the party, whereas in fact one of these representatives has, since 1912, only represented a separate organisation called into being by himself.⁹

We request that the International Bureau take a position on these questions and at the same time take steps speedily to bring about unity. If these steps remain unsuccessful, the question of Social Democratic unity in Russia should be placed on the agenda of the International Socialist Congress in Vienna,¹⁰ modelled on the treatment of French unity at the Amsterdam Congress.¹¹

III: Observation on the International Socialist Bureau Session, 13-14 December 1913

'Bemerkung zur Sitzung des ISB am 13 und 14 Dezember in London' ('Observation on the ISB session of 13 and 14 December in London'). Translated for *Revolutionary History* by Mike Jones from Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, Volume 3, pp 360-62. Originally published in *Vorwärts*, no 338, 23 December 1913, this is a correction to a report of the ISB session dealing with the RSDLP in *Vorwärts* of 18 December 1913.¹² Following from the previous item, this one clarifies the SDKPiL's view. © Mike Jones and *Revolutionary History*.

THE report on the meeting of the International Socialist Bureau in *Vorwärts* of 18th of this month contains some inaccuracies, and owing to its brevity it reproduces the course of the debate so incompletely that the reader will not be

clear about what the differences of opinion really hinged on.

The Kautsky resolution originally contained the phrase that the Executive Committee should reach an agreement with all those 'who consider themselves to be Social Democrats', in order to bring about an all-inclusive Russian party conference. My statements were directed against *this phrase*, and the reporter thoroughly misunderstands the situation in the Russian Social Democracy when he speaks of it concerning 'small amendments' to the resolution.

After I had emphasised approvingly that the resolution of the German representatives supported the proposal of the Russian-Polish Social Democracy concerning the restoration of the unity in the Russian workers party,¹³ I saw myself nevertheless forced resolutely to oppose the above phrase in the resolution and particularly against the argument given by Kautsky. I stated roughly the following. It would be thoroughly false to imagine that in Russia it is now a question of cobbling together a wholly new party out of independent fragments. It is a question, not of establishing a *new party* but of restoring the *old party*. Not disconnected elements that 'choose to consider themselves as Social Democrats', but those groups and currents that regard the programme, the statute and consequently the decisions of the old party as binding, must be united once more. The Social Democratic movement in Russia is no *tabula rasa*, the united party had already existed from 1906 until recently, it was the historical work of the revolution, and it would be both wrong and hopeless to want to annul with the stroke of a pen the history of the last six years of the Russian movement, one must, on the contrary, link up with the preceding development of the party. The source of the disputes in Russia is precisely whether the labour movement should be built up on the basis of the old revolutionary party or should there be a break with the past and a wholly new basis be created. Should the Bureau engage in this latter project, then, without doubt, it would meet with insurmountable difficulties and fail in accomplishing its task.

When the report further quotes me as saying 'one must stand on legal grounds' — an expression that under Russian conditions could be thoroughly misunderstood — then I have not spoken about the activity being on the 'legal grounds' of the so-called Russian constitution — in legal workers' associations and suchlike — but I demanded that in its activity towards unification the Bureau should act according to *party legality*, that is, that the basis and decisions of the old party should be respected as authoritative. It is likewise an error when the report says that the change in the text of the resolution had resulted from a proposal by Łapiński.¹⁴ Actually, the words that the desired outcome was to reach an agreement with all those who considered themselves as Social Democrats were substituted for 'all factions which recognise the programme of the Social Democracy of Russia' by Kautsky himself, which he understood

as a concession to the point of view expressed by me. Finally, regarding the alleged withdrawal of my amendment, of which the report speaks, well I had no cause to withdraw it, after the chairman Vandervelde¹⁵ had stated that the Executive Committee considered it self-evident that it *above all* had to reach agreement with the representatives of Social Democracy of Russia and Russian-Poland, though it did not want to tie its hands beforehand and also be allowed to negotiate with other groups. Naturally there was no objection, particularly because it was first of all a question of a discussion towards a clarification of the point at issue.

IV: On the Situation in the Russian Social Democracy

'Zur Lage in der russischen Sozialdemokratie' ('On the Situation in the Russian Social Democracy'). Translated for *Revolutionary History* by Mike Jones from *Internationale Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, Volume 27, no 3 (September 1991). © Mike Jones and *Revolutionary History*.¹⁶

This text by Rosa Luxemburg was discovered in the Warsaw/Moscow archives. Although the original letter is untitled, it is introduced in the *IWK* by Feliks Tych, the Polish scholar of Luxemburg, under the above title, and this introduction draws heavily upon Tych's essay. The original text of this document consists of 37 handwritten pages with a few editorial corrections in handwriting by Leo Jogiches. It includes an extensive note apparatus, not all of which is needed here, and we have omitted those of no political interest.

This document illustrates the thinking and approach of Luxemburg and Jogiches, who added or deleted the odd detail in marginal notes, on the question of the party, and in particular their differences with Lenin, although the other currents in the RSDLP also receive sharp criticism. Tych informs us that letters written by Luxemburg to Jogiches between February and November 1911 mention that, at the request of the SDKPiL executive and the personal wish of Jogiches, Luxemburg was working on a text characterising the situation within the RSDLP. Until its discovery, this text, known in the correspondence as the 'Credo', could not be identified. It was found in the SDKPiL archive, the original is in the Central Party Archive of the Institute for Marxism-Leninism of the CPSU Central Committee in Moscow, while the Polish United Workers Party Central Committee Central Archive in Warsaw had a microfilm copy.

Internal SDKPiL correspondence shows that this text was to serve as the official position of the Polish party regarding the situation in the RSDLP and the threatening split. The SDKPiL wished to prevent a split and it was hoped that this text would also serve that aim. Although it was first of all directed at

SDKPiL members, it was surely also written with the other parties of the Second International in mind, in order to illustrate the SDKPiL's position regarding the threatened unity of the RSDLP.

The text was never published, as shortly after its drafting it became clear that a split in the RSDLP could no longer be avoided. Already by November 1911, hardly any official bodies of the party were functioning. Then in January 1912, as Lenin organised his own separate, Bolshevik, 'All-Russian Conference of the RSDLP' in Prague, the split became a fact.

The Polish party did not act as outsiders in their struggle to maintain the unity of the all-Russian party, as by the summer of 1911 it had been a part of it for more than five years. The Fourth ('Fusion') Congress, held in April 1906 in Stockholm, had not only reunited the so-called Bolshevik and Menshevik factions of the party, but included the three national parties that had affiliated to it on an autonomous basis: the Poles, the Jewish Bund, and the Letts, who all operated within the Russian Empire. Since then the SDKPiL had been represented in all the organs and leading bodies of the RSDLP. Leo Jogiches, who since 1902-03 had practically led the whole activity of the SDKPiL, and thereby made use of Luxemburg's literary talents, was the main figure in the relations between the SDKPiL and the RSDLP.

In respect of tactical questions, the SDKPiL had been close to the Bolsheviks since 1905, although it was very critical of their tendency to create factions to deal with organisational questions. The Polish party saw its main political task within the RSDLP as preserving the hard-won unity of the party.

During the Sixth Congress of the SDKPiL in December 1908, Jogiches expressed it thus:

We constitute a counterbalance against the narrow factional endeavours of the Bolsheviks on one side, and against the opportunist and disruptive endeavours of the Mensheviks on the other, and thus contribute so much towards preserving the unity of the party.

And he added:

The guiding principle of our activity was... striving to eliminate organised factions which undermine united party activity, and to replace them by the struggle of non-organised ideological tendencies and to unite the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in common work.

Jogiches pointed out that at the joint RSDLP conference in November 1907:

We introduced a resolution, which was adopted, that forbade the existence of organised factions and factional centres that compete with the activity of the Central Committee... Considering the open attempts of the Bolsheviks aimed at excluding the Mensheviks from various joint commissions and above all from the editorial board of the central organ..., with our votes we have ensured that the Mensheviks have the possibility of participating in the central institutions, very often in equal number to the Bolsheviks. (*Sprawozdanie z VI Zjazdu Socjaldemokracji Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy*, Kraków, 1913, pp 144-46)

Tych presumes that the text should have been published in *Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny*, the SDKPiL's theoretical monthly, whose reappearance after more than a year's absence was planned, or as a separate publication. It would have been too long for *Czerwony Sztandar*, the party's central organ.

Once the split in the RSDLP became a fact, Luxemburg published an anonymous article in *Czerwony Sztandar*. This article condemned Lenin's policy in respect of the organisational question and the split it had effected in the RSDLP. Among other things, she wrote that even before the 1905 Revolution:

Lenin shattered the unity of the party in order to preserve his organisational conceptions, according to which the Central Committee is everything, the real party however is only its appendage, a soulless mass which moves mechanically at the sign of the leader like an army exercising on the parade ground or like a choir singing according to the conductor's baton. ('Rozbicie jedności w SDPRR', *Czerwony Sztandar*, no 188, July 1912, pp 2-3)

Tych sees the 1911 text as an important link between Luxemburg's two well-known texts about Lenin and the Bolshevik party, 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy' of 1904, and 'On the Russian Revolution' of 1918. Lenin's party model would, of course, not only determine how Russia would be ruled following the October Revolution, but would be adopted by the Communist International and then be imposed on its affiliated parties. The attitude of both Luxemburg and Jogiches to the foundation of the Comintern can be found in *Revolutionary History*, Volume 6, no 2-3, p 234.

Received from Adolf, 1 October 1911.¹⁷

A GRAVE crisis is once again taking place in the organisational affairs of the Social Democratic Party of Russia at, to a certain degree, a decisive moment.

The starting point of the present crisis is the meeting of the Central Committee that took place in June this year in Paris,¹⁸ and whose decisions shaped the axis of a subsequent series of important events in the party as well as a new regroupment of its factions and currents. However, before we discuss the said meeting in more detail, it is indispensable, even if only very briefly, to present a full picture of the situation in which the Social Democratic Party of Russia found itself towards the middle of the current year, in order both to be able adequately to judge the fact that such a meeting took place at all, and to assess the political significance of the work it began.

All comrades surely still remember the joyous impression, in its time, the news of the results of the last plenum session of the Central Committee, at the beginning of 1910,¹⁹ made on the whole of the party and its members without exception and difference of the current. The complete unification of the party, the dissolution of the factional organisations and the suspension of the factional organs! — that was news that one hardly dared believe, since it seemed to contradict this sorry and disgusting practice of endless factional wrangling, to which by this time one had already become accustomed in the Russian party, and which had still continued until shortly before the start of the deliberations of the plenum session of the CC. The restorative belief in the power and future of the party, brought about by those decisions of the CC, then made an all the more stronger impression, unanimously demonstrating the unbending will, in spite of the greatest difficulties and aggravated circumstances, to accomplish with a firm hand the important work of the organisational unification of the Russian party. After that, therefore, one could expect that we would hear no more of 'Mensheviks' and 'Bolsheviks' as two separately-organised factional camps within the party, along with their quarrelling and controversy and their fights in the press, but of Russian Social Democrats, who in spite of being in differing currents would still put the unity of the Social Democratic Party above all else. The work of the CC seemed to have all the more stability, as the party unification had been not only organisational, but established on a firm, ideological and principled basis.

The plenum session did not limit itself to technical and organisational steps, as it also elaborated clear political directives which formulated the direction which the future party tactic was to follow. On the one hand, it was deemed indispensable to utilise all the institutions of legal activity, though not for legal activity at all costs, but only inasmuch as these — under the present conditions of the counter-revolutionary course — are compatible with the principles of the class struggle and the standpoint of Social Democracy as a specific party of the revolutionary proletariat. On the other hand, the plenum issued the slogan of a sharper and more resolute struggle not only against 'liquidationism', that is

against the tendency which in order to conduct broad legal activity at any price will destroy the party as an illegal organisation, but also against such nonsense as so-called 'otzovism', that is against the tendency which has for some time insisted on the recall of the Social Democratic group from the Third Duma, in order supposedly to deny this bastion of counter-revolution the mask of popular representation.²⁰ After the plenum session had secured the party tactic from deviations to the right as well as to the left and had put it on the firm basis of principled class struggle, it crowned its work by the decision to convene a joint party conference in the immediate future that, in deputising for a regular party congress,²¹ would, in the spirit of the principles cited, drive forward the practical work of the party and solidify its spiritual unification through a common united practice.

That was the course of the CC plenum session, and those were the prospects in 1910 at its conclusion.

Unfortunately to a certain degree they were empty hopes and expectations. It soon became clear that the old factional vices and sickness gained ascendancy over any consideration of the well-being of the party and the proletarian movement. Contrary to the clear decision of the CC plenum session, *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata*, the Menshevik factional organ, was not discontinued; on the contrary, it resumed practically the day after the ending of the plenum with a cannonade upon the central party institutions. And two editorial board members of the party's central organ, representing the Menshevik current, began a boycott of this organ, since they refused their collaboration, which, however, did not hinder them from drawing their editorial salaries for almost a further year.²² Such behaviour by the rebels of factionalism on the 'Menshevik' side was, of course, the cue for the other side to start factional activity, and soon the old factional struggle set in again in full splendour in the journals, whereupon all the factional organisations that formed a thoroughgoing 'state within a state' in the heart of the party fortified their trenches and redoubts all the more openly.

This turn which the affair took produced lamentable consequences. The party conference that had been provided for by the latest CC session did not take place. The highest party organ, the CC, broken up by arrests, did not meet in the course of one and a half years, showed no sign of life and in practice did not exist. As a result of the unceasing factional conflict on the editorial board of the central organ, complete confusion prevailed. In the 'Foreign Bureau of the CC', a committee that had been set up by the last CC meeting in order to execute various technical matters and also to convene a party conference, the same situation prevailed: an incessant factional struggle. Here the 'Menshevik' current, with the support of the representatives of the Bund and the Latvian

Social Democrats, utilised a one-vote majority against the representatives of the Bolsheviks and the SDKPiL, turned the 'Foreign Bureau', a subordinate technical organ of the CC, into a tool of the factional politics of Menshevism, and used this organ uninhibitedly against the CC's unequivocal decisions and instructions. In its clearest form it expressed itself in the resistance which the Foreign Bureau of the CC systematically put up to the convening of a plenum session of the CC. In view of the anarchy prevalent within the ranks of the party, such a meeting became more and more a burning necessity. Without the holding of a party congress or conference, only the highest central organ, the CC, could smother the newly-fanned factional struggle, unite the party, give it once more a clear and united direction, and push it into practical actions. To convene the CC as soon as possible, even as it would be composed in the aftermath of the impact of the arrests and other difficulties, was, so to speak, the damned duty and obligation of this institution — the Foreign Bureau — which was after all through its designation merely a subordinate tool of the CC. Although with the convening of a party conference or even a session of the CC, a hard confrontation of the party majority with the opportunist minority clearly threatened to occur, the latter, thanks to, as was soon confirmed, an accidental majority in the Foreign Bureau did as it liked at will here, and in a narrow factional outlook wanted to exploit for as long as possible the cherished absence of central party institutions, although it was evident to everyone that this state of affairs led inevitably to the disintegration of the party, to chaos, demoralisation and paralysis of the party's activity as well as to the diminishing of the party's authority within the country [Russia].

These symptoms of decay became more and more apparent. The orgies of the opportunism of the 'Mensheviks' and their open support of liquidationism led, as is known, to the split in their own faction and to the separation of the current of 'party-loyal Mensheviks' under the leadership of Georgi Plekhanov.²³ However, as a rejoinder to the crass opportunism of Menshevism, a dangerous development emerged in the heart of the 'Bolshevik' faction. Instead of applying all their energy to saving the solidity of the party, this faction, under Lenin's leadership, vigorously applied itself to the rebuilding of its factional apparatus. The Bolsheviks revived or set up a factional organisation with its own factional centre, with its own organ and even with its own popular journal for the workers, even its own party school with factional recruitment.²⁴ The greatest danger for the fate of the party was, however, the organisational policy that was upheld more and more openly by Lenin and his friends. This policy consisted of wanting to build a bloc solely with the group of party-loyal Mensheviks, that is with the Plekhanov group, and simply to exclude the Martov-Dan current around *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata* from the party, along with not only the current

of former 'Otzovtsi' around the journal *Vpered*,²⁵ but also the adherents of Trotsky's *Pravda*,²⁶ which pursues a completely hypocritical policy indeed, and, with phrases celebrating radicalism and the solidity of the party, ultimately supports opportunism and liquidationism by its indulgent silence about all of their transgressions.

As a result of the facts outlined briefly here the situation in the party was desperate. The organisational split was in fact almost completed and at any time could not but appear on the surface. The behaviour of the warring factions illustrated that already no consideration for the existence of the party as a whole was able any longer to restrain this instinctive rage. The vile brochure against Lenin published by Martov,²⁷ and which represents such a filthy and shameless pamphlet that until now could flow only from the pen of paid scribblers of reaction in order to deprive socialists of their reputation and throw muck at them, was an ominous warning that it was high time to smother the fire of a split in the party kindled with malice by the Mensheviks. On the other hand, the obstinate resistance with which the Foreign Bureau of the CC opposed the convening of a CC plenum induced the representatives of the Bolsheviks officially to leave this bureau and to withdraw the monies delivered to it from the party funds. With that the factional split in this party institution had already become a fact, exactly like in the editorial board of the central organ as a result of the boycott by the Menshevik editors. Under Lenin's leadership, the Bolsheviks began clearly to prepare to convene a factional conference of their current, which obviously would result in the granting of official expression and ratification to the splitting of Russian Social Democracy.

In this situation a group of CC members seized the initiative to gather for a deliberation in order to save the unity and solidity of the party. Nevertheless, before we judge the policy that was elaborated at this gathering, we have to dwell on the question of the standpoint of our organisation, the SDKPiL, in the face of the whole situation in the ranks of the Russian party.

The position and role of the SDKPiL within the federal state party was from the beginning²⁸ based on its not identifying with either the Menshevik current or with the Bolshevik faction but on taking its own standpoint.²⁹ A real chasm in the fundamental understanding of the whole proletarian tactic in the Russian empire divided us from the Mensheviks, while Martov and Dan's current understands the revolution that began in 1905 as bourgeois in character, that the political leadership belongs to the liberal bourgeoisie, while the working class is merely given the role of an assistant that supports the action of the liberals. For a long time our party has held the standpoint that the role of the conscious proletariat in the Russian empire is one of the political leadership of the popular masses, who alone by independent revolutionary action can

overthrow absolutism and create a new political order, whereas the wretched bourgeois liberalism under tsarism must rather be regarded as its adversary and as an ally of the counter-revolution. Out of this fundamental difference in analysis there always emerges a wholly different tactic and wholly different evaluation of the course of the revolution, its results, the causes of its failures, as well as its prospects for the future and also wholly different instructions for the party of the proletariat during the present counter-revolutionary phase. The Mensheviks, who, in the last analysis, were disillusioned by the course of events since the crushing of the revolution and who doubted a revival of independent revolutionary action, in a consistent subordination of the policy of the proletariat to the actions of the liberal bourgeoisie, began to hunt for broad legal activity under the Stolypin regime.³⁰ The Russian opportunists soon cast themselves over the idea of a 'Workers Congress',³¹ they soon saw the prospects for legal trade union and cultural activity by the grace of, and tied to, the reins of the counter-revolution, and since the failure of the revolution showed more and more openly their contempt and disdain for the illegal Social Democratic organisation and illegal Social Democratic activity. Had they been a danger for the independent class policy of the proletariat during the revolutionary struggle, then, under the rule of the counter-revolution they were a distinct danger to the very existence of an independent proletarian party and a factor that consciously or unconsciously was aiming to liquidate the Social Democracy as a separate revolutionary organisation and to deliver up the working class as prey to all the paupers of the radical and liberal intelligentsia. The inexorable struggle with this pestilence of opportunism and liquidationism was from the beginning a guiding principle of the policy of the SDKPiL in the heart of the Russian party.

However, our party also found itself in serious opposition to the Bolshevik current. Already in 1903, shortly after the constitution of both factional wings in the Russian party, we saw ourselves forced to come out decisively against the organisational centralism of Lenin and his friends who, as they wanted to secure the movement of the proletariat by means of a revolutionary current, wrapped the party up entirely mechanically in the swaddling of a spiritual dictatorship of the central executive.³² No less than this crude mechanical way of understanding the essence of revolution showed in the course of the 1905 and 1906 revolution, as Lenin's partisans loudly shouted platitudinous phrases about the necessity of 'preparing the armed uprising' — many were not found wanting — and we understand that they formed small armed squads of 'groups of three' or 'groups of five' and held 'battle' exercises. At the last joint congress in 1907 in London,³³ our delegation fought both the opportunist putrefaction of the Menshevik right as well as the uncouth revolution-making of the Leninist left. Since then the evolution of the Bolsheviks in the direction of a European understanding of a

Social Democratic radicalism enabled a rapprochement between our party and the said current on the basis of a joint principled struggle against the pestilence of liquidationism, although recently, at the time of the general disorder in the party described above, the particular tactic of Lenin and his friends forced our party once more into determined opposition. This time the dangerous inclination of Lenin to settle complicated problems and difficulties in the development of the party in Russia mechanically, with fist and knife so to speak, showed itself once more. In view of the cynical excesses of the factional conduct on the part of the liquidators, Martov, Dan & Co, Lenin and his friends openly began the convening of a party conference with the aim of expelling the *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata* current. Also our comrades who are familiar with Russian Mensheviks, read their literary products and to some extent are acquainted with their practice, are able to reach no other conclusion than the conviction that the former group is ruinous for the labour movement. Our active worker comrades within the country [Poland] have in a whole series of gatherings, conferences and congresses of our party expressed the firm conviction that there is no place in the ranks of the party of the revolutionary proletariat for this liquidationist opportunist putrefaction. There is no serious difference in the political evaluation of the Mensheviks between us and Lenin's current. What does constitute a serious difference, however, is the method of struggle with the Martov-Dan group, and with other smaller groups too. In addition, the *Vpered* group, which undoubtedly exhibits certain anarchist tendencies and whose confusion by no means contributes to the vigour of the ranks of the party, comes into play here. Finally, there is the question of the handful of partisans of Trotsky's *Pravda* who undoubtedly pursue a Jesuitical policy, since by denying the danger on the part of their liquidationism, in this way really only support the 'Golosoivtsi', and push themselves into the role no less of a patron of the Polish liquidators, that is, the PPS Lewica.³⁴ For us just as little as for Lenin and his friends there exists not the least doubt that the hypocritical mediation of Trotsky, who spouts platitudinous phrases about 'party unity' but in practice at every opportunity barks at the left wing of the party, is actually equivalent to political support for opportunism. But nevertheless and in spite of everything the representatives of our party in the CC in the central organ and in the Foreign Bureau³⁵ could not and cannot agree with the tactic which is used by Lenin's group *vis-à-vis* all these groups. This tactic amounts to throwing the Golosoivtsi as well as the *Vperedovtsi* and Trotsky's *Pravda* out of the party and only combining with the Plekhanov current of party-loyal Mensheviks. This tactic is undoubtedly just like a stick, but like every stick it has two ends, that is, from the standpoint of the interests of the party as whole it is double-edged. First of all, even if we regard the liquidator nest that is *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata* as a malignant cancerous

growth in the body of the party, which the party ought to get rid of, and the quicker the better, we think that it is nevertheless not possible to carry out this operation by means of, so to speak, a factional fist-fight. As yet the Golosovtzi still belong to the party, and only the party as such, the party as a whole, has the power and also the duty to repress this dangerous current or to get rid of them in an organisational manner. Therefore the representatives of the SDKPiL had to adopt a wholly different standpoint to Lenin and comrades. In the name of the unity of the party they were against the reciprocal exclusion of factions, and, on the contrary, thought it necessary to also invite the Golosovtzi into the work of the collective renewal of the central party institutions, in order to carry out *within* the party, in the framework of the reconstituted unity of the party, an all the more sharper ideological struggle against the liquidationist pestilence.

Even less could our party support Lenin's tactic *vis-à-vis* the other groups. Indiscriminately combating the Vperedovtzi and Trotsky's *Pravda* with the same doggedness as with the liquidators of *Golos*, Lenin's 'policy of the fist' led at once to all these elements artificially drawing closer and being brought together against the left wing of the party. It was not so much similar political views as rather the same indiscriminately-given kicks on the part of Lenin's tactic that drove all these groups into united opposition to the Bolsheviks. And exactly this dogged war of the Bolsheviks against all other groups also caused Plekhanov's group, frightened by the isolation of Lenin's faction, clearly to draw back from the only alliance that Lenin saw as a possibility.

Analysing this state of affairs, then it is clear that Lenin's tactic has unquestioningly led, on the one side, to splitting the left wing of the party and completely isolating the Bolshevik faction; on the other, it has drawn the most heterogeneous elements towards the right. In the final result, Lenin's tactic of radicalism led meticulously to the same result as the tactic of opportunism of Martov & Co: to the break-up of the party. Both extreme wings tore the joint party to pieces: the Mensheviks of *Golos* and in the Foreign Bureau with their calculating liquidatory cynicism, and, on the other side, Lenin with the blind radicalism of his 'organisational' arguments. Against these suicidal policies our party had to come forward to the rescue of the party's unity with a clear and determined programme of *coalescing* in order to save the unity of the party. No exclusions of groups that belong to the party with the aid of factional arguments, and the creation of a firm ideological core to support party unity and for combating the danger from the side of the liquidators in the heart of the party — that was the clearly-elaborated plan which the SDKPiL representatives had to present. At the same time, this plan contained yet another extremely important point. Party life should on no account be exclusively and completely absorbed in internal disputes. If Lenin and his friends proclaimed as the only slogan of party

policy the fight against liquidationism, then the representatives of the SDKPiL had to place in the forefront besides the slogan 'Struggle Against Reaction', the slogan 'Preparations for the Elections to the Fourth Duma'.³⁶ Consideration of the general tasks of the party, bringing together and strengthening of the organisations for the election campaign, regulating and strengthening of the trade union struggle with a regard to the revival of the mass movement and the strike wave, regulation of the problems of legal activity, re-establishment of the centres of illegal work — all this stands before the federal state party as a burning task. In order to carry out these tasks and moreover to renovate the united party and to reinstate the CC, a joint party conference is indispensable, to which all organisations and currents that constitute the party should be invited, that is the tactic proposed by the representatives of the SDKPiL, as they are convinced that only in this way are they acting in the spirit of the mandate entrusted to them by our party in the spirit of the decisions of its party conferences and congresses, in the spirit of our whole party tactic.

The position which the SDKPiL representatives presented was also, as it proved, the only basis on which the CC deliberations could rest. In the present situation there was no other choice: either Lenin's tactic, which led to an open split in the party, one that had already begun by the official exit of the Bolshevik representatives from the Foreign Bureau, or the tactic of the Polish CC members, which led to the coming together and reconstitution of the unity of the party on the basis of a consistent revolutionary class struggle. The alternative was so clear and the necessity of the Polish tactic so evident, that our comrades succeeded in winning over a part of the Bolshevik faction to it, those who understood that the interests of the party and of their own wing did not allow them after that to follow Lenin in his perilous tactic. Thanks to these circumstances we³⁷ succeeded, together with the party-loyal Bolshevik group, in creating a strong centre in the spirit of the above-mentioned tactic, and the deliberations of the CC members in Paris were based on this new inner-party constellation.³⁸ So almost all of the decisions were then forced through also against the resistance of Lenin and those of his friends who persisted with his tactic, thanks to the majority which our representatives created together with the party-loyal Bolsheviks.

We now come to the Paris meeting itself, and it can be stated that all CC members living abroad were summoned to it. To the meeting came: three members representing the Bolsheviks, two representing the SDKPiL, two members of the Foreign Bureau of the CC majority: one Menshevik and a Bund representative, as well as a representative of the Latvian Social Democracy. As a whole then eight CC members appeared at the meeting, that is more than half of this body numbering 15 members. Immediately, even before the deliberations began, it showed up that two members of the Foreign Bureau of the Central

Committee, representing the Mensheviks and the Bund, had arrived at the gathering with an *a priori* drafted instruction wholly in the spirit of the tactic of the Mensheviks, with the decision to break up the meeting and hinder its fruitful work. It was enough for these liquidators of the CC at the first pretext, which was only all too transparent, that firstly the one and then the other left the meeting with the customary declamations against the legitimacy of its decisions, even before a decision had at all been taken. The other members, unimpressed by this manoeuvre that was only a continuation of the Foreign Bureau tactic, then energetically got down to work.

The problem of the competence of the meeting is already solved merely by the character of its decisions alone. The Paris meeting adopted no new decisions at all, besides those which the last CC plenum session had conveyed. In particular, the decision of the latter relative to the convening of a general party conference represented the real axis of the deliberations. Purely with the aim of carrying out that decision, in order temporarily to secure the existence of the party and to convene the conference, the gathering was forced to appoint a *Technical Commission* to carry out the most urgent routine affairs of the party, as well as an *Organisational Commission* whose special task is purely to convene a joint party conference in the near future.

The setting up of these provisional organs had become a simple necessity considering that the technical organ created by the last CC plenum, the Foreign Bureau, had become wholly disloyal to its character and openly the organ of a faction and an obstacle to the convening of its master — the CC itself. Following the exit of the Bolshevik member of the Foreign Bureau,³⁹ the meeting recognised the fact of the split, and had to reckon with the fact that the Foreign Bureau had ceased to function as a tool of the CC. A whole series of practical burning needs of the party, such as publishing the central organ, transport, etc, had to be regularly satisfied, if the existence of the party as a whole were to continue. As it was the main task and duty of the meeting to save the unity of the party from a threatening split, it was indispensable to maintain the daily functions of the party and therefore to establish an organ necessary for this purpose in the place of the Foreign Bureau of the Central Committee. The establishment of the Organisational Commission resulted directly from the need to carry out the decision of the CC to convene a joint party congress, which of course demanded a whole series of preparations, arrangements with the organisations that operate within the country [Russia], etc. Not only that, the Paris meeting stipulated from the outset that both commissions would have to keep within the concrete framework of the instructions and decisions of the last CC plenum session. The Technical Commission was directed to spend the party monies exactly within the limits of the party budget set out by the CC and

previously followed by the Foreign Bureau. The Organisational Commission again was directed by the meeting to follow exactly the guiding principles that had been issued in this case by the CC plenum during the preparations for convening a joint party conference. The meeting adopted no other decisions at all besides those.⁴⁰ That, with the above steps towards the realisation of the decisions of the last CC plenum session, the CC members by no means exceeded their competence, but, on the contrary, simply did their duty *vis-à-vis* the party, can only be contradicted by those with a factional interest in procuring chaos and decomposition in the party, even its complete ruin. For all those, on the other hand, for whom saving the unity of the party is of the utmost concern, the initiative of the CC members in holding the Paris meeting, and the work achieved by it, was a conscientious execution of duty on the part of these members — a duty whose neglect would have represented a punishable crime against the interests of the party at the most dangerous moment, as the fate of the unity of the party is of great importance.

The second reproach advanced by the semi-open and disguised adherents of liquidationism is the split supposedly caused by the Paris meeting, that it replaced the 'legal' party institutions with new illegal and factional institutions: the Technical Commission and the Organisational Commission. This reproach intentionally ignores the fact that the split — inasmuch as the paralysis of the activity of the Foreign Bureau of the Central Committee at all concerns our critics — had occurred *prior* to the Paris meeting, and the latter was faced with accomplished facts: the refusal on the part of the Foreign Bureau of the Central Committee to convene a CC session and the resignation of the Bolshevik member from the same Bureau, and then, and not least, the persistent boycott on the part of the two Menshevik members of the editorial board of the central organ, and finally, in addition, such things as Martov's vile brochure, with whose publication an already quite shameless and cynical factional war over the corpse of the united party had been announced and begun. So the Paris meeting did not cause the split, it only met with it. Indeed, on the contrary, it did not result in deepening the split, but in energetically doing its utmost in preventing its progress. The meeting proclaimed — against the resistance of Lenin and his close friends — the slogan of a non-factional policy of coalescing and conciliation, the only slogan that could end the fratricidal factional struggle. The meeting decided to convene, not a conference of a faction or of only the left wing, but a joint party conference, to which all party organisations had to be invited. It is true that an invitation was not issued directly to the *Golos Social-Demokrata* group; however, those CC members who at its last session had decided to close down this organ and to issue the slogan of a sharp struggle against liquidationism (which this organ propagated more or less openly) could consider themselves

invited. But if the Paris meeting did not take responsibility upon itself to invite the organ's editorial board, which is an incarnate expression of factional rebellion against party discipline and party unity, then it did nevertheless allow the actual possibility of participation by the 'Golosovtsi' at the conference, for it decided that an invitation for this group is indispensable, because even one other valid conference participant puts a demand referring thereto and takes responsibility for this step upon himself. Furthermore, the meeting decided, besides the national organisations of the SDKPiL, the Bund and Latvia, to invite the *Vpered*, the *Pravda* editorial board and naturally Plekhanov's group to the conference, in other words all party currents. In accordance with that the Technical Commission and the Organisational Commission expressly announced that they by no means thought of conducting a factional policy, that they would be far removed from factionalism in the spirit of Lenin, that in clear contrast to his policy of isolation, they stood by the standpoint of the policy of conciliation and of coalescing the party. They would, however, also hold themselves close to the tactical directions of the last CC plenum, that is, to the indispensability of the struggle against liquidationism in all its shadings and manifestations.

That is the work that was accomplished by the last Paris meeting. The convening of a joint party conference to reinstall the CC, renovation of the other party institutions and strengthening of the party for the struggle in the pre-election period — that is the task that now stands on the agenda. The Technical Commission and the Organisational Commission have energetically dedicated themselves to this task. The Organisational Commission decided to transfer the main part of the preliminary work from abroad to Russia and to call upon active party organisations on the spot to establish a special committee that will arrange the conference. All party organisations without distinction of current can participate in this committee, thus there no longer remains even the slightest trace of a pretext for a reproach of factionalism with regard to the preliminary work. The Organisational Committee abroad has given over all the burden and responsibility for the work towards the convening of the conference into the hands of this committee set up on the spot, and with that reduced its own functions to a minimum: it will only supervise the exact adherence to the instructions of the last CC plenum.

One should have supposed then that considering these guarantees for a neutralising of factionalism, and considering such a loyal and unshakeable adherence to the policy of conciliation, the work that was undertaken by the Paris meeting would have met with full appreciation from all sides. Unfortunately, the stubborn spirit of factionalism blocked the way of the hitherto best intentions and attempts towards saving the party. On the one side, Lenin and the adherents

of his tactic of the destruction of the party hinder from the first moment the work of coalescing and preparing a joint party conference. On the other side, the Foreign Bureau has cynically refused the formal proposal put in the name⁴¹ of the SDKPiL to reach an understanding with the Organisational Commission over collaboration in convening the conference, with which it once more underlined its standpoint of hostility to the party, which aims at maintaining anarchy and decomposition in the party. On the third side, Trotsky's *Pravda*, now without the mask of the apostle of unity and solidity of the party, shamelessly attacked the members of the Paris meeting as 'usurpers' and 'wreckers' of the party, and with that openly went over to the side of the liquidator group of *Golos* and the Foreign Bureau.⁴² And finally as it saw that in spite of all obstacles the work of the Organisational Commission in Russia is making progress, the Foreign Bureau decided actively to thwart this work, through the fact that, ostensibly off its own bat, it summoned a second conference. Considering the decomposition in the Menshevik organisations, and also considering the standpoint of at least half the party *vis-à-vis* this organ of liquidationism that is the Foreign Bureau, the *Golos* group, together with its confederate Trotsky, is just as firmly convinced as everyone else that in reality the conference that it has summoned will never even take place. For Martov and Dan's partisans it is not after all a matter of the conference, but about the confusion which will be caused by the two rival sets of tasks, in order to hinder the work of coalescing the party that is being done by the Organisational Commission. The intrigues spun by the Foreign Bureau to this end took place lately so brazenly, that this Foreign Bureau did not even find it necessary to inform comrade Tyszka, who represents our party within the Foreign Bureau, of its steps and sessions.

In spite of all these machinations and manipulations abroad, the work of the Organisational Committee in Russia, however, is undoubtedly, even if slowly, making progress. The local organisations welcome with joy, without distinction of current, the initiative of the Paris meeting, and are joining the preparatory committee one after another. The prospects of a joint party conference are getting better, and one can only have the firm hope that the work begun succeeds in leading to a happy end.

It is now the duty of all comrades vigorously to support these preparations for the convening of a joint party conference. The Social Democracy must once more overcome the internal decomposition, must strangle with a firm hand both the Hydra of this savage instinct of factionalism which lacerates its soul, and the gnawing cancer of opportunist liquidationism. The representatives of the SDKPiL in the central party organisations believe that with this dual slogan of the coalescing of the party and its tempering through the implementation of the revolutionary class tactic, along with the subsequent instituting of practical

measures centring on the convening of a joint party conference, in order to enable political action upon a consistent social democratic basis, they did justice to their task and have done the duty imposed on them in the spirit of the principles and tradition of the SDKPiL since the time of its adherence to the federal state party.

V: After the Jena Congress

'Nach dem Jenaer Parteitag' ('After the Jena Congress'). Transcribed by Einde O'Callaghan for the Marxist Internet Archive and translated for *Revolutionary History* by Ben Lewis from Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, Volume 3, pp 343-53. This article was written at the beginning of October 1913 for the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, which refused to publish it, and it was published for the first time in 1927 in *Die Internationale*, Volume 10, no 5, pp 148-53. It also appeared in the *Weekly Worker*, 29 January 2009. © Einde O'Callaghan, Ben Lewis and *Revolutionary History*.

WHAT distinguishes our party's last congress in Jena⁴³ from previous congresses is not so much that theoretical or practical revisionism no longer took centre stage, but rather the emergence of two new problems — both born of new situations. As long as we had to waste most of our time and energy at congresses with Bernsteinite 'misunderstandings' on theories of immiseration and catastrophe or with South German budget approvers and participants in monarchist rallies — that is, more or less every congress from 1898 to 1910 — the results led merely to the defence of the old status quo of the party. Of course, those conflicts were no coincidence, but rather a symptom of the powerful growth of the movement amongst the broad masses, leading a section of party comrades into doubts about the old revolutionary principles. Of course, those debates were also of great use and in addition to this were of absolute necessity if the party did not want to abandon its proletarian class-struggle character.

However, this periodic necessity of repeatedly defending the old theoretical clarity and solidity of principle created the impression that we were not going anywhere, which had a tiring and depressive effect on wide circles of the party. On top of this, for the mass of our comrades the theoretical disputes often appeared to be nothing more than empty academic discussions about splitting hairs.

It was different at this year's congress. Two purely practical problems were up for discussion; problems which every informed worker, whether active politically or in a trade union, was able directly to approach and grasp; problems which were not thought up by a mad theoretician in his study, or came about by a surprise revelation of infidelity by one of our South German parliamentarians. It was the change in the general conditions of our struggle that imposed on us

in Jena both the debate on the mass strike and the debate on the question of taxation.⁴⁴

Of course, on the question of the mass strike this year's congress was only taking up an item that had already been up for discussion and voting in 1905 and 1906. Seemingly, the problem had already been solved through the acceptance of the mass strike in principle, and since nobody was considering the immediate proclamation of the mass strike in Germany, the discussion might seem pointless. At least, this is how the party Executive and its theoreticians presented the matter — a pointless argument about words, and a damaging one at that, which reveals our current impotence to the enemy. This is how the spokesmen of the majority characterised the debate on the mass strike at the congress. Yet nothing is better than this view in proving how much the resolution on the matter of the mass strike carried at Jena in 1905⁴⁵ has remained a dead letter — both for our practical and theoretical 'authorities'. It also proves just how necessary a new debate was and how necessary it remains in order gradually to move this letter of law into the party's living bloodstream.

The Jena resolution of 1905 had been passed under the immediate influence of the Russian Revolution and its victorious expansion. It came in a period of great struggles, revolutionary mood and a general advancement of the proletarian army in Europe. In the January of the same year, the German public was already deeply stirred by the giant struggle of the miners in the Ruhr.⁴⁶ In Austria, the fight for general and equal suffrage, likewise under the influence of the Russian Revolution, made the greatest waves of all.⁴⁷ Revolutionary determination and the belief in the power of the working class — a lively sentiment that back then penetrated the whole working-class movement — provided the inspiration for the mass strike resolution at Jena. One only needs to read Bebel's⁴⁸ great speech at the congress in order to feel the strong reverberating note of revolutionary determination, of the greatest revolutionary tradition, which permeated the discussions and the resolution itself: 'There we have Russia, there we have the battle of June, and there we have the commune! With the spirits of these martyrs, should you not starve yourselves a few weeks to defend your highest human rights?'⁴⁹ This was the glowing fire of the greatest idealism in which the first resolution on the mass strike was created.

It would, however, be a fateful error to imagine that this mood was shared by all circles of the workers' movement later on, or even at the time itself. Let us not forget that a few months before the Jena congress, in May 1905, the trade union congress in Cologne had passed a resolution regarding the mass strike, which was in direct contradiction to the Jena resolution. The mass strike was rejected on the grounds that it was a useless, and indeed harmful, weapon — not merely making propaganda for it, but even discussing it was *forbidden* as it

was seen as playing dangerously with fire!

Of course, this ban was not pronounced from the heart of the broad mass of the comrades in the unions — these comrades are after all identical to the mass of the party comrades who soon after cheered both the Jena resolution and Bebel's speech across the whole of the country. But the Cologne trade union conference had clearly shown where the main opposition to the idea of the mass strike is to be found: in the bureaucratic conservatism of the leading union circles. The Jena party resolution was adopted explicitly *against* the leaders of the trade unions, and Bebel's speech was for the most part a clear polemic against the rationale of the Cologne congress.

Yet the hostile position of the trade union leaders towards the mass strike did not disappear with this speech. Faced with the decisive position of the party and the revolutionary atmosphere in the country, it did not dare to come to the surface. That it still exists as a silent, passive resistance was shown with quite admirable clarity by the official representative of the General Commission of the trade unions, comrade Bauer,⁵⁰ in his talk on the issue at this year's congress. It was also shown by comrade Scheidemann's⁵¹ reference to the fact that 'willingness to take action' had been culled from the Executive Committee's resolution on the mass strike — evidently on the behest of the other instrumental authority, the very same General Commission of the trade unions. The same point is continuously proven by statements of trade union leaders when they are reporting on the Jena congress at party meetings. The typical example was delivered at the general meeting in Bochum, in which Leimpeters and other happy people reduced their wisdom to the old formula that a 'general strike is general nonsense' and with this thought to have said everything necessary on the question.

With the acceptance of the mass strike in principle in 1905, the question was thus dealt with to such a limited extent that today we are facing the same principled resistance that we did eight years ago. And nobody should have known this better than our Executive Committee. In producing the failed resolution in cooperation with the trade union leaders, they should have been able to see at close range just how much the Jena resolution has remained a dead letter to them.

However, even in party circles the zest of 1905 had markedly evaporated. For he who only looks at the surface and only appreciates tangible success, the defeat of the Russian Revolution had brought about a deep depression. The defeat of the miners' movement in the Ruhr region had equally discouraging effects. On top of this, in 1907, our party suffered its first electoral defeat for decades.⁵² Together, all these conditions led to an ebb in general confidence and fighting spirit, something that is from time to time unavoidable in the living historic

pulse of the workers' movement.

Only since 1910, under the pressure of the course of imperialism, has class pugnacity gradually been growing again, and a return to fiercer methods of struggle been noticeable. The debates on the insufficiency of our party's activity against the advance of imperialism defined our congress in 1911.⁵³

And it was essentially not merely, and definitely not primarily, the result of the Prussian state parliament elections,⁵⁴ but rather the effect of the immense military bill⁵⁵ and the recognition of the general intensification of the situation which so forcefully put the matter of the mass strike on the party's agenda in the last few months.

Objective conditions now worked towards once again giving the resolution adopted eight years ago living force and increasing strength. Now, conditions prevailed which were gradually instilling the decision taken eight years ago by 400 party members into the minds of millions.

This year's conference was called to signal this shift in the situation and this heightening of contradictions in the face of imperialism and to call out to the masses: Equip yourself with the sharpest weapons, for only from your inner intellectual and political maturity can — when necessary — the decisiveness of action and the certainty of victory be born.

Yet it was precisely here that the transformation of our own 'authorities' manifested itself. Instead of purposefully expressing the party's will as Bebel and the Jena conference of 1905 had done, the current Executive, unnerved by the unions' resistance, saw its mission in giving in to the union authorities, in bringing about a common resolution stripped of everything that would encourage practical determination, and in cohering an entire front in the debate — not against the unruly trade union leaders, but against party comrades who were pushing forwards.

Both in his speech and his summing up, comrade Scheidemann adopted a completely opposite position to that of Bebel in 1905. Whereas Bebel spoke sharply and with bitter mockery against the fear of publicly discussing the mass strike and against the bloody spectres which were being painted as the consequences of the mass strike, Scheidemann summoned up all of his oratory skills to oppose the discussion of the mass strike, playing with politics and painting bloody spectres on the wall!

In one word: if Bebel's approach in 1905 was an advance of the party in order to force the unions to the left, then the party Executive's strategy in 1913 consisted in allowing itself to be forced to the right by the union authorities and to serve them as a battering ram against the party's left wing.

Now if the party debates had forced a clear and direct rejection of the mass strike from the representatives of the General Commission, and if they

subsequently forced the party Executive, by way of Scheidemann in his closing speech, finally to veer from this standpoint and to stress more strongly the will to action, then this exposure of the situation in front of the whole party was an inestimable success.

That the debate on the mass strike took place at the congress in spite of all the resistance; that as a result it will be taken up again in all party meetings; that the masses are dealing with the question; that they have experienced what they have to expect from their leaders on both sides; that they had the opportunity to see how necessary it is to get things going through their own political pressure if the party's methods of struggle are to advance — these are all unquestionable achievements of the party minority, which from its point of view has been successful, *despite* its resolution⁵⁶ being rejected by the majority.

II

Because of recent imperialist developments, the question of taxation, just like the question of the mass strike, has become a current issue for the party. After all, what has been expressed by this 'new era' of the property tax in Germany? Nothing more than the fact that in its advance, German militarism has even abandoned its convoluted indirect taxation system and now demands that the bourgeoisie is partially drawn in to cover its costs. Thus, taxation of property, which has long been a reality in England, appeared before our parliamentarians as a totally new fact and initially caused quite a lot of confusion amongst them. It is likely to be the perception of most comrades that the party congress did not dispose of this confusion, but rather that this confusion was made into the common property of the party both in the way the question was discussed and the subsequent motion that it adopted.

Indeed, hardly any serious theoretical and practical matter has been treated in such a completely inadequate manner at a German party congress as the question of taxation. It has been on the agenda for four years — sufficient time, it would seem, to prepare a thorough discussion of the material. Yet it was precisely in this field that the scientific review of the party appointed to deal with such issues, *Die Neue Zeit*, failed. Instead of introducing the discussion, *Die Neue Zeit* did not even publish any arguments from the quills of the editors themselves — editors who had already entered the debates with a very pronounced position at the Leipzig conference,⁵⁷ albeit one which is the opposite of their current one.

Left high and dry from this side, the party was dependent on the daily press with all its insufficiencies in large and complicated problems. In party meetings the question was barely discussed at all. Furthermore, one of the speakers published his theses and resolutions less than a month before the congress, and the other one did not publish his at all. This is how the party congress came

into the position of deciding on a new, highly important and complex question and to determine the party's tactics for the coming period, without being in the slightest factually prepared for this responsible role. And just to compound the insufficiency of this situation, everything at the party congress was geared towards allowing one side to speak at great length, whilst the other side was hardly allowed to speak at all.

That a decision made under such unprecedented conditions bears all the signs of 'tentativeness' and a 'botch job' is not surprising. Wurm's⁵⁸ resolution did not decide the question of taxation for the party, but for the first time curtailed it. Amongst other things, we need complete and systematic work in the press in order to disentangle what was frilly and unclear, and to shed light on what was improvised and left unanswered by the majority, especially by comrade Wurm, in the field of tactics around taxation at the party congress. Furthermore, we need a systematic discussion of the question of taxation in party meetings in order to make the mass of the comrades aware of the complicated economic and political context of the problem, so that they can become aware of all the fatal and unforeseeable consequences of our tactics, to which Wurm's botched resolution will necessarily lead.

If on the question of the mass strike a concession was made to the conservative resistance of the union leaders by adopting the Executive's resolution,⁵⁹ then the adoption of Wurm's resolution and the endorsement of the tactics of the majority faction represent a much more significant concession to parliamentary opportunism — to the Südekums, the Davids and the Noskes.⁶⁰

Now elevated to the point of a principle, the 'lesser evil' slogan — in the sense that the abandonment of the principled rejection of militarism is the 'lesser evil' — the acceptance in principle of approving credits for military purposes, 'if the military bill has already successfully been decided upon' — all this opens the door to the very same revisionist tactics which the overwhelming majority of the party had, until now, brusquely defeated, year after year.

Yet Wurm's cleverly contrived formula, that we approve military funds once it can be demonstrated that they can be represented as the sole means of avoiding the placing of a burden on the people through more adverse taxes, is a *carte blanche* for all budget approvals, as of course no budget can be perceived which could not be portrayed as the 'prevention' of another, more adverse one.

It is enough to keep these consequences in mind in order to see that the revision of the casual work done on the question of taxation in Jena is an urgent task for one of our next party congresses, and one to which systematic preparation both in the press and in party meetings must be dedicated.

And yet, in looking at the decisions on the mass strike and the question of taxation, it would, in our opinion, be an error to draw the conclusion that

the Jena congress highlights a hefty shift to the right, with the revisionist wing gaining a two-thirds majority. Such a rapid growth of the right wing, which up until the last party congress represented a mere third of the party, would be an inconceivable phenomenon, and indeed it has not happened at all. On the question of taxation, at least half of the victorious majority did not commit conscious revisionism — it was the lack of understanding about the true consequences and the true character of the decision reached which influenced a great number of the delegates. And on the question of the mass strike, it was clear that the party Executive was obliged to do its utmost to the very last moment to pull together a majority for its resolution.

Accordingly, we have no reason to assume that the usual revisionist third of party congresses, as represented by the conscious and consistent spokesmen of opportunism, has somehow increased at this party congress. Those who formed the majority alongside the revisionist third were the indecisive and vacillating layer of the centre. Back in Dresden, following the well-known description of the Convention of the great French Revolution, Bebel referred to these forces as the 'swamp':

It is forever the same old struggle — the left here, the right there, and between them the swamp. These are the elements who never know what they want, or rather, never say what they want. They are the 'wise guys' who always ask: what's going on here, what's happening there? They always feel where the majority is, and then go with them. We have these types in our party too. In these proceedings, a whole number of them has come into the light of day. We have to denounce these comrades. [Hackle from the audience: 'Denounce?'] Yes! Denounce them I say, so that the comrades know what semi-people they are. At least I can struggle with the man who defends his position openly — I know where I am with him. Either he wins or I do, but the lazy elements who always suppress themselves and go out of the way of every clear decision, and always say that we are all united and are all brothers — these elements are the worst of all! These are the ones I combat the most.⁶¹

The role of this 'swamp' is — in spite of the indecisiveness of the opinions of each of its members — quite a decisive one in every political body, and not least in our party. During the whole of the last period of the struggle against revisionism, the swamp supported the left wing of the party and together with it formed a compact majority against revisionism and brought about one sensational defeat of revisionism after the other. What motivated it to do so was the seemingly conservative factor, which it considered necessary to defend. After

all, 'the old tried and tested tactics' had to be protected in the face of revisionist innovations. And what sanctified this defensive struggle in the eyes of the centre elements was that the highest and most respected authorities stood at the head of this struggle. The party Executive, the scientific central organ of the party, such well-known names as Singer, Liebknecht, Bebel, Kautsky⁶² fought it out in the front row. That the traditional and established elements found themselves on this side provided the calming guarantee that the swamp needed.

Yet the imperialist period, the sharpened relations of the last years, confronts us with a new situation and new tasks. The necessity of imbuing the party in all its massive broadness with a greater mobility, quick-wittedness and aggressiveness, of mobilising the masses and the party majority to use its victories in crucial questions and to throw its full weight onto the scales of history, all this requires more than the desperate adherence to 'tried and tested tactics'. Namely, it necessitates the understanding that this old and proven revolutionary tactic now needs new forms of mass action and that these tactics also have to be upheld in new situations, for example when it comes to the introduction of the property tax for German militarism.

This is where the 'swamp' first fails. As a conservative element, it now resists the forward thrust of the left in exactly the same way that, until now, it resisted the backward drag of the right. Yet through this it transforms itself from a protective barrier of the party against opportunism into a dangerous element of stagnation, in whose tepid waters the very same opportunism which has until now been suppressed can sprout like a weed. It is not merely the decision on the question of taxation that shows, at a closer look, how the victorious swamp unconsciously organised a triumph⁶³ for the very same parliamentary opportunism against which it had been fighting at dozens of party conferences. The whole nature of struggle against the left, the whole manner of arguing while systematically distorting the other side's arguments and the persistent 'misunderstandings' on the apparent underestimation of legwork, underestimation of parliamentarism and cooperatives, putschist tendencies and other nice products of their imagination — this whole apparatus is truly taken from the revisionist wing's arsenal of weaponry. In the fight against the left, the swamp is now making use of literally the same arguments that the right has been hurling at it for years.

And the thing that finally determines the swamp's attitude is that the 'authorities' are turning on the left. The party Executive, having fought under Bebel's leadership against the right for years, now accepts the right's support in order to defend conservatism against the left. Finally, since 1910, the scientific revue *Die Neue Zeit* has also gone through this change alongside the party Executive. Amongst its circle of friends, the popular expression of the 'Marxist

centre' has recently been used. More precisely, this supposed 'Marxist centre' is the theoretical expression for the current political function of the swamp. Propped up by the swamp and in alliance with the right, the party Executive and the party majority have gained victories on the crucial questions at the Jena congress. And Kautsky, crowing over the victory of the 'old tried and tested tactics' in Jena, has forgotten to reflect on this strange situation where the likes of Südekum, David, Noske and Richard Fischer⁶⁴ are on his side — people against whom he had defended those tactics for over a decade!

This new constellation is no coincidence, it is the logical development of the shifts in the external and internal conditions of our party life, and we would do well to look out for the continuation of this constellation maybe for a couple of years, if external events don't suddenly accelerate the course of developments. However unpleasant the situation may seem to some comrades, there is not the slightest reason for pessimism and despondency. This period must, just like every other historically conditioned period, be endured.⁶⁵ On the contrary, the more clearly we look into things, the more energetically, vigorously and merrily we can continue our struggle.

The next task that emerges from the Jena congress is systematic action against the 'swamp' — that is, against the intellectual conservatism in the party. Here too, the only effective way to do this is through the mobilisation of the broad mass of the comrades, the shaking up of opinion by carrying the discussion on the questions of the mass strike and taxation (with all tactical differences) into party meetings, union meetings and into the press. Every day, the course of events itself is leading with historic necessity towards increasingly vindicating the tactical endeavours of the left, and if this development itself leads to the overpowering of the elements of stagnation in the party, then the minority of the Jena congress can look towards the future with good spirits. That the Jena congress has brought about clarity on the reciprocal power relationship in the party and led for the first time to a self-contained left opposed to the bloc of the swamp and the right, is a pleasant beginning to further development which can only be welcome.

VI: Open Letter On Splitting, Unity and Resigning

'Offen e Briefe an Gesinnungsfreunde: Von Spaltung, Einheit und Austritt' ('Open Letter to Like-Minded Friends: On Splitting, Unity and Resigning'). Translated for *Revolutionary History* by Ian Birchall from Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, Volume 4, pp 232-36. Originally published in *Der Kampf (Struggle)*, Duisburg, no 31, 6 January 1917, it was signed 'Gracchus', one of Rosa Luxemburg's pseudonyms.⁶⁶ © Ian Birchall and *Revolutionary History*.

On Splitting, Unity and Withdrawal

IN the German Social Democracy since 4 August 1914,⁶⁷ a process of decomposition and collapse has begun, which has not paused for a day or even an hour, and which is proceeding with all the rigour and consistency of a natural phenomenon. Every new step on the road of imperialist policies, every new positive advance by the governing authorities to reinforce their position of strength, every convocation and dismissal of the Reichstag [German Parliament] in the service of the dominant policy, and indeed merely every day that the war continues, represent at the same time for the Social Democracy so many more additional collapses of its timberwork and falls of its crumbling masonry. Every new action by triumphant imperialism thus eliminates Social Democracy as a factor in active politics ever further, destroys it and eradicates it yet further from public life in Germany as a party with distinctive politics, as the agency of the class interests of the proletariat.

Anyone who surveys this powerful historical process in its full breadth and depth can only regard with a shrug of the shoulders and a sympathetic smile the officious concerns of the governmental Socialists Scheidemann⁶⁸ & Co who are striving, by means of all sorts of stratagems and roguish tricks, to establish permanently their control over the whole party; and likewise the anger, caused by sensitivity about their reputation, of the mild opposition around Haase⁶⁹ and Ledebour,⁷⁰ when they consider themselves to be suspected of 'splitting tendencies'. The amusing squabble between the two tendencies as to which of them really 'wants to split' the party, and the eager efforts of both of them to lay the blame for this monstrous crime on their opponents, is in itself a nice illustration of how much actually the whole conception of the basic conditions of the party's existence for the right wing and for the swamp are actually cut from the same cloth. Local branches, leading bodies, conferences, general meetings, cash books, membership cards, that is what 'the party' means both for the Scheidemann comrades and for the Haase comrades. Neither of them notice that local branches, leading bodies, membership cards and cash books turn into worthless rubbish from the moment when the party stops promoting the policies implied by its essence. Both of them fail to notice that their quarrel about the question of the splitting or the unity of the German Social Democracy has now become a fight for a shadow, for today the German Social Democracy as a whole no longer exists.

Let us imagine for a moment that in St Peter's Basilica in Rome, this most sacred temple of Christian belief, this most precious monument of religious culture, one fine day (my pen almost refuses to write it down) instead of the Catholic act of worship, well, a shameless orgy were staged publicly as if in a brothel. Let us imagine something even more frightful, let us suppose that

during this orgy the priests have retained their robes, their vestments, and their censers which they had used earlier for high mass. But would St Peter's in this case still be a church, or would it have become something quite different? The slender walls would of course still be the same, the altars and the vestments would be the same as before, but anyone who cast a glance into the interior would recoil and ask in dread and consternation: 'What on earth has become of the church?'

Now a church is a building in which people pray to God, and the Social Democracy is a party which conducts the proletarian class struggle. With the official abandonment of the class struggle, the German Social Democracy has embarked on the process of its decomposition with the irresistible force of an overwhelming avalanche, and today its warped roof houses such opposing tendencies, such basic elements that are bitterly hostile in their very nature as bourgeoisie and proletariat, as imperialism and socialism, as class state and international fraternity of peoples.

From here onwards we can judge in a pocket-sized version the political map with which the mild opposition of the centre is approaching a situation unprecedented in world history. The whole map is summed up in a single word and also thereby criticised: 'Backwards!' They want to go back to the conditions that existed before the outbreak of the World War, they want to get back their German Social Democracy as it was before 4 August 1914. They want to go back to their 'old tried and tested tactics' with 'brilliant victories' from one Reichstag election to the next, to their victorious battles with 'revisionism' from one party conference to the next, to their patient barrel organ of agitation for the international solidarity of labour, to their 47 mass gatherings in one day, which 'proceeded magnificently', arranged as though by a conductor's baton, with 'unanimously' adopted resounding resolutions and three cheers for the 'international, revolutionary German Social Democracy which will set the peoples free', back to the 'red weeks' which copied in miniature the great miracle of the Lord God and to the innocent astonishment of the world created in seven days a hundred and fifty thousand 'Social Democrats'. Back, back, to the beautiful times of comfortable, charming self-deception:

Put the fragrant mignonettes on the table,
Bring here the last red asters,
And let us talk again of love
As once we did in May...⁷¹

But unfortunately the small map has a big hole in it. The former German Social Democracy, as it was 'once in May', no longer exists; there is only the

one that it became in August. That former German Social Democracy with its 'tried and tested' tactics lies beneath the pulverising wheels of the triumphal chariot of imperialism. The longing of the swamp to go back to the party as it was before the World War is one of the most childish utopias to which the terrible war has given birth, and only one other approaches it for childishness. That is the touching political naïveté with which the leaders of the swamp, the likes of Haase, Ledebour and Dittmann,⁷² suppose that the old famous Social Democracy, which they first helped to bury and on whose grave they have danced together for a year and a half, can now be awakened as though from the dead, and that it can now behave in the middle of the World War, 'true to the old tried and tested tactics', just as it did before the war, and that they can blare out just the same Reichstag speeches as they did in the year dot as though nothing had happened.

While in the forefront of the party this innocent satyr play⁷³ of a backward-looking opposition is running its course, which as a result presents only its soft rear parts to the assault of the present, within the party a process of world-historical tragedy is being completed. It is the lethal encircling of the élite troops of the German proletariat by the many suckers of German capital. The domination of the party and trade-union leading committees of Scheidemann and Legien⁷⁴ and their comrades over the organised labour movement, that is in essence nothing but the greatest victory of the German bourgeoisie over the working class which has ever been won or even imagined. The masses enticed into struggle against capital under the banners of Social Democracy and the trade unions have today been fettered precisely through these organisations and in these organisations under the yoke of the bourgeoisie in a fashion that has never previously existed since the beginning of modern capitalist relations.

And there also follows a concise conclusion to the question of 'split and unity' of the party for those who are striving to go forwards and not backwards out of the collapse of the workers' movement. However praiseworthy and understandable impatience and bitter resentment are, which today are resulting in the flight of many of the best elements of the party, flight remains flight, and it is a betrayal of the masses who, delivered up unconditionally to the bourgeoisie, struggle and suffocate in the choking noose of Scheidemann and Legien. One can 'depart' from small sects and secret societies, if they do not suit one any longer, so that one can found new sects and secret societies. But it is nothing but an immature fantasy to want to liberate the entire mass of proletarians from this most oppressive and dangerous yoke of the bourgeoisie through a simple 'departure', and to precede them on the way with a bold example. To throw away one's membership card as an illusion of liberation is merely an inversion of the fetishism of the membership card as an illusion of power; both are simply the

opposite poles of organisational cretinism, the constitutional disease of the old German Social Democracy. The disintegration of German Social Democracy is an historical process of immense dimensions, a general confrontation between the working class and the bourgeoisie, and one does not turn aside from this battlefield out of disgust in order to breathe purer air in a corner under a bush. This gigantic struggle must be fought out to the very last. The lethal noose of the official German Social Democracy and the official Free Trade Unions, which the ruling class has placed around the neck of a confused and betrayed working class, must be stretched with united forces until it breaks; and it is necessary to assist the deluded masses in this most difficult battle for their liberation, and to defend them loyally with our very bodies. The liquidation of the 'heap of organised decay' which today calls itself the German Social Democracy, is not presented to us as a private concern to be decided by single or isolated groups. It will only follow as an inevitable postscript to the World War and must be fought to a finish as a great public trial of strength with the utmost exertion. The decisive throws of the dice of the class struggle in Germany will for decades fall into this general confrontation with the leaderships of the Social Democracy and the trade unions, and that will be true for each one of us till the last: 'Here I stand, I can do no other!'⁷⁵

Notes

1. The Third Congress of the RSDLP took place from 25 April to 10 May 1905 in London. It was the first congress of the Bolsheviks.
2. Pavel Borisovich Axelrod (1850-1928), Vera Ivanovna Zasulich (1849-1919) and Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov (1856-1918) were veteran Russian Social Democrats who by 1905 were, along with Yuli Osipovich Martov (1873-1923), were leaders of the Menshevik faction of the RSDLP.
3. According to the RSDLP organisational statute, the party council, whose chairman was Georgi Plekhanov, had the right to summon a congress. As Plekhanov was opposed to summoning a congress, the Bolsheviks took the initiative. Representatives of 22 Bolshevik committees met and issued an appeal for resolutions expressing support for a congress to be adopted. By April 1905, a large majority of organisations had supported the proposal so the congress was summoned, although the party council still declared its opposition.
4. The Mensheviks who were invited to the RSDLP congress opposed participation and met separately. On account of the low number of participants — only nine committees had sent delegates — they characterised the gathering as a conference of party officials.
5. Karl Kautsky, 'Die Spaltung der russischen Sozialdemokratie', *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, no 135, 15 June 1905.
6. Possibly Grigory Yevseyevich Zinoviev (1883-1936), who was sometimes referred to in Lenin's correspondence as 'Gr'.
7. The Social Democratic group in the Fourth Duma was composed of seven

- Mensheviks and six Bolsheviks. The Mensheviks exploited the one-vote majority and used all means to hinder initiatives by the Bolshevik deputies and the pursuing of a revolutionary parliamentary tactic. When the Bolsheviks' repeated demand for equality of both parts of the group was rejected, the Bolshevik deputies constituted themselves as a separate group in October 1913.
8. In the summer of 1912, the SDKPiL Executive dissolved its Warsaw organisation, which was in opposition to it, charging it with allowing informers into membership and working to split the party, declaring also that the Warsaw organisation no longer belonged to the RSDLP. In a letter to the ISB on 31 August 1912, Lenin, as a representative of the RSDLP, protested against this insinuation, saying, among other things, that the SDKPiL Executive had no right to determine who could belong to the RSDLP, as it had no organisational links with either the CC elected at the January 1912 conference, represented by himself, nor with the liquidator centre.
 9. The January 1912 conference in Prague finally established the Bolshevik faction as a separate party headed by Lenin.
 10. The congress planned for 23-29 August in Vienna did not take place owing to the outbreak of war.
 11. At the Amsterdam Congress in August 1904, a resolution was adopted in favour of party unity. All the socialist groupings of a country were to be united in one party on the basis of the principles determined by the congress of the International. It was formulated particularly in regard to the situation in France, and in 1905 the various groupings there fused into one party.
 12. 'Das International Büro' in *Vorwärts*, no 333, 18 December 1913. The question of the restoration of the united RSDLP was one of the items on the agenda of the ISB session of 13-14 December in London. A resolution introduced by Karl Kautsky, Friedrich Ebert and Hermann Molkenbuhr was adopted, whereby the ISB was given the task of organising a meeting amongst all factions of the Russian labour movement with the aim of restoring the unity of the RSDLP. In line with the decision, a conference took place on 16-18 July 1914 in Brussels that determined that the differences were not insurmountable and that a unification congress should take place where they could be resolved. In the meantime Lenin had no intention of dissolving the Bolshevik faction and was already preparing its next congress. Neither congress took place owing to the outbreak of war.
 13. See Document VII, 'On the Split in the Social Democratic Duma Group', in this issue of *Revolutionary History*.
 14. Paweł Łapiński (real name Lewinson, 1879-1937) was a member of the Left faction of the Polish Socialist Party. He later joined the Russian Communist Party, and worked in the Soviet state apparatus. Both the PPS and the SDKPiL were members of the Second International.
 15. Émile Vandervelde (1866-1938) was a Belgian Social Democrat and Chairman of the ISB from 1900. He supported the First World War, holding a Cabinet post throughout its duration, and subsequently played an important role in the reconstituted Second International.
 16. A different translation of this article is included in Peter Hudis and Kevin B Anderson, *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 2004).

17. This is a note by Jogiches put there when he received the text from Adolf Warski.
18. The meeting of the RSDLP CC members living abroad took place during 10-17 June 1911 in Paris on the initiative of the Bolsheviks and was advocated by the SDKPiL. Felix Dzerzhinsky and Leo Jogiches represented the SDKPiL; Lenin, Rykov and Zinoviev the Bolsheviks, in addition Boris I Goldman-Gorev, the Menshevik, from the editorial board of *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata*, Mikhail I Goldman-Liber from the Bund, and MV Ozolin-Martyn for the Latvian Social Democrats, were also present. Thus only eight of the 15-member CC appeared (among others, three Mensheviks were absent). The main theme of the meeting was the convening of a party conference of the RSDLP. To this end, in addition to an Organisation Commission abroad, a Technical Commission was set up, to deal with the party press, the smuggling of literature to Russia, etc.
19. The January/February plenum of the RSDLP CC had met from 15 January to 7 February 1910 in Paris. Leo Jogiches and Adolf Warski represented the SDKPiL. Due to the influence of the SDKPiL and the Bolshevik 'conciliators' (that is, such Bolsheviks as IF Dubrovinsky, Viktor Nogin and Aleksei Rykov, who favoured party unity and were sympathetic to the Menshevik concept of legal work, in opposition to Lenin and his group), the plenum decided to dissolve the factions in the party and suspend their publications. The party funds (the Schmitt Legacy), until then in Bolshevik hands, were deposited with Karl Kautsky, Franz Mehring and Clara Zetkin, who acted as trustees.
20. 'Liquidationism' existed within the Menshevik wing of the RSDLP, its supporters wanted to shift the activity of the party into that which was legally possible under the Tsarist regime. 'Otzovism' was a leftist trend within the Bolshevik wing of the party, and its supporters opposed any participation of the Bolsheviks in the Duma. Its leading proponents were Aleksandr Bogdanov and Anatoly Lunacharsky; the former was expelled from the Bolshevik faction in June 1909. The Third Duma sat from November 1907 to June 1912.
21. The last, Fifth, Congress of the united RSDLP had taken place in May 1907 in London. A total of 336 delegates participated, among them 44 from the SDKPiL. The Bolsheviks with 105 delegates had a majority of one vote over the Mensheviks. The rest of the delegates belonged to the Bund and the Latvians. Rosa Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches were also present, the latter being elected an alternate CC member of the RSDLP. Following congresses were only those of the divided party.
22. *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata*, the journal of the Menshevik liquidators, appeared from February 1908 until December 1911, firstly in Geneva, then in Paris. The central organ of the whole party, *Sotsial-Demokrat* (February 1908-January 1917), appeared during 1908-13 in Paris, and from November 1911 was *de facto* a Bolshevik paper. After the decision of the Paris plenum of the RSDLP CC of January-February 1910, the editorial board of *Sotsial-Demokrat* was composed of two Bolshevik representatives (Lenin and Zinoviev), two from the Mensheviks (Fyodor Dan and Yuli Martov) and one from the SDKPiL (at first Adolf Warski, from October 1910 Wladyslaw Leder). Rosa Luxemburg was referring to Dan and Martov. Under pressure from Lenin both finally left the EB in June 1911. In November 1911, the SDKPiL representative also left.
23. The non-liquidationist wing of Menshevism that emerged in late 1908 and which

expressed itself in favour of maintaining a united RSDLP.

24. These were the legal weekly *Zvezda* published during December 1910–April 1912 in St Petersburg by the Bolsheviks, and the popular monthly *Rabochaya Gazeta* that appeared during October 1910–August 1912 in Paris. The party school was in Longjumeau near Paris. It had 18 students and three permanent lecturers (Lenin, Zinoviev and Inessa Armand). Other speakers were invited from time to time. It existed from June 1911 and was intended for the whole party but became a Bolshevik institution.
25. *Vpered*, published in Geneva during 1910–11.
26. *Pravda*, a 'non-factional' RSDLP journal edited by Trotsky, appeared during 1908–12 in Lemberg, later in Vienna.
27. *Saviour or Destroyer? Who Destroyed the RSDLP and How*, Paris, May 1911. It contained sharp attacks on Lenin and the Bolsheviks.
28. That is, since the adherence of the SDKPiL to the RSDLP at its Fourth (fusion) Congress in April 1906 in Stockholm.
29. The words 'in the spirit of the revolutionary Social Democracy of Western Europe' at this point were deleted by Jogiches.
30. That is, during Peter Stolypin's time as prime minister (July 1906–September 1911). He had bloodily repressed the 1905–07 revolution. On 16 June 1907, he dissolved the Duma and decreed a new electoral law that ensured a parliamentary majority for the richest part of society. In 1911 he was the victim of a Socialist Revolutionary assassination. His time in office was known as the Stolypin Reaction.
31. This idea was originally proposed by Pavel Axelrod in the summer of 1905 and was supported by the Mensheviks. The congress was to have determined the tactics of the left regarding the first plan for a national Duma published by Interior Minister Alexander Bulygin. The congress never took place and the élitist and purely consultative plan for the Duma was dispatched by the general strike in October 1905. Instead of this, the Tsar's manifesto of 17/30 October 1905 contained the promise of the convening of a regular parliament. Following the failure of the 1905–07 revolution, the Mensheviks again took up the idea of 'broad Workers Congress' in which they saw an exit from the internal crisis of the RSDLP, and a legal route for the Social Democratic movement. Lenin vehemently opposed a 'Workers Congress' as he saw it as a departure from the idea of a revolutionary workers' party and therefore received the support of the SDKPiL at the Fifth Congress of the RSDLP in May 1907 in London.
32. See Luxemburg's 'Organisational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy', published under the title of 'Leninism or Marxism' in *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism* (Ann Arbor, 1972). This title was first given to it by the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Organisation of Glasgow when it published an English translation in 1935.
33. The Fifth Congress of the RSDLP.
34. The left-wing faction of the Polish Socialist Party.
35. On behalf of the SDKPiL, Leo Jogiches, Felix Dzerzhinsky, Julian Marchlevsky, Adolf Warski, Jakub Hanecki, Antony Mafecki, Władysław Leder and Zofia Goldenberg took part in the work of the RSDLP central institutions at different times between 1906 and 1911.

36. The elections to the Fourth Duma took place in September-October 1912.
37. The words 'comrade Tyszka succeeded in creating' have been deleted by Jogiches.
38. See note 18.
39. A reference to Nikolai Semashko (1874-1949, pseudonym Alexandrov). He became a Social Democrat in 1893, was secretary and treasurer of the RSDLP CC abroad after 1905, and held key posts in the Soviet health system after 1917.
40. Marginal note by Jogiches: 'Convening of the CC, an election conference.'
41. The words 'member and representative cde Tyszka' deleted by Leo Jogiches.
42. See Rosa Luxemburg's letter to Luise Kautsky of 25 July 1911, regarding the Vienna *Pravda* article. The relevant part is found in *Revolutionary History*, Volume 6, no 2/3, pp 240-41.
43. A reference to the congress of the German Social Democratic Party that took place in Jena during 14-20 September 1913.
44. The retarded development of industry and the strength of the peasantry in Southern Germany were amongst the factors that encouraged Social Democratic leaders in that region to adopt a considerably more moderate political approach than the party did in the remainder of the country. For the question of taxation, see note 55 below.
45. The congress held in Jena in 1905 decided to defend the general right to vote and to assembly by, if necessary, using the mass strike, but restricted the use of the mass strike to this purpose.
46. During 17-19 January 1905, approximately 215 000 miners had gone on strike in the Ruhr for the eight-hour day, for higher wages and for safety provisions. The strike united workers from all the miners' unions as well as unorganised workers. The strike leadership — dominated by reformist and bourgeois trade union bureaucrats — decided to call off the strike, and thus it ended without a result.
47. The first political mass strike for universal suffrage took place in Austria-Hungary. In January 1907, the continued protest movements forced the Austrian government to present a bill to parliament, which would introduce the general right to vote.
48. August Bebel (1840-1913) played a key role in the formation and subsequent leadership of German Social Democracy. He had died just prior to the writing of this article.
49. *Protocol of the Proceedings of the SPD's Congress Held at Jena During 17-23 September 1905* (Berlin, 1905, p 305).
50. Gustav Bauer (1870-1944) chaired the General Commission of the German trade unions during 1908-18. He was Chancellor of Germany in 1919-20.
51. Philipp Scheidemann (1865-1939) was a journalist and a leader of the right wing of the SPD. An ardent supporter of the First World War, he was Chancellor of Germany in 1919.
52. Under the management of Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow, the campaign for the Reichstag elections of 25 January 1907 was characterised by a hate campaign of the reaction against all opposition forces, particularly against Social Democracy, and by chauvinistic propaganda for the continuation of the colonial war against the Hereros in South-West Africa. Although the SPD won the most votes, due to obsolete constituencies and the alliances that the bourgeois parties had forged, the SPD won only 43 seats, whereas in 1903 it had won 81 seats.

53. At the SPD congress of 10-16 September 1911 in Jena, the 'wait and see' politics of the party Executive in relation to the Morocco crisis was at the centre of the debates. In the spring of 1911, French imperialism had attempted to extend its reign to the whole of Morocco and finally to consolidate its influence. The German imperialists took this action to be a motive for announcing that Germany no longer felt bound by the Algeciras agreement. On 1 July 1911, the German government sent out the warships *Panther* and *Berlin* to Agadir and through this provocation intensified an immediate threat of war. Great Britain's intervention in favour of France forced the German colonial politicians to give in. A compromise was reached between France and Germany.
54. Because of the reactionary three-tier voting system, in the Prussian state parliament elections of 3 June 1913, the SPD only got 10 seats from its 775 171 votes (28.38 per cent). On the other hand, the German Conservative party won 147 seats with only 402 988 votes.
55. The military bill of March 1913 brought the greatest increases in armaments spending in German history. As some of the costs were to be covered by a wealth tax, parts of the SPD wanted to agree to the tax increases in spite of their purpose. Through the application of party discipline in the parliamentary fraction, these revisionists suppressed the resistance of 37 representatives and the fraction voted for the new law. Through this act, the Social Democratic maxim of 'not a man nor a penny for this system!' was abandoned.
56. See Rosa Luxemburg, *Motion on the Political Mass Strike Resolution*, in Rosa Luxemburg, *Collected Works*, Volume 3, pp 328-29.
57. A reference to the SPD congress held in Leipzig during 12-18 September 1909.
58. Emanuel Wurm (1857-1920) was a journalist, and worked with Karl Kautsky on *Die Neue Zeit*. He subsequently joined the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD).
59. See Rosa Luxemburg, *The Party Executive's Resolution on the Mass Strike*, in Rosa Luxemburg, *Collected Works*, Volume 3, pp 323-24.
60. All leading SPD right-wingers. Albert Südekum (1871-1944) was editor of its paper *Vorwärts*, and Minister of Finance in Prussia during 1918-20. Eduard David (1863-1930) was Minister of the Interior during 1919. Gustav Noske (1868-1946) was a trade union official and Minister of Defence during 1919-20; he permitted the emergence of right-wing paramilitary forces, such as that which murdered Luxemburg.
61. *Protocol of the Proceedings of the SPD's Congress, Held at Dresden, 13-20 September 1903* (Berlin, 1903, p 319).
62. Paul Singer was with Bebel the co-chairman of the SPD. Karl Kautsky (1856-1938) was at this point the editor of *Die Neue Zeit* and the most prominent theoretician of the SPD. It can be seen from this article that Luxemburg is including Kautsky in the 'swamp'.
63. In the original: trump.
64. Richard Fischer (1855-1926) was a longstanding leading official in the SPD.
65. In the original *durchfressen*; literally 'eaten through'.
66. The name came from the ancient Roman advocate of land redistribution, and had previously been used by the pioneer revolutionary communist Babeuf.

67. Date on which the German Social Democracy voted for war credits.
68. Philipp Scheidemann (1865-1939): one of leaders of the SPD right; in 1919 he became the first Chancellor of the German Republic.
69. Hugo Haase (1863-1919): leader of the SPD centrist minority from 1916; leader of the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) from its foundation; murdered on the Reichstag steps by a nationalist.
70. Georg Ledebour (1850-1947): centrist during the First World War; leading figure in the USPD from 1917, remaining in the USPD sector that rejected fusion with the German Communist Party (KPD) in 1920, also rejecting fusion with the SPD in 1922. In 1923, over to a dispute over the Ruhr crisis, he set up the Socialist League. When the left wing of the SPD broke away in 1932 and set up the Socialist Workers Party (SAP), Ledebour's organisation joined it, as did the USPD shortly afterward.
71. The first verse of Richard Strauss' well-known song 'All Souls' Day', based on a poem by Hermann von Gilm zu Rosenegg.
72. Wilhelm Dittmann (1874-1954): opposed the First World War, founder-member of the USPD, but returned to the SPD in 1922.
73. In the ancient Greek theatre a trilogy of tragedies was accompanied by a satyr play for comic relief.
74. Carl Legien (1861-1920): trade union leader; allied to the SPD right; organised the general strike against the Kapp Putsch in 1920.
75. Words attributed to Martin Luther (1521) after his excommunication.



Charles Wesley Ervin
Selina Perera: The 'Rosa Luxemburg of Sri Lanka'

THE Trotskyist movement has produced many heroes and heroines in its long history. Surely one of the most outstanding was Selina Perera (1909-1986). She was a founding member of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party and also played a leading role in the Indian Trotskyist movement for more than two decades. The colonial police once likened her to Rosa Luxemburg. The comparison was on the mark. Selina was a revolutionary socialist internationalist to the core.

Formative Years

Selina Margaret Peiris was born in 1909 in Badulla, Ceylon, a hill-town near Kandy surrounded by lush tea plantations. Her parents were prosperous Sinhalese gentry who wanted their children to get a good English education. Though Buddhists, they sent Selina to the local Catholic Convent for her early schooling. After that cloistered education, she was sent down to cosmopolitan Colombo to attend Musaeus College, the premier Buddhist girls' school, founded in 1895 by Theosophists who wanted to regenerate true Buddhism in Ceylon.

Like many children of the well-to-do, Selina was sent to England to pursue her higher studies at the University of London. She studied economics, Sanskrit and Pali, the language of the early Theravada Buddhist scriptures. She also became active in student politics. As one of her long-time comrades recalled, Selina 'began to speak against imperialism in college and university campuses'.¹

After completing her studies, Selina returned home and took a job teaching at the Buddhist Girls' College in Mount Lavinia. She became its first Principal. But she was not content simply to teach. While she had been away, radical nationalists in Ceylon, inspired by the Civil Disobedience struggle in India, had formed Youth Leagues to agitate for independence. Selina joined the South Colombo Youth League. Young nationalists used to meet at her school in the evenings to discuss politics.

Into the Struggle

In 1933, the South Colombo Youth League decided to participate in the Suriya

Mal protest against the official celebration of Armistice Day (11 November). Ceylonese nationalists had objected to all the jingoistic military parades and pomp and started a counter-demonstration, in which Ceylonese volunteers sold the local Suriya flower, rather than the official poppy, and donated the proceeds to Ceylonese veterans and local charities.

Selina and her comrades injected a strong dose of anti-imperialism into the protest: 'Register your refusal to encourage participation in Imperialist War. Every Suriya Mala is a blow against Imperialism, Fascism and War.' In the context of that time, this was shocking. Nice middle-class Ceylonese women weren't supposed to be parading around the streets handing out leaflets that sounded like they'd been written in Moscow.

During 1933-34, a malaria epidemic swept through the south-western provinces of Ceylon. The British response was tardy and inadequate. In just two months alone more than 30 000 perished. The Youth League activists decided to organise an immediate grass-roots relief effort. Selina and her comrades went from one stricken village to the next, dispensing quinine tablets and distributing food. The experience was searing. Selina saw babies sucking the breasts of their dead mothers, and whole families lying dead or dying.

In the course of this relief work Selina became close with Dr NM Perera, a fellow Suriya Mal volunteer and member of the South Colombo Youth League who was a lecturer at the University College in Colombo. He was handsome, charming and very bright. He also was known to be part of the radical group around Philip Gunawardena, the hard-core Trotskyist who was the real brains and driving force behind the Youth League.² Selina was smitten with Perera, and a sweet romance ensued.

The Red Party

In 1935, the British announced that elections to the second State Council would be held in early 1936. The leaders of the Youth League decided to form a socialist party and field candidates in the elections. In December 1935, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) was launched to fight for 'independence and socialism'. Selina was elected to the Central Committee of the new party.

The LSSP flaunted its radicalism. Party members marched in formation with the red flag, gave the clenched fist salute, painted the hammer-and-sickle emblem on walls, and sang an anthem based on *The International*. 'In our day', noted the Sri Lankan journalist Ajith Samaranayake, 'we can hardly understand the enormity of the sacrifice a woman would have had to make to throw herself into the Left movement of that time. It was a virtual rejection of the image of womanhood that the traditional society of the time upheld.'³

As many have noted, the LSSP was deliberately structured to function like a

broad mass party. Apparently, Philip Gunawardena, the dominant party leader, had a soft spot for Rosa Luxemburg. Like her, he believed strongly that the revolutionary party had to draw its strength from the masses. He also is said to have agreed with her early criticisms of the Leninist model for a narrow, vanguard party.⁴ He imparted his respect for Rosa Luxemburg to Selina and the rest of his 'T Group'.

The LSSP immediately fielded candidates for the State Council. NM Perera contested Ruwanwella. Selina threw herself into his campaign. This was an uphill battle. His opponent was a wealthy local aristocrat who represented Ruwanwella in the first State Council. But NM Perera and Selina had earned the respect of the local folk during the malaria epidemic. Much to the shock of the establishment, he trumped the incumbent.

After the election, Selina married NM Perera on 6 March 1936. She played a big role in his development into a party leader. As he later recounted:

If I had not married someone as interested in politics as myself, and the same brand of politics too, perhaps my life would have been different. In any case, I do not believe my career would have set itself so quickly and so definitely in the track it has followed unswervingly, despite many subsequent political disturbances, to where it is now, where my personal life is a hundred per cent subordinated to the movement, if I had married any other woman.⁵

There was no time for a honeymoon. Like Rosa, Selina always put the party above her own personal life. She devoted herself to building the new party, while NM Perera and Philip Gunawardena took their seats in the State Council.

Mission to Mexico

Selina was a role model and mentor to the younger women in the party, notably Vivienne Goonetilleke and Kusumasiri Amarasinghe, who had been her younger classmates at Musaeus College and who also married party leaders (Leslie Goonewardene and Philip Gunawardena, respectively). Selina instilled in them a deep respect for the pantheon of women in the socialist movement, above all Rosa Luxemburg.⁶ Vivienne later wrote a tribute to Rosa in the party journal, *Permanent Revolution*.

The LSSP was not an overtly Trotskyist party at the start. However, the dominant party leader, Philip Gunawardena, was a Trotskyist, and he steered the LSSP on a course that hewed to Trotskyist positions on all key questions. Selina was part of the 'T Group', the Trotskyist faction, within the party.

In 1938, the Trotskyist faction decided that Selina should undertake a mission

to establish contact with their co-thinkers abroad. She was a real Bolshevik, and so she bid farewell to family, friends and husband and departed for England.

In London she contacted the local Trotskyists. She stayed with Charlie Van Gelderen, an immigrant Trotskyist from South Africa who attended the founding conference of the Fourth International in Paris in September 1938. She also worked with an Indian Trotskyist, Ajit Roy, who had connections with a fledgling Trotskyist group in Calcutta. But world politics were getting more menacing by the day. In September 1939, Britain declared war on Germany. Selina had to continue her mission post-haste.

In October 1939, Selina arrived in New York City and made a bee line to the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the American section of the Fourth International. The SWP welcomed her with open arms. The party published her statement of opposition to the 'imperialist war'.⁷ On 2 November, she met with the members of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International who were resident in New York. No doubt, the news that a vigorous new section had sprouted in Ceylon was welcome in those dark days when one European Trotskyist party after another was being decimated in Nazi-occupied Europe.

The SWP helped her make arrangements for the long trip down to Mexico, where Trotsky, his wife and staff were living a precarious existence in a fortified house in Coyoacán. When she reached San Antonio, Texas, she sent Trotsky a short letter, dated 17 November, asking to be met at the bus terminal in Mexico City: 'I do not think you will have any difficulty in identifying me, if you look out for a brown-skinned female in a strange costume!'⁸ However, to her great dismay, Selina was stopped at the border crossing in Laredo, Texas, on a visa technicality. Deeply disappointed, she wrote to Trotsky four days later: 'I was reluctantly forced to abandon my trip to Mexico and forego perhaps the one chance in my lifetime of meeting you.'⁹

As soon as he learned what had happened, Trotsky penned a letter to Selina, in which he responded to the political questions she had posed in her letter and sent his 'warmest greetings to yourself and to the Ceylon comrades'. A Stalinist hit-man murdered him less than a year later. For the rest of her life Selina would express her deep disappointment at having been denied the opportunity to meet the man whom she admired more than anyone else.¹⁰

Fighting in the Front Rank

When Selina arrived in Ceylon in early 1940, she found her party energised on a new footing. The Trotskyists had expelled the pro-Moscow minority and openly declared solidarity with the Fourth International. The LSSP vigorously opposed the 'imperialist war'. In the State Council, Philip Gunawardena and NM Perera created uproar with their militant speeches and votes against war

funding. Meanwhile, in the hill country, LSSP organisers were leading strikes on the British-owned tea plantations. At Wewessa the strikers seized the plantation. No longer willing to tolerate these Trotskyist troublemakers, the Colonial Office sent orders to the Governor to arrest the LSSP leadership and suppress the party. On 18 June, Philip Gunawardena, NM Perera and Colvin de Silva were arrested. Leslie Goonewardene went underground. The following day, Edmund Samarakkody was also arrested and detained with the others at the Welikada prison.

The LSSP called a mass meeting to protest against the arrests. The police attacked. In the mêlée Selina rallied the crowd and led a march to the Welikada prison. 'A vanload of baton-waving policemen jumped on us as we reached Norris Road, and having introduced us to the heavy ends of their batons, took several of us into custody.'¹¹ Selina was jailed and later released.

From that point on: 'Selina became the principal mass figure around whom the open activity of the party was organised and developed.'¹² In 1941, she addressed the Jaffna Youth Congress. 'Selina made a fiery speech but worded it cunningly to avoid an open denunciation of the British. Nevertheless, she was arrested and charged with sedition in the Mallakam courts and was acquitted of the charges.'¹³ Later she helped lead a strike at the Rothman's cigarette company in Colombo. When a police officer tried to arrest her on the picket line, she slapped him and said: 'That should teach you not to lay hands on a woman!'

The Exodus to India

In April 1942, the LSSP carried out the legendary rescue of their four leaders who had been cooling their heels in jail, and concealed them in secure hideouts in Colombo. Even then, Selina was not really reunited with her husband. After the jailbreak, the police had her under constant surveillance. She had to be careful not to lead the police to his hideout. Forced deep underground, the LSSP cadres had limited scope for political activity.

Meanwhile, the situation in India was heating up fast. After months of temporising, Gandhi finally gave the British an ultimatum — leave India or face mass civil disobedience. With an historic showdown in the offing, the LSSP leaders decided to decamp for India as soon as possible. They already had established links with groups of Trotskyists in Bombay, the United Provinces, Bengal and Madras. In May 1942, these groups merged to form the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India (BLPI).¹⁴

In July 1942, Selina and her comrades eluded the police and crossed over to India in little fishing boats. Selina and her husband were part of the contingent that went to Bombay, where the BLPI already had a functioning branch. Selina and her husband rented a little flat in the working-class slums of Girangaon.

Selina became a member of the Central Committee of the BLPI, which was based in Bombay.

Just a few weeks later, on 9 August, Gandhi gave his famous 'do or die' speech in Bombay. When he was arrested the next morning, riots erupted and quickly spread throughout India. Unlike the Communist Party, which supported the government in the name of 'fighting fascism', the BLPI sided with the masses and tried to give the chaotic revolt revolutionary leadership. Selina and her comrades used to go to demonstrations in disguise, dressing like a Muslim woman in a veil or a Christian in a skirt and blouse with a crucifix.¹⁵

The Manhunt for the Ceylonese 'Rosa Luxemburg'

The government regarded the BLPI to be a serious threat that had to be removed quickly. Detectives who could recognise the LSSP leaders were brought up from Ceylon. The Bombay police were told to look for a woman with a 'Rosa Luxemburgian' character.¹⁶

The BLPI recruited more youth during the Quit India revolt. They had to be trained in Marxism and Trotskyism, and there was no better teacher than Selina. The youth affectionately called her by her nickname, 'Margie'.¹⁷ She also got a teaching job in Bombay and helped to support the party with her earnings.

In July 1943, the Bombay police, acting on a tip from the local Communist Party, raided the BLPI hideout where Philip Gunawardena, his wife Kusuma, and a half dozen other comrades were living. NM Perera was also arrested. Selina heard from one of her students that the police were looking for her too. And so Selina, together with her comrades Colvin de Silva and Leslie and Vivienne Goonewardene, quickly packed their bags, donned disguises, and took the train to Madras, where there was a strong BLPI branch.

In Madras, Selina took up residence with the other Ceylonese comrades in a spacious two-storied house in Venus Colony in Teynampet. She became part of the party Executive Committee. The BLPI in Madras was growing, and morale was high. The party had active fractions in the two most important industrial enterprises in the city — the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway workshops and the huge Buckingham and Carnatic Mills.

In her personal life, too, this was a happier chapter. In Bombay, Selina had become estranged from her husband, and the two lived apart before his arrest. In Madras, Selina became close to Colvin de Silva, who had befriended her during her personal crisis in Bombay.¹⁸ But the relationship was more than just personal. She became his key political partner. Colvin de Silva matured into a first-rate party leader during this period, and I have no doubt that Selina played a very big role in his development. I suspect that she was always more radical than the men in her life.¹⁹

During this period an emissary from the American SWP contacted the underground party in Madras. He was a comrade whom Selina had met in the USA in 1940. It was a happy reunion. 'Her eyes sparkled with immense delight as we recalled her tour and some of the people we knew. She wants to be remembered to all the comrades she had met over here.'²⁰

In 1944, Selina participated in the first all-India conference of the BLPI, which was held in Madras under the tightest security. Somehow the police got wind of this meeting. The delegates had to disperse quickly. With the police on their trail, Selina, Colvin de Silva and the Goonewardenes went to Calcutta, where there was another well-organised branch of the party.

No Turning Back

In late 1945 and again in early 1946, huge political demonstrations took place in Calcutta. In Bombay there was a mutiny in the Indian navy and fighting in the streets. 'Sheela was highly delighted to find a genuine revolutionary situation in India', recalls Sainen Bannerji, who was then a young recruit in the BLPI.²¹ So the question was posed: remain in India or go home? After some soul searching, Colvin decided to return. But Selina opted to remain. The BLPI had become her mission in life. And from that point on, India was her adopted home. Selina became 'Sheela' — the way the Bengali comrades pronounced her name.

In Ceylon, Selina had demonstrated her capacity to be a front-rank mass leader. However, in Calcutta, since she couldn't speak Bengali or Hindi fluently, she had to play a more internal role in the party. Like Rosa Luxemburg, Selina placed great importance on training the next generation of cadres. A visiting British Trotskyist commended Selina for her initiative in 'the work of giving study groups, classes and lectures, the work of training up new members, candidates and contacts in dialectical materialism, in economics, in the general theory of Marxism'.²² She supported herself, and contributed financially to the party, by privately tutoring well-to-do Bengalis in English.²³

The Demise of the BLPI

In 1947, a group within the BLPI proposed that the party enter the Congress Socialist Party. In their view, the BLPI was too small to compete effectively on the left. But if they joined the Socialist Party, they could influence the left-wing party members, build up a Trotskyist faction, and then exit stronger than before.

At first Selina fought against this proposal. She pointed out that the BLPI was making significant headway, especially on the trade-union front in Madras and Bengal. However, the pro-entry faction gradually gained a majority in the party, and in late 1948 the BLPI voted to enter the Socialist Party.

Though she had misgivings, Selina carried out the party decision with

energy and discipline. She took a leadership role in the West Bengal Executive Committee of the Socialist Party. 'Sheela Perera went on with dedication. As a result, many leaders and activists of the Socialist Party remained her friends.'²⁴

Her misgivings proved justified. The Socialist leaders would tolerate no factionalism within the party. The former members of the BLPI were trapped in quicksand. More than anyone else, Selina fought for Trotskyist positions within the Socialist Party. She opposed the party's 'Third Camp' line in the Korean War and called for support to the North Korean and Chinese forces. She also sharply criticised her own comrades who adopted the 'Third Camp' position of the Socialist Party.²⁵

In the 1952 general elections the Socialist Party was buried in the Congress landslide. Traumatised, the Socialist leaders negotiated a behind-the-scenes merger with a breakaway group of dissident old-school Congressmen. Again taking the initiative, Selina rallied about 500 party members to reject the merger and continue functioning as the Socialist Party. But this was a Pyrrhic victory. After four years of 'entrism', Selina and her comrades ended up with a pale pink version of the BLPI, with no link to the Fourth International.

Abortive Socialist Regroupment

In the aftermath of the 1952 elections several left parties, including the Peasants and Workers Party and Revolutionary Socialist Party, jointly called for the formation of a new revolutionary party. Selina welcomed this move and joined the preparatory committee. On 27 January 1955, more than a dozen leftist parties met in Bombay and voted to launch the 'Mazdoor Kisan Party' (Workers and Peasants Party) at a future conference.²⁶ Selina and six other Trotskyists were elected to the 20-member Provisional Central Committee.

For all their good intentions, the constituent parties found it difficult to arrive at a common programme. Some still had semi-Stalinist politics. Taking an active role in the debate over the programme, Selina criticised the fuzzy formulations and ideological waffling and submitted various amendments. The discussions dragged on for more than two years with little progress. Meanwhile, the trade unionists clashed and undermined each other. Clearly, the 'urge to merge' wasn't very strong.

As the general election of 1957 drew near, the two largest parties mounted their own independent election campaigns. Selina concluded that the whole merger exercise had been a waste of time. She called upon all Trotskyists in India to close ranks and form a purely Trotskyist party. 'Let us tell them [the other Left parties] that instead of running after illusions of half-baked unity just now, we are consolidating Trotskyists to contribute in clarifying our stand and laying a sound basis of Left unity if it ever comes about.'²⁷

Fighting for the Party Perspective

In November 1957, Selina convened a conference of Trotskyists in Calcutta. The delegates voted in favour of building a new party that would be associated with 'the international Trotskyist movement'. Selina was enthusiastic. She could finally devote herself to rebuilding a Bolshevik party in India. She promptly made a financial donation to support the production of the internal discussion bulletins.

Some of the Trotskyists, however, waffled on the conference decision, temporised and wanted to chase after other 'centrist' parties. In the discussion bulletins, Selina and her group sharply criticised their proposals as wishful thinking and opportunist manoeuvres. Like Rosa Luxemburg, Selina defended the fundamental perspective of building a disciplined Bolshevik party, no matter how long and hard that struggle might be.

In 1958, the Trotskyists met again in Calcutta and launched the Revolutionary Workers Party.²⁸ The new party declared: 'The only revolutionary ideology today in this world has the name of Trotskyism, that is, contemporary Marxism.' The RWP's programme was based on the original programme of the BLPI. Selina was elected to the three-member Political Bureau.

Selina was keen to re-establish the link with the Fourth International that had been severed when the BLPI entered the Socialist Party in 1948. However, in 1952 the Fourth International had split in two — the International Secretariat in Paris and the Anglo-American International Committee. Both sent their greetings to the RWP. Each invited the RWP to join *their* 'Fourth International'. Jimmy Deane, a British Trotskyist who was working in India at this time, urged the RWP to 'maintain close and friendly relations' with both wings of the FI.²⁹ Selina and her comrades urged both sides 'to seriously consider and find out ways and means to heal up this wound with democratic organisational safety for future'.³⁰

A Stab in the Back

Though the RWP got off to a good start, there were still those in the party who had appetites for a bigger merger. In Bengal some RWP members started discussions with the Revolutionary Communist Party, a maverick communist group that had been around since the 1930s and had a pro-Trotsky faction of its own. Selina opposed this initiative to liquidate the RWP into the RCPI.

The International Secretariat in Paris, however, encouraged the pro-merger faction. In 1959, they sent a senior emissary, Livio Maitan, to India.³¹ With the backing of the International Secretariat, the pro-merger minority in the RWP was able to get the upper hand, and the RWP merged with the larger group in June 1960. Selina regarded the intervention of the International Secretariat to

be a stab in the back.

The liquidation of the RWP demoralised Selina. According to one of her close comrades: 'Her lofty dream [of a Trotskyist party] was torn asunder.'³² She retired to the sidelines. She continued to support leftist causes and remained on friendly terms with her large network of political friends in Calcutta. When the Communist Party split in 1964, a number of her close comrades from the old BLPI days, including prominent trade unionists such as Robin Sen in Raniganj, joined the CP(M). Though she didn't join, Selina was on good terms with some of the CP(M) leaders in Calcutta, particularly Ashok Mitra, who became Finance Minister in the first Left Front Government in West Bengal in 1977.

I met Selina Perera twice in 1974 at her little flat on Ganesh Chandra Avenue in central Calcutta. She was feisty, alert and interested in my project to write a history of the Indian Trotskyist movement.

The Tragic End

In her later years Selina became more and more depressed. The death of her parents grieved her terribly. She also couldn't seem to resolve her emotional attachments with her ex-husband or Colvin de Silva. She became a recluse. She gave money to her students for tuition and lived in virtual poverty herself. Her health deteriorated. Her letters to old comrades in Sri Lanka became less and less frequent, and then stopped altogether.

Selina made arrangements to have her family property in Maharagama donated to the LSSP after her death. She also instructed in her will that her personal savings be donated to social service organisations in India. Was she contemplating suicide? If she was, she wouldn't have been the first revolutionary to do so. Rosa Luxemburg herself briefly considered suicide when the German Socialists voted to finance the war in 1914.

In May 1986, Selina's neighbours noticed that they hadn't seen her recently. They called the police, who entered her flat and found her body. She had been dead for some time. The Calcutta government, run by the CP(M), showed no respect whatsoever. 'They detained her dead body for a month with various pretexts, first in the post-mortem room and then in the morgue.'³³ Finally, her friends and comrades were able to give her a proper funeral. She was cremated at Sahanagar in south Kolkata on 15 June 1986.

In his obituary, Sailen Bannerji paid fitting tribute to his life-long friend and comrade:

Sheela remained in the forefront of a revolutionary party for over three decades. She had to suffer sarcasm and persecution for her political ideology. Disease, old age and grief had taken a harsh toll but her revolutionary self

was indomitable. A relentless revolutionary, she was not only an ideal, but a great and rare pioneer.

And so in 2009, the centenary of her birth, let us pay tribute to 'the Rosa Luxemburg of Sri Lanka'.

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Notes

1. Sailen Bannerji (Bandopadhyay), 'Biplabee Kamred Sheela Perera' ['Revolutionary Comrade Sheela Perera'], *Ganabani*, 15 July 1986.
2. See Charles Wesley Ervin, *Philip Gunawardena: The Making of a Revolutionary* (Colombo, 2001) and CW Ervin, *Pilip Gunavardhana: Viplavavadiyakuge Hadagasma* (Colombo, 2005).
3. Ajith Samaranayake, 'Selina Perera: The LSSP's Link with Trotsky', *Pravada*, Volume 4, nos 10-11 (1997), pp 92-93.
4. Regi Siriwardena, *Working Underground: The LSSP in Wartime: A Memoir of Happenings and Personalities* (Colombo, 1999), p 50.
5. Quoted in EP de Silva, *NM: A Short Biography* (Colombo, 1975), p 59.
6. Kumari Jayawardena, 'Vivienne Goonewardene: "La Pasionaria" of Sri Lanka', *Pravada*, Volume 4, nos 10-11 (1997), p 17.
7. 'An Interview with a Comrade: Ceylonese Masses Want to Part of the Bosses' War', *Socialist Appeal*, 10 November 1939.
8. The letter is preserved in the Trotsky papers at The Houghton Library, Harvard University: bMs Russ 13.1, file 3798.
9. Houghton Library: bMs Russ 13.1, file 3799.
10. Letter from Sailen Bannerji (Kolkata), 14 October 2007.
11. Reggie Perera, 'Capture of the Leaders', chapter of his memoirs, *Journey into Politics*, serialised in *Ceylon Observer* (Sunday Edition), August-September 1962.
12. H Abhayavardhana, 'Selina Perera — The Forgotten Socialist Militant', in W Muthiah, S Thiruchandran and S Wanasinghe (eds), *Socialist Women of Sri Lanka* (Colombo, 2006), p 86.
13. Handy Perinbanayagam, a prominent Youth Congress leader, reported her speech and arrest in his newspaper, *Kesari [The Lion]* (Santasilan Kadirgamar, *Handy Perinbanayagam: A Memorial Volume* (Jaffna, 1980), part 1, p 93). I thank his son, Robert Siddharthan Perinbanayagam, for providing me with this information.
14. For an in-depth account of the BLPI, see Charles Wesley Ervin, *Tomorrow is Ours: The Trotskyist Movement in India and Ceylon, 1935-48* (Colombo, 2001).
15. Lakmali Gunawardena, *Kusuma: A Life in Left Politics* (Colombo, 2004), p i.
16. Letter from Sailen Bannerji, 14 October 2007.
17. Vinayak Purohit, *A Life of Surfeit and Overflow 1927-2005*. Chapter 1: 'An Initial Summing Up of a Lifelong Effervescence' (Pune, 2005), p 12.
18. CW Ervin interview with Hector Abhayavardhana, Colombo, 18 December 1997.

19. When NM Perera died in 1979, his brother made the comment: 'Selina was too radical for NM.' (Quoted in Ajith Samaranayke, 'Selina Perera: The LSSP's Link with Trotsky', p 94)
20. L Scott, 'Red Passage to India', a 28-page confidential report sent to the Bureau of the Fourth International after his return from India. The document is in the SWP Papers at the Hoover Archives in Stanford.
21. Letter from Sailen Bannerji, 14 October 2007.
22. 'Report by JF on the Activities of the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India during 1947', manuscript in the Jock Haston archives at the University of Hull Library.
23. Letter from Sailen Bannerji, 22 November 2007.
24. Sailen Bannerji, 'Biplabee Kamred Sheela Perera'.
25. Letter from Sheila Perera to US Socialist Workers Party, 1 August 1954, Hoover: SWP Papers, box 38.
26. *A New Marxist Party is Born: The Policy Statement of the All-India Mazdoor Kisan Party*, 30 November 1955, pp 7-8.
27. RN Arya, 'Reply to Comrade Kolpe on his Recent Proposals', *Internal Bulletin* [Socialist Party (Marxist)], Volume 1, no 4 (June 1957), part 1, p 9.
28. *Marxist Unity: For Socialism in India: Statement of Policy of the Revolutionary Workers Party of India* (Calcutta, 1958), p 3.
29. Jim Deane, 'On the Fourth International', *Internal Bulletin* [RWP], Volume 2, no 3 (September-October 1958), p 11.
30. RN Arya, 'An Appeal to the International Trotskyist Conference (Affiliated to the International Committee)', 2 May 1958.
31. *Information Bulletin*, 3 October 1959.
32. Letter from Sailen Bannerji, 14 October 2007.
33. Sailen Bannerji, 'Biplabee Kamred Sheela Perera'.

Vincent Pr sumey
Pierre Lambert (1920-2008)

Translator's Introduction

The article below is composed of parts of two articles published on the Internet in French by Vincent Pr sumey. These articles, taken together, are too long to be published in full in *Revolutionary History*. In this issue we are therefore, with the permission of the author, publishing extracts (amounting to about two-thirds of the total) chosen by ourselves. Omissions are noted by ellipses. Part One is in chronological order and focuses on Lambert's general political work and that of the tendency of which he was the undoubted leader. Part Two is thematic and focuses mainly on the work of Lambert and his tendency in the French trades union movement. The full texts, in English, of the two articles will found on the web.

Richard Kirkwood

Part One

A Real Building-Block of History About Whom People
Are Telling Many Stupid Stories

THE death of Pierre Lambert on 16 January 2008 at the age of 87 has inevitably aroused two types of comments; some hagiographic, others demonising. It is, however, indisputable that Pierre Lambert represents a page in the history of the French working-class movement.

His party, the Parti des travailleurs (PT — Workers' Party), currently in the course of being renamed the 'Parti Ouvrier Ind pendant' [Independent Workers' Party],¹ and his current, the 'Internationalist Communist Current of the Workers' Party', which in practice controls the said 'party', present him as the 'leader of the Fourth International'. [...]

From another side, the established journalistic commentators tell us that 'the mysterious Lambert' was a practitioner of entrism, and embark on hazy speculations as just to where Lambert may have placed his pawns. [...] Many people have charged him with faults which are in reality also partly their own: sectarianism, violence — latent and sometimes open — a cult of the leader, machismo. [...] I would dare to claim that those who passed through the school

of the old Organisation Communiste Internationaliste [OCI — Internationalist Communist Organisation] and who have consciously divested themselves of its sectarian and fantasist mantle have, on the contrary, learnt much from it and continue to this day to nourish the French working-class movement not as a gang of plotters but as militants with an experience to share. The scales lean to the positive in the balance of history: as concerns the training of militants, of fighters of intellectuals, Lambert did in the end do good work as a whole, particularly if we consider those who broke with him or whom he expelled! Contradictory? Of course — life is complicated, life is dialectical.

From the Young Bousset to the OCI

Pierre Bousset, from a very poor background, born on 9 June 1920 in Montreuil and the epitome of a Montreuil 'titi parigot',² along with his childhood friend Essel (the future boss of FNAC),³ became a Trotskyist militant in the 1930s, that is to say, at the time when Nazism and Stalinism set themselves up as complementary nightmares, blocking the horizon to the magnificent spirit of the French workers and of the Catalan and Spanish workers and peasants in 1936. [...] Having gone over from the Young Communists to Trotskyism, then chosen Raymond Molinier and Pierre Frank's minority but activist group and having tried to join the ranks of the Pivertist⁴ 'Socialist Left' to push his ideas — to summarise: Build your Party! Build your Soviet! — the young Bousset hadn't chosen to be a professional militant, he was one *de facto* through hard times in the underground following his arrest for 'communist propaganda harmful to national defence' in early 1940 and his exit from prison in the midst of the débâcle of June 1940.⁵

It was during the Second World War and the Occupation that he was to assume a specific profile in the Trotskyist movement. In the Internationalist Communist Committees (CCI), led at the time by Henri Molinier (killed in 1944), he opposed the latter's theories which argued that the world order of the Nazi-Soviet Pact would be in place for at least 50 years, and was expelled from the group (according to the 'Lambertist' version it was for these disagreements, according to Michel Lequenne — a militant from this period who has written a lot and cordially detests Lambert — it was for making these differences known in a cadre training meeting, thus putting the security of the group in danger) a little before the general reunification in which he was to participate in 1944 and which gave birth to the 700-strong Internationalist Communist Party (PCI). [...]

Lambert (for it is at this time that he became Lambert) established himself after 1945 as one of the organisers of the PCI's trades union work, along with, in particular, Daniel Renard and Marcel Gibelin. In retrospect, it is clear

that this trades union activity forms part of the aspects of the PCI's postwar struggles which have left the most traces. It has two main feats of arms to its credit. The first is the 1947 Renault strike — its best known leader, Pierre Bois, was a member of the group which is the ancestor of Lutte Ouvrière, but he would not have been able to play the role of mass orator without the presence of other militants, themselves members of the PCI, like Daniel Renard. This strike transformed the French political situation, particularly by bringing about the expulsion of the Communist Party (PCF) ministers from the government of national unity. The second was its contribution, via the Ecole Emancipée⁶ tendency (which should in no way be reduced to Trotskyism, but within which Trotskyist militants were active), to maintaining, in the face of the split between the CGT [General Confederation of Labour]⁷ and Force Ouvrière (FO),⁸ the unity of the CGT's teachers' federation, the FEN,⁹ with rights of tendency within it, a choice from which originated the place that the FEN occupied for a long period in the French working-class movement and which was then to be partially occupied by the FSU.

In the official 'Lambertist' version, Lambert was at this time the 'leader' of the 'Workers' Commission' of the PCI which is supposed to have been the seat of resistance to the 'petit-bourgeois habits' of the leadership represented by Pierre Frank and then of resistance to 'Pabloism'. This after-the-event reconstruction includes a nugget of reality, that is to say, that it was the trades union roots of many PCI militants which led them in 1951-52 to resist the instruction to join the PCF issued by Pablo in his capacity as 'Secretary-General of the Fourth International' (sic) (it was thus, for example, that the young Pierre Broué, who had just become a trades union activist as the defender of the lycée (high school) boarding supervisors, rejected entrism). [...]

In reality, Lambert — expelled from the CGT in 1950, then becoming an employee of a health insurance organisation¹⁰ and, pretty rapidly, a full-time trades union official for Force Ouvrière — led a grouping of trades union militants who were anti-Stalinists but supporters of the reunification of the CGT based on class independence (often symbolised by references to the Charter of Amiens)¹¹ and who had a journal, *l'Unité* [Unity]. This journal sought to eat into the CGT and into the ranks of PCF militants, and was partly financed by funds emanating from the Embassy of Tito's Yugoslavia. The historical reality is clearly that Lambert at first involved himself with a certain reserve in the polemics between the supporters and the opponents of 'entrism' into the PCF and only engaged himself in this at the point when it became apparent that the line that Pablo sought to impose in the name of so-called 'international discipline' would lead to the liquidation of this trades union grouping. In fact this latter was to wither away in the years that followed, but it furthered

one encounter and the birth of a friendship which was to prove fruitful for Pierre Lambert — that in 1952 with the anarcho-syndicalist leader of FO's Departmental Union in the Loire-Atlantique, Alexandre Hébert. [...] An ironic formula coined by an old comrade who took a long time to distance himself from him, Claude Bernard, doubtless expresses well what Lambert was at the time: the 'contact man' of the organisation, a type who was not necessarily of importance in himself, certainly not a theoretician or a political analyst, but was an organiser who built up contacts and took advantage of them. Among these were Alexandre Hébert, but also, for a time, André Marty,¹² following his expulsion from the PCF, and the Algerian national leader Messali Hadj. Thus, in 1952, the majority of the PCI was 'expelled' from the Fourth International' by Pablo in an entirely authoritarian and bureaucratic way because of its rejection of 'entrism' into the PCF. [...] In these conditions, the talents of the 'contact man' were to be decisive in their avoiding sinking into total isolation in relation to the real French workers' movement.

On the international level this isolation seemed to have been overcome at the end of 1953 — the 'contacts' here came essentially from Daniel Renard — when the US SWP broke with Pablo, bringing with it Gerry Healy's English group, and these groups, along with the French PCI, formed an 'International Committee of the Fourth International'. In reality, [...] each remained in relative isolation and it is then that the PCI came to turn more and more around the person of Lambert to the point where, after 1958, it could be called the 'Lambert group'. Many other strong personalities were eliminated from it, Danos and Gibelin after 1953, Bleibtreu and Lequenne in 1955 and then Daniel Renard were progressively to withdraw, to fade away. The key year is 1958, as the working-class defeat constituted by De Gaulle's seizure of power and the creation of the Fifth Republic¹³ together with Messali Hadj (who became the main target of the Algerian FLN) going over to De Gaulle — while Lambert had presented him as 'the Algerian Lenin' — were hard blows for the group. [...]

It was also in 1958 that the Voix Ouvrière¹⁴ group and the La Vérité group (known as the 'Lambert group') entered into contact, undoubtedly in the form of a 'leader-to-leader dialogue' which reinforced each of the two leaders within his own group, on the one hand Lambert, on the other Robert Barcia (known as Hardy), and together they distributed leaflets at factory gates with mutual protection against Stalinist attacks. According to Robert Barcia: 'It was thanks to Lambert that we were able to open up in the provinces.' (Interview in *La véritable histoire de Lutte Ouvrière*, 2003) In other words, the 'joint venture' above all benefitted Voix Ouvrière, and Lambert had contributed decisively to the national development of this rival current!

The OCI and Its Most Eminent Mediocrity

The physiognomy of what was to be the OCI thus took shape in a lasting form during these years, and Lambert was the central personality within it, the recognised leader. This physiognomy had a double aspect and rested on two pillars. [...]

One was that of a group with a few dozen militants at the end of the 1950s, then a few hundreds at the end of the 1960s, based on a solid foundation of Marxist and Trotskyist education and training, characterised by the international dimension of its analyses and enriched by the contributions of intellectuals such as the historians Pierre Broué and Jean-Jacques Marie, on the one hand, and theoreticians Stéphane Just and Gérard Bloch on the other. [...] Together with this were alliances with anti-Pabloite Trotskyist currents — the American SWP up to 1962, Healy's British organisation (this was a stormy alliance) until 1970,¹⁵ Guillermo Lora's Bolivian Revolutionary Workers Party from 1967 to 1979, to list only the main ones. [...]

The organisation of this group was 'controlled' by Pierre Lambert, who was also the key person in the second pillar — that of a trades union/friendship network which became the official opposition, allied to the leadership, in FO while at the same time having a strong presence in the FEN as well. This network was based on compromises with the trades union apparatuses. [...] Its development was not controlled by the organisation, but by Lambert personally. But all the other political leaders — Stéphane Just, like Pierre Broué — accepted the fact that Alexandre Hébert frequently attended meetings of the Political Bureau of what became the OCI in 1965, although he never concealed the fact that he was most certainly not a Trotskyist. The 'first pillar' (building a revolutionary party) was to be progressively adapted and sacrificed to the second (the bureaucratic/friendship network of which Lambert was the centre), though this was probably not based on any preconceived plan.

This progressive evolution took place in fact at the same time as the OCI and its youth organisation the AJJ (Alliance des Jeunes pour le Socialisme) became, from 1968 onwards, one of the big organisations of the 'far left' (though it rejected this term) in France and, at the end of the 1960s and in the second half of the 1970s, the most significant in numerical terms — the high point of about 6400 militants was finally reached in around 1982. Within the far left, the OCI and the AJJ were the 'anti-leftist' organisations who promoted the workers' united front, defended traditional trades unionism — thus literally preserving its existence in the student milieu through maintaining a 'UNEF Unité Syndicale'¹⁶ around which was to form the UNEF-ID in 1980. They rejected the 'power in the streets', the 'pedagogy', the 'sexual revolution' discourses at the risk of acquiring a falsely 'puritanical', not to say macho, profile (Lambert, with

the help of Just and Bloch, was to eliminate from the OCI in 1967 the education organiser who he had himself enthroned 10 years before, Boris Fraenkel, the main person responsible for introducing Wilhelm Reich to France and a noted homosexual, on the grounds that he had printed a translation of Reich on the presses of the organisation without having informed it...). When the great years of post-1968 leftism began to fade, crudely speaking from the dissolution of the Ligue communiste in 1973¹⁷ and the Presidential elections of 1974¹⁸ onwards, the OCI for several years had the wind in its sails. It thus became the question of putting forward the move towards the 'Party of 10 000' (10 000 militants being the symbolic figure for crossing a qualitative threshold) linked to the struggle for the 'reconstruction' or 'recomposition', not to say 'reunification', of the Fourth International. [...]

The perspective of a partial reunification of the currents laying claim to Trotskyism had become more distant as a result of the formation at the end of 1979 of a 'joint committee' between the current led by the French OCI and the current led by the Argentinean revolutionary Nahuel Moreno, followed by the split between Lambert and Moreno with no serious political explanations on either side and of which the third current which had been involved — the little 'LTT', the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, which had pulled towards the OCI almost a quarter of the Ligue communiste révolutionnaire¹⁹ of the time but also included groups in Central America — bore the brunt. [...] It was in around 1983 that Lambert began to claim that the SWP was now the pro-Cuban party in the United States and thus was no longer Trotskyist. The 'continuity of the Fourth International' thus far represented by the 'workers' cores' of the American SWP and the French OCI was now represented only by the French core, that is, by himself. [...] The development towards a new International, a re-established Fourth International making real progress, with democratic debates and several currents, [...] was not to take place. In any case, Lambert didn't want this [...] for that would have demanded a radical modification of the daily routine, the peaceful institutionalisation henceforth established by the 'shop', by 'our business which turns over and brings in' as he was himself to say, or was said to have said, in internal circulars at the end of the 1980s.

What had allowed this evolution to happen was the internal regime of the organisation, [...] in which the leadership itself functioned as a fraction, keeping its own disagreements quiet before the militants — a marvellous way to mould and maintain the power of a sort of oligarchy, itself dominated by a charismatic leader who had patently, in relation to the political debates of particular moments, eliminated one after another independent personality. I give here a rapid list of the national purges (not to speak of local purges and Stalinist

mini-trials): Jacques Danos and Marcel Gibelin in 1953, Marcel Bleibtreu and Michel Lequenne in 1955, Robert Chéramy and Charles Cordier in 1960, Boris Fraenkel in 1967, Balázs Nagy (known as Michel Varga) in 1973 (the most violent), Charles Stobnicer (known as Charles Berg) in 1979, Stéphane Just in 1984, Pierre Broué in 1989, André Lacire (known as A Lagevin) and Michel Panthou in 1991, Pedro Carrasquedo in 1992 (I say below why I don't include Cambadélis in this list). [...]

It is even possible that, subjectively, Lambert had as much suffered them as provoked them (those purged tomorrow were, incidentally, often the purge agents of today — like Stéphane Just towards Varga, then Pierre Broué towards Stéphane Just). [...]

Compared to the long list of personalities whom he eliminated, not forgetting those who left on tiptoe, Lambert was generally less 'brilliant' than any one of them. He cut a dull figure, he was a good storyteller and his cocky Parisian humour act was endearing, but he was repetitive and, deep down, rather boring. But he was excellent at coordinating and controlling relations between people. [...]

Moreover, he left nothing significant in the way of theoretical work. [...] On the other hand, he had some talents in terms of getting others to write and in using the talents of others.

This valuable militant, who had been educated and selected-out in the most difficult of periods was thus neither a theoretician, nor a great mass leader, nor a workers' agitator, but above all an organisation builder. [...]

A Necessary Parenthesis — No, Lambert Didn't Practice 'Entrism'

[...] As far as Lambert is concerned, the correct term is not 'entrism' but 'undercover operations'. Here we are dealing with something different from the 'entrism', entirely transparent, open and public which Trotsky had advocated towards Social Democracy in 1934, nor the other cases of entrism by those claiming the heritage of Trotsky which include the entrism into the Stalinist parties known as 'sui generis' — which was a special type as it involved repudiation [of one's political views and past] — which Pablo demanded in 1952; the 'organic entrism' put in place by Moreno in Argentina which, at the end of the 1950s, consisted of passing as Peronists while at the same time trying to build a genuine political current on this basis; or, finally, the entrism in perpetuity practised by Ted Grant and his disciples.

But the possibility of organising a socialist or social-democratic left current did exist. [...] This issue was raised earlier than one would normally think because it was between 1958 and 1960, in the crisis created in socialist milieux by the Gaullist victory, at the time of the genesis of what was to become the

PSU (Unified Socialist Party)²⁰ that militants of the 'Lambert' group tried to intervene — thus this was, in the beginning, genuine entrism. These militants were, incidentally, well placed in the SNES-FEN, the secondary school teachers' union. But what they were doing in the PSA (Autonomous Socialist Party, which existed from 1958 to 1960 and gave birth to the PSU) escaped Lambert, who asked himself what sort of current could come out of it — in any case it would be one that he wouldn't be able to control. In 1960, he had Robert Chéramy, Louis-Paul Letonturier and Charles Cordier expelled — confidentially because officially these militants weren't members of his group. They were all to become union leaders in the FEN, and in the case of the first an advisor to François Mitterrand. The reason for the expulsion was that in following the PSA into the PSU they were giving their backing to the liquidation of a current that had come out of the working-class movement, through the seizure of control over the PSU by a bourgeois politician, the former Fourth Republic Prime Minister, Pierre Mendès-France.²¹ The debates in the sphere of the PSA, PSU, UGS (Union of the Socialist Left) and UPS (Union for Socialism) did incidentally lead to two militants, Jean-Jacques Marie and Jean Ribes, who were to be important later, coming over to the future OCI. [...]

Ten years later, but on a much larger scale, the problematic of the birth of the new PS (Socialist Party) between 1969 and 1971 was partially the same.²² Political cadres, intellectuals, union leaders, all radicalised by May 1968, were simultaneously in contact with the OCI and the AJS and with the milieux from which the new PS sought to draw its cadres. [...] At this time, Lambert played a double game — officially he shared the opinion of Alexandre Hébert; that is, that the bourgeois politician Mitterrand taking control of the PS was an attempt to destroy it as a party that came out of the working-class movement (Hébert thought that this had been achieved at Epinay),²³ thus one should certainly not get involved in this operation, even less so than with Mendès and the PSU in 1960. But at the same time he agreed that a valuable recruit, Lionel Jospin, should join the PS on the basis of his direct relationships with François Mitterrand's immediate team. On the one hand, there was no open political battle which might (or might not, now *that* should have been debated) have laid the basis for genuine entrism. On the other, there was the installation of a 'mole' at the highest level, whilst all the time, naturally, hiding this business from the OCI's rank-and-file militants. [...]

It was not to be until 1983 that Jospin was to oppose advice given by Lambert, with whom his relations were close and regular, when the latter wanted him to involve the PS in opposition to the austerity policies incarnated in the Mauroy government by Jacques Delors.²⁴ Jospin argued against this by raising the danger represented by the right and the beginnings of the Front National. And

it was not to be until 1987 that Lionel Jospin was to stop paying his 'phalanges' (subscriptions) to the organisation. [...]

In the Jospin case, Lambert substituted his personal methods of craftiness and a good way with people, which had been tested in trades union circles, for a political battle (enrlist or not) *vis-à-vis* that party which had finally capitalised on the shift to the left of May 1968 and the 1970s, the PS. That the true victor, and the most crafty [operator], had been Mitterrand is obvious, but Jospin the militant had been pushed into that situation. For Lionel Jospin had been, at the beginning, a disciplined OCI militant — indeed a militant who had given early evidence [of his loyalty] because, having been educated by Boris Fraenkel and sharing an intellectual friendship with him, he had backed up the latter's expulsion. One remarkable thing: Jospin was never penalised for indiscipline. [...] While Chéramy, Cordier and Letonturier had been kicked out in 1960, Jospin had been able to appear on the strength of the 'phalanges speciales' (special membership) right up to 1987! The reason for this is that Lambert had counted up to the last moment on his [Lambert's] personal influence, ignoring the real political weight [on Jospin] of the high spheres of the PS and of government.

In parallel, in a sort of interesting dance-step, Lambert found his Parisian team of brilliant student leaders of the UNEF-ID²⁵ around Jean-Christophe Cambadélis 'stolen' from him by Mitterrand. [...] The split in 1986 was as much an immense cuckolding of Lambert by Mitterrand as a 'Lambertist purge' like the others. This was crowned by the departure—expulsion of Luis Favre, an advisor to the Brazilian Workers Party leader Lula, and, at the secret level, by the definitive banishment of Lionel Jospin, both in 1987. This seriously weakened Lambert from his point of view, which had not been that of the building of a real revolutionary party, but of the development of a network of political influence, which in the end did not work out too well for him. [...]

At the end of the 1980s new horizons opened as the Berlin Wall came down. But Lambert's horizons narrowed down once and for all.

The French 'Workers' Party': Political Ectoplasm

Thus in 1991 the 'Workers' Party' (PT) was announced in France simply by the transformation of the former OCI-PCI into an illusory and artificial federation of 'currents' — the internationalist communist current,²⁶ the current led by the old ally Alexandre Hébert, known as 'anarcho-syndicalist', and the fictitious 'socialist' and 'communist' currents — within the PT. [...] But the French PT had three or four times fewer militants than had been in the PCI in 1982...

The following year the Fourth International was re-proclaimed — it was 'refounded' — and thus, as if it was nothing, began to renumber its congresses

from the Fourth, because three world congresses had officially been held before the one which had seen the so-called Pabloite crisis break out in 1951. [...]

The PT was in fact a political cover for the fact that the OCI-PCI was to become henceforth totally embedded in the folds of the confederal apparatus of the CGT-Force Ouvrière, and subsidiarily in the leadership of the Freethinkers and in certain circles of Freemasonry. From 1969 — when their vote was justified, as in that year the FO confederation had firmly and clearly appealed for a 'No' vote against De Gaulle before the CGT did so, even though an unofficial deal between Lambert, Hébert and André Bergeron,²⁷ who believed that the 'Yes' would win, anticipated that FO would participate in the Gaullist Senate... (these facts were laid out in the edition of the journal *La Révolution Proletarienne*²⁸ which came out after the 1969 FO Congress) — Hébert and Lambert were to vote for all of Bergeron's Annual Reports without exception.

Elsewhere the OCI's positions were also significant in the FEN, where we can note that over the relevant period the organisation had oscillated between its participation in the Ecole Emancipée tendency (which became revolutionary syndicalist), 'climbing up' the reformist apparatus (from the 1950s in the SNES 'classical and modern'),²⁹ and the promotion of its own tendency, the EE-FUO (Ecole Emancipée for the Workers' United Front).

At the end of 1983, at the request of André Bergeron, the leader of FO, Lambert took an important decision and imposed it [on the militants]: to force the great majority of OCI-PCI militants leave the FEN to make them take in hand the FO teachers' federation. This decision, a genuine historic blow to the unity of the FEN, didn't in reality drastically transform the educational trades union landscape, and appeared after the event to have opened the way for the attempt at 'trades union recomposition' by the FEN's own leadership which called in question their former traditions (the aim of reunifying the workers' movement, strong professional, sectoral, unions and tendency rights) and led to the launch of what was to become the UNSA.³⁰ It signified a profound alignment of all the OCI-PCI's trades union policies to fit the interests of the bureaucratic alliance between Lambert and Hébert on the one hand and Bergeron on the other. It led the OCI-PCI to repudiate one of its own foundations: the struggle for the re-unification of the French trades unions on the basis of class independence. [...]

On the road to the proclamation of the PT came the pathetic Presidential election campaign of 1988: for the first and last time in his life Pierre Lambert, under the name of Pierre Bousset, appeared in the national media, putting forward purely defensive statements about workers' demands, posing neither the issue of power nor that of revolution — you couldn't think that! — and presenting himself not as a Trotskyist or even a militant, but as a little retired

Social Security worker...³¹

The real success for Lambert, for him undoubtedly on a personal level, too, was not the Presidential campaign but the accession to the head of the FO confederation of a protégé from the friendship/trades union milieu in FO, who had been hatching for many years within the Federation of White-Collar Workers and Executives. This followed a genuine battle against the supporters of an eventual rapprochement with the CFDT and the UNSA and the pursuit of an even stronger policy of organic collaboration with the employers. The left wing of the union apparatus, which also signed rotten agreements but wanted to stop halfway, took power in FO in the form of Marc Blondel, undeniably the spiritual son of Lambert and Hébert (but I wouldn't dare say who was the father and who the mother!).

The only lasting 'gains' from the Presidential campaign were the signatures of 500 mayors.³² [...] For the most part, these were left-wing mayors of small rural communes, won over on the issues of the defence of public services and of secularism — not in itself without value — but there were also some from 'divers droit'³³ or 'sovereigntist'³⁴ groups who wished to defend 'the nation' against 'the European Union'. The defence of democracy against the Fifth Republic which had been put forward when the sections for a workers' party were launched in 1983-84 had become the defence of the nation against the European Union — this being a French nation that was supposed to carry with it collective [trades union] agreements, Social Security, public services and secularism, and, for these reasons, was under attack from Brussels. Based on these themes some links on the right were possible and were practised by Lambert and even more by Hébert, who didn't have even the tiniest bit of the image of a Trotskyist party leader to preserve, and who didn't hide his contacts in the direction of Pasqua³⁵ and Le Pen. [...]

The dodgy point to which this discourse can drift is cruelly illustrated by one example — that of the only section of that Fourth International re-proclaimed by Lambert which had a significant base in its own country, the Algerian section, which was also a Parti des travailleurs and had a symbolic figure in Louiza Hannoune. The 'defence of the nation' led the Algerian PT to oppose head-on those mass movements in Kabylia³⁶ which had several times confronted the capitalist and military power of the Algerian regime, and also led the PT to participate in elections boycotted by all the other opposition parties... which had gained it the 'great victory' of 20 or so Deputies, bestowed on it by the SM — the Algerian Military Security of sinister repute... [...]

Compared to the old OCI, this party was, in the 1990s, remarkably dull and quiet, grey and boring like Brezhnev's USSR. At the head of this kingdom of the blind there shone, through his sophisms and 'Marxist' erudition, the one who,

in the end, by a process of elimination, had become Lambert's 'heir apparent', taking the place left empty by the earlier purges and the growing absences of the ageing old leader who was kept well preserved in his HQ, like an old caliph, by the vizier Daniel Gluckstein whose pseudonym was Seljuk. As for the ageing old leader, he had become a sort of banner, with his 'swallowing-words' accent,³⁷ his fag-ends (he was the 'grandpa fag-end' of an old sketch by Alex Métayer), his slightly reddening conk, his cheerful mug like an old fox who was in the end not so crafty and not so self-satisfied... [...]

The PT had become a sad organisation. I shall always recall Karim Landais, a young man who well represented honest research from a revolutionary background and the thirst for knowledge of students at the end of the twentieth century and who had nothing to get his teeth into but organisations with a heavy past like this one. In the course of two years he weighed up all the sadnesses of the world, of the absence of a political way forward while the crisis of humanity and of the planet are there before us — and it was his journey through the PT that made him weigh this up. There he burnt his wings. After bequeathing us his most interesting research on why organisations built for emancipation are not themselves emancipatory, Karim killed himself.³⁸ [...]

The year of 2007, the one before Lambert's death, had called into question the continuity of that illusion called the PT. [...] This fiasco³⁹ had led the leadership of the PT, that is the team educated by Lambert and led by Gluckstein, to change tack and announce that they would soon be founding a 'workers' and socialist party' which, according to the latest news, is to be called an 'Independent Workers' Party'. [...] But there is undoubtedly something more significant which is pushing the PT to appear to change if it wants to carry on existing: since Marc Blondel took over as head of the CGT-FO, it had held a solid position of power in the working-class movement to which it was genuinely attached. But power to do what? Lambert's protégés in FO were running the union and its apparatus full stop, as did other union bureaucrats. With no revolutionary political perspective they could not but adapt to the evolution of capitalism. An 'honest reformist' who resists by defending gains can last for several years, but not for a whole historical period. There comes the moment when he signs sell-out agreements whether or not he was brought up on Lambert's knee. Particularly when, in the case of Blondel, this wasn't his first such signature!

Blondel retired to the comfortable Aventine hill of the presidency of the Freethinkers, leaving his pre-programmed heir Jean-Claude Mailly to take the reins of FO in 2004. Since then — and it is the friends of Alexandre Hébert who say it — Mailly is sliding towards corporatism. Very recently he signed an agreement on the 'modernisation of the labour market'. This signature, to this day not denounced as such by *Informations Ouvrières* (*Workers News*), the

paper of the PT (and once of the OCI-PCI), signifies not only a social retreat, but visibly contains the 'corporatism' of the CFDT-type historically denounced by Lambert, Hébert and Blondel, as the text signed by Mailly is supposed to act as the basis for the bill to be presented to the National Assembly by the Sarkozy government.

As to the friends of old Hébert, they have already become an opposition [to the FO leadership] since the Congress of Lille in June 2007 where they stood up to be counted by voting against joining the ITUC, gaining nine per cent of the votes and an even stronger respect among the delegates. History definitely has no pity: it could have waited a few months until after Lambert's death to show us the current of his old ally — who had helped him to constrain the OCI and to put it at the service of climbing the union apparatus as an end in itself — break away from him... to the left!

The PT leaders in FO (starting with Alexandre's son, Patrick Hébert, in the Loire-Atlantique) covered up for the visible evolution of Mailly and the confederation leadership at the time of the Congress of Lille. What will they do about this latest deal? History is not written in advance. [...]

Peace to the shade of Boussel-Lambert and 'ni Dieu ni maître' — 'No God nor Master.'

Part Two

Supplementary Points on Pierre Lambert (1920-2008)

[...] As a result of the diffusion of my first piece on the Internet, I became aware of a remarkable piece of work — Jean Hentzgen's essay *Agir au sein de la classe. Les trotskystes français majoritaires de 1952 à 1955 (Action Within the Class: The Majority French Trotskyists 1952-55)*.⁴⁰ This is the first systematic work on the evolution and composition of the former French section of the Fourth International, the future OCI, over the turning-point period of the three years which followed the 'Pabloite crisis'. [...]

Once More on Lambert and FO

It is an incontestable fact that Lambert's political role and particularly the way that he shaped, bit by bit, the policies of the OCI-PCI and then of the MPPT⁴¹ derived to a considerable degree from an organic, structural alliance reached with the Force Ouvrière union confederation and with that union's leadership at the time when its leader was André Bergeron. This alliance turned the union current of which Pierre Lambert and Alexandre Hébert were the two main representatives into a sort of 'official left' in FO, one which, after 1969, voted regularly in favour of Bergeron's Annual Report and Perspectives documents and which placed its supporters and allies in positions at all levels of

the apparatus. The final fruit of this work was to be the victory of Marc Blondel who became head of the union in 1989. [...]

1969: The 'No' to the Gaullist Referendum⁴²

To summarise the 'Lambertist' version of this episode: with the 1969 FO Congress confronted with De Gaulle's referendum proposal, whose explicit objective was to liquidate May 1968 by means of 'participation' — that is to say, the integration of the unions as wheels of State, André Bergeron's introductory report took an unfavourable position towards the legislation that De Gaulle wanted, and Pierre Boussel (Lambert) made a speech which, basing itself on what Bergeron had begun, was applauded for making it completely explicit that this meant appealing for a 'No' vote in the referendum. Thanks to this, the 'No' vote carried the day. In Pierre Lambert and Daniel Gluckstein's book of joint interviews *Itinéraires* (Editions du Rocher, 2002) Lambert says this:

When, much later, a certain Séguin, then a minister in the Balladur government, drew up a balance-sheet of this period, he was to say: the 1968 general strike and the defeat of the 1969 referendum made us lose 25 years in our policy of integration of the unions and the destruction of the Social Security system. I think that he was right and that what we did at that time, respecting the independence of unions from parties and respecting the prerogatives of union organisations, contributed to this result for the working class.

This is exactly right in terms of analysing the political relations of class forces that May 1968 and the 'No' in 1969 had shaped in France in a lasting way. But it was not 'respecting the prerogatives of union organisations' that had led to this latter result. It was, on the one hand, the political unease of union cadres faced with the Gaullist project, and, even more so, the problem for those who might have wished to do so of accepting, or appearing to accept, a role as accomplices of De Gaulle — due to the pressure of the working class following the general strike in 1968. It was also, on the other hand, a genuine fractional strategy of concerted intervention in the union, rather than 'respecting the prerogatives... etc', which was set in motion at this Congress. Raymond Guilloché, who analysed the Congress for the revolutionary syndicalist journal *La Révolution Proletarienne*, describes it thus:

Comrade Boussel (from the Social Security workers) inaugurated the series of interventions by the Trotskyist tendency [...] He brought out straightaway what was to be the tactic common to all the interventions by

his tendency. This could be called an optimistic interpretation of Bergeron's report, or even a method of encirclement which consisted of making him prisoner of a few phrases he had spoken. These are highlighted, they are extended and finally they are made to say much more than they would have wanted to say: this then opens the way to a composite notion that can eventually be adopted.

[...] What emerges from the very precise accounts in *Révolution Proletarienne*, which at that time was the approved voice of class struggle militants other than those represented by Hébert and Lambert, is that Bergeron's 'No' was not a pure and simple 'No' but more of a 'No, but...'. It gave a blank cheque to the union's confederal bodies to participate, in the last resort, in the organisms that De Gaulle wished to create, and it followed that the 'left' interpretation of Bergeron's line put to the Congress by Lambert, then by Hébert, in fact also consisted of leaving open that possibility. [...]

To become involved in a union apparatus is not necessarily counter-revolutionary, but the key question is what is given in exchange for this; here the deal was clearly that in its move to the left FO would go no further. Furthermore, *Révolution Proletarienne* clearly implies that there was a prior agreement between those pursuing Lambert's tactics and those pursuing Bergeron's tactics, which would explain, incidentally, why Lambert was given the first speech in the general debate, immediately after Bergeron's report. The fraction strategy had thus here taken the form of an understanding between leaders: is it this that Lambert meant by 'respecting the prerogatives...'? [...]

Untangling the Two Aspects of the Heritage

[...] To put it in a rather schematic, but historically useful, way; one could argue that the equation which carried Marc Blondel to the head of FO in 1989 was the end result of the '1969 alliance' and that his successor, Jean-Claude Mailly, is thus also a consequence of this process. Yet the many leaders of Departmental Unions and of Federations that the PT has in FO were not in a position to call for a 'No' on a question in the 2005 referendum that was not without analogies to that of 1969, indeed they didn't even try to. Recently, while they no doubt deplored the signature by FO — even before that of the CFDT — of the January 2008 agreement called the 'modernisation of the labour market', they couldn't prevent this, and didn't really try to. They opposed any denunciation of this signature on the grounds that this would be to mess everything up in relation to the confederal leadership. Their integration into the union bureaucracy is thus more important than the interests of the working class. Thus long columns are given over to denouncing 'the European Union', but not Sarkozy nor the

signature by FO of these sorts of agreements. [...]

In a supreme irony of history, the 'Hébert' half of the historical 'Hébert-Lambert' current — the militants and leaders who draw their inspiration from a sort of anarcho-syndicalism — is now in open opposition to FO's membership of the International Trades Union Confederation and to their signature of the key 2008 agreement.

1959: No 'No' to the Fifth Republic

If, in the 1969 deal we see two methods amalgamated into one by Lambert — and by many of his detractors — the amalgam itself is older.

It was when I was writing my biographical article on Pierre Broué in 2005⁴³ that I was led to study the congresses of the CGT-FO and the orientation of the PCI/la Vérité/OCI group in trades union organisations in the 1950s and 1960s. This led to a small discovery, which, because I formulated it too sharply, led to a factual error. I quote my article on Pierre Broué: 'Now it was in fact in 1959 that Lambert and Hébert for the first time voted to endorse FO's "*rapport moral*" (Annual Report).' [...]

Now Lambert wasn't in FO in 1959 and was therefore not present at its congress. Furthermore, the delegates at the congress who were members of his organisation (Daniel Renard and René Dumont) did not vote for the '*rapport moral*', but abstained and made statements to that effect. This already constituted a 'first' as up to then they had always voted against. It was Alexandre Hébert who voted for the '*rapport moral*' for the first time in 1959 — he was not to vote for it again until 1969, this time with Lambert indeed present and playing the main role, and was thereafter to vote for it at all confederal congresses without exception. Lambert was not to be unionised in FO, in the Paris region social security white-collar and managers' union, until 1961. And so these facts lead me not only to confirm the political assessment that I drew from them, but also to refine it.

This 1959 congress took place, in fact, in a context which was, so to say, *the opposite* of that which was to present itself 10 years later in 1969.

The working class had suffered a serious defeat with the May 1958 *coup d'état* which led to the institution of the Fifth Republic. A major aspect of this defeat had been that it had occurred without a serious struggle against De Gaulle's coming to power. The furthest move towards such a struggle was the demonstration of 28 May 1958 initiated by the FEN, but this was never followed up. [...]

While the PCF, the CGT, the FEN and the Parti Socialiste Autonome (formed by dissidents and people expelled from the SFIO for hostility to its Algerian policy and to Guy Mollet⁴⁴ going over to De Gaulle) all called for a 'No' vote, the Mollet leadership called for a 'Yes'. FO refused to give any advice on the vote, just as its national leadership had refused to call for any action whatever

against the forcible takeover throughout May, even though the front line of this struggle was held not by 'the communists' but by their own reformist and secular cousins in the FEN. On the eve of the 'Yes' victory, Robert Bothereau, predecessor of Bergeron,⁴⁵ called this 'Yes' vote 'a Yes for democracy' which was supposed to drown the Algerian 'ultras'⁴⁶ (who had actually been the initiators)⁴⁷ in support for De Gaulle in the name of democracy. This formula, apparently paradoxically, was the same as that used by PCF leader Thorez and CGT leader Frachon who, having presented De Gaulle as a 'Fascist agent', suddenly turned him round to make him a 'bastion of democracy'. But one wing of the FO confederation, represented in the leadership by the former 'revolutionaries' André Lafond and Raymond Le Bourre, was simultaneously 'Algérie française' and openly supportive of the Fifth Republic. A confused incident had exposed in broad daylight their unofficial contacts with Michel Debré, father of the Fifth Republic's constitution and the then Prime Minister, and the Gaullist leaders: a lift breakdown was followed by the arrival of a repair man accompanied by press photographers. This incident began or accelerated the resignation of Lafond and the *de facto* expulsion of this tendency just before the April 1959 Congress. This split undoubtedly weighed heavily in Hébert's eyes as showing that the Bothereau leadership had finally resisted the Gaullist temptation and deserved congratulations for this, even though its attitude was well short of that taken by the FEN.

A current had clearly emerged in FO demanding that the union call for a 'No' vote in September 1958, with the appeal of 58 leaders — among them Clément Delsol, linked to *Révolution Proletarienne*, Pierre Bérégovoy from French Gas (future Prime Minister under Mitterrand), Maurice Labi from the Chemicals section (later to go over to the CFDT) and former PCI members Michel Lequenne and Marcel Gibelin. But neither Hébert, nor Renard nor Dumont figured among the 58 on the list published in *Révolution Proletarienne*, no 431 (September 1958). At the April 1959 Congress the opposition from the left was lively, expressed in the votes of Soffieto, secretary of the Loire Department Union, Henri Lapeyre, secretary of the Public Works and Transport federation, and Laval of Engineering, and there were many votes against the *rapport moral* (about 11.5 per cent, which essentially consisted of this opposition, emphasising in particular the attitude to the Gaullist *coup d'état*). It was in this precise context that Alexandre Hébert chose to declare himself satisfied with the orientation of the confederation: the 11.5 per cent was reached without him. [...] Hébert also supported a resolution opposing 'any common action with the Communist CGT' which the other class-struggle militants had opposed.

Raymond Guilloré, the *Révolution Proletarienne* columnist, expressed his perplexity at what seemed like a U-turn at a strategic moment, and one that was

in contradiction with the generally very 'left' ambiance among the Congress delegates.

After making this point, Guilloché continued maliciously:

I simply wanted to understand a bit more. I spoke to Lambert, who — again to my astonishment — approved Hébert's position without any reservations. Like Hébert, he warned me against 'verbal ultra-leftism' and, like him, explained that the 'relationship of forces' was no longer moving in favour of the working class. Ah! This notorious 'relationship of forces'! I admit, in reality, that this has been modified. But I swear that I cannot see very clearly *why it follows from this fact* that the national leadership should now receive nothing but praises. Furthermore, how will Lambert know that the relationship of forces is in the course of being modified again, this time in favour of the working class. When Lambert has worked this out, can he let us know as quickly as possible? (*Révolution Proletarienne*, May 1959)

[...]

Leading Up to FO: Lambert and the Trades Union Tradition

Let's say, then, that Lambert joined FO in 1961. Concerning my mistake in my earlier article on Pierre Broué... , it must be said that there is a certain vagueness about the exact date on which the latter joined the CGT-FO. [...]

The author of the piece in the *Maitron*, the biographical dictionary of the workers' movement, Pierre Broué, has this to say: 'In 1958, while having responsibilities in Force Ouvrière, he [Lambert] was at the same time an honorary member of the CGT union of *monteurs-levageurs*⁴⁸ and in this capacity had an office in their headquarters in the Paris Bourse de Travail.'⁴⁹ One must deduce from all this that, at the end of the 1950s, although Lambert was not already actually unionised in FO, and thus could not speak in its Congresses, he already had a reputation as being active in FO and to have influence in it to the point where, in the memory of his (at that time) comrade Pierre Broué he was already a member. Something rather more odd, and not lacking in panache, is that he is even presented as being simultaneously in the CGT and FO (at the height of the Cold War!), as, professionally, he was, on the one hand, an employee of the *caisse primaire d'Assurance Maladie*⁵⁰ from the beginning of the 1950s, and, on the other, was a half-time union official for the CGT *monteurs-levageurs* union. [...]

These variations confirm, in my view, that Pierre Lambert didn't join as an ordinary union member, but in the context of a deal with leaders with whom

he was already working, thus he became secretary of the Paris region FO *Chambre syndicale des employés et cadres*⁵¹ (based on Lambert's own account in *Itinéraires*). At the same time, he was still secretary of the CGT *monteurs-levageurs* for several years until the disappearance of this trade — he states that he held this position for about 10 years without giving dates: 'An office on the Third Floor of the Bourse de Travail and an office on the Fifth Floor!'

An office with the CGT, an office with FO, at the height of the Cold War, *chapeau l'artiste* — 'Hats off to the performer!'

The Lads in the Building Trades

Yet Lambert was not a *monteur-levageur*! This union, like the *Charpentiers en fer*⁵² union, had, within the building-trade federation, maintained strong revolutionary traditions in this milieu, linked with a *trade-based* unionism rather than industrial unionism. Contrary to the current portrayal, which, it is true, often corresponds to reality, it was the case, notably in the building trades that it was the old *trades* unions with a corporate trade identity, sometimes conveying memories of the guilds, which represented revolutionary traditions in the face of an industrial unionism that was more centralised and more bureaucratic.

In the second half of the 1930s the CGT unions of *terrassiers, puisatiers, tubistes, poseurs de rail...*⁵³ constituted little anti-Stalinist and often, too, anti-reformist bastions involved in the revolutionary tendency known as the Class-Struggle Trades Unionist Circles alongside the primary-school teachers of the *Ecole Emancipée*, and of groups of engineering workers led by an expelled PCF member, Eugène Galopin. Their main spokesperson, Pierre Dichamp, known as Riguidel, wrote frequently in the anarchist press as well as in *Révolution Proletarienne* after the war.

During the Second World War, a young Trotskyist militant became secretary of the Paris region of the *peintres en bâtiment*.⁵⁴ He 'fell' in November 1942 and was killed by the Nazis. In building a special relationship with a little trade-based union with an anarcho-syndicalist culture, Pierre Lambert thus falls within a specific tradition. [...]

To succeed in the exploit of being simultaneously in the CGT and FO for a period in the early 1960s, it would have been necessary to have solid experience and good relationships with many militants as well as a very good knowledge of the milieux involved. [...] I am thus inclined to think that this Lambert, he of the *Chambre des employés et cadres* and of the little brotherhood of *monteurs-levageurs*, was a remarkable trades union militant who, in difficult circumstances, enjoyed a rare level of recognition for this.

How had he become this?

1944: Engineering in Paris

To understand this we must go back even further — to 1944. I am aware that the text I am writing goes against the passage of time. We have gone back from 1969 to 1959, now we are in 1944, and we will, moreover, go back a little further still. [...]

When it emerged from underground in 1944, the young PCI was to see many of its militants playing a leadership role in the CGT at a local level as well as in a series of organisations which were not to survive when the revolutionary situation created by the collapse of the occupation and the Vichy regime had ended, such as workers' production committees or patriotic workers' militias. In this context, the rise of the young Lambert which seems to have begun in the spring, thus while still underground, is probably the most rapid in terms of the CGT. In *Itinéraires* he recalls his responsibility, as secretary of the Clichy⁵⁵ *union locale*,⁵⁶ in the workers' conference on production organised by the CGT Paris region engineering union. He claims to have failed to have imposed a genuine workers' committee for the organisation of production because the Stalinists did not want this. But the rest of the interview with Daniel Gluckstein doesn't say how this first rise in the union was to end up.

Michel Lequenne in *Le trotskysme, une histoire sans fard* [*Trotskyism: An 'Uncovered' History*] (Syllepse, 2005) gives his version:

All the Trotskyists that I had met since my entry into the movement up to the liberation of Paris had impressed me by their characters and their knowledge. [...] Only one had seemed to me to be less serious: the leader of my section [the Paris-Nord section], Lambert. I was to learn later that when he got involved in a workplace he did not do what all the others did and work to build roots at the base, but rather had found a way to get himself into contact with the CGT's underground apparatus and to rise in it, under the pseudonym Temansi, and... to rise so high that our leadership was to discover suddenly that this Trotskyist, under his false identity, was on the point of becoming a member of the national leadership, which could have been the source of a massive scandal with accusations of provocation. Temansi had to be got out of circulation.

I fear that here we have an example of a cosmic hostility reinterpreting the past so as to show how basically reprehensible this person was. [...] But in what respect was it wrong to 'rise' in a CGT in major ferment, undergoing major reorganisation and subject to the pressure of thousands and thousands of workers who had a tendency to take over factories, and had indeed taken over many with collaborator bosses in flight? Doesn't this rapid rise show, rather,

that concerted intervention, necessitating a less leftist approach, by the young PCI might have borne much more significant fruits? In 1944, carrying out this work under a false name is in no way surprising. Even the risk invoked of being accused of a provocation by the Stalinists is, in reality, exaggerated by the policy of the PCI which, in 1944, saw no point in working to build a trades union base because 'soviets' were on the agenda. If 'Temansi' had been exposed, it would have been possible to demand why the PCF was denouncing a workers' representative and trades union organiser on the pretext of his use of a pseudonym while their own militants and leaders were themselves often known by pseudonyms.

All this having been said, Michel Lequenne's surprise no doubt expresses the feelings of the PCI's leadership and of most of its other militants. Lambert had acted off his own bat, taking risks and involving the party in them. He would therefore have to pull out at the request of the PCI before he could be 'uncovered'. [...]

The Prehistory, Formative Too

At the age of 13½ or 14 he joined the Young Communists following the events of 1934: workers' unity and street battles against the Fascists. He was expelled in 1935 for Trotskyism though he wasn't yet one. In fact he joined Marceau Pivert's *Gauche révolutionnaire* [Revolutionary Left] in the SFIO, but was henceforth to be close to the Trotskyists in Raymond Molinier's group, of which he was to become a full member, according to different versions, around 1936, 1937 or 1938. He was engaged in studying history when the War broke out, and he was arrested with 10 other militants in February 1940 for 'communist propaganda harmful to national defence', and managed to escape due to the débâcle.⁵⁷ He then led a difficult existence for four years, underground like other militants, using numerous pseudonyms.

He belonged to the former 'Molinier' current, which was not the main Trotskyist group, and went under successive names: the *Que Faire* [What Is To Be Done] group, *La Seule Voie* [The Only Way], *Comité Communiste Internationaliste* [Internationalist Communist Committee]. Within this group he opposed the line proposed by its main leader at the outbreak of war, Henri Molinier, known as Testu, who predicted a lengthy stabilisation of a Europe divided between Hitler and Stalin, and deduced from this that it was necessary to carry out long-term work in the PCF and in the Vichyite RNP (Déat's *Rassemblement Populaire Nationale*).⁵⁸ Against this position, Lejeune (Boussel's pseudonym) argued that a widening of the war was more probable, and rejected Testu's conclusions. This debate was interrupted by the invasion of the USSR in June 1941 which pushed Testu into changing his opinion. Lejeune was soon once again, in late 1943, to

oppose the leadership of the group, represented by Jacques Grinblat, known as Privas, who denied that a revolution in Italy independent of imperialism was a reality. This time he joined up with Testu, the Spanish militant Fon Ferran and Claude Bernard, known as Raoul, to oppose Privas. He was expelled from the group for having tried to win over to his position 'trainees' who were yet to be admitted to the group.

But this expulsion took place at the time when the process of fusing the different French Trotskyist currents, which was to give birth to the PCI, was under way. In that situation he joined a small circle of 15 or so members, the October group, and thus Lambert-Lejeune-Temansi found himself along with the other Trotskyists, including those who had just expelled him, in the young PCI, the French section of the Fourth International. At this time he began that experience in Paris factories and of the CGT which, in his own opinion, was to establish for good his maturity as a militant.

Three significant points need to be made to situate his experiences in relation to those of the totality of Trotskyist militants of that time.

Firstly, the young Lambert was part of a 'norm' at the social level: young, with no stable work, he could be considered, according to the angle from which one looked, as a poor young worker, as a *déclassé* intellectual, as a professional revolutionary or as an adventurist personality. Here the historical conditions are determinant. There had been no trades union base, indeed no base in any regular milieu, in which he could intervene up to 1944.

Secondly, and this point is significant, these years of his apprenticeship had been served in the context of the 'Molinier' current (Raymond Molinier, his brother Henri and Pierre Frank were the leaders). This current, since 1935, had been regarded with suspicion by Trotsky. Although the break had been caused by Molinier's desire to stay in the SFIO and by a certain tendency to try to find 'short cuts' and to adapt to the 'Popular Front mystique', what was really held against him were his methods. He financed the political activities of the movement — choosing those people he approved of — through a debt-collection agency that he had set up... 'Style' was a significant issue. Here this was a very activist, sometimes anti-intellectual, dynamic, but often sectarian and aggressive. The POI (*Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste* [Internationalist Workers' Party] — the name of the official section of the Fourth International in the late 1930s and again after 1942) was criticised by the 'Molinierists' as too intellectual and too lazy. Nonetheless, it was in the POI that there were to be found the few Trotskyist militants to have genuine trades union responsibilities: the Bardin brothers among postmen and technicians in the 1930s, Henri Souzin in the Painters and Decorators during the occupation. In fact, there were very few Trotskyist militants who were genuinely recognised as trades unionists. In

this respect, the 'original sin' dates back to the two years which followed the first organisation of French Trotskyism in 1929. Trotsky himself had trained his red cannonballs on his old friend Pierre Monatte⁵⁹ when the latter had proposed trades union reunification,⁶⁰ accusing him of reformism. The alliance of Trotskyists, in the context of the Unified Opposition in the CGTU, with the former leaders, recently expelled from the PCF, of the CGTU teachers' fraction who were the leaders of the CGTU primary-school teachers' federation and were soon to form the tendency called *l'Ecole Emancipée*, came to a sudden end, and the first organiser of French Trotskyism, Alfred Rosmer,⁶¹ an historic figure in French syndicalism, took his leave, infuriated particularly by Raymond Molinier. Thus of the two currents in French Trotskyism which came together in the PCI in 1944, that which had shaped Lambert was the less 'trades unionist'. Lambert was the first proclaimed 'trades unionist' to emerge from this current.

Thirdly, Lambert, as a minority oppositionist expelled from the CCI, thus from the former Molinier current, was, in short, part of the minority of the minority at the time of the reunification which created the PCI. In other words, he was on the outside.

Consciously or not, the ability to make a breakthrough, as an outsider, in the field of trades union action enabled him to 'exist' in an organisation in which he risked carrying no weight. And effectively, though he was criticised, and was perhaps the subject of jealousy, he was recognised: from 1945 or 1946 he led, along with Marcel Gibelin — with whom his relationship was undoubtedly never good — the trades union committee or 'workers' commission' of the PCI. Other trades union militants of considerable worth, notably Daniel Renard in the Renault factory, one of the leaders of the great 1947 strike, were to assert themselves and to work within this committee in the years that followed. [...]

The 1950s Were Not a Parenthesis

In 1950, Lambert, who seems to have worked in engineering since 1945, was to lead a delegation of CGT and FEN militants to Yugoslavia. This was at the same time as he was participating, as the peg on which to hang his union work, in the launch of the journal *l'Unité* in which context he got to know Alexandre Hébert. On his return, a procedure for his expulsion from the CGT was launched. It was not to be finished until 1952. [...]

Here we can bring in the valuable work carried out by Jean Hentzgen, who has dissected the minutes of the PCI's Central Committees over these years.

It was primarily by work 'in the class' at the time of the 1953 strikes and in the unions — always either in the CGT or directed towards it (in the case of campaigns for the re-admission of expellees) — that the PCI maintained its existence, and not through the polemics against Pablo which at the time were

above all necessary from an internal point of view, but obviously not at the factory gate.

Furthermore, Lambert, from the morrow of the split with the Pabloites, had precisely developed systematically the view that it was work in the class and in the unions that should be the guiding principle and should become the main strategy.

This took the form of campaigns for trades union unity, during which — another contribution of Jean Hentzgen's work — Lambert presented a positive view of the leader of the CGT, the Stalinist Benoit Frachon, who according to Lambert wanted to preserve the CGT from the 'turns' of the PCF and who should be supported when he talked of trades union unity — something that in fact was often to happen in the early 1950s. And, in fact Lambert was to be re-admitted to the CGT in 1954, the only Trotskyist in this situation; Daniel Renard, sacked from Renault for having gone out on a strike called by the CGT and expelled from the CGT in the same year, was not to have this possibility.

This, by the way, is what explains the secretaryship of the *monteurs-levageurs*, who would undoubtedly not have pushed their challenge to the leadership of the CGT to the point of paying a secretary who was not a CGT member. [...]

This is what is reported by Jean Hentzgen, systematically referring to the minutes of the PCI's CC, on the political circumstances of this re-admission: it had been directly agreed with Benoit Frachon!

During the same meeting of the Central Committee (26 September 1954), M Lequenne proposed a resolution against the re-admission of P Lambert to the CGT. According to M Lequenne, B Frachon had decided on this re-admission at a meeting with P Lambert and R Cheraemy. The CGT leader saw little danger in the PCI's campaign for parity committees [committees for trades union unity]. The PCI's leadership was trying to ally itself with the CGT apparatus and it was minimising the responsibility of the latter for the 28 April setback [a strike call from the CGT]. M Lequenne accused the PCI leadership of wanting to 'rise' in the apparatus of the confederation. P Lambert agreed that his re-admission had been decided by B Frachon. Finally the Central Committee adopted a resolution from Renard which judged M Lequenne's motion to be dishonest as it accused P Lambert of capitulation to the Stalinist apparatus.

Jean Hentzgen observes that in the mid-1950s there was no 'preference for FO' by the Trotskyists in the PCI. The PCI cell in Loire-Atlantique — in Hébert's area — was in the CGT. In general, members found themselves in FO because of Stalinist expulsions — because there was nothing else they could do. The FEN

was extremely highly valued, especially once, having, in 1956, taken a position against both the Stalinist repression in Hungary and the Franco-British neo-colonial intervention in Suez, it launched a campaign for trades union unity under the name of MSUD (*Mouvement Syndical Uni et Démocratique* [Union Movement for Unity and Democracy]). Even the CFTC⁶² unionists were regarded at this time by the PCI as needing to be linked into campaigns for trades union unity. At the same time, Lambert's methodology foreshadowed what was to become, after 1959 (though he was not then yet a member as such) and above all after 1969, his strategy of 'rising' in FO. Let pose the question explicitly: had he 'chatted up' Frachon as he was later to do with Bergeron? But this is to pose the question wrongly. In fact there was nothing scandalous in leaning on Frachon's declarations about unity and on the real contradictions between the pressure of working-class militants and the needs of the PCF. Even the fact that the campaign for trades union unity led by the PCI may have allowed Lambert to appear pro-CGT and to gain his re-admission without any 'self-criticism' or something similar on his part doesn't constitute in itself a compromise with the apparatus. [...] As in 1944, he had played the 'outsider', but at a time when he was the principal leader, at this point, of the PCI. It seems, in fact, that the Central Committee as such was only to discover the facts at the September 1954 meeting. Hardly a year earlier, Marcel Gibelin had been expelled for going to the USSR in his capacity as an FO unionist without having told the organisation — in 1953, just after the death of Stalin, what dreadful indiscipline! But here Lambert incurred no reprimand for having dealt directly with Frachon, General Secretary of the CGT and a member of the Political Bureau of the PCF...

To conclude: what this episode reveals is *not* a congenital opportunism on the part of Lambert, it is that the functioning of his party had *already* at this date made him one of those militants 'more equal than the others', as George Orwell would have put it. It was *in the functioning of the 'party'*, for which he was not the only one responsible even if, around this time, he became its main beneficiary, rather than in its trades union practice, that the conditions of its later 'degeneration' were germinated.

Notes

1. This was duly carried out at an extraordinary congress of the PT held on 1 June 2008. All notes have been added by *Revolutionary History*.
2. A cocky Parisian 'lad'.
3. FNAC is one of France's biggest book and record store chains.
4. After Marceau Pivert, who created this group in the late 1930s, and who was initially at least quite friendly to Trotskyism.
5. The fall of France to Nazi forces.
6. 'The Emancipated School'. This tendency brought together Trotskyists,

revolutionary syndicalists, anarchists and independent lefts and was to be the main 'leftist' grouping in the FEN (see note 9) and the dominant one among primary school teachers until it split in the early 1970s along sectarian lines. See Pr sumey's piece on Pierre Brou  (*Revolutionary History*, Volume 9, no 4).

7. The General Confederation of Labour is the biggest trades union federation in France. Originally syndicalist in inspiration, it became dominated by the French Communist Party (PCF) after the Second World War.
8. Force Ouvri re, to be more precise CGT-FO, originated as a late 1940s/early 1950s minority breakaway from the PCF-dominated CGT, encouraged (if not actually created) by the French state and the CIA (which was heavily involved in splitting Communist Party-led or influenced unions and parties in the early years of the Cold War). Its main influences were a mixture of right-wing social democrats, 'left' social democrats and old-fashioned French syndicalists, some still seeing themselves as 'Revolutionary Syndicalists', even Anarchists. Many were only in FO because of expulsions from the CGT. See below for its evolution and Lambert's role in this.
9. F d ration d'Education Nationale: this brought together almost all the teachers' unions organised 'horizontally' into unions representing teachers at different levels from Primary to University. Until the splits of the period referred to, it had managed to remain united despite the CGT/FO split elsewhere. It had also maintained 'tendency' rights, and different political factions competed freely.
10. Many parts of the French Health Insurance and Social Security systems are run by institutions in which trades unions participate. Thus a 'social security employee' may in practice be working for a union.
11. This was the founding document, in 1906, of the CGT as a syndicalist union. It includes clauses designed to prevent the domination of the union by *any* political party. The PCF had found ways to circumvent these.
12. Marty had been one of the leaders of a mutiny in the French Black Sea fleet in 1919 which seriously impeded France's ability to intervene against the Bolshevik Revolution. Sometimes seen as a key figure in the 'military wing' of the PCF.
13. In 1958, France was bogged down in the Algerian independence struggle. Attempts at a peace deal were threatened by uprisings of a coalition of French settlers in Algeria and sections of the army. The French political establishment turned to the wartime Free French leader General De Gaulle, who created a new constitution with a strong President (himself). Much of the left saw this as a coup.
14. Ancestor of Lutte Ouvri re.
15. Most authorities give the date of Healy's break from Lambert as 1971.
16. National Union of French Students — Trades Union Unity.
17. The Ligue communiste (Communist League), the French Section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, was banned in 1973. It re-emerged in 1974 as the Ligue communiste r volutionnaire (Revolutionary Communist League).
18. The Presidential elections in 1974 saw Val ry Giscard d'Estaing (Independent Republican) beating Fran ois Mitterrand (Socialist Party) in the second round with a close vote of 50.81 versus 49.19 per cent.
19. See note 17.
20. The Parti Socialiste Unifi  (PSU — Unified Socialist Party) was formed in 1960

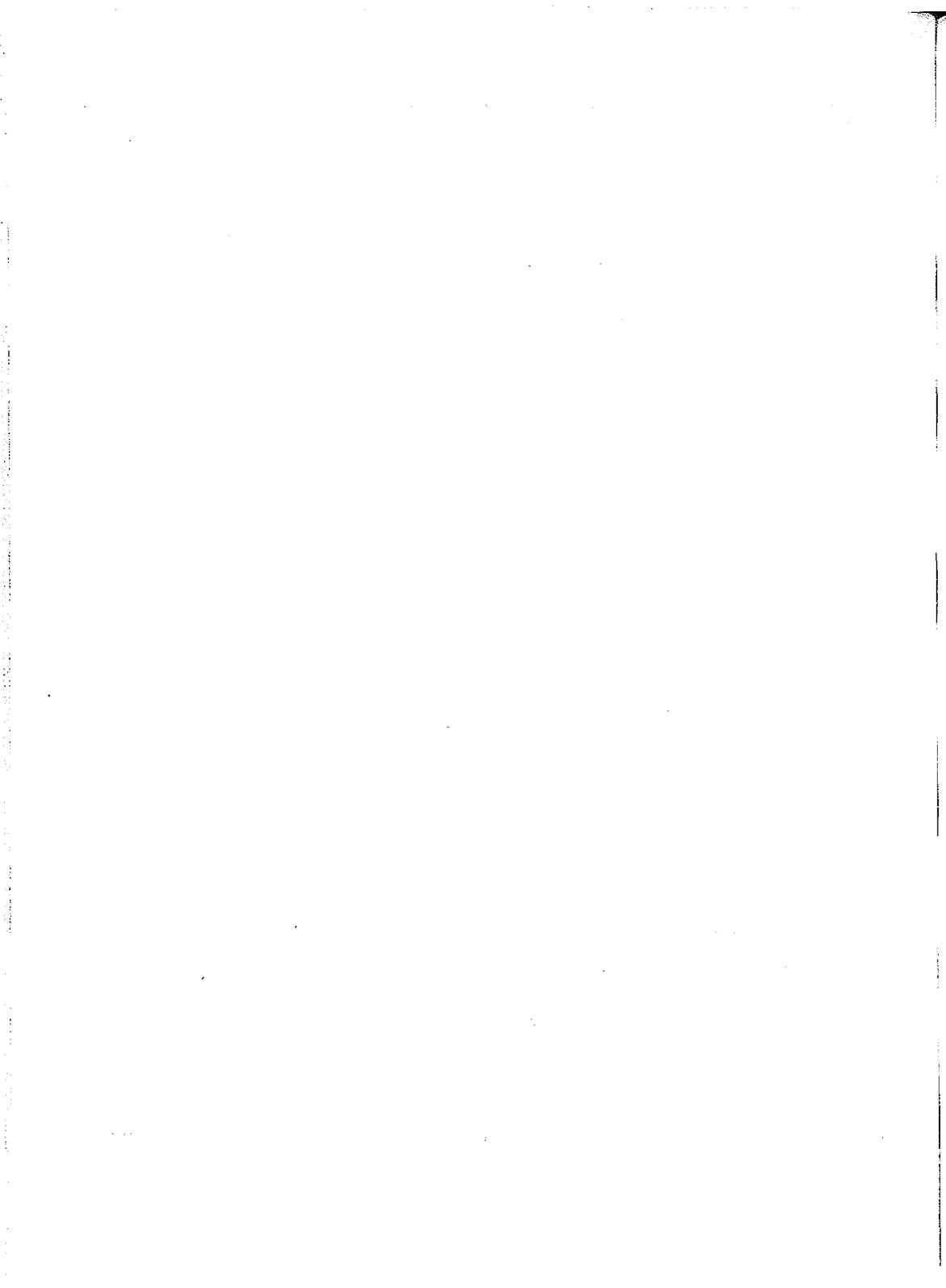
from a merger of the Union de la gauche socialiste (UGS — Union of the Socialist Left), which was formed in 1957 by dissident members of the main socialist party (SFIO — see note 2) who were sympathetic to the PCF; the Parti socialiste autonome (PSA — Autonomous Socialist Party) which was formed from a split from the SFIO in 1958; and a group around the journal *Tribune du Communisme*, which had split from the PCF after 1956.

21. Pierre Mendès-France (1907-1982) was a member of the Radicals, and was Prime Minister from June 1954 to February 1955. He proposed decolonisation policies, and opposed De Gaulle's proclamation of the Fifth Republic in 1958. This led to his expulsion from the Radicals, and he subsequently joined the Unified Socialist Party (PSU) and rapidly became its main leader.
22. The Parti socialiste (Socialist Party) was formed in 1969, replacing the Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière (SFIO — French Section of the Workers International), which until then had been the major socialist/social democratic party in France.
23. The third congress of the Parti socialiste took place in Epinay in June 1971, at which Mitterrand and his supporters took over its leadership.
24. Pierre Mauroy (1928-), a longstanding member of the SFIO/PS, was Prime Minister from May 1981 to June 1984; Jacques Delors was Mauroy's Minister of the Economy throughout his premiership.
25. See references elsewhere. The UNEF-ID, under 'Lambertist' leadership, was one of the national student unions that survived the splits of the 1970s.
26. That is, the former OCI-PCI.
27. The right-wing social democratic General Secretary of FO.
28. *La Révolution Proletarienne*, founded in 1925, was the traditional paper of the syndicalists.
29. The high-school teachers' union.
30. Union nationale des syndicats autonomes (National Federation of Independent Unions), a largely public sector union federation, founded in 1993 by the then leadership of the FEN. Where previously the FEN had included supporters of both the CGT and FO and stood for trades union unification, after 1993 UNSA was happy to see itself as 'professional' and outside the 'political' battles between other unions. In practice, its politics are conciliatory and loosely right-wing social democratic.
31. Lambert received 116 823 votes, 0.39 per cent of the total vote.
32. Mayors' signatures are a legal requirement for French Presidential candidates.
33. 'Various right' — that is, conservative but not aligned to major parties.
34. Meaning opposed to more powers for the EU.
35. Anti-EU conservative, at one point a notorious hard-line 'law and order' Interior Minister.
36. A region in north-east Algeria, mainly populated by the Berber ethnic minority and the traditional base for 'left social democratic' nationalism, but also with strong regionalist tendencies.
37. A working-class French description of a working-class Parisian accent.
38. Karim Landais joined the PT in 1999 and was active for two years. He then became an anarchist, but devoted much of his time to investigating the party which had

raised his hopes and then disappointed him. In 2005, just before his twenty-fifth birthday, he committed suicide. His copious writings have now been edited by Yves Coleman and published in two large volumes under the title *Passions militantes et rigueur historienne* (2006, no place or publisher given). [Enquiries and orders to Guy Landais, La Bastide des capucins, 84 240 Cabrières d'Aigues, France.] The first volume (823 pages — 20 €) deals with his researches on the PT and its antecedents, and contains some remarkable interviews with some of the veterans of French Trotskyism, notably Pierre Broué, Michel Lequenne, Boris Fraenkel, Alexandre Hébert and Charles Berg. Several of these interviews (in French) are also available at <http://www.meltl.com/>. (Note by Ian Birchall)

39. The PT, presenting itself as part of a loose anti-EU coalition, did very badly in the election — far worse than other 'far-left' groups.
40. <http://jeanalain.monfort.free.fr/Hentzgen/agir2.htm>.
41. MPPT: Mouvement Pour un Parti des Travailleurs (Movement for a Workers' Party) was the name of the 'campaign group' consisting of the OCI, some of Hébert's supporters and various OCI 'fronts' that went on to create the PT.
42. General De Gaulle proposed various constitutional reforms. These included a proposal for a Senate to include representatives of 'professions' — including unions — this was regarded on the left as an attempt to incorporate the labour movement into the state. The vote, held on 27 April 1969, rejected the proposals by 12.0 million to 10.9 million votes, and De Gaulle resigned shortly afterwards.
43. *Revolutionary History*, Volume 9, no 4.
44. Guy Mollet (1905-1975) led the SFIO during 1946-69 and was Prime Minister during 1956-57, during which time he involved France in the Suez adventure, and instituted repressive policies against the Algerian independence movement.
45. As leader of FO.
46. Far right, settler and military supporters of 'French Algeria'.
47. Of De Gaulle's 'coup'.
48. '*Monteur-levageur*' is the name of a trade in the building industry. Prémuey later notes that it 'disappeared', probably in the early 1960s. It literally means 'fitter-lifter'. A search of technical dictionaries and enquiries to comrades in the building trade have found no British equivalent. The French term has therefore been retained throughout. A number of other trades are mentioned later, some also lack an obvious British equivalent. For the sake of consistency I have retained the French terms throughout.
49. Trades Union Centre — most major French towns and cities have, or had, a building in which all local and/or regional unions had their offices, often with meeting-rooms and other facilities.
50. Health insurance office — see earlier notes on French Social Security.
51. The white-collar workers' and managers' union.
52. See note 48 on trades in the building industry.
53. See note 48.
54. See note 48.
55. A borough immediately north of Paris, part of the so-called 'Red Belt'.
56. The local body that brought together CGT unions in different workplaces, trades and industries.

57. The fall of France in June 1940.
58. Déat was one of a number of former Communist and 'Left' leaders who went over to the far right and tried to build mass 'people's movements' with the alleged aim of pushing the Vichy regime leftwards. In practice they became the hard-line Fascist elements within the conservative nationalist Vichy regime.
59. Pierre Monatte (1881-1960), a revolutionary syndicalist; founded *La Vie ouvrière* 1909; joined the PCF in 1923, expelled with Rosmer in 1924; founded *La Révolution Prolétarienne* in 1925.
60. In the late 1920s, the CGT had split with the PCF, leading the CGTU (Unified CGT) and accusing the 'old' CGT of selling-out to reformism
61. Alfred Rosmer (1877-1964) was an uncompromising revolutionary for over half a century, and observed and participated in some of the most important events of the age. A revolutionary syndicalist before 1914, he was one of the handful who opposed the war from the very first day. A supporter of the October Revolution, during the high tide of struggle between 1920 and 1924 he played a leading role in the Communist International, in the Red International of Labour Unions and in the PCF. Expelled from the PCF in 1924, he played an important role in the earliest phase of building the Left Opposition in Europe; although he broke politically with Trotsky, he maintained a close friendship and spent several months in Coyoacán shortly before Trotsky's murder. In 1938, he made his home available for the founding conference of the Fourth International. He remained an intransigent anti-Stalinist, but never made peace with his own bourgeoisie; in 1960, aged 83, he signed the Manifesto of the 121, supporting those who refused to take up arms against the Algerian people.
62. Confédération Française de Travailleurs Chrétiens (French Confederation of Christian Workers): the predominantly Catholic union. Traditionally regarded by the secular left as a scab union. In the 1960s, it was to split with the majority forming the CFDT, which was, briefly, a 'leftist' union, and is now solidly right-wing social democratic. The minority have continued the CFTC.



Obituaries

Karuppiah Appanraj (1923-2007)

KARUPPIAH Appanraj, a veteran of the Trotskyist movement in India, died at his home in Chennai (Madras) on 5 November 2007 at the age of 84. Appanraj had been a founding member of the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India (BLPI), the Indo-Ceylonese section of the Fourth International from 1942 to 1948. He played a key role in building the BLPI into a mass-based party in South India in the tumultuous and pivotal years leading up to the forced British withdrawal in 1947. I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to get to know Appanraj through the many letters that we exchanged over the last few years, while I was writing my book on the BLPI. More than anyone else, it was he who brought that history alive for me. Though he had drifted from the Trotskyist movement in his later years, he recounted his revolutionary past with pride and no regret. I offer this tribute as a salute to a man who devoted his life, from his teenage years to the very end, to the long and hard struggle for the freedom of his country and the uplift of all the oppressed.

Karuppiah Appanraj was born in 1923 at Madurai in the British Madras Province (now Tamil Nadu), the son of M Karuppia Servai. He grew up in exciting times. The Indian National Congress had already become a powerful mass movement capable of rousing millions from every walk of life to the bruising and bloody fight for freedom. In 1941, he enrolled at the American College in Madurai and became active in the Student Federation, in which the Communist Party was very influential. At that point the Communists were very anti-British. However, after the German invasion of the USSR, Stalin proclaimed that the 'imperialist war' had been transformed overnight into a 'peoples' war' against fascism. Appanraj opposed the new pro-British line of the Communists, and that brought him to the attention of some radical Congressmen who were sympathetic to the Fourth International. They took this promising contact to meet the Ceylonese Trotskyist organisers from the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) who had been dispatched to Madurai to help form a Trotskyist party on the mainland. Appanraj found his calling. At the age of 19, he joined the BLPI. Given the government repression, the BLPI had to be clandestine from the start. Appanraj used the cover name 'Giri'.

In August 1942, Gandhi made his famous 'do or die' speech in Bombay, calling upon his countrymen to paralyse the government and thereby force the British to 'quit India'. Faced with an imminent Japanese onslaught on India, the British were in no mood for conciliation. The government whisked Gandhi and the Congress high command off to jail. Riots erupted in Bombay, and the revolt rolled across India. The panicked British government responded with mass repression. Like his comrades elsewhere, Appanraj went underground and attempted to give leadership to the anarchic upsurge. Though the BLPI programme characterised Congress as 'the party of the bourgeoisie', Appanraj had the good sense to collaborate closely with the radical Congressmen who were in the vanguard of the movement. Using a cyclostyle machine hidden in a nearby village, Appanraj produced revolutionary propaganda in the name of the BLPI.

Even though the BLPI was a tiny party, the government was determined to nip it in the bud. In 1943, the police, acting on information provided by the Stalinists and other spies, swooped down on the Trotskyists in Madurai, Madras and Bombay. The BLPI was nearly crushed. But Appanraj escaped the roundup, and, without telling even his parents, fled to Madras. He had no money. He roomed with a former classmate at the Tambaram Christian College Hostel. The BLPI group in Madras became his new 'family'. The Madras branch was ably led by the LSSP transplant, SCC Anthony Pillai (1914–2000). Pillai became his political guru and a father figure to young Appanraj. He would remain devoted to Anthony Pillai for the rest of his life.

Appanraj got a job as a record clerk in the Madras & Southern Mahratta Railways (MSM), a hotbed of militant nationalism. However, within a few months the police tracked him down, and after another close call he again had to pack his bag quickly and slip away, this time to Coimbatore, an industrial city in western Tamil Nadu. At the age of 21, he was leading the nerve-wracking life of a revolutionary fugitive.

When the war ended, the BLPI surfaced to legality for the first time. That began a period of frenetic activity for young Appanraj. The BLPI sent him to Tuticorin in south Madras Province where the party had a group working in an important textile union. 'I organised a strong party group in Tuticorin and started some trade unions', he wrote in one of his letters to me, 'and I was the president for them.' He led a textile strike. In 1946, he returned to Madurai and led another strike at the Mahalakshmi Textile Mills. This was rough and risky work. The working-class slums were rife with crime and every other social pathology that fester in such fetid pools of poverty.

Appanraj was a gifted orator. When the BLPI called public meetings, thousands attended. He recounted what happened when the Communist Party sent thugs to disrupt one of his meetings:

The cadres of the BLPI, though small in number, retaliated and started a hand-to-hand fight with the Communists. The sympathisers of the party also directly intervened. From the dais, I threw a challenge to the Stalinists that the BLPI would hold another meeting in a week and if they have guts let them come and break up the meeting.

He made good on that promise. That was the end of the Stalinist attacks. Appanraj was also an effective recruiter:

I was a full-time party worker. I used to travel all over the District. At that time the BLPI was strong in the area around Bodi [Bodinayakanur]. Almost all the villages had BLPI units. In Thevaram we had such a strong unit that comrade Erulandi Thevar contested the election for president of the Panchayat Board and won.

During this period Appanraj also took leadership of a peasant union in Sholavandan, a town about 15 miles northwest of Madurai: 'The landlords and police tried their best to break the strike but could not. We organised rallies and public meetings regularly. Finally, the government backed down.' Appanraj drew these peasant militants into the work of the party in Madurai: 'I used to bring Peasant Union activists from Sholavandan to act as guards for our union meetings. In the dark night when I addressed the meetings, the swords that were brought by peasants would glitter under the lamps of the mill gate.'

The BLPI had its biggest success in Madras, where party cadres had made inroads into the labour movement during the war years, when the Stalinists opposed anything that would disrupt production for the war effort. In 1946, the Madras Labour Union, which represented the workers in the huge Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, elected BLPI leader Anthony Pillai president. In 1947, the union called a strike. The BLPI threw every available comrade into the struggle. Anticipating the inevitable repression, the Trotskyists formed a network of strike committees and a workers' defence corps with 1000 union men. For the next hundred days, Appanraj and his comrades led militant marches through the streets of Madras, staged massive open-air support rallies, skirmished with the police, and kept the ranks firm in the face of repression and severe financial hardship. The red flag of the union fluttered defiantly everywhere in the city.

The BLPI emerged from that landmark labour battle with tremendous prestige. In 1948, Anthony Pillai and seven of his comrades contested the elections for the Madras Municipal Corporation (city council). All were elected. The Trotskyist bloc began to implement measures that benefited the working class, such as setting up the Municipal Maternity Hospital, establishing dispensaries, and

building flats for slum dwellers. In 1948, Pillai was also elected president of the Madras Port Trust Employees' Union and became a member of the general council of the All-India Trade Union Congress. The BLPI was on the road to becoming a mass-based revolutionary party in South India.

Meanwhile, the BLPI was embroiled in an internal debate that was to have far-reaching consequences. Some party members in Bombay proposed that the BLPI enter the Congress Socialist Party with the objective of building up a left wing and then exiting stronger than before. Appanraj was opposed to this 'entry tactic'. He did not think that the Congress Socialist Party offered a fertile enough ground for recruitment to warrant the dissolution of the BLPI at a time when the party was poised to make progress. However, as the Congress Socialist Party grew rapidly during 1947-48, the entry faction gained ground. Appanraj wrote:

To their favour, the Congress Socialists exited the Congress and formed a separate party. They held their first conference at Madurai for three days, and on the final day their leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, addressed a mammoth public meeting which drew hundreds of thousands of people. No political leader except Mahatma Gandhi had pulled such a huge crowd. This indirectly convinced our cadres, who started to side with the pro-entry leaders in the BLPI. So my voice had gone with the wind.

In late 1948, the BLPI formally folded into the Socialist Party. Appanraj, then only 25 years old, accepted the majority decision, though with apprehension. In one of his last letters to me, he described the dissolution of the BLPI as 'a great tragedy'. Though he had opposed the entry, Appanraj tried his best to make it work. 'Since I happened to be a good orator', he wrote in his usual modest way, 'I gained influence not only with the leadership but also with the rank and file.' Whenever one of the national party leaders toured Tamil Nadu, Appanraj went along to translate. 'In all the towns thousands of people gathered in spite of the hot sun.' In 1951, he was appointed editor of the party weekly, *Samadharma Vathi* (*Socialist Appeal*).

In 1951, the Nehru government called the first general election since Independence. The Socialist leaders had high hopes that they could become the dominant opposition party. But Congress campaigned with its own socialist-sounding programme, backed up by a vast grass-roots machine. The Congress won in a landslide. Even the Communist Party won more seats in parliament than the Socialists. Traumatized and demoralized, the Socialist leaders negotiated a hasty marriage of convenience with a group of dissident Congressmen to produce the Praja Socialist Party (PSP). Appanraj and his comrades appealed

to the ranks to reject the merger and revitalise the Socialist Party on a more militant programme. The ignominious collapse of the Socialist Party showed that Appanraj had been right in his opposition to the entry tactic in 1948.

The Trotskyists were the brains and the backbone of the rump Socialist Party. The Madras group produced the party newspaper, *Socialist Appeal*, on the printing press at the Madras Labour Union. When they held their first conference at Madurai on 2 November 1952, their erstwhile comrades in the PSP attacked the meeting hall. Appanraj recalled the m \acute{e} l \acute{e} e: 'We had long sticks which could be used for two purposes — one was to fly the flags, the other was for our safety. We thrashed the attackers and many were wounded.'

As the Trotskyists predicted, the PSP was doomed to unravel. In July 1955, Ram Manohar Lohia, an old Socialist warhorse, left the PSP and launched his own rival Socialist Party. He appealed for Socialist unity. Anthony Pillai and his group, including Appanraj, joined forces with Lohia. Appanraj became president of the Tamil Nadu organisation. In 1956, he became editor of the Tamil edition of its journal, *Manaittha Kulam* (*Mankind*). His mentor, Anthony Pillai, became the leader of the Socialist Party in Parliament.

In the late 1950s, Ram Manohar Lohia went on a crusade to 'abolish English' (the *Angrezi Hatao* movement). Whatever the merits, that demand didn't play well in Tamil Nadu and other states in South India where Hindi was every bit as 'foreign' as English. 'As Tamil Nadu Socialist Party President', Appanraj recounted to me, 'I directly condemned Dr Lohia's behaviour. We held a party conference at Madurai. The party was split in two. We decided to continue our party as the "Socialist Workers Party".'

In 1962, the Socialist Workers fielded seven candidates for the Madras Assembly. Every single one lost. The ruling Congress Party claimed to be carrying out a 'revolution' in the social and economic relationships of India. Kamaraj, the Congress boss, invited all those who believed in socialism to return to the Congress fold. Some of the Socialists heeded his call. Appanraj wrote tersely: 'Likewise, we the Socialists in Tamil Nadu also joined Congress.' He became general secretary of the South Madras District Congress Committee (1968-74), president of the Tamil Nadu National Trade Union Congress (1974-76), and general secretary of the Tamil Nadu Congress (1979-80).

Having devoted his entire adult life to politics, Appanraj was not financially secure. He had a wife and three children to support. In 1972, the government established the 'Freedom Fighters' Pension' for Indians who had gone to jail or were fugitives in the long fight to oust the British. Appanraj applied, but the government rejected his application on the grounds that he could not prove that he had been an underground fighter. He appealed, and finally in 2003 the High Court in Madras ruled in his favour. He lived in retirement on that modest pension.

In the 1990s, some old BLPI veterans in Tamil Nadu got together and formed the Samadharma Ilakkiya Pannai (Socialist Publishing Society). Their goal was to publish Trotskyist literature in Tamil and in so doing, muster the forces to 're-launch' the BLPI. Appanraj gladly volunteered to help his old comrades. He produced *Puratchi Pathai (Way to Revolution)*, a translation of the book *Rise and Fall of the Comintern* by K Tilak (Leslie Goonewardene), which the BLPI had published in 1947. He also wrote *Anja nenjan: Thoyizh sangha medai SCC Anthoni Pillai, vazhikai varalaru (The Fearless One: Biography of the Labour Leader, SCC Anthony Pillai)*.

Reflecting on his life, I recall the oft-quoted lines from Wordsworth's poem about the French Revolution: 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive / But to be young was very heaven!' Appanraj had the opportunity to participate in one of the most dramatic, momentous mass movements of the twentieth century. He felt the tremors of revolution during the convulsive Quit India revolt of 1942-43, and he witnessed the power of the working class in the great Madras general strike of 1947. Thanks in no small part to his efforts, the BLPI in South India became a 'proletarian party' in actual composition, not just in theory, and that is something that few Trotskyist parties have ever achieved.

Karupiah Appanraj deserves to be honoured and remembered for what he was in his prime: a 'soldier of the revolution' who bravely fought for socialism under the banner of the Fourth International.

Charles Wesley Ervin

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Peter 'Pedro' Miguel Camejo (1939-2008)

PETER Camejo's story is that of a student who became politically active in the late 1960s, joined the US Socialist Workers Party, where his talents developed and were recognised. There also he acquired some of the undesirable organisational habits endemic in (but by no means restricted to) that party, but having been expelled from the SWP fought to find a politics of dedication to social justice and freedom that addressed the masses and resolutely eschewed all sectarianism. A happy counter-example to the dreary procession of renegade Trotskyists into neo-conservatism in the USA and its New Labour Siamese twin in the UK. Compiling these notes from the many informative obituaries on the internet has been a short voyage of discovery for one who was in political youth taught to despise Camejo as the very worst of all that was wrong with the SWP.

Camejo was born in the USA of Venezuelan descent, and spent most of his

childhood in Venezuela. This accident of birth ensured that later in life he was eligible to contest elections for the US Presidency. In 1960, he competed at the Rome Olympics as a yachtsman, representing Venezuela. With the benefit of hindsight it is possible to see in this youthful Camejo a gift for strategic navigation. The name 'North Star', ever the sailor's friend, was often to be associated with him in later life.

He studied first at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he first became involved in left-wing politics. Barry Sheppard has described how in 1958 he, as a member of the social-democratic Young People's Socialist League, was able to work with Camejo who was then already in the SWP's youth organisation, the Young Socialist Alliance (Camejo's initial interest in the Communist Party of the USA was broken by the Stalinist suppression of the Hungarian uprising). One of their first activities was to picket Woolworths stores, where racial segregation at the lunch counters was practised. Sheppard was soon to join the YSA, and thereafter the SWP. Together Camejo and Sheppard played a major role in the SWP's recognition in the summer of 1961 that a workers' state had been established in Cuba, following the decision by the 26 July movement to expropriate the capitalists.

Camejo studied history at the University of California, Berkeley, where he was elected to the student council. He was suspended from the University for 'using an unauthorised microphone' during a demonstration against the Vietnam War in 1967. Ronald Reagan, at that time state governor, described him as one of California's 10 most dangerous citizens. He was soon to be found engaged with the mass civil rights campaign, marching at Selma, Alabama. His talent as a public speaker was recognised very early, and he was fluent equally in Spanish and English.

In the Berkeley spin-offs from the battles of May 1968 in Europe, Camejo was engaged in creating an effective coalition of left groups among students, and organising the fight-back against police violence on and around the campus.

The SWP's successes in recruiting newly-radicalised students brought their own problems, specifically those of the dilution of the proletarian component in the membership, which was to have inevitable consequences for the political line. The Proletarian Orientation Tendency (POT), led by Larry Trainor and Alan Wald, warned that the working-class line would come under pressure to change from the energetic, coherent middle-class students. The POT urged a turn towards industry, and in the Boston area pre-emptively led it by taking blue-collar jobs. (The fact that they had to take such jobs and were not already in them speaks volumes.) Camejo was despatched to Boston to take control of the situation.

The Boston branch lagged behind the rest of the country in building the mass

anti-war movement. As branch organiser, and a rising young leader, the task was allotted to Camejo of destroying the POT and redirecting the branch towards the student movement. Camejo succeeded locally, and Jack Barnes succeeded nationally, in displacing the industrial proletariat from the centre of their politics and enthroning the new mass movements. At the same time, however, Camejo deployed his oratorical skills to great effect in the student anti-war campaigns in Boston. He also played a leading role in rallying the SWP membership against the guerrillaist mood that assailed the Trotskyist movement under the popular influence of Che Guevara. He was also one of the named litigants in the SWP's successful lawsuit against the CIA, launched in 1973.

Such had Camejo's status become in the SWP that in 1976 he was their candidate in the presidential election. He polled no more than 91 000 votes, a derisory figure arithmetically, but one that was to provide him with a resource of experience of huge value. It also substantially aided the SWP's recruitment and propaganda.

As is frequently the case, the victorious leadership, after a decent interval, adopted almost all the positions of the vanquished 'workerists', and conducted a (mainly botched) 'turn toward industry'. Not so Camejo; he had spent time in Nicaragua witnessing a living revolution, having been sent by the SWP to study and report. He duly reported to the August 1979 SWP Convention: 'The socialist revolution has begun in Nicaragua!'

Camejo continued to look outwards from what he was increasingly clearly seeing as Trotskyist sectarianism, arguing for work with non-Trotskyist socialist groups and parties, groping and grasping his way towards a more popular mass basis for socialism. This difference was eventually to lead to his expulsion. During his absence in Venezuela, Barnes, by then the SWP's leader, announced that Camejo had resigned. This is now known to have been a lie. He continued as a member of the International Executive Committee of what called itself the 'Fourth International' for another two years. His important document from 1983, 'Against Sectarianism', recognised the SWP's sectarianism while misdiagnosing its origins in 'workerism', and not, as Louis Proyect has made admirably clear, in a wrong conception of party building and a mistaken view of 'Bolshevism'.

In 1983, Camejo founded the North Star Network (NSN), named after the abolitionist Frederick Douglass' newspaper, describing it as a 'revolutionary but anti-sectarian' group, critical of the SWP under the Barnes/Carleton College leadership for its sectarianism, and for its inadequate support of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas. The NSN took a positive view of Jesse Jackson's 'rainbow coalition', and called for a re-evaluation of the 'official' communist parties in the light of what the NSN viewed to be their positive contributions in Cuba and Nicaragua.

Although mainly a West Coast phenomenon, the NSN recruited significant figures such as Carl Boggs and Myra Tanner Weiss. However, the NSN eventually proved to be an organisation only of the disaffected, and it inevitably disintegrated. At this point Camejo was less clear-sighted than at most points in his political career.

In the remainder of the 1980s, Camejo was casting about for opportunities for fruitful political work. He put considerable effort into working with allies in Australia and New Zealand, and with limited success discussed with the once promising 'Line of March' group that emerged apparently sane from US Maoism. In 1991, the fallout from the disintegration of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe seemed about to pay dividends as the CPUSA broke apart, creating an opening for reviving a discussion of the socialist line among the Committees of Correspondence (CoC). Eventually this too was to prove an *ignis fatuus*. In 1992, Camejo committed substantial personal resources into establishing the Progressive Alliance of Alameda County, an organisational effort that failed to sustain itself.

In 1987, Camejo co-founded Progressive Asset Management Inc, an Oakland investment firm that steered its clients' money into socially responsible funds. He remained its board chairman until his death. He argued that microelectronic technology had massively increased labour productivity, stabilising capitalism and laying the basis for a new phase of capitalist expansion. From this he developed an approach to fund management based on 'Socially Responsible Investment' (SRI), and published a book *The SRI Advantage* that argued that SRI-based investment strategies outperformed others. He also served as a board member of Earth Share, a federation of more than 400 environmental organisations, where he worked to promote solar energy.

Time had taught Camejo not to put all his eggs in one political basket, and not to allow anybody's grandmother to suck them all. While chasing down all the opportunities that the CoC offered, he had also participated in the foundation of the California Green Party in 1991, having come to recognise the force of those arguments that proposed there was a major threat to the future of humanity in the ecological crisis. Also, he correctly saw in the Green Party the only realistic chance for an attack from the left on the two-party hegemony, a chance to rewrite the political agenda.

When in 2000 the Green Party ran Ralph Nader as their presidential candidate, Camejo had a key role in winning and retaining support from the International Socialist Organization and Solidarity. This skilful positioning maximised the gains from the anti-globalisation demonstration in Seattle in 1999. (Camejo was quoted in 2002 as claiming that he was a watermelon — green on the outside but red on the inside.)

In 2002, Camejo stood in the state gubernatorial election in California for

the Greens, on a clear anti-war programme, and in support of the rights of undocumented workers. With a five per cent share of the state-wide vote, peaking at 16 per cent in San Francisco, this campaign was a major success, out-polling the Republicans in some areas. (Predictably he came under repeated criticism from those who thought the 1938 *Transitional Programme* of the Fourth International's founding conference was a full and sufficient platform for the 1990s.) His reputation as an impressive political speaker was boosted by every media appearance, and he built further on this in the recall referendum in 2003. One of his achievements during these campaigns was substantially to raise the level of interest in and understanding of ecological problems among 'communities of color'. This line of advance was blocked in 2004, however, when the Greens in effect backed down from the challenge to the Democrats and rejected Nader as their candidate. Camejo remained indefatigable, and again won the gubernatorial nomination in 2006, but by then his health was failing under the onslaught of the lymphoma that was eventually to conquer him. The Greens had come under severe criticism from 2004 onwards, in particular for taking votes away from John Kerry, who presented himself as the anti-war candidate. There were tendencies developing among the Greens to seek an alliance with 'progressive democrats'. Camejo succeeded in rallying the core of the Greens sufficiently to maintain an independent challenge.

The final phase of his political life was to complete his autobiography, under the title *North Star*, which has not yet been published.

Peter Camejo is survived by his wife Morella, his daughter Alexandra, his son Victor, three brothers Antonio, Daniel and Danny, and three grandchildren Andrew, Daniel and Oliver. He was a prolific writer, of articles, pamphlets and books. The following indicate the range of his concerns:

How to Make a Revolution in the United States, 1969.

Liberalism, Ultra-Leftism or Mass Action, 1970.

Guevara's Guerrilla Strategy: A Critique and Some Proposals, 1972.

The Racist Offensive Against Busing: The Lessons of Boston: How To Fight Back (with Willie Mae Reid and others), 1974.

Who Killed Jim Crow? The Story of the Civil Rights Movement and its Lessons for Today, 1975.

Racism, Revolution, Reaction, 1861-1877: The Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction, 1976.

Stop the Deportations, 1977.

The Lesser Evil: The Left Debates the Democratic Party and Social Change, 1978.

The SRI Advantage: Why Socially Responsible Investing Has Outperformed Financially (with Geeta Alyer and Samuel Case), 2002.

Bridget St Ruth

Pete Glatter (1949-2008)

PETE Glatter, who died in March 2008, was a revolutionary activist and writer for some 40 years. Pete was the child of Jewish refugees from Vienna. According to a story he liked to tell, his first act of rebellion came at the time of his Bar Mitzvah. Pete was preparing enthusiastically, and learning a Hebrew song. Then one day he was visiting the rabbi, and the latter asked him to remind his father to send the money. Pete was so shocked that payment was involved that he refused to proceed with the Bar Mitzvah.

Over the next few years, he broke sharply with his childhood religion and, even more importantly, with Zionism. But he retained an implacable hatred of all forms of racism.

In 1968, he joined the International Socialists (IS: forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party). He was somewhat hesitant, and another comrade filled in the membership form on his behalf. It was nonetheless a decision that was to shape his remaining 40 years. As an activist in Kingston he helped to recruit Harry Wicks to IS.

Pete had become a student and was involved in the struggles of the time. At an occupation at Kingston Polytechnic, students were presented with the choice of a motion to occupy, and one emanating from Jack Straw (then president of NUS) proposing that they should write to their MPs. With the tactical common sense he was often to show later, Pete urged them to vote for both resolutions.

Pete was critical of the IS student strategy, believing that we should concentrate on students in the newly-created Polytechnics and in FE colleges, who suffered from the worst conditions. His first article in *International Socialism* (no 47, 1971), 'Second Class Students', dealt with this question. Beyond the tactical question, he was undoubtedly right when he wrote of the continuing drive to 'subordinate directly more and more of the student's life to purely capitalist ends'.

The early 1970s were the time of the biggest wave of working-class militancy in Britain since 1926, the years of the Saltley picket and the Pentonville Five. Pete abandoned his studies to put himself at the heart of the struggle, and for many years worked as a London busman.

He enthusiastically supported the 1972 miners' strike, but remained totally irreverent towards the bureaucracy of the labour movement. During the strike he and another young worker, Vic Richards, wrote a letter to *Socialist Worker* that said: 'Miners should use the coming lobby of parliament to make the left MPs fight. Stand your MP on the line in front of a scab lorry — and see what happens.'

The IS perspective at this time was the building of rank-and-file groups, and Pete was involved in the formation of a London bus workers' bulletin called

The Platform. According to figures from the IS print-shop, three issues were produced in 1973, with a print order of 3000, of which 50 per cent were paid for. In the industrial report to the 1974 IS conference, the section on the bus industry—undoubtedly written with Pete's involvement—realistically pointed to the difficulties of building a bus workers' fraction with a range of different employers and the problem of getting workers together at the same time since they were always 'on the road'. Nonetheless, the hope was for 'the building of a national busmen's organisation which is large enough to have influence in every region'.

But as well as his activities as a trade unionist and an IS member, Pete found time for historical work. His first major article was about the 1930s: 'London Busmen: Rise and Fall of a Rank & File Movement' (*International Socialism*, no 74, 1975). He had dug out original documents, including copies of the rank-and-file paper *The Busman's Punch*, but also brought to the study his own experience of involvement in a similar project. He showed the strengths and weaknesses of the Communist Party, told the story of the Coronation Strike in 1937 and recalled a bus workers' song to the tune of Clementine that asked: 'What's the use of having a pension / Unless you are still alive?'

In March 1974, Pete was one of over 500 delegates to the National Rank and File Conference. He spoke, calling for more specific organisation around rank-and-file papers rather than a general newsletter for the movement.

Pete was a talented linguist and also involved himself in IS's international work. In July 1975, I travelled (as interpreter) with Pete, another bus worker called Les Kay and a young civil servant to Brussels to meet a group of rank-and-file bus workers there. In those hopeful days the possibility of an international rank-and-file movement seemed to be something we could aspire to.

Pete and Les shared the driving and there was much criticism of each other's road skills. But they also regaled us with stories of their confrontations with management and with union bureaucrats. In fact this was just after Denis Healy had introduced wage controls which would mark a sharp turn in the pattern of class struggle, but these young workers were still full of the self-confidence bred of the preceding years of militancy. That sense of working-class strength would stay with Pete for the rest of his life.

When we re-entered Britain, we were held up while customs officials spent an inordinate amount of time dealing with the vehicle in front, occupied by a black family. Pete and his mates jumped out of the car and accused the customs men of racism.

Later that summer Pete was in Portugal at the high point of the revolution. He also took a close interest in Italy, and especially in Avanguardia Operaia, with whom IS had close links at the time. He recognised the value of AO's work

in building CUBs. (Unitary Base Committees — autonomous rank-and-file committees), but was critical of the political weaknesses that would lead to its decline after 1976.

For most of the 1970s, he worked as a bus driver, then became an ambulance driver. With the advent of Thatcher and the downturn in industrial struggle, the rank-and-file groups came to an end. But Pete remained committed to revolutionary politics and to building the SWP, believing it would have a vital role when a new wave of struggle arose. He said to me quite recently that he had never been disappointed in the SWP because he had never expected more than what it gave him. What it had given him was a rigorous but flexible Marxist view of the world and a permanent commitment to activism.

Pete had a naturally friendly and generous personality. But he also believed in honesty and plain-speaking. I recall in the 1980s speaking at a meeting of Brixton SWP, where Pete was a leading member. Smugly, I felt I had spoken rather well, but at the end Pete took me on one side and said 'That was good — *but not good enough!*', and proceeded to tell me what I had failed to do.

In the 1980s Pete opted for an academic career. He took a first-class degree in Russian and became a research student at the University of Wolverhampton. Through this he became both a close friend and an intellectual collaborator with Mike Haynes.

Unfortunately, Pete did not manage to get a permanent academic job. Doubtless his intransigent Marxism and his deviation from orthodoxy did not help his career prospects. He worked at both the British Library and Amnesty International.

He was now writing more extensively, both for the SWP press and for academic journals. There is an excellent account of his work in Mike Haynes' article on Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pete_Glatte), and an archive of his writings at <http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/glatte/>. Pete had always been particularly enthusiastic about the 1905 revolution, and had considered writing a book for the centenary. When that fell through, he was very pleased to be put in touch with *Revolutionary History*, and he agreed to edit a special issue devoted to 1905 (Volume 9, no 1, 2005). Here he translated a substantial amount of material previously unknown in English and enriched our understanding of these crucial events. He attended the *Revolutionary History* editorial board regularly, and was pleased to make new friends and to work with a group of people from varying political standpoints but united in their concern with the history of the socialist movement. He was particularly pleased at working with Brian Pearce, who he felt had given him a 'master class' in translation skills.

Pete published several articles on 1905, dealing with various aspects — the

impact of the Russian-Japanese war, the role of women workers, etc. But his central concern was a theme that fascinated him and which he wished to pursue further, what he called 'change through struggle' (the subtitle of the *Revolutionary History* volume), the way in which working people set out to change the world and transformed themselves in the process.

Although now in his late fifties, Pete seemed to be at the height of his powers, and his intellectual curiosity was undimmed. It seemed reasonable to think his best work was still ahead of him. For the last 14 years of his life, his close friendship with the Chilean Monica Riveros became an intellectual partnership that was crucial to his development of new ideas.

His studies of Russia led him to new fields of enquiry, for example the criticism of 'elite theory'. During the *Historical Materialism* conference in late 2006, he was very active in making contacts with visitors from Russia and with scholars of Russia from the USA. He was also making plans with Neil Faulkner to respond to right-wing revisionist accounts of the First World War and the Russian Revolution with 'a grand narrative account of the global crisis of 1914-1921'.

He took a keen interest in my biography of Tony Cliff (Cliff had been an important influence on him). When I became demoralised at my lack of progress, he was very encouraging, and for a time it was agreed he would phone me once a month to check that I was up to schedule and not slacking.

Recently he had had health problems, but his friends were shocked to learn that he was suffering from a rare form of sporadic CJD which affects about one person in 20 million. I spoke to him on the phone late in 2007 when he was already in hospital, and he was anxious for news of the SWP. But the illness produced massive loss of memory. When I visited him a few weeks before his death, he thought I had been sent from Cottons Gardens (the IS headquarters in the early 1970s). By now he was living in a world of his own fantasies. But when I mentioned the names Lenin and Cliff there was a strong reaction — his revolutionary commitment was clearly at the very core of his being.

His funeral at Golders Green Crematorium was attended by close to a hundred friends and comrades who had shared his life and struggles and various times. One of the most moving moments was the reading of a poem by his daughter Nadine. As often happens, parent-child relations had not run smooth. But her account of the ups and downs was marked by a combination of warmth and honesty which showed just how much she had inherited from her father.

As we celebrate the fortieth anniversary of 1968, it is fashionable for supercilious media commentators to disparage the events of that year. If any investigative reporter had ventured out of the closed, self-congratulatory circle in which so many journalists dwell in order to attend Pete's funeral, they could

have met literally dozens of Pete's friends who, in their varying commitments and activities, have, like Pete, stayed true to what they learned in that year of workers' power.

Ian Birchall

Jorge Guidobono (1944-2007)

COMRADE Jorge Guidobono died on 2 September 2007 in Buenos Aires.

At the age of 12 he became involved in the struggle for the student bus discount in Uruguay. Two years later he was part of the high school movement to support university students fighting for university autonomy. In 1962, he became an employee of the principal bank in Uruguay, bought by Rockefeller interests. He led a successful strike in 1966, but was fired several months later during the state of siege. The workers responded with a strike that lasted five days.

In 1965, he joined the only Trotskyist organisation in Uruguay at that time: the POR Posadista. He participated in editing their newspaper, but broke with Posadism in 1969. Together with other comrades, he formed the Liga Espartaco, and wrote sharp attacks on the Frente Amplio in the newspaper *Marcha* in 1971 and 1972 in a polemic with the Communist Party. At this time he joined the PRT (later to become the PST). He became part of the editorial team of the PST's review *América y de Avanzada Socialista*.

Later he reached an agreement with the current led by Nahuel Moreno, whose organisation in Uruguay was led by Ernesto Gonzalez. He was exiled to Argentina in January 1974, and joined the leadership of the Argentinean PST. He and about 50 comrades were involved in a confusing split in May 1992, and left the MAS in September.

On 10 October 1992, the Liga Socialista Revolucionaria was founded together with the newspaper *Bandera Roja*. The name 'League' was used to express a political view contrary to the Stalinist conception that some existing group was already 'The Party'.

Bandera Roja has since published 80 issues, and the LSR is presenting a list of candidates for the October elections in Buenos Aires: Luis Calcagno and Barbara Calarescu are candidates for national Senators; Hugo Benitez, Celeste McDougall and Claudio Andreotti are running for Congress. The central theme of the campaign is 'Socialist Revolution or More Capitalist Barbarism'.

He had contributed a number of major articles, including 'The Long March of the Revolution' in 1994, 'Trotskyism Under the Dictatorship' in 1996, and 'NATO Occupies the Balkans' in 1999.

Translated by E Gilman from *El Nuevo Topo*.

Celia Hart Santamaría (1963-2008)

CELIA Hart Santamaría (CHS) has attracted a great deal of attention among the Trotskyist currents for her claim to be a Trotskyist able, or at least proposing, to reconcile Trotsky's revolutionary thought and strategy with that of the regime that emerged from the revolution led by Fidel Castro and by Che Guevara. (Those currents have not admitted the challenge of the strategic divergence/s between Fidel and Che. No more had CHS.) Immediately this raises once again the decades-long argument within Trotskyism on the nature and class character of the Cuban state; the phenomenon which she constituted cannot even be described without taking a view on this question. In those states which the majority of Trotskyists can bring themselves to agree had been Stalinist (the East European 'buffer zone', China, North Korea), the eventual re-emergence of interest in Trotsky was widely expected, even where the experience of presently-existing Trotskyism proved a disappointment to the new Trotskyists. The question in Cuba is less straightforward. In Cuba, Trotskyism (along with anarchism) had been suppressed as effectively as in the acknowledged Stalinist states. Years of support to the Cuban regime by the US SWP and its international allies, as well as some minor currents, had not resulted in any indication of interest in Trotskyism among workers or intellectuals — successive US Presidents had seen to it that Cubans united behind the regime. The Castro regime found nothing in Trotskyism to suppress after the POR(T) was broken in 1973. And yet, a Trotskyist comet burst out of the Cuban sky (clear pure popular blue, or starless Stalinist black, according to your analysis). Such was CHS.

CHS and her brother Abel were killed in a car accident on Sunday, 7 September 2008 while travelling through the Miramar district of Havana, Cuba. They were the children of Haydée Santamaria, a major figure in the Cuban revolution, one of the band who (with Fidel and Raúl Castro, Che Guevara and others) attacked the Moncada Barracks on 26 July 1953, and of Armando Hart, who was already imprisoned as a student leader of the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR) at the time of the Moncada attack and for many years served the revolution as Minister of Culture.

CHS studied physics, first at the University of Havana, and from 1982 at Dresden in the (then) German Democratic Republic. She described how she was repelled by the personality cult of Honecker, and the suffocating effect of the rule of the bureaucracy, while admiring the standard of living achieved in the GDR's planned economy: (The US paper *Labor Standard* has reproduced a speech of Fidel Castro in 1968, in which he reports that Cuba scholarship students in the Stalinist states were depressed and demoralised with the politics they encountered.) During a holiday in Cuba, she discussed her impressions

and doubts with her father, who gave her Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed* and Deutscher's biography of Trotsky to read.¹ She has described her powerful response to these illuminations, how they made sense of the conflict between her love for the revolution and her loathing of the reality that had emerged from it in the GDR. It was to be some time before she had access to further Trotskyist material. In the GDR there were tiny numbers influenced by, and tinier numbers in contact with, the larger international Trotskyist tendencies, but they would have been well advised to avoid contact with distinguished overseas students. Despite this lack of political contact, she has described herself outraging friends by predicting the collapse of the GDR, on the basis of the absence of socialism from its ethos and operation.

After completing her studies in 1987, she returned to Cuba and resumed scientific work at the University of Havana, receiving a PhD in physics. Consistent with her energy and commitment, she wrote a considerable number of scientific papers. She specialised in magnetism and superconductivity, contributing particularly to the development of magnetic resonance imagery, which had valuable medical applications.

Having had the opportunity to read more of Trotsky, as a result of which she has said 'Everything fell into place', she left the university in 2004 to devote her time and energy to political writing and speaking. It is not clear how her new career was economically possible. In Cuba the most distinguished of academics are very poorly paid, and one meets numerous holders of doctorates who have abandoned academe for the chance to earn a slightly better living as tourist guides and bar staff. But the life of a freelance writer pushing a minority political line must be beyond precarious. And most of the Trotskyist journals and websites do not regularly pay for contributed articles or interviews.

Her first article promoting Trotsky, 'The Flag of Coyoacán,' appeared in November 2003 on a Spanish website promoting Cuba solidarity, but attracted little attention. In May 2004, however, when the Cuban magazine *Tricontinental* published her article "'Socialism in One Country" and the Cuban Revolution', this in effect launched her international career as a Trotskyist. The US group Socialist Action translated and published it in pamphlet form, and as a supplement to their monthly newspaper. Walter Lippmann, a Los Angeles-based socialist activist and long-time friend of the Cuban revolution, also posted a translation of the article on his website, which focuses mainly on Cuba. She quickly became a much in demand speaker at conferences of Trotskyist tendencies around the world, among them the International Marxist Tendency (Grant-Woods), the 'official' Fourth International and the Freedom Socialist Party/Radical Women, accepting opportunities to speak at their conferences, having her writings distributed on their websites and printed in their journals.

Even *Workers Vanguard*, on most occasions predictably the grouchiest of critics (when it can bring itself to recognise the existence of individuals outside its tendency at all), found a kind word to say of her.

CHS, however, was careful not to join any of the organisations that welcomed her. And she described the differences among them as insignificant, deriving from their isolation. Nor, as far as we can tell, did she attempt to build a Trotskyist organisation of any kind in Cuba. In an interview she described herself as a 'Trotskera', not a Trotskyist — that is, an independent follower of Trotsky's ideas, not a member of a Trotskyist organisation.

In her articles she claims Trotsky as a true and misunderstood ally of the Cuban revolution, and particularly sought to reconcile Trotskyist and Guevarist positions. That this endeavour had become possible at all is noteworthy, and the courage required to undertake it is admirable. '*Trotsky comes to us from within our own ranks. He is the twin brother of Che.*', she writes. The essence of her position has been distilled in a number of articles about her, which is broadly in line with that of the Joseph Hansen tendency in the US SWP and its international allies, that the Soviet Stalinists exercised a harmful influence over the Cuban revolution, but did not succeed in destroying it as they did in the European satellites. A powerful bureaucracy developed during the period of Soviet influence, but during and following the 'special period' (the decade following the collapse of Stalinism in Europe and its economic support for Cuba) this was beaten back and is now no more than a potential danger.

CHS described to the USA paper *Labor Standard* a letter from Fidel Castro (whom she had known from childhood) which concluded with the assertion that she was not to be discouraged from expressing her views. '*No one will hurt a single hair on your beautiful head*', wrote Castro. We are forced to conclude that the Trotskyists of the POR(T) suppressed and imprisoned by the Castro regime in the 1960s and into the early 1970s must have had ugly heads indeed to have earned Fidel's vituperations. As far as we know, CHS never criticised the suppression of the POR(T), but one article about her reported she had made contact with some of the elderly survivors of the POR(T) who had historically been influential among the working class in the city of Guantanamo, in particular 90-year-old Ydalberto Ferrera (who served out five years of his nine-year sentence) and his son Juan Leon Ferrera (sentenced to nine years, of which he served only 18 months, discharged as a model prisoner).

(For readers to whom the history of Trotskyism in Cuba is unfamiliar, we recommend 'The Hidden Pearl of the Caribbean. Trotskyism in Cuba', *Revolutionary History*, Volume 7, no 3 (Socialist Platform, London, 2000). This volume consists of edited sections from Gary Tennant's PhD thesis, and a selection of supporting documents. The full thesis is available at <http://>

www.cubantrotskyism.net/PhD/central.html. Also of importance, at www.whatnextjournal.co.uk/Pages/History/Cuba.html are primary documents on the POR(T)'s dispute with the Barnes SWP on the facts of the POR(T)'s positions and activity prior to their repression, and which bear upon the failure of the various international currents adequately to support the POR(T).)

A rumour received some circulation to the effect that she had been expelled from the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) in 2005. She publicly denied this, saying she had voluntarily left the party, while determined to continue to defend the Cuban revolution from outside the ranks of the PCC. Why she felt better able to defend the revolution outside than inside the ruling party has not yet been elucidated. The facts that she and Abel were buried among prominent supporters of the revolution, and that the deaths were reported in *Granma* and on state TV (with of course no reference to her political line) would seem to bear out her claim to a considerable, but not conclusive, extent. Some of her reported conversations indicate that her membership was 'suspended' for a period before her departure, during which 'the plug was pulled' on her right to promote her positions within the party. She referred in interviews to comrades who could not reconcile her Trotskyism with her defence of the Cuban revolution, but so far we do not seem to have the benefit of access to records of any such discussions within the PCC. (For the sake of completeness in the record, I mention an article 'Celia Hart: In Memoriam', by Jorge Gómez Barata, from the Cuban weekly *Progreso* (18-24 September 2008), which disputes what Barata takes to be CHS's positions. This is available on Walter Lippmann's website, though he makes clear his distaste for it.) Nor is it clear that she had any formal status within the PCC that would require her views to be considered (though the matter of her distinguished parentage and personal friendship with Fidel Castro may well have weighed more heavily than whether she had the support of any constituency). At the time of writing, these would seem to remain unresolved questions.

Her descriptions of her position in relation to the tendencies present within the PCC, and their approaches to the crisis arising from the illness of Fidel Castro, at least as far as they are available in English, are at best gnomic. It is however fairly clear from a number of sources that she opposed the line of Raúl Castro, the 'Chinese Road' to re-establishment of capitalism with a strong state influence (describing it on at least one occasion as 'a nightmare possibility'). The available data are inadequate to allow us at this point to assess whether her voluntary separation from the party was an outward sign of a hidden stage in the PCC's progress towards a strategic decision.

CHS found a platform in a wide range of international speaking engagements. In November 2007, she participated in a rally in Caracas, Venezuela, calling for

a 'Yes' vote in the constitutional referendum on 2 December 2007 on a basis of critical support to Chávez. She participated in the November 2006 conference in Algeria in solidarity with the working women of Nazareth (Palestine).

An aspect of CHS received little appreciation among the international Trotskyist tendencies — her focus on the sensuous, physical side of human life. A comparison with Kollontai is inevitable. Here, for example, in an interview for *Rebelión*, she describes Fidel Castro, responding to an accusation that he is 'macho':

People exist who do not know how to use any of their senses or sensuality. The corruption of this civilisation, the lack of sensuality; the inability to achieve orgasm, the spiritual frigidity (anorgasmia) in which we live, and of which we are all guilty, has turned us into *nothings*, neither men nor women, neither machos nor hembras nor gays, neither rhinoceroses nor bees.

It's obvious that he's macho! Whoever among us is a woman, whether of the hips or of the heart — and all genuine men and women, if they are sincere — must recognise that Fidel is the 'leader of the pack' or 'chief horse of the herd'. And he's a stud horse who sires good fillies and colts.

I'm not being sexist. The dominant horse in a herd is something that exists, as are Alpha males and females, macho men and dominatrixes. (The queen bee, for example, is the boss of the beehive.) I am overpowered by Fidel's hands. He moves them as if he were a flamenco dancer. Guayasamín [the Ecuadorian painter Oswaldo] has painted them very well. They dance, they whirl about, they contain ideas, and there is no way, no human way anyhow, of resisting the movement of those hands.

It would be entertaining to observe such ideas presented at one of those interminable 'aggregate meetings' in dreary rooms above London pubs, that constitute the inner life of Trotskyism. Nevertheless, the Trotskyists who have obituarised her all found her a warm and lovable comrade. (All of them assumed the right to write about her under her first name.)

Some of CHS's political articles in English can be found at websites, including the Marxists Internet Archive <http://www.marxists.org/archive/celia-hart/index.htm>. This selection is based substantially on the material assembled by Walter Lippmann (<http://www.walterlippmann.com/celiahart.html>). Material is continuing to be translated and posted at a rapid rate and any attempt at a list would be out of date before this journal goes to print. A broader range of her writings in Spanish may be found on the website www.rebellion.org. At least three selections of her articles are available in print, including *It's Never*

Too Late To Love Or Rebel, and *Celia Hart Speaks: The Cuban Revolution and a World in Revolt*. All of this material is central to the urgent task of clarifying the Trotskyist line on Cuba.

Celia Hart Santamaria, 46, is survived by her two sons, José Julián (16) and Ernesto (11).

Corula Star

Ludwik Hass (1918-2008)

I MET Ludwik Hass twice, the first time at the Wuppertal conference on Trotskyist History in March 1990 and the second time at a conference on Social Democracy and Bolshevism in Moscow in July 1991. I also had some correspondence with him about the Polish issue of *Revolutionary History* (Volume 6, no 1), much of which is devoted to Hass or is by him and from which material much of this obituary has been derived. We had some difficulty communicating because he had no English, for though he spoke Russian and German as well as Polish, his French was no better than mine and so we spoke in fractured French.

Hass, a small man, was a most impressive individual and seemed quite fearless. We were in Moscow just before the collapse of Stalinism later that year, and, faced with some minor bureaucratic hurdle of the usual Russian kind, Hass went for the minor bureaucrats in his fluent Russian with such fury and contempt that I wondered if we would both end up in the Lubyanka, even though I assumed that hopefully he knew what he was doing. But that was typical of him, for according to both Elżbieta Wichrowska and Janusz Maciejewski, he never made any concessions and always expressed himself forcefully about 'liberals' or Stalinists 'not always very politely'. But he was lucky, lucky to have survived.

Hass was born of assimilated middle-class Jewish parents, loyal Poles, educated in the Humanities Gymnasium in Stanisławowo (now in the western Ukraine) and he was at the University of Lvov (or if you are Polish Lwów, or if Ukrainian Lviv, or if Austro-Hungarian Lemberg), where he became a Trotskyist. At the time of the Hitler-Stalin partition of Poland in 1939, he was on the Soviet side of the line. It is not generally appreciated that the Trotskyists maintained themselves in German-occupied Poland for about three years, producing underground journals until most of them were murdered, but generally as Jews rather than as Reds. But this was not so on the Russian-occupied side, for, needless to say, the first people the NKVD arrested were the Trotskyists. However, because of a bureaucratic muddle between the different sections of the Russian political police Hass was sent to Vorkuta and not immediately executed. It is a little bit unclear from the account he gave in an interview to three Polish journalists

(*Revolutionary History*, Volume 6, no 1, p 72) about the situation at the time of the German invasion in August and September 1941 when the Poles, or the vast majority of military age, were released from the camps if they volunteered to join Anders' army, because he was marched back to the camp. But it would be entirely in keeping with his character if he had refused to serve. Again he was lucky, and because of his education was employed in the office rather than down the mine where he says he would certainly have died. He finished his sentence in the labour camp in 1948, but had to do the same job in the same area as a sort of ticket-of-leave man. Again he was quite fearless, and though it was forbidden he seemed to have travelled through parts of Russia which he was not supposed to do. After the death of Stalin, things got easier and most of the few Poles surviving in the camps were returned home. He went rather later in 1957, among the last if not the very last, after some agitation by a Catholic student organisation seeking the return of all the Poles. Those who had returned earlier had brought news of his existence and survival.

The arrival in Warsaw was quite a performance. At the railway station there was a welcoming delegation of students, but he stepped up on the soap-box provided, announced that he was coming back as a revolutionary to overthrow the bureaucracy and then sang the 'Internationale' giving the clenched fist salute. This everyone thought rather astonishing if not totally mad. Together with others he took part in intellectual discussion circles, made contact with the Fourth International in Paris, and eventually with others was sentenced to three years in prison in 1965 when a temporarily slightly more 'liberal' period came to an end.

Politically he does not appear to have been so active for some years afterwards, the times were much less propitious, but he managed to do a massive amount of historical work and produce a few articles about the working-class movement in Poland in the interwar period, and he became the foremost expert on Polish freemasonry with its political role. Most of his efforts, however, bore their publishing fruit later. With the rise of the working-class movement in Poland in the late 1970s he again became active. He believed that it was necessary to enter *Solidarność*, even if it was Catholic and opposed to Marxism, because that was where the workers in struggle were. The situation started to become critical, and, as Hass points out in an interview with Hörst Hanisch³ in October 1981, the ideas of a few tiny groups of Trotskyists were starting to be attractive to wider sectors of the class than ever before, to the youth above all. A few weeks later in December the coup occurred, the shutters came down and the bureaucracy negotiated in prison and made a deal with the right wing of Solidarity — helped always by the Church. Hass with the rest of the far-left was kept in prison another year until the situation had been stabilised. When he

came out the world had changed, for the possibility of revolutionary situations never last for very long as they are but fleeting moments of opportunity. Hass believed they had made mistakes, but the number of cadres was tiny, and the bureaucracy and the Holy Church were far from stupid.

It was then in this period late in his life that most of most of his scholarly work was finally published, including four of his five books on freemasonry in 1982, 1984, 1987 and 1993. Only in 1979 at the age of 61 was he made a member of the History Institute of Polish Academy of Science, and in 1986 he was made a professor.

Hass never gave up, he remained true to his convictions to the end of his life, and he was a man of enormous, almost suicidal, courage. He leaves a wife and son. A video clip of Hass's funeral can be seen at <http://youtube.com/watch?v=E-Wq4htjuyQ>.

Ted Crawford

Incidentally, we have a good many copies of the Polish issue of *Revolutionary History* (Volume 6, no 1) and we are making them available at a special price of £2 each + £1 p&p. E-mail me at tcrawford@revhist.datanet.co.uk. I will send you my snail-mail address for cheques or POs. Readers abroad will have to pay more for p&p and need to make different payment arrangements with me.

Sy Landy (1931-2007)

SY Landy, National Secretary of the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) since its founding in 1976, died of cancer at the age of 76 on 28 November 2007.

Born of the working class on 7 May 1931, in Brooklyn, New York, Sy (Seymour) Landy remained a champion of the struggles of his class to the end. Living modestly and fighting boldly for revolutionary politics, Sy resisted pressures to accommodate to this wretched imperialist world — in contrast to so much of the left of his and subsequent generations. He told his comrades that the struggle for socialism had given his life its meaning and remains humanity's only hope. As a political thinker and leader, Sy Landy contributed more than any other individual in the past half century to resurrecting and advancing genuine proletarian revolutionary Marxism in the aftermath of the Fourth International's decisive degeneration in 1952.

Sy entered political life as a student at Brooklyn College in the early 1950s, when there was no authentic revolutionary organisation. Under the impact of the expansion of the middle classes and labour aristocracy during the post-Second World War economic boom, the various left groups had in reality given up on Marxism's first principle: that the emancipation of the working class

must be the task of the working class itself.

Sy joined the Independent Socialist League led by Max Shachtman, an organisation which had separated from Trotskyism in 1940 in the name of the supposed 'Third Camp' and which had increasingly accommodated to American 'democratic' imperialism and its trade-union bureaucracy. He was a leader of a left current in the Shachtmanite tendency that opposed Shachtman's shift toward the bourgeois Democratic Party, and broke with Shachtman over his support for the US's 'Bay of Pigs' invasion of Cuba in 1961. Sy helped found and lead the Independent Socialist Clubs (ISC), which changed its name to the International Socialists (IS) in 1969.

The late 1960s saw the real turning point in Sy's political life, the beginning of a break that eventually led to the existence of the LRP today. He was inspired both by the Black ghetto uprisings that shook the major cities of the US, and by the powerful general strike of the working class in France in 1968. As he often explained, such mass upheavals were a demand for revolutionary leadership. Combined with a period of international travel and intensive re-study of Trotsky's writings, these events drove Sy fully to grasp the power of the working class as a class, as well as the vital role that would have to be played by Black and other racially and ethnically oppressed workers around the world in building the international vanguard party.

Sy became convinced of the need to revive the essentials of Trotskyism as the revolutionary Marxism of our time. It was necessary to 'say what is' to the working class so that it could develop its own consciousness and capacity to make the revolution. And it was necessary above all to demonstrate in theory and practice to our fellow workers that, as Trotsky taught us, 'the world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by an historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat'. Building the revolutionary party as the expression of the advanced communist consciousness of our class was the key to uniting the working class and the oppressed in the fight for socialist revolution.

Sy was the main leader of the Revolutionary Tendency in the IS, which became the Revolutionary Socialist League when it was expelled in 1973. He led a fight in the RSL against its degeneration, which led to the formation of the LRP to preserve and extend the RSL's gains. The full lessons of the mass struggles of the period were drawn out in these factional struggles.

Our understanding of the centrality of the working class and its revolutionary consciousness is fundamental to all of the LRP's politics. In particular, within the international left, the LRP has become best known for its theoretical viewpoint on Stalinism and the 'Russian Question.' The analysis of Stalinism, the 'Russian Question' and the epoch of imperialist decay is developed in detail in our book *The Life and Death of Stalinism: A Resurrection of Marxist Theory* by Walter

Daum, for which Sy wrote the foreword.

In writing this initial brief statement about Sy's life and work, we must speak frankly. Since our birth in 1976, the level of class struggle, in the US especially, has remained far more stagnant than all of us hoped for. Since the LRP bases itself on the advancing class consciousness of our fellow workers, we have always understood that our growth would inherently be tied to the resurgence of class struggle and the desire of more workers to look for genuine communist politics as a result of direct experience. So we know that our feelings of profound debt to Sy and our admiration for him might be discounted by many — since our group is still small and our programme of workers' socialist revolution seems so outlandish to many who have given up on it. But it would be a cynical mistake to discount our theoretical and practical accomplishments for such reasons.

As Sy wrote in reflecting on the LRP:

Trotsky taught us to have little patience with those who judged an organisation by size alone. Such people, he said, had only achieved trade union consciousness, not revolutionary consciousness. The decisive question in evaluating a political organisation is the power and relevance of its political ideas. If our politics actually reflect the real interests of the working class and point out the road ahead, then with the necessary initiative and courage the numbers will come. (*Twenty Years of the LRP*)

Sy loved life passionately, and wore his heart on his sleeve. He could not suppress his affection for all his friends any more than he could hide his hatred of capitalism, a bestial world system that was destroying humanity. Full of personality, Sy certainly had his own human frailties. But he was an outstandingly fine leader to comrades young and old, extraordinarily patient and a deep source of support for many friends and comrades. Sy Landy leaves behind no traditional nuclear family, but a large chosen family of comrades and personal friends here and abroad. We loved him so.

Further information on Sy Landy and the LRP can be found at <http://www.lrp-cofi.org/index.html>.

The LRP is appealing for support to a fund to disseminate Sy Landy's work more widely. Contributions can be sent to SV Publishing, PO Box 1936, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156, USA, earmarked 'Sy Landy Memorial Fund'.

Brian Pearce (1915-2008)

BRIAN Pearce was found dead in his flat by a good neighbour, who had contributed to Brian's care and support, and who had been tutored by Brian's

wife Margaret, on the afternoon of 24 November 2008. His death, at the age of 93, ends a lifetime of scholarship and independent enquiring spirit the equal of which is rarely encountered.

I had exchanged letters and telephone calls with him many times before I met him face to face, when I went with Professor McIlroy to interview him for the 1956 issue of *Revolutionary History*, to which the reader is referred for a detailed account of Brian's break with the Communist Party. In the course of this conversation, Brian remarked that as a youth he had always wanted to be part of something strong, and that he might easily have become a fascist if he had not become a communist first. Trying to look retrospectively across Brian's career, this is a much more incomprehensible comment than it seemed at the time. Brian gave so much more to the revolutionary movement than he received from it, and I can only resort to a concept of 'intellectual integrity' to account for the important decisions of his life.

At the University of London (where he joined the Communist Party in 1934), against everybody's expectations, including his own, he did not win First Class honours. His theory was that he had been madly in love with a girl in the same class (he never revealed her identity to me) and she had been placed quite near him in the exam hall. His attention kept wandering towards this siren and away from his work. So unexpected was his Upper Second that a friendly academic personally checked the scripts and with regret concluded that the mark was a fair one: 'Your final answer, Mr Pearce, was pure verbiage.' As a consequence, Brian was not eligible for a scholarship, and his father was unable or unwilling to finance him to continue as a post-grad researcher. His only opportunity to undertake research was in a position under an unsympathetic senior lecturer who specialised in administrative history. He set Brian a topic on logistics and administration in the Tudor period. This was very unattractive, but he decided to attempt it, in the hope that if he completed it well he might then be able to find a better situation. It was very hard going, and he several times considered abandoning it. He then found that he had been 'scooped'. A year ahead of him a Cambridge scholar published a doctoral thesis on the same subject, and his supervisor had neglected to register the project in the list intended to prevent such duplication. Brian had to consider whether, with a radically altered approach, a thesis might yet be salvaged, but the Second World War broke out and he signed up in the army instead.

Before he engaged in action, a rumour circulated that his unit was to be sent to Finland, to defend the Finns against the invasion by the Red Army. Brian later discovered that the planned deployment, landing at Narvik and travelling overland into Northern Finland, was not designed to defend the national sovereignty of Finland at all; British strategists assumed from early on that this

was a lost cause, that Finland would be overrun by Russia or Germany almost as a preliminary to the real action. The true military aim of the British was to destroy an iron mine in the north, and the railway connection that allowed winter-time export of iron ore via Norway, which would have been of strategic importance to the German war effort. At the time, of course, this was not known to the soldiery. Brian received no 'line' from the CPGB, but he told me that he and a couple of comrades presumed it obvious that their duty would be to desert and join the Red Army at the first opportunity. However, the Finnish resistance ended before he was to face this test, which might well have snuffed out his career almost before it had begun.

The origins of the influential CPGB Historians Group can be traced to an initiative of Brian's during his postgraduate period. Following the appearance of AL Morton's *A People's History of England*, he contacted a number of other post-grad historians, and a joint letter was drafted and was published in *The Modern Monthly* welcoming the publication for its educational value, but pointing out a number of places where the book would have benefited from acquaintance with the latest academic work. (Morton was working as a schoolteacher at this time and could hardly be expected to be on top of the academic developments.) The researchers said what a good thing it would be if a group of sympathetic scholars whose up-to-date knowledge extended across the whole of English history could work with Morton to strengthen the book. Around this group of volunteers, the Historians Group was later to coalesce and to shape a left-wing approach to British history that exercised an hegemony for decades.

During the Second World War, Brian attained the rank of Major, serving much of his time in India. After the war, he worked for the *Daily Worker* mainly as a 'copytaster', spotting the news stories that should be carried and developed. He subsequently worked for the Society for Cultural Relations with Russia (SCRR). He also taught English to Russian embassy staff until his departure from the CPGB, when Harry Pollitt intervened personally to end the arrangement. During his work with the Embassy he received only one invitation to spy for the Soviets, and none at all from the British intelligence services.

Following an increasingly determined disagreement with the CPGB leadership over the verity of its line on history, Brian was eventually brought into contact with Trotskyism by the long-serving militant Joe Pawsey (according to notes by John Archer), whose involvement in the movement went back before the Second World War to the Revolutionary Socialist League ('Mark 1'), and prior to that to CLR James's group in the Independent Labour Party in the early 1930s. Brian never knew how Pawsey had become aware of him as a 'prospect', but had a vivid recollection of him arriving very late one night on the doorstep, drenched with rain and carrying a bundle of soggy propaganda. The transition

from the CPGB to 'The Club' as the Trotskyist organisation led by Gerry Healy was then known, was made the easier by contact with Peter Fryer, whose famous despatches from Hungary had been suppressed by the *Daily Worker*, and who was accepting Gerry Healy's offer to edit the Trotskyist weekly *The Newsletter*. Healy counselled Brian against resigning from the CPGB, urging him (and every other dissident and critic 'The Club' could contact) to stay and fight for as long as possible, and to do whatever was needed to spread oppositional ideas within the CPGB. How this was done, using *noms de guerre* and getting letters into *Tribune* and elsewhere, has been fully documented in Professor McIlroy's article.

Fryer undertook the editorship of *The Newsletter*, and Brian began to contribute articles and features aimed initially at the dissidents and discontented among the CPGB, later turning to more general Trotskyist educational material. The Club won some of the best intellectuals and industrial militants from the Communist Party at this stage, though many of them were soon to find the party regime unacceptable. Fryer, Cadogan, MacIntyre and Daniels were to depart. Open critics of Healy were briefly to organise themselves as the 'Stamford Faction', but Brian was not to be among them. By this stage he was a member of the Central Committee and was contributing original articles to *Labour Review* and *Fourth International*. John Archer pointed out the importance of this material in opening up for study many aspects of the history of the Third International and its sections, which had been inaccessible to the Trotskyist rank and file previously, and which extended their perspectives. (It was during this period that Fryer produced his famous pamphlet *Lenin as Philosopher*, which still stands as one of the best expositions of dialectical materialism.) A number of Brian's articles from this period (with one by Michael Woodhouse) were compiled by New Park Publications under the title *Essays in the History of Communism in Britain*.³ During this period Brian used the *noms de guerre* Leonard Hussey (drawing on a family surname), Joseph Redman and Brian Farnborough (from the depot in which he had been based at one stage during military service).

Alison Macleod has mentioned Brian's prescience in relation to Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' of 1956. This same depth of insight was of great value within the Healy organisation, in the inner-party struggle against the ultra-leftism of Brian Behan. Behan had shown himself an outstanding motivator and organiser, at first during the Shell strike and later in a number of interventions by The Club/Socialist Labour League (as The Club subsequently became) into industrial disputes. He was irreconcilably opposed, however, to 'entry work' in the Labour Party, which had long been a key element in Healy's strategy. (He was also proud to describe himself as 'a philistine' and cordially detested the aspirations of Fryer and Pearce to a raised cultural level in *The Newsletter* and

Labour Review.) Brian warned Healy that Behan's trajectory would lead him into a sectarian rejection not only of the Labour Party but also of the trades unions. (Ken Weller has described Behan at this time as: 'Reading the *FT* every day and expecting headlines reporting the collapse of capitalism.') Brian selected for Healy the key texts of Trotsky, including the articles on Kronstadt, that should be published to prepare the membership for the fight that was to come. He was proved correct in every detail within 18 months. Behan was to depart and never again to have political significance. I have found no evidence that Brian himself worked inside the Labour Party during this phase.

Inevitably tensions developed in Brian's relations with Healy, and with other members of the leadership. Healy always found it difficult, if not impossible, to accept that members of his organisation might be making independent contributions to the movement. As early as September 1959, Peter Fryer in his 'Open Letter' to members of the SLL described how he had 'heard the general secretary and B__ P__ come near to blows as each uttered threats of violence and vengeance'. In 1961, Brian wrote an article, 'Lenin and Trotsky on Pacifism and Defeatism', in which he set out his support for Trotsky and his criticism of Lenin. Healy had not read the article before he saw it in print, and reproved a puzzled Brian. Healy clarified that differences between Lenin and Trotsky were played up by the Stalinists, to underpin their refusal to discuss with Trotskyists; consequently such differences were not to be brought up. Brian's spirit rebelled at this, and a parting of the ways was to follow soon afterward. Although Brian was to continue to do translation work for the Healy publishing company, New Park, politically and organisationally he cut himself off from Healy (although maintaining relations with a number of individual SLL members such as Cyril Smith). So complete was this separation that Brian was able to write to me the day before his death: 'Did anything appear on paper regarding my departure from the SLL in 1961? Was I ever formally expelled?' But in contrast to his leaving the CPGB, where airing his differences led to some of his best writing, he never attempted to settle scores with Healy. Unlike some of those former CPGB members who had found the Healy regime unacceptable, such as Cadogan, he never published criticisms of Healy or his organisation. And unlike many who stayed with the Healy movement through to and beyond the implosion of the Workers Revolutionary Party and its international ('Clapham Ragnarok'), he always referred to Healy by his first name. (When I was in a position to show him copies of internal bulletins of the Healy organisation documenting the expulsions of Fryer, Cadogan, Daniels *et al*, he was interested to read whether he had assisted any of 'Gerry's dirty work'.) After Healy's expulsion for sexual abuse of female comrades, it became easier to maintain relations with former comrades, and he often recalled with pleasure his ninetieth birthday celebration

organised by Cliff Slaughter and other members of the movement.

During his phase of 'political independence' Brian was able to focus on areas of historical research of his own choice. What he regarded as much of his best work appeared in the journal *Revolutionary Russia* and its forerunner *Sbornik*. He valued his participation in the academic work of these journals, and this esteem was warmly reciprocated by the other participants. His book *How Haig Saved Lenin* was one of the fruits of this independence, as was his less well known little book *The Staroselsky Problem*. Brian's book of translations of David Riazanov's book *Marx and Anglo-Russian Relations and Other Writings* came to our attention almost by chance. Brian mentioned to me that he had an unpublished translation of an early article by Trotsky, 'On the Intelligentsia', for which we were able to help find a publisher. When I asked him if he had any other unpublished material of a similar kind, he told me about the Riazanov translations, and said how much he would like to see it in print, but doubted if any publisher would touch it. Al Richardson worked many late nights to word-process it, and many hours seeking a publisher, before Francis Boutle accepted it into his catalogue.

Cyril Smith often recalled with affection an incident where he had disagreed with Brian and they had both gone home after whatever meeting it was, a little disgruntled with each other. By some miraculous process, before Cyril was up and about (which was usually early as a dedicated member of the Healy movement and a single parent), Brian had delivered by hand an envelope to Cyril's address. It contained his translation of Trotsky's famous article of advice to young communists — 'Learn to Think!' Cyril's admiration for Brian was great. I remember an occasion where the minutes of a meeting were being checked. I had said, and it was recorded: 'Brian Pearce was right.' Cyril wanted the minutes amended to insert 'of course' between 'was' and 'right'. Brian reciprocated Cyril's admiration, in a typically understated manner: 'He was a very useful person to argue with.'

During his later years Brian developed a relationship with the University of Aberdeen, attending and contributing to conferences there, and maintaining a correspondence with Terry Brotherstone. A few years ago he donated his personal library to the University, and expressed the wish that his files of political correspondence should also end up there. He was an enthusiastic letter writer, and maintained contacts across the world with people he had met and worked with. He enjoyed quoting Pascal: 'I am sorry this letter is so long; I didn't have time to make it shorter.' He never got to grips with computer technology; all his correspondence, indeed all his writing, was in manuscript.

Of the articles he wrote during his 'Healyite' period, Brian was to say that there was much he no longer agreed with, but he was happy to have the material

made available on the internet so that interested readers could make up their own minds. 'What I have written, I have written', he said. Volunteers on the ETOL section of the Marxists Internet Archive, mainly Ted Crawford and Einde O'Callaghan, scanned and marked up his articles from *Labour Review* and *Fourth International*. The material can be found at <http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/pearce/index.htm>.

Brian's contribution to the broader revolutionary movement as a translator of many of the most important revolutionary documents will leave us always in his debt. If you got a translation from Brian it was always a case of 'Buy one, get one free', as he always added more and better notes to the document than any editor could reasonably expect, and there was always a letter explaining the meaning and context of the document better than you could arrive at yourself in weeks of reading.

If a document attracted his attention he would work at it with extraordinary energy. When we were assembling the material which was to form the book *In Defence of the Russian Revolution* edited by Al Richardson, we thought we had a huge scoop in Lenin's major speech on the invasion of Poland. I phoned Brian to ask if he would translate it, thinking that here we have something he won't know about. He immediately replied: 'I expect you mean the speech where he says "I request that less be taken down", yes I'll be happy to do it, it's very interesting.' And of course he was right, having read it in Russian several months earlier in a journal sent to him by a friend in Moscow. He completed and delivered the translation even before I called to check he had received the original safely, and before we had the chance to discuss payment for his work. He must have worked all day and night for 48 hours. For a man in his late eighties, a magnificent achievement.

Brian's translations for New Park provided many of us who came into the movement a decade after he left it with the material that helped us form our political understanding. A quick look through my shelves brings up a number of his translations of Trotsky in pamphlet form — *The Intelligentsia and Socialism*, *Class and Art*, *Culture and Socialism*, *Tasks Before the Twelfth Congress*, *Through What Stage Are We Passing?* — all of them essential reading for aspiring Trotskyists. Among the most significant was *Permanent Revolution/Results and Prospects*. Brian's translation of the five volumes of Trotsky's military writings, *How the Revolution Armed*, was an impressive feat of concentration and insight. He described it in his last letter to me as his most important translation. As if it were not sufficient to have completed the work of translating such a massive document, following the publication of each volume the *Newsline* correspondence column would receive a series of short notes from Brian suggesting corrections and improvements to his translation.

He translated other valuable volumes on the Bolshevik revolution for New Park, including Preobrazhensky's *From NEP to Socialism*, Raskolnikov's *Tales of Sub-Lieutenant Ilyn* and *Kronstadt and Petrograd in 1917* and Ilyin-Zhevensky's *The Bolsheviks in Power*, as well as the proceedings of the Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East, and the transcripts of the 1903 Congress of the RSDLP. Nobody can claim to understand Bolshevism without having studied these last two in particular.

New Park by no means held a monopoly on Brian's gifts as a translator. Preobrazhensky's *The New Economics*, Bettelheim's *Class Struggles in the USSR*, Sergo Beria's biography of his father Lavrenti (Brian thought this was an unjustly neglected source), Boris Kagarlitsky's political reflections and Fernando Claudin's history of communism in Europe are among the important books that he helped make available through other publishers. In addition, with Ian Birchall, he edited and prepared for publication John Archer's translation of Pierre Broué's *The German Revolution 1917-1923*, and brought it to print after interminable delays.

Brian's translation of Marcel Liebman's *Leninism Under Lenin* was the first of three occasions when he won the prestigious Scott-Moncrieff prize. We are not yet sure of having a full list of Brian's translations (we will put our best effort on the *Revolutionary History* website in the near future). The following deserve to be mentioned: *The War Correspondence of Leon Trotsky: The Balkan Wars, 1912-13*, *The Institutions of France Under the Absolute Monarchy, 1598-1789* by Roland Mousnier, Ernest Mandel's *Marxist Economic Theory, Rationality and Irrationality in Economics* by Maurice Godelier. The sheer scale of Brian's intellectual contribution is difficult to grasp — how different our intellectual world would be without access to these books.

Brian was a friend to *Revolutionary History* from the time it first appeared. His support to Pete Glatter in preparing our issue on 1905 was essential. Pete himself was a very capable Russian reader, able to conduct himself among the Moscow and provincial archives, but he described Brian's assistance as 'a masterclass'. Brian contributed important checking of translations to our issue entitled *Culture and Revolution in Trotsky's Thought*, and also translations for the volume still in preparation on Iran. In the current issue we present Brian's review of a book on Radek. He also supported Ian Thatcher's *Journal of Trotsky Studies* with translations, reviews and original articles, and regretted the end of that journal. He contributed to it a short but moving obituary for his friend Alec Nove.

Despite his prolific output, he never earned much money from his work and continued to be on the look-out for suitable work well into his eighties. His most productive years were given to the CPGB and the Trotskyist movement,

when a less altruistic man would have been building an academic career and a pension fund. The small flat he and his wife Margaret occupied in Barnet was comfortable and sufficient for their needs, but by no means compared fairly with the fruits of the long academic careers of his former comrades, many of whom he continued to correspond with. Historians who had grafted their way across the decades to big volume sales were still first names to him — 'Eric' (Hobsbawm), 'Christopher' (Hill), 'Edward' (Thompson) and so forth.

The end of his wife Margaret's life was far from easy. They had coped together with the onslaught of cancer, from which she appeared to have made some recovery, only to be struck down with a dementia of the Alzheimer's type ('That man Alzheimer has a lot to answer for', he would remark), one of the hardest of ends to face as the mind and personality of the loved one are changed out of recognition. Brian devoted his time to Margaret exclusively during her final months; the effort was a great drain on his health, but he gave unstintingly and stoically as much as he could. In the few months between her death and his, he remarked often on how much he missed her, and despite the support he received from neighbours and friends, how lonely his life was without her.

Despite his continuing pain at the loss of Margaret, I am convinced that his final hours were passed in a positive mood. I had discussed with him a project for *Revolutionary History*. I asked him, and he had agreed, to look at Yurii Felshtinsky's four-volume collection in Russian from the Trotsky archives at Harvard, to select the most important of the untranslated material and assess whether we could publish it as a special issue of *Revolutionary History*. I took him the material on the Saturday before he died. At first he was doubtful whether he had the capacity for the task, but as he looked through the tables of contents his enthusiasm was building. Here was a piece never published on Trotsky's differences with the Kremlin on China, we must have that of course, no question (how pleased I was to hear that 'We'). And look at this, the basis of the agreement with Zinoviev to form the United Opposition. And so on. Brian's neighbour Mark told me that when he visited him on Sunday afternoon he was energised with the task, and delighted to have been asked to do it. His work table was cleared, and the four volumes of Felshtinsky, the Louis Sinclair bibliography of Trotsky, and Brian's much sellotaped Russian dictionary commanded the terrain. He had a project that he felt worthy of his time and talent, and the prospect of a stream of visits from old-fashioned Trotskyists to bring him news and journals. He had also said that he hoped to be able to die at home, not to have to 'go into a home', but stoically added: 'That may not be in my hands.' Well at least that wish was granted to him. I don't think anybody else will be capable of the project we had asked him to undertake.

At that last conversation he had talked about two areas where he hoped

to stimulate historical discussion. The first was on Lenin's *Imperialism* and defeatism. Brian recalled how Marx and Engels had not espoused defeatism as a universal strategy, but had looked to throw the political weight of the proletariat, wherever it could be influential, into inter-imperialist or inter-capitalist struggles on the side where the workers' self-interest would benefit. When Lenin proposed a strategy of defeatism (which Brian thought was 'of no use to anybody') some German communists had written to him recalling Engels (who was not long dead) and asking what had changed to require so fundamental a change of line. Lenin's response was that Imperialism had emerged, and that changed the whole picture. Brian wanted to probe further into the relationship between Imperialism and defeatism, to question whether Lenin's view was not premature, whether it had not led to the isolation of the communists from the workers during the major twentieth-century conflicts. The second topic was the emergence of capitalism. Why had capitalism emerged in Western Europe alone, if the 'five stage scenario' of human development (primitive society, slave society, feudalism, capitalism, socialism) was universally valid? He referred to footnotes by Marx in the French edition of *Capital* where he and Engels had noticed in Japan a different route to the origin of a mercantile class. That night, my brain fired up with calvados, I photocopied Cyril Smith's notes on Marx's unpublished, unsent, letters to Zasulich, doubting Plekhanov's insistence that Russia had to pass through a capitalist phase before socialism could be considered as next business, and extracts from Shakeri describing the emergence of a native merchant class where there had been no feudalism in Persia. All too late, overtaken by the implacable progress of time's cortege. The envelope was still in my bag waiting to be posted when I learned on the Tuesday evening of Brian's death. I had assured Brian that if he could not find any more prestigious publisher, *Revolutionary History* or *New Interventions* would be proud to take whatever he wrote.

De mortuis nil nisi bunkum is not an approach to obituary writing that *Revolutionary History* espouses. Nevertheless, there are few valedictory criticisms that one can honestly make of Brian. His reticence about his departure from Healy, and how that event was to transform itself into a departure from Trotskyism contrasts oddly with his openness and clarity on his split from the CPGB. It was a gap that should have been filled. Also, it has been suggested that in some of his early articles for *The Newsletter* Brian's pro-Arab, anti-Israel line exceeded even Healy's in vigour. We will be better able to comment on that when we have completed assembling the material. Brian Pearce is, and will remain, irreplaceable both as a friend and as an intellect.

JJ Plant

Recalling Brian Pearce

BRIAN Pearce, who has died at the age of 93, was to the end of his life an erudite and wily talker, whose recollections of the political battles he had been embroiled in fascinated all his hearers.

Those who loved him best, however, would not have wished him to live longer. They knew how much he missed Margaret, his wife, who died a few months earlier.

Brian graduated in history at London University. What period he specialised in I do not know; he seemed equally expert in them all. When we were both working at the *Daily Worker*, early in 1950, I would ask, 'Why did Greece attack Turkey in 1922?', and be sure of getting an answer. Brian's expertise on India was to be expected; he had spent much of the war there, as a major in the British Army. But he could answer my questions about other countries too.

The questions arose from the books the *Daily Worker* had asked me to review. None of them, in any period of history, were too much for Brian. Not only did he know the main outlines of each event; he remembered any particularly foolish remark made at the time by any statesman.

It was a great loss to me when he went to work for the Society for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union. There he suffered the first blow to the illusions (widely shared at the time) which had made him an uncritical admirer of Russia. He actually went there. This had been impossible to any ordinary tourist since the Second World War. Brian went as part of a delegation, charged with writing a pamphlet about the Ossetians living in the Crimea.

Stalin had died a few months earlier. While Brian was in a train heading towards the Crimea, he noticed that everyone was attentively reading *Pravda*. This was unusual. The news in *Pravda* was that Stalin's former police chief, Beria, had been shot. Brian went up and down the train, trying to find somebody who would talk to him about the event. Brian was always modest about his grasp of Russian, but he certainly knew enough to ask such questions, and understand the replies. Only there were no replies. Not one person on the train would talk about the news which they had all been avidly reading. That was Brian's first encounter with Soviet freedom of speech.

His next, after his return to London, came when he had written his pamphlet, *A People Return*. This described the resettlement of the Ossetians in the Crimea. Brian discovered that they had gone to live there after the Chechen and Ingush peoples had been forcibly deported. After a long argument at the Soviet Embassy he was allowed to say that the Chechens and Ingushes 'were given an opportunity to develop elsewhere in the USSR'.

Brian could never forgive himself for writing those words. He was haunted by the reality they covered up — the people dragged from their beds in the night,

thrust into cattle trucks, left to die of cold and hunger on a nightmare journey... His relations with the Communist Party were never the same again.

The aftershocks of Stalin's rule continued. Throughout 1954 and 1955 'rehabilitations' were announced. Many of those now cleared of wrongdoing had already been shot. '*The Soviet Union has very good taxidermists*', commented Gabriel, the *Daily Worker* cartoonist. Brian, when I met him at this time, told me to look out for the Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, fixed for February 1956. This Congress was as dreary as we expected, until its final hours. Then, behind closed doors, Khrushchev made a speech blowing the gaff on Stalin. Foreign Communist delegations were excluded, but their leaders got copies of the speech. The Polish Communists, then struggling for their independence, gave a copy to the Western press. The contents were not so shocking to Brian as to the British Communists in general. Most of them had, until that moment, believed every word that came out of the Soviet Union. Their leaders, who had not, relied on the Soviet leaders to keep up the old pretences. Brian, who could not get his letters printed in the *Daily Worker*, embarked on a press campaign through the *Guardian* and other papers.

Nobody likes to be exposed as a liar, and the letters Brian wrote made him bitterly hated by the British Communist leaders. The Russian Communists took it more calmly; they continued to employ Brian as a teacher of English to Soviet diplomats. He got the sack only when Harry Pollitt protested to the Russians.

When the Hungarian rising broke out in October 1956, the *Daily Worker* tried to suppress the despatches of its own correspondent, Peter Fryer. Brian sought out Peter Fryer, and introduced him to a man willing to print everything he wrote: the Trotskyist, Gerry Healy. By this time neither Peter nor Brian was afraid of the word 'Trotskyist'. For a time they worked happily with Gerry Healy, who enabled Peter to produce a regular newssheet.

Unfortunately Healy's power mania made it impossible for anyone to work with him for long. First Peter and then Brian broke with him. Healy kept his grip, however, on some devoted young ladies. Brian and Peter, after quarrelling over Healy, were reconciled. Both had long been expelled from the Communist Party.

The rest of Brian's life was calmer and pleasanter. His book *How Haig Saved Lenin* (MacMillan, 1987) is typical of his historical researches, in its juxtaposition of characters not normally considered together. He was not contending that Haig had any intention of saving Lenin, but that this was the effect of his action on the Western Front. It is, like everything Brian wrote, splendidly written, terse and to the point.

Though I never could agree with Brian about politics (he thought Trotsky was a great man; I did not), I continued until his last weeks to delight in his

conversation. Few talkers like Brian are still alive to talk.

Alison MacLeod

Dov Shas

DOV Shas, a member of Matzpen, died at the end of October 2006 at the age of 81.

Dov was born in Romania. In the Second World War, he was active in the Communist underground, mainly distributing leaflets, but began to distance himself from the policy of the USSR led by Stalin. After the war, Dov joined a Hashomer Hatzair *gar'in* that set out for Palestine, but he quickly recognised the contradiction between the Zionist movement and his socialist principles.

Here he joined a small Trotskyist organisation that advocated the joint struggle of Arab and Jewish workers for socialism, and opposed the UN plan to partition the country into two states. In 1947, Dov started working as a labourer in the Haifa Oil Refinery. In the 1950s, the organisation disbanded, and for about a decade Dov had no political home. A short time after the founding of Matzpen, Dov joined the organisation, and for many years combined his activity in the organisation with his work in the oil refinery.

Dov signed some of the reports and articles published in *Matzpen* with the pen-name 'Moshe Epikoros'.⁴ After taking early retirement because of health problems, Dov began studying at Haifa University (sociology, anthropology and education), but in spirit he remained a worker revolutionary. He died at home of heart failure at the end of October 2006, at the age of 81.

By kind permission of The Palestine Right to Return Group.

BJ Widick (1910-2008)

ON 28 June 2008, Branko J Widick, known to everyone as 'BJ' or 'Jack', died at the age of 97 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Widick was a prominent figure in the history of US Trotskyism and above all in the unorthodox political tendency known as the 'Shachtmanites'. In the Great Depression, he was directly involved in the rise of the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) and was a participant in the General Motors sit-down strike of automobile workers.³

Self-assured, quick, energetic, expressive and warm-hearted, Widick kept up affable ties to several generations of socialist activists on whom he eagerly bestowed advice. Although he was only five feet four inches tall, his personality aura was powerfully etched in the minds of many who knew him.

Widick joined the Communist League of America (CLA) in 1934, and was a founding member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in 1938, at which time he also served as the SWP's first National Labor Secretary and was a member of

the National Committee and Political Committee. In 1940, he was an initiator of the Workers Party, led by Max Shachtman.⁶ Thereafter Widick participated in many Workers Party leadership capacities and contributed articles to the journal *New International* and newspaper *Labor Action* under the names Jack Wilson, Jay Hardwick and Walter Jayson.

In 1949, the Workers Party reorganised as the Independent Socialist League (ISL), and in late 1958 Widick and other members joined the Socialist Party. Subsequently, with the war in Vietnam and rise of the New Left, the 'Shachtmanites' fragmented. With old comrades like Max Shachtman on his right and Hal Draper and the Jacobsons (Phyllis and Julius) on his left, Widick was more often than not in the centre (liberal social democracy) with Irving Howe and Michael Harrington.

Widick's area of expertise was the US labour movement. In the 1930s, he was active as a member of the American Newspaper Guild and United Rubber Workers in Akron, and in the post-Second World War years he was a United Automobile Workers (UAW) official until he embarked on a career in the early 1960s as a professor at Wayne State University and Columbia University. Along the way he wrote a number of books: *The UAW and Walter Reuther* (co-authored with Irving Howe, 1949); *Labor Today: The Triumphs and Failures of Unionism in the United States* (1964); and *Detroit: City of Race and Class Violence* (1972, revised 1989). He also edited *Auto Work and Its Discontents* (1976). He was a correspondent for *The Nation* in 1958-60, and after the 1960s occasionally contributed to the socialist journals *Dissent* and *New Politics*.

In 1913, Widick, who had been born in the Serbian village of Okucana, came from Yugoslavia to the United States. His mother, Angelina, had died shortly after his birth, and his father, Joseph, then married the son's nurse. Joseph Widick had various job difficulties in the United States, but eventually found employment as a barber, while Widick's stepmother worked in a pottery factory. For a few years the family lived in Minnesota, often in Serbian communities.

Joseph Widick was an admirer of anarchist Emma Goldman, had a good friend in the Socialist Labor Party, and was sympathetic to steel strikers in 1919. Subsequently the Widicks moved to Detroit and, in 1923, to Akron, Ohio. In 1929, BJ Widick became a freshman at University of Akron, where he met his life-long friend, Chalmers Stewart (1910-1995), who would publish in the socialist press under the name Blake Lear.

Widick had planned to become a civil engineer, but ended up graduating in economics in 1933. By then he had transformed into a self-proclaimed Communist and was quite happy to declare his Marxist opinions in interviews that appeared in local Akron papers. Widick later claimed he became radical simply from believing Sunday School and Boy Scout values about doing good

deeds, and also from reading Western pulp fiction about the good guys taking on the greedy owners of railroads and banks.

Following graduation, Widick conducted a double life, working as a cocky reporter (nicknamed 'Scoop' by the police) during the day and organising for socialist revolution by night. Through his journalist associates, he met proletarian novelist Jack Conroy and with him attended meetings of the John Reed Club (a pro-Communist organisation for writers and artists) in Cleveland. There Widick was introduced to Henry Kraus, who was to launch the official newspaper of the United Auto Workers Union. In 1934, Widick played a part in setting up Akron's Progressive Workers School, attended by future leaders of the United Rubber Workers.

From 1933 to 1936, Widick was employed by the *Akron Beacon Journal* where he helped to organise a chapter of the Newspaper Guild. But he was fired after his participation in the 1936 Goodyear Strike, a crucial step in the evolution of the CIO. The events of the strike were fictionalised in Ruth McKenney's 1939 novel *Industrial Valley*, in which a character based on Widick plays a minor role. Later on, Widick also appeared briefly as a composite character in novels by Harvey Swados and Saul Bellow.

Widick was at first a close ally of the Communist Party. At the party's request, he became head of the Ohio League Against War and Fascism and chairman of the Friends of the Soviet Union. Then Widick was deeply affected by the 1934 labour upsurge and above all by the role of the Trotskyists in the Minneapolis Teamsters strikes. He and two friends began checking out all the radical groups. They were most sympathetic to the Trotskyists, but, inasmuch as there were no Trotskyists in their area, they joined the Communist Party with the aim of promoting Trotsky's views.

The secret Trotskyist trio was soon expelled as counter-revolutionaries, and Widick then became a fraternal delegate to the last CLA convention, in November 1934. At that time a fusion with the American Workers Party (an independent revolutionary organisation founded in 1933 by AJ Muste) was finalised, occurring immediately afterwards.

At the CLA convention, Widick befriended Albert Glotzer and Martin Abern. They were founding members who since 1929 had been in opposition to James P Cannon, the historic leader of the CLA. Glotzer and Abern believed that Cannon was bureaucratic in his organisational methods and overly fixated on his proletarian background.

They also believed that he was unstable in his activities; one moment, they alleged, Cannon could be friendly and persuasive, and the next he might fall completely out of touch. The other chief historical leader, Max Shachtman, was also originally in opposition to Cannon; after 1934, however, Shachtman

became allied with Cannon and so that he, too, became a target of criticism by Glotzer and Abern.

Among the outstanding Trotskyist leaders of the fused organisation, Widick was most attracted to AJ Muste, then serving as National Secretary, and Maurice Spector, the historic Canadian Trotskyist who was living in New York. In 1936, Muste would visit Akron and, impressed with Muste's integrity, Widick thought of himself as something of a 'Musteite'; thus he was much dismayed when Muste departed Trotskyism later that year as a religious pacifist.

The newly-formed Workers Party of the US launched the journal *New Internationalist* in 1934, and Widick became a frequent contributor. His first article, 'In a Billion Dollar Industry', about the rubber workers, appeared in March 1935, bringing him notability as an up-and-coming young leader. Simultaneously, he continued to write for the Akron press and also contributed to *The Nation*. His personal role models at that time were the left-wing journalists Lincoln Steffens and John Reed.

In Akron he set up a research department for the Rubber Workers Union, and in 1937 became Research Director, writing regularly for *CIO News* and the Rubber Workers paper. As soon as the Rubber Workers Union was established, he began branching out into other CIO activities. Although Widick was known as a Trotskyist, he collaborated in the Flint auto strike with pro-Communists he admired such as Bob Travis and Henry Kraus. He was also welcomed by the Reuther brothers as representing the solidarity of rubber workers.

In June 1937, with approval of the Trotskyist leadership, Widick sailed on the SS Orizaba to Mexico with the destination of Coyoacan to provide a first-hand report to Leon Trotsky about working-class activities in the United States. Trotsky had been shown articles by Widick from the *Akron Beacon Journal*, *Flint Journal*, the United Rubber Workers paper and elsewhere. For a week they discussed each day the possibilities of a labour upsurge, the nature of working-class leadership, and the prospects for building a new US revolutionary socialist movement. By that time, the US Trotskyists had entered the Socialist Party and were building a base among its large and dynamic Young People's Socialist League.

Upon returning to the United States, Widick was offered a permanent position in the union movement, but turned it down when persuaded by James P Cannon to become a professional revolutionary and move to New York City. Widick's attitude toward Cannon was still mixed. He regarded Cannon as a splendid working-class leader with oratorical powers second only to United Mine Workers President John L Lewis.⁷ He also admired Cannon for playing a behind-the-scenes 'Rock of Gibraltar' role in the Minneapolis strikes.

Yet Widick shared the assessment of Glotzer and Abern, and was now

uncomfortable with what he believed to be an element of deception when the Trotskyists entered the Socialist Party. Cannon and Shachtman had publicly denied that this was a political raid, but Widick was suspicious; later on, Widick claimed, the two acknowledged to him that a 'raid' was precisely what it had been. Still, Widick, like teamster Farrell Dobbs, believed it was a higher honour to become a leader of a Marxist party than of a union.

Thus Widick made the move east in 1937 and served on the organising committee for the first convention of the SWP, writing the trade union resolution.⁸ He then went on a national speaking tour and launched a column in the Trotskyist newspaper, which was first called *Socialist Appeal* and then *The Militant*. There was also time for socialising and cultural activities. From the late 1930s, Widick recalled hearing Mary Lou Williams and other jazz singers and musicians at the Village Vanguard. This was always on Monday night, which was designated 'Trotskyist' night; the Communists, who were much more numerous, poured into the nightclub on the other evenings.

Throughout his life Widick talked about the major political debates of the late 1930s that had a profound effect on him. One was the shift in attitude in 1938 towards the call for a labour party; Widick believed that this reflected a change in viewpoint on Trotsky's part, no longer seeing the US in a 'revolutionary crisis', but regarding it as being in a 'social crisis', when reforms are central.

Another controversy involved the Ludlow Amendment. This was a proposal by a US Congressman to amend the US constitution to require a national referendum before a declaration of war. The Trotskyist leadership, except for the New York University Professor James Burnham, was opposed to the amendment because they thought it created the illusion that world war could be prevented in any way other than by social revolution; but Cannon and Shachtman reversed themselves under prodding from Trotsky. Widick thought that the episode demonstrated just how dependent US Trotskyists were on their leader in Mexico.

A third issue was the 1939 'auto crisis', when the Trotskyists were torn between supporting two factions in the United Auto Workers Union, one led by Homer Martin and the other by Walter Reuther in alignment with the Communist Party. While Cannon was out of the country, the party supported the former; after he returned, it switched to the latter.

The era that Widick saw as the high point and most hopeful moment of US Trotskyism came to a crisis when the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with Germany in August 1939. The SWP had long been simmering with disagreements over its policy towards the Soviet Union and internal organisational practices. When the USSR invaded Finland, the movement divided into two factions headed for a split; Widick sided with Shachtman, James

Burnham, CLR James and others who formed the Workers Party in 1940.

In preparation for the faction fight, Widick took a political assignment in Chicago. There he felt that the faction fight proceeded fairly, and he enjoyed cordial relations with Cannon supporters Albert Goldman and Arne Swabeck. In his mind, the Chicago situation contrasted dramatically with Minneapolis, where he believed that the Shachtman faction never got a fair hearing.

After the new party was created, Widick was in St Louis and then Los Angeles. As the Second World War became a reality, the Workers Party did not support any side, calling instead for a socialist revolution against both the fascism of the Axis and the imperialism of the Allies. Nevertheless, Widick, who was originally rejected when drafted for medical reasons, enlisted in the Army in 1942. The Workers Party view was also that a revolutionary socialist should participate in the life of the working class. From the Army Widick transferred to the Army Air Corps, where he became a sergeant and served mostly as a file clerk.

After the war Widick was hired at a Chrysler Plant in Detroit, quickly becoming chair of the Veterans Committee of UAW Local 7. For Widick, however, UAW activities gradually became more important than his involvement with Shachtman's organisation; early on he thought that their political current had erred in presenting itself as a party rather than a league.

He was elected a chief steward and remained a Plant Union Official for the UAW until 1959, subsequently serving as an economist on Walter Reuther's staff in 1960-61. However, his 1949 book with Irving Howe on Reuther caused complications in his relations with the union leadership. Left critics saw the work as an apology for Reuther, but Reuther himself disliked the book, which was not uncritical.⁹

Moreover, while some co-workers and conservatives saw Widick as a 'Red', Widick, in fact, supported Reuther in destroying Communist influence in the union. Widick himself survived the 1950s anti-radical witch-hunt era as a union official, but was unhappy about compromises he felt that he had been forced to make.

One action of which he always felt proud was his testimony on 1 July 1956 in Washington, DC that led to the Independent Socialist League's being removed from the Attorney General's list of subversive organisations. Another was his long-term support of Civil Rights for African Americans. This eventually led to his collaboration in 1960 with the African-American union leader Horace Sheffield in Detroit's Trade Union Leadership Council. Together they supported the Kennedy-Johnson presidential campaign. But Reuther increasingly saw Widick as a political maverick and a year later kicked him off the UAW staff.

In 1962, at the age of 51, Widick started a new career in teaching, receiving an MA from Wayne State University, becoming a tenured Economics professor

in 1968. In 1969, he became an associate professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Business in New York City, retiring to Ann Arbor in 1983.

In the meantime, even though he had been an early advocate of ISL members joining the Socialist Party, he became dismayed in the mid-1960s by the growing antagonism between Shachtman and former ISL member Michael Harrington over Shachtman's support for the Vietnam War. Sensing that another brutal faction fight and split was in the works, Widick distanced himself from organisational involvement, although he later was associated with the Democratic Socialists of America.

Widick was part of that generation of the Old Left that considered personal life separate from what he regarded as serious political matters. Despite our friendship from 1984 until his death, we mainly deliberated about radical history with the result that he disclosed little about his private affairs. Originally, he and Chalmers Stewart had wedded the Horst sisters; Widick married Jacqueline (Jackie) and Stewart married Marguerite (Maggie). After the Second World War, the Stewarts broke up and Maggie married Albert Glotzer. Then, in 1964, Jackie was killed in a car accident in Detroit. Widick subsequently married Barbara Klan, a school teacher from Pontiac, Michigan. They had two sons, Brian and Marshall.

By the time I met Widick in 1984, his outlook was that union movement had been a powerful force in the 1930s but declined into a largely service organisation clinging to the past and frightened of the future. Moreover, the radical movement had evolved from being cocksure to virtual extinction. After more than four decades of activism, Widick regarded himself as still a dissenter but contemptuous of all 'True Believers', Right or Left.

At the time of the 1968 student rebellion, he was teaching at Columbia University. His assessment was that the uprising was an 'historical farce', a ripple compared to giant struggles of the 1930s.

Widick thought that the fears of his old comrades (like Irving Howe) that the new radicals were becoming 'Totalitarians of the Left' was an exaggeration, and that any notion that the students had the capacity to destroy Columbia University was laughable. He regarded Mark Rudd and other SDS leaders as minor characters compared to the worker militants he had known, second only to United Mine Workers President John L Lewis.

Yet Trotsky always remained a giant to Widick; his books were prized as classics. As he entered his seventies, Widick decided to write own autobiography. He despised the ex-radicals who claimed that they hadn't been much involved, beyond a youthful lapse of judgement, in order to protect themselves against the legacy of McCarthyism. He was also near-apoplectic about autobiographies of those once connected with the Communist Party and downplayed their

dependence on the party line and illusions in the Soviet Union, presenting themselves simply as working-class fighters. In the area of Communist historiography he thought that Bert Cochran's *Labor and Communism: The Conflict That Shaped American Unions* (1977) pointed in the right direction.

An additional frustration for Widick was that his one-time mentor, Shachtman, had never explained in writing how and why he had evolved so far to the right. But Widick was above all irked by the memoirs of a generation of activists who were once profoundly critical of the Communist Party from the left but who cleverly rewrote their personal histories so as to make it seem as if they had always been 'anti-communist' and 'anti-totalitarian'. He thought that New York University philosophy professor Sidney Hook during the Cold War provided the archetype of this distorted method.¹⁰ The autobiographies he preferred were Carey McWilliams' *The Education of Carey McWilliams* (1979) and Robert Schranck's *Ten Thousand Working Days* (1978).

Sadly, Widick waited too long to get started on his own narrative. He completed drafts of a few chapters, which he decided to withhold from publication. His point of view, however, was clear. The Trotskyist movement had attracted uncommon talent, but in the end had come to nothing. While the Trotskyists in the 1930s had been right in their view that capitalism stinks, they were wrong about what was to happen.

Widick and I endlessly debated the meaning of his experiences; on matters such as Cannon-versus-Shachtman, the meaning of 1968, and the legacy of the Communist Party, we could never reach accord. Sometimes there were late night calls when he would ask me to look up a reference in an old discussion bulletin or journal to which he didn't have access. But there was always an element of kindness in his retorts and rebuttals; in no way any mean-spiritedness.

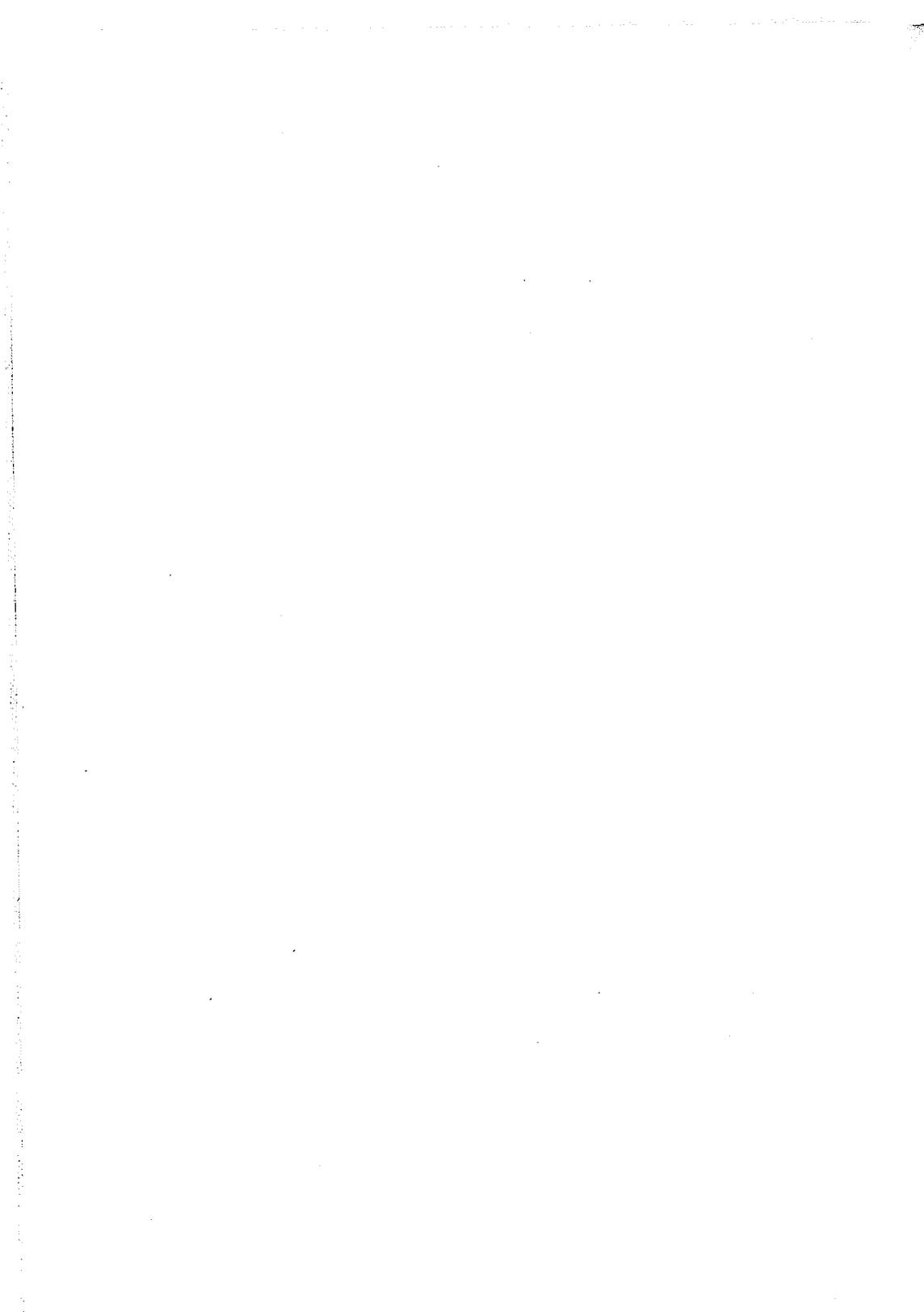
Widick also had an engaging sense of humour. He never tired of congratulating me on finding my way into what he invariably called 'the professor racket', which, as in his own case, was not the original plan. Widick certainly had no regrets about his years in the union movement, but saw many advantages to his second career in the professoriat: 'If you're a radical and a trouble-maker, it can't be beat.'

Alan Wald

This obituary was first published in *Against the Current*, no 136, September-October 2008. We thank that journal for permission to reprint it. Interested readers may like to read a further study of Widick, by Nelson Lichtenstein, focusing on his engagement in the UAW, at <http://www.solidarity-us.org/node/1958>. An article by Widick can be found in the MIA at <http://marxists.architexturez.net/history/etol/newspape/ni/vol05/no10/widick.htm>.

Notes

1. This is not as improbable as it may seem. A member of the *Revolutionary History* Editorial Board saw volumes of both Trotsky and Deutscher in second-hand bookshops in Havana in 2008.
2. Hanisch was a member of the SAG, at that time the affiliate of the British Socialist Workers Party. The interview was never published probably because it needed a certain amount of editing and checking, and Hass was in prison and therefore unavailable.
3. This selection was compiled by Alan Clinton, but his contribution was never acknowledged. Instead, as he had joined Alan Thornett in the opposition which was to become the Workers Socialist League, he was subject to a vituperative attack in the foreword.
4. *Epikoros* derived from Epicurus, meaning something like 'despised heretic'.
5. The classic Marxist study of the rise of the CIO is Art Preis, *Labor's Giant Step: Twenty Years of the CIO* (Pioneer, New York, 1964).
6. A superb study of Shachtman's political career can be found in Peter Drucker, *Max Shachtman and His Left: A Socialist's Odyssey Through the 'American Century'* (Humanities Press, New Jersey, 1994).
7. Cannon is now the subject of a magnificent new biography by Bryan Palmer, *James P Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 2007).
8. A valuable collection is *The Founding of the Socialist Workers Party: Minutes and Resolutions 1938-89* (Monad, New York, 1982), prepared under the unparalleled editorial supervision of George Breitman.
9. The major study of Reuther is Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (Basic Books, New York, 1995).
10. The full and accurate story of Hook's evolution has now been told in Christopher Phelps, *Young Sidney Hook: Marxist and Pragmatist* (originally Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1997; paperback reprint, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2005).



Work in Progress

In recent years we have harvested much valuable information — reviews, obituaries and news — from the website of the Nin Foundation. We are not reluctant to acknowledge our debt and hope to find opportunities to work with the Foundation in the future. We take this opportunity to provide this appreciation and recommendation from Mike Jones.

Electronic Bulletin of the Andreu Nin Foundation.

THE bulletin of the Foundation gives details of public meetings, conferences, new publications, etc, but also includes high-quality essays, articles and historical texts. For example, No 72 (September 2008) includes, among other items, 'Nin in Alcalá de Henares' by Antonio Cruz Gonzalez, a member of the management board of the Foundation, who examines what happened to Nin after his arrest and up to his murder. Always in the hands of NKVD agents, he was tortured with the aim of obtaining a confession of his complicity in the Franco-led rebellion and being in league with Hitler. Proving in this way the guilt of Nin and the POUM, denounced as a Trotskyist, would bolster the campaign against Trotsky and the credibility of the Moscow Trials. But Nin died without providing any confession, so there was a cover-up. The author establishes that Nin was never in any official jail in Alcalá de Henares but detained in a private chalet belonging to a prominent PCE member, and also that Alexander Orlov, the top NKVD man who later fled to the USA, lied in the report he sent to Moscow, owing to the failure to obtain the confession.

The same number contains a 12-page essay on the late Vlady Serge by Claudio Albertani, which looks at both the politics and the painting of the son of Victor Serge, sketching out his life from his birth in Petrograd, through the degeneration of the October Revolution, the internal exile, then exile in France and finally in Mexico. A fine study of a man worth knowing more about, whose painting, according to the author, deserves wider recognition beyond Mexico. Another text, by Pello Erdezliain, deals with moves within the PSOE to rehabilitate Juan Negrín, the Prime Minister of the republic after the ousting of Largo Caballero, who did the bidding of Stalin's regime during his tenure. Negrín dispatched the Spanish gold reserves to Russia and arms were purchased

in return. The rifles thus purchased were often stamped with the two-headed eagle of the Tsarist regime. Negrín's role in the latter stage of the civil war, when Stalin was seeking an accommodation with Hitler, is also covered.

Articles from other publications are reproduced, as for example; an interview with the author of *La noche desnuda* (*The Naked Night*), a novel the theme of which is Nin's murder, from *La Verdad*, and one from *La Vanguardia*, about the campaign by the Foundation to find the whereabouts of Nin's remains.

This year, of course, is the seventieth anniversary of the POUM Trial in Barcelona, which was supposed to back up the show trials in Moscow: but the POUM leaders refused to play ball.

No 73 (November 2008) notes that the Foundation's website now has two important historical texts by Juan Andrade, the leader at the time of the pro-Trotsky component of the POUM, and one by Julian Gorkin, a POUM leader from the other component.

Highly recommended!

Mike Jones

Simon Pirani

Review Article: Communist Dissidence and Its Context

International Communist Current, *The Russian Communist Left 1918-30*, ICC, London, 2005, pp 280.

Simon Pirani is a journalist and historian. His book, *The Russian Revolution in Retreat, 1920-24: Soviet Workers and the New Communist Elite*, was published by Routledge in 2008.

VLADIMIR Demidov, who in 1917 led the Bolshevik cell at the heavy artillery workshops in Moscow's Bauman district, was, in a way, the communists' answer to Horatio, Lord Nelson. During the October uprising, he directed the workshops' Red guard, which mounted artillery on the banks of the Yauza river and shelled the Alekseevskoe military academy and other buildings held by counter-revolutionary forces. On 27 October, after prolonged street fighting, the Menshevik-led rail union Vikzhel negotiated a ceasefire, to which the Bolsheviks' Moscow leadership agreed. But when Aleksandr Arosev called Demidov on behalf of the city's Bolshevik-dominated military revolutionary committee, and ordered him to stop the bombardment, Demidov claimed that he could not hear — and continued the shelling until the other side ran up a white flag. Arosev later recalled the phone call: 'Demidov was irrepressible and not without cunning. He kept on answering, 'I can't hear!' And then another shell: boom!!' Where Nelson turned a blind eye, Demidov pleaded a deaf ear.

Demidov's reactions that day were shaped not only by the euphoria of the moment, but by a vision of revolution in which workers' armed action had a central place. This readiness to turn the guns against the bourgeoisie was combined with an almost puritanical conviction that industrial workers were the only progressive social force; that the communists among them had a special role; and that the Bolshevik party's workplace cells therefore held the key to pushing the revolution forward. Demidov's outlook was closely moulded by the circumstances in which he conducted political activity during the First World War: as one of the Bolshevik militants in the Tsarist army, whose success in bringing large numbers of soldiers over to the party's side — in disciplined formation and with their weapons — was pivotal in October. He was among a

group of worker-soldiers stationed at the Brest fortress, on the western front. In 1916, the group moved to the Bauman heavy artillery workshops and the Bolshevik cell there, headed by Demidov and Nikita Tuliakov, and soon won control of the factory committee.

After the October uprising, Demidov served on the eastern front in the civil war, and returned to the workshops in early 1920. Like many Red Army communists who arrived in Moscow at that time, he was appalled at the growth of privilege, hierarchy and bureaucratism in the Moscow party. The comrades-in-arms culture that had evolved among Red Army communists clashed sharply with the already comparatively comfortable existence of those wallowing, struggling or drowning in the government apparatus. That summer, Demidov became one of the leaders of the Bauman opposition, a district grouping loosely allied to the trade union officials who that year proclaimed the Workers Opposition. Demidov believed that the proletarian character of the state was guaranteed by the party, and the proletarian character of the party by its industrial worker members. In his eyes, like those of most party leaders, the dilution of the party's class nature was the main cause of bureaucratism; in contrast to those leaders, he railed at the young party officials sent into the district to keep an eye on him because of their supposedly 'petit-bourgeois' social backgrounds. Demidov was a committed internationalist, and in the autumn of 1920, even after the Moscow newspapers were reporting that Tukhachevsky's army was being driven back in Poland, he told cell meetings of his hopes that that army would help spread the revolution to Western Europe.

In March 1921, when the New Economic Policy (NEP) was declared and factions banned in the party, the Bauman group split. Its most prominent leader, Vasilii Paniushkin, quit the Bolshevik party and formed the Russian Workers and Peasants Socialist Party, which grew rapidly for two months until it was shut down by a series of arrests. Paniushkin's group not only denounced anti-worker and bureaucratic tendencies, but also urged a 'workers' democracy' that specifically embraced all soviet parties (that is, including Mensheviks, SRs, anarchists, etc) and non-party workers. Demidov did not yet go that far. He stayed in the party, remained critical, but shied away from a broader vision of workers' democracy. He made no public protest about the suppression of the Kronshtadt rising. Many Bolshevik rank-and-filers were alarmed by the assault on Kronshtadt, but it was supported by all the party's organised opposition groups.

In 1923, in another row about full-time officials being sent by the centre to spy on, or control, the Bauman dissidents, Demidov was expelled from both the Communist Party and the metalworkers' union. Maria Berzina, a former schoolteacher now running the workshops cell with him, was also kicked out.

Angry mass meetings were held in their defence, but to no avail. The issue proved fertile ground for the Workers Group led by Gavriil Miasnikov, which recruited Demidov, Berzina and other former Bauman opposition activists. In September 1923, the Workers Group was broken up by the secret police and Demidov exiled to the Solovetskie islands. He repented and rejoined the party at some stage, but to no avail: in 1935 he was tried with other former Workers Oppositionists and shot.²

The 1923 manifesto of the Workers Group, to which Demidov rallied, is one of the important documents made available in English for the first time in *The Russian Communist Left*. It called, as the Left Opposition would do later in the same year, for more intensive development of Russian machine-building, for the substitution of imported technology and for tight controls on foreign capital (p 174). But its political arguments were more radical than those of the Left Opposition: the Workers Group argued that 'the greatest peril' of the early NEP period arose from the rapid expansion of the material wealth of leading cadres. Danger threatened from an unexpected quarter: the 'hegemony of a powerful group deciding to take political and economic power into its own hands, naturally under the pretence of very noble intentions' (p 175). The manifesto argued that to confront this, reorganised soviets, as opposed to the All-Russian Executive Central Committee and other central bodies, should direct 'the whole state apparatus' (p 177). This version of the manifesto seems to be based on abbreviated texts published by the Workers Group's foreign sympathisers in the 1920s; it is to be hoped that in future the (much longer) full manifesto, which sets out in more detail both the Workers Group's critique of Lenin's strategy and its limited (but much less limited than Lenin's) vision of workers' democracy — and which is now available to readers at the Russian federal archives — will also be translated.³

The Russian Communist Left also includes two other texts previously unavailable in English, the 'Platform of the 15' of 1927 signed by Saprionov and others, and an article by Miasnikov from 1931. There are two other long-out-of-print documents — the Left Communists' theses (1918) and *The Workers' Opposition* (1920) by Aleksandra Kollontai⁴ — and commentaries on the communist left by supporters of the International Communist Current (ICC). Here I will, firstly, refer to the historiographical context; secondly, offer some thoughts on the left's approach to its history, provoked by this collection; and, thirdly, comment on the issue of the continuity of Russian left communism down to the late 1930s.

The Russian Communist Left is published at a time when the Soviet archives have been open for long enough that historians have begun not only to unearth previously concealed documents of such groupings, but also to understand

better the lives that people like Demidov lived and the circumstances that shaped their dissident activity. And the documents are best read in this context. It is exciting that we now know not only the text of the manifesto that Demidov supported, but also about the path he took to get there. We know more not only of what the dissidents said, but also about the conditions under which they said it. We know that a minority of the oppositionists, including Demidov and Paniushkin, joined the Bolsheviks in the difficult, dangerous years after 1905; most of the dissidents, though, were of the generation that flooded into the party during the revolution and the civil war, numerically overwhelming their older comrades. We know that the dissidents by and large saw NEP as a retreat, but that — unlike those who simply became disillusioned or quit the party in disgust — they channelled their concerns into a search for alternatives to Lenin's strategy. We are starting to learn about the relations between this first wave of communist dissidents and the second one, which flooded into the communist oppositions in 1927-28 as the party leadership began to turn the screws on workers prior to the 'great break' (the industrialisation drive and forced collectivisation of the First Five-Year Plan). We know that, right through that 'great break' and on into the 1930s, many of the most visible dissidents — that is, those that wrote the documents — held to the conviction that the USSR remained a 'workers' state' that needed reform; a more radical, usually younger, group saw that state as a dictatorship imposed by the class enemy.

Recent publications in English that touch directly on the history of communist opposition include the memoirs of Eduard Dune, who was close to the Democratic Centralist leader Timofei Sapronov; articles by Barbara Allen, who has researched the life of Aleksandr Shliapnikov, the Workers Opposition leader; Kevin Murphy's recent book on the dynamics between workers and the party at the Hammer and Sickle works in Moscow; and my own work on party-worker relationships in Moscow. Some of Aleksei Gusev's work on the influence of such movements on the Left Opposition in the late 1920s, and the tensions within the opposition, will soon be available in English too.⁵ Worker opposition more generally has been widely written about, for example in Diane Koenker's recent history of the Russian printers' union. Jeffrey Rossman's book *Workers Against Stalin* deals primarily with industrial opposition among textile workers during the First Five-Year Plan, but also contains inspiring descriptions of non-party socialist leaders who were active in that movement.⁶ As for the broader context in which both communist and non-communist dissidents operated, there has been a constant stream of writing by historians: about the social background of those generations, about the social and cultural history of the working class in which they operated as well as labour history *per se*, about their culture and mores, and about the peasantry to which workers remained so close.⁷

The introductory essay in *The Russian Communist Left* (pp 13-31) makes reference to this body of work, but the main political survey of the left communist groups, first published in 2000 (pp 61-115), unfortunately does not. And it suffers as a result. The authors are more interested in judging the left communists' documents textually, against what they regard as immutable communist standards, than in the actual struggles during which these documents appeared, and the real people such as Demidov to whom they were addressed. The authors seem almost determined to ignore the historiography. For example, they discuss the Kronshtadt rising of 1921, and revisit the old dispute about the class character of the Kronshtadt garrison — that is, whether the challenge to the Bolsheviks in 1921 came from the revolutionaries that fought alongside them in 1917, or by peasant interlopers, as Trotsky later claimed. Trotsky's assertion was 'in total opposition to reality', the authors write (p 88) — and actually I think they have a case. But the evidence offered is lamentable: an Italian left communist document of 1938, whose authors were unlikely to have had access to the relevant information, is quoted, while Israel Getzler's research on this specific issue, and that of Paul Avrich and Mary McAuley on related issues, is ignored.⁸ By 2000, some effort might even have been made to consult — or at least acknowledge the importance of — the hundreds of previously secret documents on Kronshtadt published in Russian in the early 1990s. Otherwise history becomes a matter of doctrinal faith, rather than a study of what actually happened.

Despite such shortcomings, *The Russian Communist Left* offers food for thought. As well as the Workers Group manifesto, the 'Platform of the 15' (pp 184-231) tells us how the radical minority of the communist opposition in 1927 reacted to the events addressed in the much better known 'Platform of the United Opposition'. Miasnikov's condemnation of Stalinism, written from exile in 1931 (pp 235-68), is both trenchant and enraged at the same time. I also found compelling an item from the ICC's own history — an essay written in 1977, 'The Communist Left in Russia 1918-30' (pp 33-60). It offers an account of the retreat of the Soviet state from socialist aims that in retrospect seems more convincing than some others available to those active in left politics 30 years ago. The assertion that the party and state were 'proletarian' is questioned: the Bolsheviks, 'prisoners of their substitutionist conceptions', believed it was possible to administer the state machine and capitalist economy while waiting for the world revolution, oblivious to the fact that 'the necessities of state power' were transforming them into 'agents of counter-revolution'; the tendency towards degeneration was 'accelerated by the fact that the party had fused with the state and thus had to adapt itself even more quickly to the demands of national capital'; the 'great achievement' of the Russian communist left groups

was their readiness to work 'against the party and against the Soviet state' when left with no alternative (pp 48-49).

In the series written in 2000, the ICC develops its analysis of the Soviet state, characterising the social system over which it prevailed as 'state capitalism... not an organic step towards socialism [but] capitalism's last form of defence against the collapse of its system and the emergence of communism' (p 73). It's a line of thought that could be followed in respect of the last 20 years of Chinese, Russian and world history. The concept of the vanguard party — which in the 1920s had 'fused with the state' — is not subject to any similar critique, though. And that is hardly surprising, since the ICC itself apparently clings to the vanguardism that played a critical — and negative — role, in Bolshevik politics in the 1920s, and in the international workers' movement subsequently. (The ICC regards 'the revolutionary political organisation' — itself, presumably — as the 'vanguard of the working class', striving for a 'regroupment of revolutionaries with the aim of constituting a real world communist party' (p 279).) This approach colours the style and methodology of *The Russian Communist Left*, whose authors see themselves as bearers of 'the torch of organised Marxist militancy — and thus of Marxism', who have a duty 'to reclaim the work of their 'forgotten' ancestors' (p 7).

This brings me to a final point, about the ideological and organisational continuity of left communism in early Soviet Russia. The introductory essay in *The Russian Communist Left* seeks to 'affirm the continued existence of the communist left' from 1918 to the 1930s, as a group that distinguished itself from others with a long shopping-list of political positions, including the characterisation of Social Democracy as bourgeois; emphasis on soviet democracy; opposition to the notion of state capitalism being a progressive stage in the struggle; opposition to national liberation wars as reactionary; and opposition to parliamentarianism, participation in elections and trade unionism 'in all its forms' (pp 13-14). To support this contention, it is argued (1) that the Workers Group of 1923 was 'in political and organisational continuity with the Left Communist fraction of the RSDLP(B) and an integral part of the international communist left' (p 21); (2) that the group continued 'issuing appeals, leaflets and manifestos until 1929' (p 26); and (3) that due to its 'political clarity and organisational strength', it 'was to maintain itself as an organisation until 1938' (p 23). I suggest, to the contrary, that the Workers Group was just one of a series of dissident groups that appeared briefly in 1921-24, and had no more or less continuity with Left Communism of 1918 than the others; that the largest Workers Group organisation, in Moscow, ceased to exist by 1924, and no evidence has yet been found of any persistent organisation after that, only of isolated patches, and of Miasnikov's energetic literary activity; and

that the shopping-list of political positions mentioned was largely irrelevant to the waves of communist dissidence in 1921-23 and 1927-29. Taking the three points in turn:

1. There was only limited organisational coherence in the Left Communist fraction of 1918, and no organisational continuity between it and the Workers Group. The Left Communist fraction included first-rank Bolshevik leaders, in particular Bukharin, who by 1920 had become the most energetic opponent of dissidents; others such as Yuri Piatakov who eschewed the 1920-21 dissidents and the Workers Group, and joined the short-lived Left Opposition of 1923; and the group around Valerian Osinskii, Vladimir Smirnov and others, many of whom would participate in the 'military opposition' of 1919 and the Democratic Centralist group. None of these people went on to support the Workers Group; of its supporters whose biographies are known, most, like Demidov, had been around the Workers Opposition or associated groups in 1920-21.⁹ While there were, of course, themes that recurred in the Left Communists' political arguments and those of the Workers Group, there was hardly political continuity. And neither grouping fully accepted the list of positions enumerated: for example, neither rejected 'trade unionism in all its forms'.

2. To my knowledge, no historian has so far found any record of activity by the Workers Group between 1924 and 1928. The GPU's reports to national party leaders for those years, published in 2000, contain references to occasional activity by anarchists, Mensheviks and SRs, or former Bolshevik party members, but nothing about the Workers Group or any successor. Inside the party, the Trotskyists and Democratic Centralists organised in 1925, and for a sustained period from 1926 until the mass expulsions that followed the fifteenth party congress in October 1927. After that, both the United Opposition and the Democratic Centralists, now expelled from the party, were active among industrial workers. Speed-up and attacks on living standards by the regime from 1928 produced a wave of worker protest, and this swelled support for the most radical communist dissidents. At this point the Myasnikov tendency reappeared briefly, under the name Workers Communist Party, which produced at least one issue of a newspaper before being broken up by the GPU.¹⁰ There is no evidence either that this group undertook nationally coordinated or large-scale organisation, or that it had the strength or longevity to develop its programme in any meaningful sense.

3. The record for the 1930s is clearer. Former supporters of the Workers Group and other left dissidents managed brief spurts of activity in the prison camps and in foreign exile. They formed a 'federation of left communists' at the Verkhneuralskoe prison camp, together with some Democratic Centralists and

former Trotskyists; there are scattered mentions of similar activity elsewhere in the gulag.¹¹ Miasnikov himself was in prison and internal exile from 1923, fled Russia via Iran in 1929, and resumed his political activity in Paris in 1930. The Russian historians BI Belenkin and VK Vinogradov researched his biography in detail, noting that he attempted to form a Russian exile group, to publish a newspaper, and to form an international organisation. They found no evidence that these attempts were successful. At least one number of the paper appeared, though, with contributions by Miasnikov and a handful of others: this was found later by another historian, Yuri Felshtinskii, who published it on the internet.¹²

The picture is of a small group of dissidents, who briefly came together in the spring of 1923 and agreed on a programme, but — due in the first place to the severity of Stalinist repression — succeeded neither in developing that programme, winning workers' support for it, nor of sustaining organisational activity for any length of time. This does not square with the claims made by the ICC, without reference to specific sources, that left communism took a politically or organisationally consistent form in early Soviet Russia.

The opening of the archives has made possible substantial progress in studying the history of communist and worker dissidence in early Soviet Russia. Research already undertaken points in at least two important directions. Firstly, that there were strong currents of socialist thought that flowed outside any party organisation, so much so that groups of 'non-partyists' won majorities in important soviets (Kronshtadt in 1917, Moscow in 1921), were prominent in decisive workers' movements (Petrograd in 1918), and offered alternative perspectives insufficiently covered by historians previously. Secondly, within the Bolshevik party, the range of views was far greater, and changed more often, than some literature suggests. Moreover, the historiography of the last 30 years has provided us with a mountain of information on social relations and cultural changes, inside and outside the workplace, that formed the context for workers' and communists' political struggles. The documents in *The Russian Communist Left* — and others now available, that will hopefully be translated, from groups ranging from the Ignatovists, Paniushkinites and Collectivists of 1920-21 to the radical left of 1927-29 — are important pieces of this exciting jigsaw.

Notes

1. Baumanskii raionnyi komitet VKP(b), *Ocherki po istorii revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia i bol'shevistskoi organizatsii v Baumanskom raione* (Moscow, 1927), pp 149-50.
2. I collected information on Demidov and the groupings of which he was part, mostly at the Central Archive of the Social-Political History of Moscow (the former Moscow party archive), especially in fond 3 (the Moscow party committee), fond 63 (Bauman district organisation) and fond 465 (Vimpel' (former heavy artillery workshops) cell). See Simon Pirani, *The Russian Revolution in Retreat 1920-24*:

- Soviet Workers and the New Communist Elite* (Routledge, 2008), especially chapters 2 and 5.
3. The full manifesto, a 76-page printed brochure with 17 sections of text, is stored at the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (formerly the central party archive) in fond 17, opis' 71, folder 4. I estimate that it is at least twice as long as the version used. The origin of the version published is not stated, but a bibliographical note (p 31) mentions texts published in 1924 in Scotland and a French translation published later in the 1920s.
 4. Editor's note: This document is available on the Marxists Internet Archive at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1921/workers-opposition/index.htm>.
 5. Eduard Dune, *Notes of a Red Guard* (Illinois University Press, Urbana, 1993); Barbara Allen, *Worker, Trade Unionist, Revolutionary: A Political Biography of Alexander Shlyapnikov 1905-1922* (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2001), and 'The Evolution of Communist Party Control Over the Trade Unions', *Revolutionary Russia*, Volume 15, no 2 (2002), pp 72-105; Kevin Murphy, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution: Class Struggle in a Moscow Metal Factory* (Berghahn Books, Oxford, 2005); Simon Pirani, 'The Moscow Workers' Movement in 1921 and the Role of Non-Partyism', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Volume 56, no 1 (2004), pp 143-60; and 'The Party Elite, the Industrial Managers and the Cells: Early Stages in the Formation of the Soviet Ruling Class in Moscow, 1922-23', *Revolutionary Russia*, Volume 19, no 2 (2006), pp 197-228; Aleksei Gusev, 'Naissance de l'Opposition de Gauche', *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*, no 54 (1994), pp 5-39, and 'The Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition and the Working Class, 1928-29', in Donald Filtzer *et al*, *A Dream Deferred: New Studies in Russian and Soviet Labour History* (Peter Lang, forthcoming). In Russian, there has appeared not only a new body of historical writing, but also a stream of collections of archive documents. Although no volume dedicated to communist dissidents of the 1920s has appeared, there have been collections on the anarchists, Socialist Revolutionary maximalists and Mensheviks, Valentina Vilko's volume on the 1923 party crisis has appeared in both English and Russian. Valentina Vilko, *The Struggle for Power: Russia in 1923* (Prometheus, New York, 1996).
 6. Diane Koenker, *Republic of Labor: Russian Printers and Soviet Socialism, 1918-1930* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2005); Jeffrey Rossman, *Worker Resistance Under Stalin: Class and Revolution on the Shop Floor* (Harvard University Press, London, 2005).
 7. The list is too long to give here. Recent bibliographical surveys of labour history covering the early Soviet period are Lewis Siegelbaum and Ronald Suny, 'Class Backwards? In Search of the Soviet Working Class', in Siegelbaum and Suny (eds), *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class and Identity* (Cornell University Press, London, 1994), pp 1-26, and Siegelbaum, 'The Late Romance of the Soviet Worker in Western Historiography', *International Review of Social History*, no 51 (2006), pp 463-81.
 8. Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917-1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1983), pp 223-26; Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1970); Mary McAuley, *Bread and Justice: State and Society in Petrograd 1917-1922*, Clarendon, Oxford, 1991. Avrich's article

- on Miasnikov ('Bolshevik Opposition to Lenin: G Miasnikov and the Workers Group', *Russian Review*, no 43 (1984), pp 1-29) is referred to.
9. Pirani, *The Russian Revolution in Retreat*, and Avrich, 'Bolshevik Opposition to Lenin', op cit.
 10. I thank Aleksei Gusev, the author of a dissertation and articles on the communist opposition of the late 1920s, for this information, based on his archival research. E-mail from A Gusev, 13 November 2007.
 11. Ante Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma* (Ink Links, London, 1979), pp 279-82 and 303-04; email from A Gusev, 13 November 2007.
 12. BI Belenkin and VK Vinogradov, introduction to 'Filosofia ubiistva, ili pochemu i kak ia ubil Mikhaila Romanova', *Minuvshee*, no 18 (1995), pp 15-17; www.felshtinsky.com, page titled 'Listovki'.

Julien Papp
Review Article: Defend the Heritage of the
1956 Hungarian Revolution

Balázs Nagy, *Sordöntő idők. A Petőfi Körben és a forradaloman (Decisive Days: In the Petőfi Circle and the Revolution)*, Imre Nagy Foundation, Budapest, 2007, pp287. This review was specially written for *Revolutionary History*, and was translated into English by Bob Archer.

ON 23 June 2007 in Budapest, in the meeting hall of the Kossuth Club — the very place where the Petőfi Circle held its famous discussions — the surviving founders of the Circle held a commemorative event together with the Imre Nagy Association to launch the book mentioned above by one of the former secretaries of the Circle, Balázs Nagy. Balázs Nagy had been part of the 'active and leading nucleus' of the Petőfi Circle together with Gábor Tánzos, András B Hegedűs and Róbert Boho.

The event coincided with the author's own eightieth birthday, which was honoured by around 60 guests. Balázs Nagy started by laying a wreath at the plaque commemorating Gábor Tánzos on the wall of the building at 7 Museum Street. He recalled his human and political qualities and that he was the heart and soul of a real movement.

The meeting was chaired by the president of the Imre Nagy Society, József Sipos. In opening the event, he, Balázs Nagy and the audience paid homage to the martyrs, companions and leaders of 1956, Imre Nagy, Miklós Gimes, József Szilágyi and many others. The speaker called for the heritage of the revolution to be preserved for their sake, without embellishments or blemishes. In particular, he insisted on the profound unity between the reform movement underway since the summer of 1953 and the explosion which followed it in October 1956. Whether in our own 1848 or the French revolution, for example, he said, these great events could not be separated from the ideas which opened the way for them, the reform era in Hungary and the work of the encyclopaedists and the philosophers of the age of enlightenment in France.

To be precise, he added, the movement which preceded October 1956 had four centres: Imre Nagy and those around him; numerous cohorts of politically

diverse writers and journalists who gravitated around them; and the Petöfi Circle. Like the workers' councils which arose during the revolution, the Circle's position in this picture was unique in that it had no direct antecedents.

These currents worked for a radical change in the existing political regime, but never contemplated revolution. However, aims such as a multi-party system, free elections and government by a workers' councils regime, not to mention a break with the Warsaw Pact, were unacceptable to the Stalinist state, which defended its positions by violence and treachery. Reform plans, therefore, could not but lead to armed struggle and the sacrifices resulting from insurrection. The leadership of the MDP (Hungarian Workers Party — the official name of the Communist Party) furiously opposed the 23 October demonstration¹ and then tried to isolate Imre Nagy and provoke the population through the massacre at the parliament building on 25 October.

Before giving way to the main contributors in the colloquium (Zoltán Olmosi, Levante Sipos, Sándor Kazmér and Dezső Pragay), Balázs Nagy summarised the main conclusion he reaches in his book, that the current regime in Hungary cannot in any way be considered the heir of the 1956 revolution.

This is a work of political autobiography. It covers the period between the autumn of 1955 and the autumn of 1956. The preface, by the historian Levante Sipos, former editor in chief of the revue *Multunk* (*Our Past*), sketches the author's eventful life and thus provides a context for the book itself.

Since his youth, Balázs Nagy has been influenced by ruralist² writers. He first met Communist Party members in 1944 and joined the party in 1945. He became district secretary of MADISZ, a Communist-inspired youth movement, and studied at Budapest University, specialising in history and political economy. While still at school, he was elected secretary of the Budapest Petöfi College and, like many of his generation, was marked for life by the people's college movement.³ He was given national responsibilities in this field in 1948-49, before falling victim to the 'great vigilance' of Stalinism at the end of 1950. He was accused of various crimes (of being an imperialist spy, anti-worker and anti-Soviet element...) and was held for a while by the political police. Balázs Nagy was banned from all public activity, sacked from his job as an assistant at the university, and, shortly before Imre Nagy became prime minister, he was expelled from the party. For several years he earned a living as a worker, then as a driver. In the autumn of 1955 he was let back into the party and shortly after that was taken on by the TIT (Society for the Propagation of Scientific and Social Knowledge), where he was able to use his university education and, above all, his oppositional political views.

This is where the book starts. It ends with the author's emigration on 22 November 1956. However, the experience and the lessons of five decades of

life as a political activist in exile re-surface each time the author tries to explain the meaning of the Hungarian revolution or to show its necessary unity with the reform movement which preceded it. In fact, in his book Balázs Nagy is simultaneously witness, actor and historian and also to a certain extent a commentator on the period, so that the work can be read from several points of view.

Its guiding line is clearly the one indicated in the subtitle: how the Petöfi Circle came into being, what it did and how it played the role of catalyst, and how it dispersed when it had fulfilled its task, as well as the role the author personally played in this process.

The Petöfi Circle arose indirectly from the intellectual effervescence in Hungary after the death of Stalin, and specifically after Imre Nagy, who became prime minister on 4 July 1953, announced his programme. This was the atmosphere in which the TTIT set up the Kossuth Club to provide a framework for the discussions and debates aroused by the 'new course', and a young writer, István Lakatos, organised the Bessenyei Circle to provide a place for young writers and poets who had so far not found an outlet.

None of them was a Communist, so the party tried to attach the group to its youth movement, the DISZ (National Federation of Working Youth), and gave responsibility for doing this to a former representative of the people's colleges, Gábor Tánczos. In the course of an unexpected meeting with Balázs Nagy in the autumn of 1955, Tánczos gave his former comrade to understand that he intended to neutralise Lakatos' circle, not for the benefit of the sectarian and dogmatic elements in the DISZ, but in order to transform it into a place where the spirit of the 'new course' embodied in Imre Nagy and his programme could be nourished and advanced.

Tánczos didn't spell things out exactly, but Balázs Nagy understood the scope of the coming struggle and enthusiastically agreed to join in. What they had to do, under the aegis of DISZ, was to take over the Lakatos group, whose interests were mainly artistic and which was moving to the right, in order to develop fairly independent political activity to serve the cause of the 'new course', whilst at the same time keeping up appearances so as to avoid a confrontation with the Stalinist leadership of the Rakosi team, which went on to a full counter-offensive after Imre Nagy was removed in April 1955 and expelled from the party in December.

This work required great caution and great skill at political tactics, as Balázs Nagy emphasises in relation to the leading nucleus which was about to form.

TTIT was to make a very good job of it, containing as it did a large number of academics and former party members who had been sidelined by the regime. They included, for example, the establishment's director, the former Communist

Aladár Mód, who had been banned from all party activity since the Rajk trial and remained very reserved but sincerely backed Imre Nagy's supporters. There were also several experienced women activists working in the social departments of the Institute who had kept in touch with leadership layers in the party and provided useful information about 'how far you could go at any given moment on this or that issue' (p 21). Most of the scientific staff remained apolitical, but were sympathetic to the movement, so that as a whole the TTIT acted as 'a real centre of propaganda for the new course' (p 20).

When Balázs Nagy rejoined the team, a debate was underway over what to call the Bessenyei Circle. Bessenyei was an author of the eighteenth-century Hungarian enlightenment who was not very well known to the wider public. The DISZ wanted to substitute the name of the poet Sándor Petőfi, the bard of the 1848 revolution, an infinitely more powerful symbol for uniting and mobilising millions of Hungarians behind the party. The master-stroke of Tánczos and his comrades was to eject Lakatos with the support of the DISZ, while using this framework to fight for the 'new course' and for Imre Nagy's rehabilitation.

Despite the vigilance of Ervin Hollós, the all-powerful general secretary of DISZ, the Circle was able to organise its work without direct surveillance. The first few weeks of 1956 were quite calm, with modest audiences of between 15 and 20 people attending the three or four lecture-debates. Then the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) provided a decisive impulse. In fact it was an extraordinary stimulus. Balázs Nagy wrote:

I would say that, without it, Rákosi and his people would have crushed the opposition's activity and broken and stifled its strength. We would never have been able to build up the Petőfi Circle and the 1956 revolution would not even have happened... We didn't fully grasp it, but we all felt the wind in our sails and knew that from then on, basing ourselves on the Twentieth Congress, we could set to work with renewed strength. (p 28)

The anniversary of the 1848 revolution was on 15 March, and commemorating it was an excellent opportunity for the Circle to test its strength. They had to take the initiative in the choice of speakers and the most appropriate quotations from the poet of the revolution to draw the parallels between the message of 1848 and the opposition's struggle against dictatorship.

Sándor Petőfi's political courage and creative voice had captivated Balázs Nagy in his earliest youth. All this came flooding back, and he spared no efforts to tear the banner of 1848 from the hands of the Stalinist apparatus. From the outset he was part of the radical wing of his team, which was not content just to go back to the situation as it was in the summer of 1953; they did not think

any compromise or reconciliation with the apparatus was possible. The success of the 15 March commemorative lectures encouraged the Circle to develop this type of activity more widely, and these more radical elements like Balázs Nagy and Róbert Boho thought that besides these big public events they should organise some semi-clandestine debates in different places.

Tánczos and Hegedűs, however, expressed some reservations and the plan was dropped, especially since right from the start the Petőfi Circle appeared as a general movement linking together supporters from a variety of backgrounds, unlike the other sources of opposition (writers, journalists, universities, radio, etc) which were limited each to their own respective professional fields.

The fifteenth of March was also an opportunity to take the measure of the opposition which had developed within the party. Its symbol was János Kádár, but his complicity in the Rajk trial, and the fact that he abased himself in front of Rákosi when the Central Committee discussed the Twentieth Congress, ruled him out as far as any of the anti-Stalinist oppositional currents were concerned. After all, the Twentieth Congress had broken the party's unity, provoking a veritable revolt against the leaders who were steeped in crimes against their own comrades.

It was in this atmosphere that, during a meeting of the party organisation in the XIII district of Budapest, a former member of the university youth, György Litvan, said to Rákosi's face (who was present at the meeting) that he and his group no longer enjoyed the confidence and support of the people. It was quite an event and widespread rumours immediately embroidered Litvan's words to make him say — in line with popular sentiment — 'You have to go, Comrade Rákosi, you have to resign!' (p 36)

After three low-key public meetings (a meeting of young historians, a debate on the second five-year plan and a discussion with the poet Gyula Illyés), the Petőfi Circle scored its first big success on 9 May 1956 with a debate on economic questions.

Balázs Nagy had fallen seriously ill in April and came back to help with the final preparations for the 9 May meeting. He wrote:

To our great surprise, the main hall at the Kossuth Club was packed to the rafters. About 300 people squeezed in, and others had to stay outside in the corridor. It went on late into the night, and still we couldn't finish the meeting. We had to organise another one about two weeks later on 22 May, and even a third meeting turned out to be necessary on 20 June. By then, though, there had already been two debates on history and philosophy. (p 41)

From then on the hall was full to overflowing every time and almost every meeting had to go on longer than expected. However late it got, most people stayed in their seats attentively and enthusiastically and expressing a very wide range of feelings: 'loud hilarity, dissent, assent, shouts of joy, exclamations, jeering, etc' accompanied the controversies (p 43).

In two months the humble Circle became a movement of repute, a political factor known throughout the country and even beyond. Activity was so feverish and events followed upon one another so thick and fast and were entangled with each other in such complicated ways that 50 years later the memorialist has a hard time teasing it all out, all the more so in that far from contemplating or merely recording the action, he was in the thick of it. In writing his memoirs, Balázs Nagy was able to refer to the now-published minutes of the Petőfi Circle, but he still expresses regret for not remembering more of the extraordinary wealth of that exalted summer of 1956.

He still faithfully conveys its impassioned atmosphere as well as the salient points which marked the life of the Petőfi Circle, driven by the great debates of the period; the protagonists and what was at stake in their confrontations; the steps taken to improve the organisation of the Circle; memorable encounters and the network of relationships, to mention only the main themes of this central part of the book (pp 37-140).

In general, the professional quality and political diversity of the speakers, including avowed supporters of the regime, guaranteed the high level and dramatic tension of the confrontations. Moreover, there were practically no introductory presentations, so there was more time for question and answer sessions. For itself, the Circle maintained order in the meetings through the enormous care the speakers devoted to preparing their contributions. It was not at all a question of telling them what they should say, but of coordinating the arguments and anticipating situations where one could not go beyond certain limits.

At that pioneering session on 9 May, for example, the speakers' table included Gábor Tánczos as chairperson, two well-known government economists and Ferenc Donáth (one of the main agents in the 1945 agrarian reforms whom Rákosi had just let out of prison). The tone was set by a former pupil of the peoples' colleges, Sándor Györffy, who spoke prudently but with enough determination to encourage a series of critical comments to come from the body of the hall. As with other sessions on socialist economy, it turned into a veritable indictment of the government's economic policy. In particular, people criticised the slavish imitation of the USSR, stagnation in the standard of living, wastage, agricultural problems, Hungary's place in the international division of labour, and above all the fact that workers had no right to oversee how economic

plans were worked out.

Starting from these themes, people went on to a more or less open discussion of political questions such as the Yugoslav example of workers' self-management, or the relationship between the Circle, which was *par excellence* a movement of intellectuals, and the Hungarian working class. This last point is not just theoretical. It poses right from the outset the practical question of learning how to overcome the material obstacles caused by working-class conditions, and also how to thwart surveillance by the political and trade union apparatuses in the factories. Workers certainly knew about the activities of the Circle — it is said that some of them even wanted to join the 'Petöfi Circle Party' (p 52) — especially since the workers who did come to the evening meetings were for the most part former Marxist intellectuals who had become manual workers and stood out from the rest of the audience for their more extreme radicalism in the debates.

Finally, the young DISZ secretary at the Aron Gábor foundry in Kőbánya (one of Budapest's industrial suburbs) invited the Petöfi Circle to send someone to report to a meeting there, and this task was given to Balázs Nagy, who until quite recently had been a worker himself. The meeting was arranged in record time, and the speaker explained to a packed hall (including the entire factory management): 'What the Circle was and what its aims were. I said clearly', he recalls 'that it wanted to change Rákosi's policies... I explained in detail that we wanted to bring about some form or other of Yugoslav self-management, as well as a really democratic government through the Popular Patriotic Front.' (p 122)⁴

His report was followed by a flood of comments and questions which got closer and closer to the danger mark, particularly in relation to a multi-party system and the presence of Soviet troops in Hungary. As the workers grew bolder and bolder, the factory management 'literally sank into their chairs'.

By the time this meeting took place, the Petöfi Circle was already presenting itself as a structured organisation. After the first great debate on the economy on 9 May, Gábor Tánczos read out to the audience a list of 24 people (this is the number Balázs Nagy recalls) who were to form a wider leadership around the initial nucleus to act as a counterweight to the 'will and the pressure' of the DISZ, to which the Circle was still officially attached, and to break 'the isolation and solitude Tánczos was under' (pp 54-55). A few days later the leadership appointed Balázs Nagy and András Hegedűs as secretaries alongside Tánczos, although in practice Róbert Boho also continued to carry out this role.

At least 11 of the 24 members of the leadership were former pupils of the peoples' colleges, and almost all of them had published articles or books. Among them there were doctors and scientists of various types, but most of them

were authors, historians, philosophers, economists and artists. Politically they represented all shades of Communism with the exception of the most narrow-minded Stalinists, and as to their age, they quite happily saw themselves as the 'thirty-something movement'.

Besides this team, the sheer number of tasks facing the Circle led its leaders to expand and exploit friendly political relationships which soon formed quite an extensive network of collaborators. Political activists, scholars and seasoned journalists lent their support and advice and also a growing number of generally young intellectuals, and even members of the DISZ and the Communist Party who followed debates with keen interest and were always ready to spread news of the Circle and recruit new people into the audience.

This audience reflected, in its composition, the image of the leadership (or was it vice-versa?), but each time the workers grew in number and — to the great surprise of the organisers — they were increasingly party cadres. The audience also included former members of the coalition parties of 1945-48³ as well as victims of persecution who had just been released from the regime's internment camps.

In all this, Balázs Nagy himself (who was 29 at the time — Tánzos, Boho and Hegedűs were younger) was a sort of black sheep, stigmatised by his expulsion from the party, which had not been wiped clean by his permission to rejoin in 1955. He wrote:

Having done time in prison — which was almost something to boast about — conferred a higher status than expulsion from the party. Expulsion always aroused a slight suspicion. So I myself was one of the lepers, thought at the time to be an unclean and dubious element. This was not so within the leadership, but many of the Circle and its sympathisers saw things that way... It was all the more annoying that there I was in the middle of this group of intellectuals, none of whom would have spoken up for me when I needed it... Even in the spring of 1956 a good number of them looked at me with open suspicion. When I officially became a member of the leadership, I was for a long time afraid that I would be unceremoniously thrown out by the DISZ. It is true that I had been taken back into the party, but I no longer felt at home there. I didn't think it was my party. To be precise, I wanted to renew it from top to bottom. I no longer had any confidence in its cadres and its representatives. Even the opposition within the party I had some difficulty in considering a real opposition. (pp 61-62)

Which is as much as to say that Balázs Nagy was very far from sharing the spirit of that 'tepid' faction of the party and went even beyond the frontist programme

that Imre Nagy launched in 1954. To clarify his ideas, he found time to write a political essay. In doing so it dawned on him that within a popular front the only way several parties can coexist and still retain the freedom of action is if they accept a common basis and that this basis can only be acceptance of fundamental social changes: agrarian reform, expropriation of industry and a new social and economic organisation. But when he tried to get his article published, the editor of the magazine most likely to take it put forward various pretexts to stop it from being published. He insisted that the article should name the parties in question, which, in the given situation, amounted to a provocation. So the work never saw the light of day.

To this chapter of disappointments should be added that after two days of enthralling debates on history, Balázs Nagy was not given the opportunity to present the observations which he had nurtured over some time, even though his name was on the speakers' list:

The two-day debate came to an end and I was still not off the starting block. I held that against Táncczos, particularly since I thought — as I still do — that a more specifically political contribution was what was clearly lacking in the debate. But we did not fall out over it... because our mutual agreement over the political tasks to be carried out was bigger than that.
(p 94)

In any case, setbacks of this kind found compensation both in the sense of a job well done as the Petőfi Circle started to exercise tangible influence of the collective destiny of Hungarians and in the happiness the author gained from the various tasks entrusted to him.

First place among these was held indisputably by his four meetings with Imre Nagy, which he recalls as a great honour. On the first occasion, around 30 May, Balázs Nagy talked to him about the Circle and what it was doing. On the second, on 7 June, his birthday, he brought him greetings from the Petőfi Circle. The topic of the third visit, in August, was the host's readmission into the party, and Balázs Nagy's suggestion about forming a new party: 'Do you not think, Comrade Nagy, that in the light of recent events the time has come to found a new party, since we have firmly established that the existing party is incapable of regenerating itself?' (p 151)

Imre Nagy reacted sharply. For him, that would be a negation of his own past and would cut across the process of democratisation that was underway. He was much more favourably inclined towards the Petőfi Circle setting up specialist commissions, thinking no doubt, although he didn't say so, that they could be useful if the opposition came to power.

The fourth meeting, about which more later, was during the revolution, in parliament, when Imre Nagy was once again prime minister. The author emphasises that, despite the accusations of Stalinists who suspect a plot behind every conversation, even the most innocent, Imre Nagy never gave him orders of any sort in the period preceding the revolution. Rumours of that sort could only have originated in the brains of Stalinists. Quite unlike this policeman's way of looking at things, there certainly was a different kind of 'complicity', a half-spontaneous interaction with its public, as well as a series of events which speeded things up and pushed the Petöfi Circle forward.

In fact the reader can follow in the pages of this book the events which anchored the Circle in the national and international political context: Rákosi's speech at the palace of sport recognising his personal responsibility for the Rajk trial, the Poznań uprising, Mikoyan's visit to Budapest and the sidelining of Rákosi, the Hungarian writers' congress, the reburial of Rajk and his comrades, Gerö's and Kádár's shuttle diplomacy between Moscow and Belgrade, Gomułka's election at the head of the Polish party...

By the end of May, the Circle was attracting estimated audiences of 600 to discussions of history. Its ranks included both so-called liberal historians denied tenure and the 'demigods' of official Stalinist history, authoritarian, dogmatic and responsible for all the falsifications of the past such as Erzsébet Andics, László Réti, Dezső Nemes, László Orbán... who had debased the teaching of history from the university level right down to the primary school, politically instrumentalised the past and above all masked particular actors in and fundamental questions of the history of the workers' movement.

In this connection we should mention the poet Attila József, expelled from the party for recommending the workers' united front against Hitler, and of the pioneer of the Hungarian workers' movement, Ervin Szabó, contemptuously dismissed as a 'syndicalist'. The name of the Marxist philosopher György Lukács, author in 1928 of the famous 'Blum Theses' against Béla Kun's sectarianism,⁶ raised a whole hidden dimension of the Comintern and the Hungarian Communist Party.

Several nationally-known historians who had been sidelined (Aladár Mód, Péter Hanák, László Zsigmond) publicly expressed their regret at having participated in Stalinist falsifications at the beginning of their careers. A liberal historian, Domokos Kosáry, accused the servants of the authorities of distorting the Marxist method and substituting naïve and simplifying theses for the search for historical truth. The atmosphere in the hall was tense and the mood became overheated, so that Tánczos had to interrupt several times to calm the audience and allow the High Priestess of official history, Erzsébet Andics, to speak.

After the enthusiastic and well-attended preparatory meeting on 9 June,

which reunited former pupils of the people's colleges, the debate on philosophy further widened the circle's success and brought it to its highest point. The organisers decided to invite the Marxist philosopher György Lukács, world-famous but practically silenced in his own country. His presence in the debate would be cocking a snook at the regime and would be a public rehabilitation for him. Balázs Nagy, Tánczos and Boho visited him at home to secure his agreement. The philosopher was cautious and spoke little, but gladly accepted the invitation, insisting that 'it was a matter of re-establishing the truth and the authority of Marxist philosophy, and not him personally' (p 116). However, he was unwilling to talk about the Blum theses and the polemics they had started.

On the day itself, well before the meeting started, there were already more than a thousand people in the hall and in and about the building, spilling out into the street. A hall big enough to hold all these people had to be found quickly. Róbert Boho had the idea of phoning the Economic Science Faculty a few hundred yards away, and did in fact get the use of a big lecture theatre. Everybody immediately set off in small groups, so that astonished passers-by thought there was a demonstration going on. 'György Lukács himself squeezed among us into one of the groups', Balázs Nagy remembers. 'With his small, delicate build and characteristic quick little steps, he walked gaily with us towards the university.'

Professors from the Lenin Institute were also present in the hall. One speaker after another stated that philosophy had become the servant of day-to-day politics, abased to the level of party propaganda. They denounced the fact that the academic discipline had been replaced by phraseology, that is, Marxist-Leninism transformed into slogans. Lukács' assistant, István Mészáros, said that the situation was made worse by the fact that this 'philosophy' was imposed by the state. Lukács went so far as to say that Marxism was in a worse situation than it had been under Horthy, when it had at least enjoyed a certain authority among some intellectuals.

But Balázs Nagy recalls that it was clear that it was not so much questions of philosophy that interested the audience, but rather the significance of this huge gathering which gave a lot of those present the feeling of taking part in a collective movement. In fact there were a lot of workers and even young army officers in the audience. Just as significant was the presence of Thomas Schreiber, a journalist on the Parisian *Le Monde* newspaper, who had already published several articles on the activities of the Circle.

It was about this time that the need began to be felt to turn to the factories and, in the provinces, the university towns. Within the leading nucleus, there was a lively discussion to determine whether to carry on discussing topics appropriate for the various academic subjects, or rather to get involved in more directly

political debates.

Since the rehabilitation of László Rajk and his comrades was on the agenda, it was decided to seek out veterans of the Spanish Civil War and raise the fate of the organisers of communist factions imprisoned by the Stalinist state such as Demény, Weissshaus, Deák and others.

The Rajk affair drew the biggest crowd ever, meeting this time in the Officers' Club. Access to this was a political event in itself, expressing growing sympathy in the army, however much the regime lavished care upon it. Particularly the presence of László Rajk's widow, Júlia, whose contribution was awaited with impatience, and the fact that the majority of the audience was made up of old communists (people who had been members under illegality, veterans of the Spanish Civil War, resistance fighters, etc) showed that 'compared with previous debates, there was a new situation... The Petöfi Circle showed a new face: radically, it had got involved in discussing more directly political questions and problems.' (p 131)

What László Rajk's widow said about the suffering of imprisoned and tortured communists aroused great emotion. The fake opposition within the party, expressed here by the voices of Károly Kiss and Imre Mező, tried to make light of this highly dramatic subject. They showed themselves up badly and lost all credibility.

Exhausted and often ill, Balázs Nagy got the chance of a stay at the teachers' rest home, so that he missed the big debate on the press, which surely marked the furthest point in the Circle's politicisation. Other comrades reported to him about it. The audience comprised several thousand people; there were people everywhere, all down the stairwell, in the courtyard and into the street, where a loudspeaker had to be set up. The various protagonists confronted each other violently and made no attempt at subtlety in what they said. The writers Tibor Déry and Tibor Tardos were particularly energetic, but Géza Losonczy, Imre Nagy's closest companion, made by far the most impressive indictment of the Stalinist régime with his lucidity and determination and the clarity of what he said.

Just Tánccos and these two together on the platform stood up to the spokespersons of the party and the DISZ. The secretary of the latter, Ervin Hollós, was particularly crude and virulent. But above and beyond the altercations and the hubbub, the meeting rediscovered its coherence when the journalists present, remembering 1848, solemnly promised to write nothing but the truth.

Returning from his week's rest, Balázs Nagy walked straight into the atmosphere created by the armed insurrection in Poznań. Together with the stormy debate the Circle had held on the press, this news made the authorities nervous and anxious. The Central Committee was hastily convened and decided that the

debate on the press was anti-democratic and that in general the Petöfi Circle was a centre of attacks on the party and the peoples' democracy. For its part, the 'Imre Nagy group' was designated as being at the bottom of these actions. 'I remember', the author says, 'that we all suddenly realised that the first stage of struggle by the Petöfi Circle, the phase of its glorious forward march, was over. The time had come for the counter-attack by the apparatus... On the other hand, we knew that from now on we would have to proceed in a different way.' (p 140)

In any case, contrary to what some people have said about this, the Circle was not suppressed, it 'merely' suspended activity.

The very existence of the Circle was threatened when the authorities started to hunt down its 'counter-revolutionary elements'. The party organised 'spontaneous' meetings in the factories, as it had done so often in the past to blacken its victims, and the papers were suddenly full of equally spontaneous 'letters from workers' condemning the petit-bourgeois intrigues of which the Petöfi Circle was supposedly a hotbed. There was also talk of a monster political trial being prepared against a list of 400 people.

But above all the leadership of the Circle was called upon to carry out self-criticism, and to that end its members were summoned to party headquarters where they were to meet a high party official, Imre Mezö, an important leader of the so-called opposition to the Kádár team, assisted by the leaders of the DISZ. As it turned out, after temporary confusion, the Circle recovered its nerve. After long discussions, five or six leaders, including Balázs Nagy, carried the day against the hesitant comrades, and there was a decision to refuse any repentance. Thus the interview with the DISZ leaders was quite short, despite their conciliatory and even obsequious tone.

It was the times that had changed. By mid-July, the Rákosi team and part of the apparatus had been dismissed from their posts (MDP meeting, 18-21 July). There was now an anti-Stalinist public opinion unlike anything that existed elsewhere in Eastern Europe, and that was precisely the result in large measure of the work of the Petöfi Circle. Unconsciously and 'without wanting to', it 'found itself spontaneously playing the role of an alternative party', the author says:

Up till then we had only heard a few workers say that, and it made us smile. Now the Stalinist general staff was saying it and we still didn't take it seriously. We came close to denying it formally, whereas there should have been at least a few amongst us who considered the question. We didn't, and that was perhaps the Circle's most serious weakness. (p 147)

In any case, the Circle started up again from August onwards, and even set up a local branch at 44 Bem Quay, on the right bank of the Danube, called the Eötvös Club. Other innovations followed, such as the introduction of membership cards, introductory remarks at the beginning of debates or preparations to set up specialist groups.

Internal debates were also conducted, giving rise to fluctuating attitudes, but allowing a moderate and a radical tendency to be discerned. But there were two important factors: Imre Nagy's refusal to engage in self-criticism and the obstinacy with which the new Gerő-Kádár team pursued the most 'classical' Stalinist line pushed the whole of the opposition towards greater firmness.

However, as far as the general public was concerned, it was necessary to go back to professional specialist debates and try to get the political message across in that framework. The Circle was greatly helped in this by the struggle which Júlia Rajk was waging for her husband's reburial and by the manoeuvres of DISZ who, faced with the increasingly obvious effervescence among the youth, tried to avoid a catastrophe by rehabilitating the people's colleges and their historic leaders, above all László Kardos and Antal Gyenes. These latter were persecuted by the Stalinists, who were also to suppress the national federation of the colleges, NÉKOSZ.

The Circle did try to restore the honour and the practices of the colleges among the youth through the debate on NÉKOSZ which opened the season on 16 September. However, although this session was very rich and successful, Balázs Nagy has kept the memory of two little disappointments: for one thing, Táncczos' introductory remarks betrayed the fact that he was giving way to party pressure; for another, the contribution of Ferenc Pataki, one of the major figures of NÉKOSZ, left out most of that movement's rich past and only talked about the educational dimension.

Indeed, an evening dedicated explicitly to educational questions and chaired by Pataki, followed on 28 September. The presence of deputy minister Magda Jóború and János Gosztonyi, one of the secretaries of DISZ as main speakers guaranteed that the discussion was once more confined to the topic. But tension had reached such a point that when a bold contributor from the floor took up the defence of Rákosi, the audience rose up and turned the evening into a demonstration in support of Imre Nagy.

Discussions on education continued on 12 October, and this time Balázs Nagy was given the chance to speak, in the capacity of professor. This rather surprised him, as he had been kicked out of university quite a few years previously. In any case, while he kept to the subject of education, he tried to clarify the political aspects of the question.

Above all he challenged the Stalinist view that it was best not to open old

wounds. There was lively support when he explained that it was necessary to expose and analyse what had happened in the past. Then he criticised both the slowness in reorganising the people's colleges and the zeal of those who were content just to change the sign-boards outside the boarding schools, and who did not understand that what made these colleges so special was not just the educational experiences they provided, but the fact that they were a genuine political movement of young people. There was a lot of applause when he talked about patriotic education, demanding the punishment of the minister, Mihály Farkas, who was responsible for imprisoning and executing hundreds of patriots.

Finally, he touched more directly on problems concerning the curriculum. He said it was intolerable that, precisely when the spectacular technical progress in the West was more and more being described as a second industrial revolution, the public education curriculum in Hungary simply ignored such fields as atomic energy, automation, electronics and synthetic materials. There was frequent applause and Balázs Nagy was congratulated on all sides, even by people who a few years previously would have rushed to approve his expulsion as an 'imperialist spy'.

Despite this success, Balázs Nagy felt a certain embarrassment during this period:

From September onwards, it was as if the ground gave way under the feet of the Circle, as if we had lost our way. And that despite the basically successful debates. In reality, even their temperature had greatly dropped compared with May-June. In many ways we seemed to be going over old ground. Even the debate on the people's colleges, which had a much more markedly and directly political impact, seemed to be lagging behind the political requirements of the situation. (p 162)

This is one way of saying that here the narrative becomes particularly dense, so quickly do events press upon one another. Some things that stand out are the proliferation in the provinces of clubs similar to the Petöfi Circle, the ferment in the universities and the factories of Csepel, a working-class bastion, then the solemn reburial of Rajk and his comrades on 6 October, when the glacial silence of the immense crowd foreshadowed the storm to come. Balázs Nagy describes how the party and the DISZ tried to prevent the explosion and shows the 'unheard-of' acceleration of events, the series of circle meetings in a feverish atmosphere and the organisation, converging with the students, of a demonstration in support of Poland, planned for 23 October.

And here we come to the last part of the book which deals with Balázs

Nagy's experiences 'in the whirlwind of revolution' (pp 179-277). Through his testimony the reader follows the salient facts of those historic days up to the Soviet intervention of 4 November and beyond, since the author rightly sees the weeks that followed up to the beginning of 1957 as part of the revolution itself.

During the uprising he tried to renew links with the other leading members of the Circle, but he realised 'that the Petöfi Circle had ceased to exist', that its role was over, it 'broke up because, due to the diverse nature of the forces which made it up, it was unable to raise itself to the height of the new events... We scattered', he says, 'and each one for his part either participated in the revolution or abstained from it.' (pp 197, 204-05).

He himself started from 25 October to understand that, contrary to the ideas dominating those around him, the armed insurrection did not force the revolution to evolve to the right: in accepting the armed struggle as legitimate and even necessary, 'I went more than halfway down the road which leads from reform to revolution', he judges. He therefore spared no effort to make himself useful to that cause, and got actively involved in several projects in the days of revolution: the Revolutionary Committee of Hungarian Intellectuals, Géza Losonczy's State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs in the Imre Nagy government, the illegal Democratic Movement for Hungarian Independence and the newspaper *23 October*. He also tried to reorganise the Petöfi Circle to respond to the requirements of the new situation. It was then that he met Imre Nagy for the fourth (and last) time to ask for his signature. 'Despite his many tasks... he found the time to hear me out', Balázs Nagy says. 'He turned to me, smiling, to ask what had brought me... I remember he smiled and teased me a little, asking if I was sure of succeeding. He added that that would be good, since there was a great need for a movement like the Petöfi Circle.' (p 247)

Besides this organisational work, we can follow the writer through various missions and numerous encounters, whether accidental or meetings in the proper sense.

And this causes me to return to another dimension of the book, the presence of a great number of people whom he met or rubbed shoulders with in the course of that crucial year, and who are simply identified or presented with their human or political qualities. These more-or-less fleshed-out notes have to do mainly with friends, colleagues or comrades close to him, but some protagonists from the other camp are also portrayed in various situations.

In the leading nucleus of the Circle, Tánczos stands out from the very first pages as a sincere and serious man who inspired confidence in everyone. His gravity, however, could lead him to be morose, tense and distant. Boho, too, 'was a serious and meticulous man, but... much more spontaneous and relaxed', and his serene self-assurance coexisted with a taste for jokes (p 25). As

for András B Hegedűs:

... he insisted on emphasising the B in his name to distinguish himself from the prime minister András Hegedűs. His wife, Maria Ember, worked on *Magyar Nemzet* with Géza Losonczy and obtained a lot of useful information... She also had access to foreign newspapers in the editorial office. She particularly followed the Swiss daily *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and the Parisian *Le Monde*... András had a lively mind and imagination, he was a dynamic and inventive man. (p 24)

To set up a representative grouping among main speakers in debates and contributors, we can take as examples an historian, a writer, an economist and a philosopher. The first, Domokos Kosáry, was deliberately invited to the history debate to report on how he was banished from the university and gradually excluded from academic life. Balázs Nagy remembers:

I did an oral exam with him once when I was a student. He questioned me about the reforms leading up to 1848... I felt happy in his presence. He had a captivating manner and was hugely competent and astonishingly young. Although we didn't agree with Kosáry during the history debate, nor with his historical ideas, characterised as they were by the classical liberal outlook... we all respected him for his extensive and exceptional knowledge and thought it was very unfair that he had been sidelined. We thought he was a great historian whose rightful place was at the university. (pp 86-87)

The writer was Imre Sarkadi, who was invited on 6 June to talk about the visit by young Hungarian writers to France. Balázs Nagy himself chaired that session, and this is how he describes the evening:

Unfortunately there were only a few people, 40 or 50, in the audience... Politics is what interested people most at the time... Imre Sarkadi made the report on behalf of the writers' delegation. He was a gifted writer of the youngest generation of ruralists. He was considered to be the best writer in that current and known to be a vehement opponent of Rákosi. He was certainly much clearer and more determined about this than the more cautious and reserved Gyula Illyés or Péter Veres. I was greatly shocked to learn later that Sarkadi had ended his own life tragically... Sarkadi's introductory remarks presented a colourful and interesting description of the delegation's impressions of Paris. He didn't say a word about politics,

but we all understood that the most important lesson of the report was to lay the blame for our people's ignorance of abroad squarely at the feet of the government. (p 107)

György Ádám deserves particular attention among the economists who visited the Circle 'for having played an important role in the development of the revolution from the very start, and then the latter was on the defensive. I had known him since my time in the people's colleges', the author says.

Back then I saw him as a young academic economist who had spent some time abroad and who already had a name. He was a competent researcher and theoretical expert on Western economies... as a friend of the people's colleges he had done lectures at the Petöfi College, which was how I knew him. I had even visited him at home on one occasion...

He was a discreet and modest man who didn't make a great show of his knowledge... We were even rather surprised to find out that he, too, had been arrested over the Rajk trial... when he got out of prison he was always a little shut-up inside himself and even more cautious and circumspect. During the revolution, when the *23 October* production team had trouble reaching agreement over the style and content of the publication, Ádám helped as a dispassionate moderator, neither ostentatious nor easily discouraged. (pp 212-13, 269-70)

As for philosophy, György Lukács, who was the living embodiment of this discipline in the Circle's debates, occupied a unique position due to his age and his reputation. Balázs Nagy was surprised by the spontaneous welcome Lukács gave him and his comrades: 'Lukács made us feel at home. I had not seen him for several years, and I was surprised by how much thinner and more shrivelled he was. But both the way he spoke and his ideas testified to his intellectual freshness and lucidity.' (p 115)

Lukács also had a successor in the person of his assistant, István Mészáros, whose 'working-class origins made themselves felt in his free, bold and pertinent manner of speech':

He was considered to be the most able of the Lukács school. He had won his position by his knowledge and his modesty. He had become known through an essay against Andrei Zhdanov's theses, in particular against so-called socialist realism, and for his bold defence of Déry and other persecuted writers. (p 185)

Beyond the wider ambit of the Circle, Balázs Nagy brings back to life key figures in the political opposition he had the occasion to meet, including Imre Nagy himself and his closest companions Géza Losonczy and Miklós Gimes.

At the very first visit, he was surprised by how friendly Imre Nagy was and his natural and simple tone of voice:

I felt neither the big age difference there was between us — he could have been my father — nor the incomparably great distance between a simple soldier like me and an experienced leader, tested by life, with a long and stormy political past in the party and armed with vast knowledge. And afterwards, each time we met, I felt at ease with him. He was free of the slightest element of pose, didn't put on airs for visitors and admirers... He didn't play the 'great man'. He would nod and grunt sympathetically. He often twirled his moustache... From our very first meeting — and I have thought about it more than once since — his relaxed and natural manner reminded me of Rajk, who used to sing with us college students in 1946 and 1947, in his shirt sleeves and without any affectation. Much later, in exile, I met someone else who, uniquely among high-placed politicians, was able to establish equally spontaneous and direct relations with simple and much younger subordinates. It was Anna Kéthly. (p 97)

Balázs Nagy met Géza Losonczy on 7 June, at the reception Imre Nagy gave for his sixtieth birthday. Together with Gimes and Vásárhelyi, Losonczy was the opposition leader's closest companion. This is how he describes him:

I had long admired Losonczy for his clear, full and well-written editorials in *Szabad Nép*... When he was released from prison and once he had been rehabilitated and recovered his health, Losonczy was the leading journalist on the daily *Magyar Nemzet*, one of the opposition papers. I studied the most important representative of the opposition after Imre Nagy with curiosity. His head and face were what we think of as characteristic of an intellectual: heavy, thick horn-rimmed spectacles, hair plastered back. He looked at me attentively from behind his spectacles. I could see no trace of the physical and mental torture he had endured in prison, although we knew what an afflicted and disturbed nervous state he had been in when he had come out. His drawn face and slow gestures seemed to testify to that. (pp 105-06)

The partisans of the authorities, for their part, were far from forming an homogenous picture, especially since it was a milieu of intellectuals for the most

part nourished by Marxist ideas intrinsically critical and emancipatory above and beyond their perversion into an ideology of legitimisation.

A case in point was the prominent economics professor, Tamás Nagy. After coquetting with the Rákosi camp, he started seeing things differently after the second debate on political economy and became one of the most active and regular visitors to the Circle. Balázs Nagy notes:

The sincere return of Tamás Nagy showed the beneficial effect of the debates... in which the audience very actively participated. This highly-respected professor was far from being an isolated case. The Circle's debates set a process in motion, especially among quite leading officials, which gave them the impetus they needed to separate themselves from the apparatus and put themselves on the side of the opposition, or at least among the critical elements. (p 43)

The revision of positions, or, on the other hand, obstinacy could also take quite a theatrical turn, like the scene which was played out a little before 23 October 1956, during a reunion of former students at the people's colleges at the Kossuth Club, when three leading personalities were joyfully and loudly called on to show what they had to say for themselves by their former comrades: Hegedűs (prime minister), Darvas (ruralist writer turned bureaucrat) and Szalai (God's earthly representative on economic affairs):

The first two submitted themselves to a proper self-criticism, which met with the approval of the audience... I seem to remember that at one point in his *mea culpa* Darvas broke down in tears... But Szalai refused to carry out any self-criticism. He would not give an inch, although people in the audience shouted at him. It got to the point that uproar broke out and several people got up... One of them got onto the platform and started pushing at Szalai to shut him up. (pp 171-72)

Several dignitaries of the regime turned up in a very different situation on 24 October 1956.

During the evening, Balázs Nagy and András B Hegedűs wanted come what may to inform Imre Nagy of the real situation and succeeded in getting into the party headquarters, 6 Academy Street, where the leader of the opposition was practically held down by force, cut off from the outside world. On the first floor there were dozens of more or less well-known party leaders anxiously and loudly discussing matters, accompanied by plain-clothes policemen. It was like a beehive that had been kicked over. Heavy-set thugs in ill-cut suits guarded the

entrance to one room, from which Suslov and Mikoyan emerged and rushed off. All along the huge corridor, the intruders spotted human shapes slumped in the leather arm-chairs which lined the walls.

Among many others you could see the prostrate form of the all-powerful József Révai, notorious for his firmness. Always a brilliant, spirited public speaker, at that moment he was resting, completely prostrate and exhausted in his chair. He stared straight ahead with fixed, glassy eyes, turning neither to the right or to the left. You could see from a distance that this man was completely knocked out.

Erzsébet Andics was beside him, until recently a judge wielding power over life and death. I could hardly recognise this normally elegant woman. There she was, hunched up in a deep arm-chair, dressed in a long black dress and her head covered with a peasant head-scarf looking like a wizened old woman, an old witch in rags. But unlike the rest of the near-dead, she at least made a little movement from time to time, a sideways upwards glance at people like the wicked fairy Carabossa in the nursery rhyme, seeking out her prey. It was an amazing and terrifying sight...

In the smaller meeting room, Károly Kiss, the all-powerful leader of the party Central Control Commission stood and dominated the conversation. Most of the others just listened. He kept repeating presumptuously and pedantically that the insurrection would soon be crushed by units of the army, the ÁVO and Soviet troops... From time to time János Kádár would appear with his hands in his pockets on his way back and forth between different offices. But he didn't say a word... He would listen for a moment and then go on his way... I could never have imagined his future career. (pp 198-202)

Right through the book, Balázs Nagy appeals to his memory and makes an obvious effort to restore ideas, events and his own role, in their authenticity, such as they were in 1956. He is perfectly aware of the danger of projecting onto the past his present convictions, sentiments or interests. This preoccupation is only strengthened by the fact that the author integrates into his memoirs the whole of the conclusions resulting from the work of clarification of the events of 1956 in the light of Marxism which he accomplished in exile.

He writes explicitly: 'Of course I make an effort to evoke and to convey my opinion at that time, but at the same time, by separating it — partly at least — I also make my current view known.' For example, the rapid success that the Circle enjoyed impressed the organisers even at the time, 'but today, looking back from a great distance, I can try to give it a more profound, more precise

and more general explanation' (p 39).

Thus the debates and events of 1956 are presented to the reader as an historical landscape of living ideas, of questions of interest for the wider workers' movement. One can therefore speak of a third level of reading Balázs Nagy's book, at which we should look briefly in concluding our analysis.

Very early on, the author reflects on the character of the Petöfi Circle. Even though at the time it was impossible to adopt the 'methods of work' appropriate to a political party, he is eager to emphasise now that 'contrary to what many people think, I can state with certainty that the Petöfi Circle was not just a debating society, but a genuine political movement' (pp 34-35). While recognising the force of the historical context — the immense majority of the opposition, with Imre Nagy at its head, was loyal and did not see any salvation outside a reformed Communist Party — he believes that the most radical elements of the Circle should have developed its political dimension 'to create a more far-sighted nucleus, united on a radical programme and functioning as a party. Perhaps that would not have been dispersed a few months later by the revolutionary tempest.' (p 148)

In connection with the Circle's organisation, Balázs Nagy also notes that 'looking back from today', you could severely criticise the fact that, with just about one exception, there were no women in the leadership, 'although there were many of them among the young intellectuals who performed brilliantly and distinguished themselves on the political level, especially as, contrary to what is said and believed nowadays, women had access to top-rank professional or political careers. It is true that women were as rare as hen's teeth among the opposition... You can say that we had more women in public life than there were in the West.' (p 57)

What matters is what the Circle as a whole did, 'the liberating novelty of the debates [which] are difficult to understand today' (p 53). This means that the reader really has to absorb, soak up, the historical context.

Most of the specific points Balázs Nagy considers are bound up with the main topics of the Circle's debates and the meaning of the 1956 revolution.

First among them are economic questions, which the collapse of the USSR has made all the more topical. In fact the process and the means set in motion by the most advanced capitalist powers have turned out the infinitely more compelling and real than 'the so-called fundamental economic laws of socialism invented by Stalin' and his supporters (p 45).

Armed since then with Leon Trotsky's analyses, the author recalls that the Stalinist thesis of two world markets, one capitalist and the other socialist, was the most paralysing dogma through which even the most competent and critical of the Hungarian economists and politicians could not manage to break. They

didn't know about the debates which had raged in the Bolshevik party after 1924 from which the Stalinist thesis of socialism in a single country had emerged victorious, justifying the isolation of the USSR with all its tragic consequences.

First of all, there was the setback suffered by revolutions in the West:

The Soviet Union remained alone, which the Stalinists fabricated into a definitive truth. They then adapted Marxism and the practice of socialist construction to this situation... In the long term, the new revolutionary regime could only have been maintained in a single country if the regime had pursued a radically different policy, marching alongside the workers within and supporting revolutionary movements outside the country. (pp 47-50)

The problems raised by the transition to socialism, approached through the medium of the economic debates, are raised afresh by the Blum theses, whose discovery was at the time the star turn of the evening devoted to history.

If Balázs Nagy still supports the rejection of Béla Kun's sectarian position, bound up as it was with the historical situation of Soviet Russia and its slavish and disastrous imitation by the Hungarian Council Republic, neither does he approve of György Lukács to the extent that he perpetuates a reductive conception of proletarian dictatorship:

Even though Lukács rightly opposed the rigid and sectarian ultra-left policy, he was wrong to identify it with the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is to say, council power.

The great discovery about the epoch of imperialism, which is eternally to Trotsky's credit, is that precisely in this epoch there could no longer be a bourgeois revolution carried out by the bourgeoisie on its own. Lukács' great mistake was rooted in the fact that he linked the proletarian dictatorship to exclusively socialist slogans and demands, which had to a certain extent excluded democratic demands. In my opinion, only a dictatorship of the proletariat which also took on democratic demands could carry out such a democratic programme (in the epoch of imperialism!).

This light which Trotsky shed on the question is entirely in place among the explanations that the author furnishes of the 1956 revolution.

Balázs Nagy notes that (for good reason) the regime put in place in 1989 could not bring out even a tiny pamphlet specifically devoted to the heroic struggle of the Hungarian workers' councils, 'even though this network, which functioned for several months, was the most important, the most original and the most

characteristic achievement of the revolution' (p 257). He then puts forward the following assessment, which one could consider the main conclusion of the book:

In exile, I discovered and got to know Trotsky's book *The Revolution Betrayed*. He seemed to be analysing the Hungarian revolution, as it were, 30 years before it happened. Using words you could call visionary and with a persuasive power he sketched in broad brush-strokes the kind of social upheaval that happened in 1956, examining the motive forces at work.

In Trotsky's view, this revolution would have to smash Stalinist rule but leave intact the social and economic gains which were socialist in character. Trotsky called this movement the political revolution... Hardly surprising, then, that Trotsky's work marked me for life.

And in that connection we are obliged to confront 1956 with the changes that happened in 1990. The latter are not just different to 1956 but also an obvious opposite to what happened then. There are many who say wrongly that the 1956 revolution wanted the same thing as the changes which happened in 1990... However, it is a deliberate falsification, or at best a serious misunderstanding.

The biggest and most decisive difference, which determines all the rest, is that in 1956 the working class was on its feet. It was in full possession of its strength... whereas 30 years later the changes were confronted only by workers who were disorganised and to a large extent atomised... From the very outset in 1956 they took over and ran the factories and other workplaces. In 1990, on the other hand, they looked on passively, dispossessed of everything and immobile. They even often agreed with their workplaces being auctioned off over their heads.

In 1956 they came on the scene organised in their councils as an autonomous power. That was what dominated. In the 1990s, on the other hand, it was a scattered, disorganised and mute mass which looked on impotently as events took their course outside them and without them. This demoralisation and dereliction was the most abject and perfidious achievement of the Kádár regime, through which it breathed new life into the partisans of the old regime, already beaten but who raised their heads once more.

The revolution was replaced by cutting deals in round-table discussions, whose main aim for each of the participants was to keep the working masses out of things... In 1956 we made the effort to win independence for our country through armed struggle and diplomacy. The partners who a few decades later tore into each other 'peacefully' at the round table, on the other hand, bowed down as one to the 'wishes' of the voracious Western

powers... In 1956 we shouted all together: 'We will not give up either our land or our factories!' Thirty-five, 40 years later, the factories have been sold off cheap to lurking foreign capital and their wily Hungarian henchmen, while part of our land has been swallowed up in compensation. (pp273-74)

Notes

1. A demonstration on 23 October called by students at the Budapest Technical University brought out vast crowds into the streets. Following Ernő Gerő's denunciation of the demonstrators on the wireless that day, the Radio Station was seized, and clashes soon took place with Soviet troops. This demonstration effectively marked the start of the Hungarian Revolution [Editor's note].
2. There are two reasons why we prefer the adjective ruralist to the usual translation 'populist' (which does indeed correspond to the literal meaning of the word) to describe this current with its many ramifications which developed particularly in the 1920s and 1930s. Firstly, at present the term 'populist' is completely tarnished and robbed of its real historical meaning; secondly, in Hungary, the development of this current is in all aspects (literary, ideological and sociographic) essentially bound up with rural poverty and research into the social pathology of the agricultural proletariat [Author's note].
3. A movement launched and sponsored above all by the National Peasant Party after the liberation to secure the replacement of former élites by educating working-class and peasant youth and winning their commitment to the cause of socialism. The colleges were residential and open to pupils of every level who were allowed great autonomy in organising the life of these establishments. Besides their studies, the pupils participated in social life in a variety of ways, including political actions such as agrarian reform and the organisation of agricultural cooperatives, manual labour, cultural activity among the population at large, literacy drives, etc [Author's note].
4. A social movement launched in October 1954 which continued right up to 1989 to unite 'all classes and categories of Hungarian society'. It had its own journal, *Magyar Nemzet* (*Hungarian Nation*) and tried to take on the mantle of the National Fronts of 1944 and 1945. Its genesis owed much to Imre Nagy who is supposed to have wanted it, at least on paper, to enable citizens who were not MDP members to get involved in public life. The movement was distorted by the Stalinists [Author's note].
5. Those were the Hungarian Communist Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Independent Party of Small Proprietors, the National Peasant Party and the Liberal Democratic Party. The first four of these comprised the government formed on 22 December 1944 and which ruled through the so-called period of democratic transition [Author's note].
6. The 'Blum Theses': a document that Lukács wrote for the Hungarian Communist Party's congress in 1928, and which called for a broad political opposition to dictatorship. It has been seen as a precursor of the Popular Front approach. The proposal stood in opposition to the approach of the Communist International, and was duly rejected [Editor's note].

Reviews

Patricia Collier, *Secrets of the Tottenham Outrage*, The Friends of the Pump House, London, 2007, pp 26, £4.99

AS was demonstrated by Donald Rumbelow, in the opening chapters of his *The Houndsditch Murders and the Siege of Sydney Street*, the failed 1909 expropriation at Schmurmann's rubber factory in Tottenham High Road provides a useful point of entry into the confusing political world of East European exiles in East London. Also, it opens up a broader arena in which these exiles lived and were active than the inner East End of Whitechapel, Aldgate and Stepney (on which Professor Fishman's books have focused). For those unfamiliar with the story, in outline it is this: two Latvian (Lettish) men, Paul Hefeld and Jacob Lepidus (possibly Lapidus), having observed the payroll delivery at Schmurmann's, lay in wait for it. After grabbing the money bag they made off, quickly attracting pursuit by police (the factory, being opposite a Police Station, might be thought a poor choice of target), factory management and numerous enthusiasts. During the chase through back streets and across open land, both sides fired copiously at each other, in the course of which two fatalities and 15 woundings ensued. The chase involved the two expropriators in hijacking first a tram, then a milk cart and finally a greengrocer's cart. The police side of the action was not lacking in Keystone qualities; when the key to the gun cupboard could not be found the lock had to be broken open. A collection of constables on bicycles were then able to join the pursuit. One, who had not got his hands on a gun, was seen pedalling furiously while brandishing a cutlass. More senior police were also hijacking transportation, ranging from deluxe chauffeur-driven cars to a horse-drawn advertising cart. One of the expropriators, Hefeld, shot himself when unable to follow the other over a high wall, and the second was surrounded in a cottage on the edge of Epping Forest and also shot himself, bringing the total of fatalities to four. The payroll was not recovered, and police suspected it had been passed to a third man at an early stage in the chase.

There seems to have been very little attempt at the time to understand the politics behind the event. Indeed, nobody has definitively confirmed that the event was a revolutionary expropriation as against a straightforward robbery. The authorities and the press at the time were quick to blame 'anarchists', but

they don't appear to have had the conceptual repertoire to distinguish among anarchists, social-democrats and social-revolutionaries, all of which had at least some organised presence in the Tottenham area, as well as stronger presences in inner East London.

Fishman, in *East End Jewish Radicals 1875-1914*, asserts that the figures involved in the Houndsditch and Sydney Street events were Lettish Social-Revolutionaries, but does not comment on the Tottenham event specifically, and does not support his assertion with references. Rumbelow, however, is able to demonstrate a link with the Lettish Social Democrats, through the 'third man', believed by the police to have got away with the swag. The main police suspect for this role was a Christian Salnish, a man of the most colourful and distinguished revolutionary career which is worth while summarising.

Born in 1885, he had begun revolutionary activity at the age of 13, and in the aftermath of the 1905 revolution he became a professional. In late 1905, he led a successful assault against Riga Central Prison to release two important Social Democrat prisoners. Among the band were a number of Latvians later identified as participants in the Houndsditch and Sydney Street events, including Piotr Piatkow, the most probable identity of 'Peter the Painter'. In the savage military repression unleashed on the Baltic regions (guilty not merely of socialist, but also of nationalist, ambitions) on the defeat of the 1905 insurrection, becoming a professional revolutionary was not likely to have been entirely a voluntary decision, more a matter of self-defence and mutual aid.

In the weeks after the Tottenham expropriation, Salnish briefly shared lodgings with two of the expropriators in the Houndsditch case. Under close police observation, Salnish appears to have reduced contact with the active service unit of expropriators to a minimum, occasionally meeting Jacob Peters, himself later to be a leading Bolshevik. The next trace of Salnish is in the USA in 1913, where he began work with the Latvian American Social Democratic Workers Association. He returned to Russia in 1917 and rapidly attained high rank in the Red Army general staff. In 1937-38, he operated as a military adviser to the Spanish Communist Party. In Stalin's purges Salnish was to find that his Order of Lenin and Order of the Red Banner did not make him bullet-proof, and he was shot on 8 May 1939.

Thus the political identification of the active service unit of expropriators as Social Democrats seems reasonable. Obviously they would not have had any interest in clarifying the confusion themselves.

The possibility of an Okhrana provocation cannot be excluded. Rumbelow refers to two well-documented instances in London at about the same time as the Tottenham event, and it was certainly a dimension of Tsarist policy against the exiles to provoke repression by the British and other host states.

Collier's account does not include any explanation, not even any expression of surprise, at the number of civilians permitted by the police to take part in the pursuit. Nor is she interested in how they came to be so extensively equipped with firearms. Rumbelow refers to a history of hostility towards East Europeans (accused of forcing down wage-rates) in the area, including minor rioting in 1902. This may account, at least in part, for the willingness of large numbers of civilians to take part in a lethal gunfight. The police actively encouraged this participation. At one point they called on a party of duck-shooters on Banbury Reservoir to fire on the fugitives (which they willingly did). A civilian with a shotgun shared with senior police a hijacked limousine, and they took it in turns to fire. There must be at least a whiff of suspicion about the numbers of civilians apparently walking about Tottenham and Walthamstow conducting quotidian commerce, on a Saturday morning equipped with loaded firearms (including so-called 'semi-automatics') and ammunition. And similarly the fact that 'detectives' were apparently almost immediately available to participate in the pursuit — presumably having a light burden of work in this area. Collier disregards these questions, and her narrative is a simple one of police and civilian heroism in the face of terror — a true product of the London atmosphere in 2007.

There is no indication that the police made any attempt to control wild shooting by the civilians; when the expropriators hijacked a tram, the unfortunate passengers were in greater danger from shooting from the armed mob and police than the fugitives. The expropriators showed no sign of wanting to take hostages or create a 'human shield' at this point, which would have been an available strategy for terrorists but less so for revolutionary expropriators, who would have been ideologically reluctant to kill working people.

There is some inconsistency in the evidence about the expropriators' proficiency with their handguns that neither Collier nor Rumbelow have probed. During the first stage, Lepidus was fighting for the money bag, rolling on the ground with Wilson, one of the workers delivering it. Hefeld is reported to have straddled the two and to have fired several shots at Wilson, at what could only have been a range of inches. That Wilson was not hit, although his coat and clothes were 'riddled with bullet holes' is described by police reports as 'miraculous' and 'unaccountable'. Quite so — the second adjective can be more easily endorsed than the first.

Further in the course of the pursuit, the reports provide a quite different picture. The expropriators were able to hit pursuers both on foot and in moving vehicles after, reportedly, 'taking careful aim'. During the stage of the hijacked tram, Hefeld, 'with one carefully aimed shot', killed the pony pulling the advertising cart that police had seized to continue the chase, before the policeman in charge

was able to get close enough to fire his service revolver. Not bad shooting from one moving vehicle against another, better yet for somebody who had within the previous hour missed a victim several times from only inches away. In a further Keystone flourish, as the advertising cart turned over, throwing the police into the road, the bill-poster's bucket of paste was tipped on top of them. 'Another fine mess', they doubtless remarked to themselves as their prospects of medals and promotion rolled out of sight.

Collier's account frequently uses the same words as Rumbelow's. Since she does not acknowledge Rumbelow, we assume that both are using the words of the same source reports. Throughout she uses the spelling 'Hefeld' against Rumbelow's 'Hefeld' — a point to be resolved. Her map of the pursuit differs from Rumbelow's in a number of details, but none that I can see generate any important new questions. She has found some interesting local photographs, and has added some biographical material about participants. She reports that a contemporary press story, to the effect that Lepidus' brother blew himself up in an attempt to execute the President of France, cannot be confirmed. She also points out that only one civilian statement survives in the records at Kew, despite the large number of civilians involved in the chase. She located a statement in the hands of the family of another civilian participant, and identifies a number of close correspondences with the Kew statement. How likely is it, we can ask, that two greengrocery roundsmen both abandoned their carts to join a police chase and jumped into the same car to continue the armed pursuit? Collier also asks the sensible question, why would a wounded and exhausted 'Russian anarchist', on the point of blowing his own brains out, address his comrade in English, let alone English clear enough to be heard and understood by pursuers anxious to dodge pistol fire? And also the question, why was none of the six civilians recommended for a bravery medal awarded one? All of this is useful, and typical work of an enthusiastic local historian. Her political and historical perspective is completely inadequate for an understanding of the meaning of the event.

JJ Plant

Noel Cruz, *The Cocos Islands Mutiny*, Freemantle Arts Centre Press, Freemantle, 2001, pp 208

THE hidden story of the Cocos Islands mutiny of May 1942 has been quite a well-kept secret for many years, though details about it do now appear on Wikipedia, largely derived from this book which is cited there, and for which we have to thank Mr Cruz. It is a sad little story which tells us a great deal in a rather artless and innocent manner about the nature of Ceylonese society at the

time, while behind these events looms the huge shadow on the historical wall of the then minuscule Trotskyist organisation, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party.

A tiny atoll, the Cocos Islands, was an important telegraph relay station about half way between Ceylon and Australia, and a garrison of colonial troops was placed there from March 1941, before the outbreak of the Pacific war. Conditions were uncomfortable, indeed such an environment often led to disaffection and disorder among their garrisons. Such tiny, lonely and sex-starved groups of American servicemen scattered over the ocean are remembered in the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *South Pacific* with the song 'There Is Nothing Like A Dame', and, unlike the Americans, who had, the song tells us:

We got sunlight on the sand, we got moonlight on the sea
 We got mangoes and bananas you can pick right off a tree
 We got volleyball and ping-pong and a lot o' dandy games
 What ain't we got, we ain't got dames.
 We get packages from home, we get movies, we get shows
 We get speeches from our skipper and advice from Tokyo Rose
 We get letters doused with perfume, we get dizzy from the smell
 What don't we get, you know darn well!

The good Catholic boys of the Ceylon Defence Forces garrison lacked many of these comforts as well as feminine company.

But disaffection is not mutiny and desertion to the enemy. To understand that, first, some understanding of colonial sociology is necessary, even if Ceylon never had Weberians like Wertheim or Van Leur observing them as did the Dutch East Indies. Yet most colonies had certain things in common, which was a layer of the population, often distinguished from the majority by racial origin or religion, and sometimes both as in Ceylon, which loyally carried out the mass of subordinate political tasks and economic roles with which the colonial rulers did not want to bother themselves. In East Africa and Burma this role was often played by Indians, in Indo-China and in Indonesia by Christians, and nearly everywhere, though much less in Africa, by those descended from the men of the conquerors and local women. In Ceylon this layer was relatively very large and very westernised because historically it had commenced very early. It had a large component with Dutch names, the previous rulers to the British, and an even larger Portuguese one, for the Portuguese were the first European rulers of the island, and their religion, Catholicism, was overwhelmingly that of both those with European names and the local gentry and merchants of wholly Sinhala or Tamil descent from the coast, who had converted quite early on from Hinduism or Buddhism. Those with Dutch and even Portuguese names were

called 'burghers'. Their sons all went to Catholic boarding or day schools, were taught in English and turned out a highly 'westernised' comprador class, some wealthy, who, with their wives, mixed socially with ease among the leading British civil servants and businessmen as my grandmother's diary from 1902-03 shows.

This same class did not exist to the same extent in India, but in Ceylon it was from this privileged strata that the independence and Marxist movement was recruited — as were the junior officers and the rank and file of the Ceylon Defence Force on the Cocos Islands. Most had belonged to their school cadet forces and were keen admirers of the British Empire, as described by Crusz, often totally caught up in its ideology to what now appears a laughable degree.¹ This made it an extraordinary unit in social terms, which must have been difficult to command in any situation.² They were, however, treated like any other 'colonial' unit, which caused great resentment, while to this mixture was added a poisonous brew of racism which distinguished between those who were wholly, half or only a quarter Asian! The only white officer, and against whom the mutiny was directed, was a chap called George Gardiner, an accountant, wartime commissioned and so a 'temporary gentleman' as they were often called by the more snobbish regulars. Gardiner had taken over command in March 1942, and by all accounts he had all the racial prejudices and more that you might have expected in the average Ceylon box-wallah.³ He was also suffering from a difficult situation that he had to deal with in his recent marriage which all fashionable Colombo had attended, and some say he had a drink problem. On the Cocos itself no effort was apparently made by Gardiner to stop the soldiers listening to Japanese broadcasts, while the leader of the mutiny, Gratien Fernando, had been much influenced by the anti-imperialist propaganda of the LSSP. It was, all in all, not a happy situation on the atoll.

But the external situation was equally unhappy. The defeat of the British forces in their greatest ever disaster at Singapore on 15 February 1942 sent reverberations which still faintly echo in South-East Asia more than 60 years later. The whole ideology of Empire suddenly appeared threadbare. In March, the unit defending Christmas Island some 500 miles ENE of the Cocos had been bombarded by Japanese warships, after which the 30-odd soldiers had shot their British officers and surrendered. This unit, the Hong-Kong and Singapore Garrison Artillery, had Indian rank and file, but was part of the British not the Indian Army.⁴ During 5-10 April, Nagumo's fleet entered the Indian Ocean and smashed the defences of Ceylon, and though the British considered (or, rather, persuaded themselves) that they had inflicted great casualties on the Japanese aircraft and beaten off this attack, it was quite untrue. After losing two cruisers and a small aircraft carrier to air attack, Admiral Somerville's fleet hid from

Nagumo in Addu Atoll south of the Maldives, and then withdrew in alarm to the east coast of Africa as the Japanese returned to Singapore in triumph. In Burma much of the army and air force had been lost, Rangoon fell in March and the remnants of the British forces finally got across the Chindwin on 20 May, bringing the Burma campaign to an end. The surrender of the fortress of Corregidor on the Philippines took place on 6 May.

The mutiny on 8 May 1942 occurred simultaneously with the first day of the battle of the Coral Sea, the turning point in the Japanese war, though, unlike the other events mentioned above, it would not have been mentioned on the Japanese radio. The aim of the mutineers was to overwhelm the garrison and appeal by radio to the Japanese to take the island. The whole plan was awkward and muddled, and one soldier, de Silva Jayasekera, was killed resisting them. The details of the plot are unimportant, but are dealt with most thoroughly by Crusz. Gardiner promptly set up a court martial, tried and sentenced seven mutineers to death, but could not get immediate confirmation of this from Ceylon. In the event the accused were returned to Ceylon, three sentences were confirmed and there they were hanged, the only sentences for mutiny in the British armed forces that resulted in the death penalty in the Second World War, according to Crusz. Technically Gardiner may have been just within his legal rights trying his own men rather than returning them to Ceylon for trial by those less personally involved, but the matter leaves a nasty taste. Those in charge, Wavell, Layton and Caldecott, must have been terrified at the enormous danger from the Japanese, from the LSSP, from the nationalist movement in India and even from Britain's Low Country Sinhala upper-class 'allies' in Ceylon, and thought that harsh measures were needed. Indeed it now turns out that JR Jayawardena and Dudley Senanyake, the leaders of the UNP, the pro-British conservative nationalists, had discussed just prior to the war their attitude in the case of a Japanese invasion with the Japanese consul. In that heavily-policed colonial society, it is unlikely the authorities got no whisper of this.

As always happens after such events, the evidence given in the trials is often contradictory, people are trying to save their skins and it all appears rather pathetic, though an exception must be made here for Fernando who did not deny his role at all and went to the gallows with great courage. It has to be said that handing the islands over to the Japanese was hardly LSSP policy as, since they knew what the Japanese were doing in China, they quite correctly regarded the Japanese as equally — if not more — brutal colonialists as the British, and knew that as 'Reds' they would be the first target. Fernando was part of a very broad area of sympathisers rather than anyone close to the LSSP, which shows they must have had far, far more influence than their tiny numbers suggest. Every single one of the mutineers was a Catholic. The nature of Ceylon society

and the role of the class from which all the leading LSSP militants came raises questions about the possibilities of revolution there and about the nature of many mass movements in the Third World.

There are a few small details where, despite the author's careful research, he has it wrong. The British were well aware of the approximate date of the Japanese attack, and had precise warning of the first air attack which occurred at the same hour as that on Pearl Harbour — it was no surprise as the radar at Mersing picked up the bombers 100 miles out. I remember it vividly. He quotes Captain Lyn Wickramasuriya (p 45), the previous commander to Gardiner, as nearly firing on an unnamed British aircraft carrier that turned up at the islands on 10 February 1942. In fact it was a fortnight earlier when the carrier *Indomitable* and three destroyers refuelled there on 25 January 1942 before going on to fly off Hurricanes to Batavia as reinforcements for Singapore. I and my family must have left Batavia for Australia about 10 days before on a refugee ship crowded with military dependants. On a personal note I knew Lieutenant-Colonel McLeod Cary⁵ (Mossie) who officiated at the ceremonial breaking and dismissal of Quartermaster Sergeant SH Perera (p 189) since he skippered the tiny 14-foot boat in which my father and three others escaped from Singapore after the surrender. As an officer in the HKSGA, he must have known personally the officers murdered on Christmas Island, which was doubtless why he was given the job.

Yet history seems to play strange tricks. In modern Sri Lanka, a very large proportion of the burgher community has emigrated, and as early as 1960 at least 50 000 of them were living in Australia, including a great many, if not most, of the survivors of the Cocos Island garrison. The emphasis on Buddhism and the Sinhala language as essential elements of nationalism has led to the disaster of the growth of the equally reactionary and violent high-caste Hindu Jaffna Tamil Tiger movement and the horrific terrorism about which we hear so much.

In the colonial world, if the working class cannot provide the leadership of an anti-colonial struggle and the bourgeoisie either will not, or as in Ceylon because of its peculiar comprador role could not, then the intelligentsia, a part of the petit-bourgeoisie, will fill the gap. This goes some way to explaining the success of various other anti-colonial struggles such as Congress in India. So in Ceylon a social group as distinctive as the burghers might seem to be unique, given their unusual characteristics in both religion and racial origin, in playing a large role in the early period of the struggle for self-determination. In fact many other seemingly unique groups — if not as unique as them — played such roles in the early years of national liberation struggles. One could mention the role played by so-called Creoles in the liberation of Latin America from Spain way

back in the 1800s, who had little in common with the masses, or the role played by minority Christians and Jews in a number of Arab countries such as Egypt in the early 1920s. As their respective national movements developed a mass base, they were all forced away from the centre of the stage and became more and more marginalised. Without a revolution in the advanced world, their early role was usurped by competing elements from more 'normal' sections of the petit-bourgeoisie and intelligentsia who have then turned, first perhaps to Stalinism or other forms of 'socialism' like the Syrian and Iraqi Ba'ath, and eventually to religious and racial reaction.

Ted Crawford

André Farkas, *Budapest 1956, la tragédie telle que je l'ai vue et vecue*, Tallandier, Paris, 2006, pp 288, €21

Henri-Christian Giraud, *Le Printemps en octobre, une histoire de la révolution hongroise*, Editions du Rocher, Paris, 2006, pp 812, €24

Paul Lendvai, *Les Hongrois, mille ans d'histoire*, traduit de l'allemand et du hongrois par Georges Kassai et Gilles Bellamy, les éditions Noir sur Blanc, Lausanne, 2006, pp 672, €28

Julien Papp, *La Hongrie libérée, état, pouvoirs et société après la de-faite du nazisme (Septembre 1944-Septembre 1947)*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Rennes, 2006, pp 366, €20

Victor Sebestyen, *Budapest 56, les 12 jours qui ébranlèrent l'empire soviétique*, traduit de l'anglais par Johan-Frédéric Hel Guedj, Calmann-Lévy, Paris, 2006, pp 444, €23.90

AS Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine points out in her article in *Le Monde* (27 October 2006) on the Budapest revolution of 1956, 'its double dimension, at the same time anti-Stalinist and anti-capitalist, gives it a universal significance'. This is why it is stripped of its true nature, after having been lied about for 50 years, by the Stalinists of the whole world. The representatives of the British and French states have thus celebrated the Hungarian revolution... whereas in 1956, their governments assisted by the Israeli army, aided the Kremlin to crush the workers, students and the Hungarian peasants by attacking Egypt, which was guilty of nationalising the Suez Canal which passed through its own territory. Eisenhower then respected the division of the world decided at Yalta between Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill.

The European Union, executive council of the multinationals, keen to destroy the public services, to privatise them all and to dismantle them for their profit, has celebrated this anniversary by warning the European people against 'Communism', or in reality against the class struggle. However, H-C Giraud

recalls in his informative work, how the former president of the party of the small businessmen, Béla Kovács, interned under Stalin and Rákosi, defined the Hungarian revolution as:

... a revolution coming from within, led by Communists. There is no shadow of doubt on this subject. Some Communists, outraged by the acts of their own party, prepared the ground for this insurrection and took part in it from the first days. That is what allowed us, former leaders of the non-Communist parties, to return to the scene and to claim our share in the future of Hungary. (p 694)

André Farkas quotes a characteristic example, that of Rudolf Földvári, apprentice locksmith, a Communist, propelled onto the central council of the trade unions, then onto the Political Bureau of the Communist Party, from where Rákosi dismissed and relegated him to Miskolc, the great metal-working centre. On 25 October, Földvári was elected to the workers' council of the city, which he organised. Condemned to life imprisonment after the crushing of the insurrection, but pardoned later, he would resume his job as a metal-worker in a factory...

Evoking the Kremlin propaganda about the alleged return of the fascistic emigrants of 1945, Kovács added:

Nobody, in Hungary, was concerned with those who had fled to the West after the fall of their regime of terror and corruption — and who then lived on Western material aid. If they had made the slightest move towards taking back power, the whole nation would be drawn up against them instantly. (p 694)

Jóoska Szilágyi, also quoted by Giraud, said approximately the same thing:

It was the Soviets which were being prepared, the true Soviets, these same which, in Russia in 1917, were not able to survive! Our nation bleeds and perhaps will continue to bleed, but everything led us to believe that, out of this bloodbath, would emerge the first and only socialist democratic state in the world!' (p 196)

The Kremlin, with the political assistance of the 'free world', was to do everything it could in order that this state would not see the light of day.

The truth was obvious to the foreign observers themselves. Thus, Giraud quotes the document in which the Director of the French Cultural Institute

explained to his superiors the meaning of the insurrection:

Desire to preserve certain democratic and socialist gains resulting from the Soviet intervention and from communist action — agrarian reforms, with slow and voluntary socialisation of agriculture, socialisation of the economic, industrial and commercial, sectors (excluding craft industry) — and while taking as a starting point the Titoist system of workers' management; reform of education; separation of Church and State. (p 479)

André Farkas and H-C Giraud cite many cases of fraternisation between Soviet soldiers stationed in Hungary and Hungarian insurgents during the first days of the revolution. Already, at the time of the crushing of the general strike by the workers of East Berlin and the GDR in June 1953, 42 Soviet soldiers and officers had been shot for refusing to shoot at the demonstrators. The Russian staff brought in for the second intervention, beginning on 4 November, troops from Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan), whom H-C Giraud bizarrely describes as 'Mongol soldiers'.

André Farkas and Victor Sebastyen also give a detailed account of the events. The account by Farkas is the best of the four, having a taste of living testimony, which its author, then a young journalist in Budapest, reinforces with extracts from contemporary evidence.

These works, which are so eloquent when it comes to the days between 23 October and 9 November, the day that the insurrection was defeated under the gunfire and shells of the Kremlin, are strangely laconic, except that of André Farkas (especially that of Victor Sebastyen) on what Boris Souvarine's *Est-Ouest* bulletin itself called 'the Republic of the councils', the long month during which the workers' councils, especially the Central Workers Council of Greater Budapest, organised the working class and its fight against the puppet government of Kádár and against the Russian armoured divisions.

André Farkas stresses the importance of it in a chapter entitled 'The Working Class so Dear to Marx on the Front Line', where he evokes the formation of the council of Miskolc from 23 October, and more so when he describes the situation shortly after the military crushing of the insurrection in a chapter entitled 'The Workers Thumb their Noses at the Communist Party':

The further one travels from the impotent top of the pyramid, the more one descends towards the bottom, towards the lower strata, closer to the earth, the more the revolution continues to bear fruit... The workers' power, the basic power is reinforced and plays a more and more determining

part. Indeed, the workers' councils are still there. They are there in every enterprise. (p 213)

He adds: 'These councils resemble, curiously, the Russian workers' councils in the great epoch.' (p 214)

The Kremlin would need five weeks to dislocate them, using their international isolation: no determining force in the world — neither Thorez nor Mollet, nor their foreign counterparts — wanted to speak about these far too contagious workers' councils!

More so than that of Giraud, Victor Sebestyen's book suffers from an historical weakness: it reduces the years 1944-47 to two aspects: the rapes by the Red Army soldiers and the manipulations of the Hungarian Communist Party.

Rapes are a sad and distressing practice of armies on campaign: how many women in the Ukraine had been raped by Hungarian soldiers who fought on the side of the Wehrmacht!

Further west, during the summer of 1944, many women of Basse-Normandie had to suffer the virile heat of American soldiers. No one, however, thinks of making that an essential aspect of the Liberation.

The work of Julien Papp, *La Hongrie Libérée*, by its detailed picture of the situation in the country shortly after the war, makes it possible to understand what happened during the three crucial years of 1944 to 1947. The increasingly fascist and anti-Semitic Hungary of Rear-Admiral Horthy — who had, in 1925, signed a treaty with the United States which accorded to the latter the status of 'most favoured nation, especially in the petroleum industry' (Papp) — had joined Hitler in the attack on the USSR. In 1944, the victories of the Red Army pushed Horthy to try to detach himself from the alliance. The Nazis captured him and substituted for him the Hungarian Nazi Szalasi and his Arrow Cross.

Shortly after their defeat, Hungary was a place of intense class struggle amid the debris of the ruined feudal-middle-class state. The provisional government and its Minister for Agriculture, Imre Nagy — whom Kádár was to have hanged in 1958 for his role in the revolution of 1956 with Pál Maléter, József Szilágyi, Miklós Gimes — gave the land to the peasants... including the lands of the Catholic Church, the largest landowner in the country, whose spiritual fury they provoked. The Vatican, then occupied with transferring to Latin America the maximum possible number of collaborators with the Nazis, refused to recognise this government and this decision. The workers tried to take over the factories, the bosses of which were often fascists or pro-fascists, who had fled to a very welcoming West. It was the time when one of the favourite slogans of the reactionary clergy in the countryside was 'Do not cut down the trees, otherwise, where will we hang the communists?', that is to say, when the workers seized the

factories and the peasants took over the land, whether they were communists or socialist, or not, it was their action which earned this qualification.

Stalin, hostile to this movement which had come from the masses themselves, whom he feared like the plague, wanted a government of national unity. He declared as follows: 'We would have accepted Horthy, but he was taken by the Germans.' That gives a particular savour to the declarations of Stalinists, Soviet or French, who were to describe the revolutionists of 1956 as the heirs to Horthy...

These three years of violent social and political struggles would finally lead to the confiscation of power by the Stalinised Communist Party, whose leadership would have to subject its ranks to a purge and to a permanent repression.

The picture drawn up by Julien Papp makes it possible to grasp the wellsprings of the 1956 revolution better than the imprecations on the 'monster' Rákosi and the 'salami tactics' implemented by him, which reduced the violent class clashes of 1944 to 1947 to an erudite bureaucratic tactic worked out after the event by a small-town Machiavelli...

While the fiftieth anniversary of the crushed Hungarian revolution generated so many works and commemorations, that of the Polish revolution is shrouded by a discreet veil. However, the term 'spring in October' was formulated by the Poles on 22 October 1956 to define their movement, which gave the first impulse to the Hungarian October. Paul Lendvai reminds us: 'It was the effervescence reigning in Poland and the Soviet threats against the return of Gomulka to power which triggered the explosion in Hungary.' (p 535)

This systematic 'lapse of memory' about the revolution which was then looming in Poland, and which the apparatus — renovated from top to bottom... but still bound to the Kremlin — would take nearly a year to stifle, has a precise meaning: it aims to reduce the Hungarian revolution of 1956 to a national insurrection against foreign domination (a characteristic which was certainly present) and thus to erase its anti-Stalinist and anti-capitalist revolutionary character as stressed by the *Le Monde* journalist.

Jean-Jacques Marie

(By kind permission of CERMTRI from *Les Cahiers du Mouvement Ouvrier*, no 33, January–February 2007.)

WJ Fishman, *Into the Abyss: The Life and Work of GR Sims*, Elliott and Thompson, London, 2008, pp 96, £9.99

IT is always a pleasure for me to read something new from Professor Fishman. His breadth of knowledge of East London, with his human and political sympathy for its inhabitants greatly outweigh any difficulties arising from

his political (anarchist-pacifist if I have understood rightly) positions. Beryl Bainbridge in her preface says sufficient about Fishman's skill as a writer; I do not need to amplify.

The subject of this booklet, George R Sims, is probably best known today as the author of the ballad 'Christmas Day in the Workhouse', which was once a popular recitation party-piece — so much so in fact that the work is now better known through music hall parodies ('We don't want your Christmas pudding; stick it up your...') than the original text. This is unfair. The Victorian ballad genre was susceptible to sentimentality, but less so than is often realised by those who have not read them. 'Christmas Day' can only be accused of sentimentalism if one regards bitter anger and sorrow at the unjust death of a loved partner as foolish, unworthy emotions to hold and express.

The full text of the ballad is reproduced by Fishman, and merits this treatment. The story is of a pauper (formerly a tradesman) in the workhouse, about to receive his Christmas dinner under the smiling gaze of the 'guardians of the poor'. He rebels, and shouts that he cannot bring himself to eat it. Naturally there is distress among the guardians, and he is at risk, but commands the situation by his intense eloquence, and expounds his grievance. A year earlier he had asked for assistance at the workhouse for his dying wife. They had replied that she might come into the workhouse, but that 'out relief' (money or food for the poor in their homes) was refused, as an act of policy. The wife had refused this welfare, as it would mean separation from her husband — she thought she could endure starvation but not separation. Her resolve broke under the crisis of her sickness and she begged him for bread. Desperate, he returned to the workhouse to plead again, to be told it was too late for such business to be conducted. He resisted the temptation to steal from the busy shops, but fought a dog in the street for a crust. Too late, he returned to find his wife dead.

The ballad was not regarded as mawkish when it first appeared. It was much denounced as an incitement to 'set the paupers against their betters', but Sims was to note in his autobiography that one campaigner for old-age pensions was inspired to activity by reading it. As a piece of propaganda it was clearly massively successful.

'Christmas Day' was by no means Sims' major writing. It was just one of a collection of ballads he composed. But more significant and substantial was the multi-volume work *Living London*, which he edited and contributed to. This was in its day as influential as works such as Steadman's *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, and Booth's careful maps of poverty in London, in forming a sharp picture of the true nature of the urban poverty which resulted from industrialisation and the subjugation of the mass of the population to the vicious chaos of the 'free market'.

In a way it is logical enough for Fishman to come to a study of reform, how it happened and who made it happen. His first published work (*The Insurrectionists*, soon to be republished) was a sustained criticism of Lenin's 'Jacobinism'. He sought an alternative revolutionary strategy in *East End Jewish Radicals 1875-1914*, and it is not clear that he found it, regardless of the warmth of his admiration for those revolutionaries. Subsequent books broadened out his areas of enquiry, but still provided him with no workable politics. Time and experience in East London provided him with more than adequate reason to be anti-Stalinist, but he formulated this learning into an anarchist anti-communism. And so, exactly how could the problems of the poor be dealt with, since they showed every sign of being always with us? The disintegration of global Stalinism has closed off one possible solution as it bade the season 'goodnight', exiting stage right with pockets a-jingle and a quietened conscience. Where else then, than to the reformers, those who influenced and facilitated improvement, should he turn his attention? And Sims would be a good target, little read and less written about, compared to Christian superstars such as Booth and Barnado.

What then does Fishman learn from Sims' life and work? His family background was important, including a grandfather who took part in the great Chartist rally at Kennington and afterwards took tea with a Special Constable. Childhood experiences included reading Dickens, and guiding Henry Mayhew through the streets of London. There was also the personal determination to see things for himself, to record and report them. On entering employment he became a nocturnal walker of the streets of London (doubtless he would be described today as a 'psycho-geographer', a once specific term now debased by the likes of *Time Out* to mean any habitual pedestrian capable of stringing two non-pedestrian sentences together), never content to rely on second-hand information. He won his independence from paid employment through his developing literary skills, and he lived (precariously enough) by his prolific production of plays and stories, before embarking on a second career as a journalist.

A School Board official, Arthur Moss, challenged him to confront the reality of poverty, not the fictionalised form of it that had financed him. Descending to the challenge, with Moss he travelled into the underworld of the London poor. He quickly directed his energy to a flow of articles about poverty and the poor in London, which were compiled as *How the Poor Live*, and in which he demanded state action to alleviate poverty. Fishman provides a good selection of extracts. From this base of knowledge and information he was to spend much of the rest of his career campaigning for reforms, and can justifiably be considered to have influenced a great deal of reforming legislation, which, with painful slowness

(but with enormous long-term payoffs), benefited the poor and improved their conditions.

Fishman makes his admiration for Sims clear, both as a reformer and a writer. He indicates numerous aspects of Sims's writing that he does not have the space to go into — his interest in the revolutionaries, sympathy for Jews, support for women's rights. He indicates some interesting sidelights — such as Sims's successful invention and promotion of a hair-restorer. Clearly a biography of fuller dimensions would be appropriate. Fishman does not conclude with any call for a new reformism, though it is evident that the Labour Party has ceded the arena of reform to the Cameron wing of the Tories. Nevertheless, the reader is likely to form the view that Fishman sees few political and social strategies as more applicable to the present stage of capitalism. He evinces no enthusiasm for the self-organisation of the impoverished in this volume, a marked and unwelcome change from his previous work. Nevertheless, I recommend this volume warmly.

One minor criticism I feel the need to record. Sims ventured, as did many journalists, into the debate on the identity of 'Jack the Ripper' and, according to Fishman, settled on the suspect Montague Druiitt. (This reviewer was a 'Druittite' for more than three decades, before acquiring a grudging respect for the case against D'Onston Stephenson developed by Melvin Harris.) Fishman describes Druiitt thus: 'A reasonable choice, a police suspect also, one Montague Druiitt, son of the Queen's physician.' The only basis of calling Druiitt a police suspect is that he was named in some manuscript notes by Chief Constable Macnaghten, who presumably had some reason for doing so. These notes were written in 1894, but not made public until the 1950s and could not have been the basis for any conclusions Sims drew. Druiitt's father, William, was a surgeon, and a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, but was not the Queen's physician. Fishman may be confused here about the widely suspected Sir William Gull, who was physician to the Queen. DJ Leighton in his meticulously researched book *Ripper Suspect: The Secret Lives of Montague Druiitt* demolished the case against Druiitt in 2006.

JJ Plant

David Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow: Left-Libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2006, pp 401, £20.00

DRAWING for inspiration on the title of a novel by Ignazio Silone, this work is primarily a series of detailed biographical portraits of 11 writers, 'seeds beneath the snow', whose ideas David Goodway hopes might help to inspire a new

generation of British anarchists. As he puts it:

The studies of this book have two purposes. In part, I offer them as a serious, scholarly contribution to the cultural history of Britain. But they are also intended as an intervention in current politics by demonstrating that there has been a significant indigenous anarchist tradition, predominantly literary, and that it is at its most impressive when at its broadest as a left-libertarian current. (p 337)

It is my intention in this review to examine these two claims in turn.

Firstly, as cultural history, it is hard to find fault with Goodway's work, which indeed deserves to be widely recognised as a superb contribution to the existing scholarship about the 11 figures discussed. The 11 are, in turn, William Morris (1834-1896), Edward Carpenter (1844-1926), Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), John Cowper Powys (1872-1963), George Orwell (1901-1950), Herbert Read (1893-1968), Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), Alex Comfort (1920-2000), EP Thompson (1924-1993), Christopher Pallis (1923-2005) and Colin Ward (1924-). Of course, one might well at this point instantly recoil a bit at the strident title of the book — what, for example, are Morris, Orwell and Thompson doing here, given, as Goodway admits, they were 'definitely not anarchists' (p 10)? And given Wilde was Irish, and the others all distinctly English (with the exception of the partly Welsh Powys), is 'British writers' totally appropriate? However, leaving the title aside, what Goodway has actually to say about each of the writers, and the background to their work, is of interest and importance regardless of how much (or how little) one previously knows about them. Moreover, the host of fascinating 'minor characters' — many of them women — who are introduced throughout the work means that it would be unfair to criticise Goodway for only discussing male 'seeds'.

Goodway, a noted historian not only of anarchism but also of Chartism, opens with an able account of some of the reasons why Britain was an 'anarchist backwater' at the time when the historic anarchist movement as a current within the international working class was flourishing from the 1860s until the crushing of the Spanish Revolution in the 1930s. Anarchism in this period was 'embedded in the artisan response to industrialisation, first in France, followed by Italy and finally, in the early twentieth century, by Russia and Spain', but this 'artisan response' in Britain had already been and gone, dying out with the end of Chartism. Accordingly, 'in Britain anarchism as a social movement never amounted to much, except among the Yiddish-speaking Jews of East London and — for reasons still to be explained — on Clydeside' (pp 9-10).

William Morris' *News from Nowhere* is described as 'an anarchist utopia',

(p 21) though the envisioned future direct democracy might more plausibly be claimed as a vision of communism, and Morris' intellectual differences with Kropotkin and other anarchists are indeed carefully explored. The homosexuality of Edward Carpenter and Oscar Wilde is carefully placed in relationship to their respective engagement with anarchist political thought. Carpenter certainly deserves resurrection from his current neglect, while I found it a pleasure to read more about Wilde's radical politics. Socialism, Wilde noted in 1889:

... has the attraction of a wonderful personality and touches the heart of one and the brain of another, and draws this man by his hatred of injustice, and his neighbour by his faith in the future, and a third, it may be, by his love of art or by his wild worship of a lost and buried past. And all of this is well. For, to make men Socialists is nothing, but to make Socialism human is a great thing. (p 69)

If Wilde and Carpenter are celebrated for their socialism, John Cowper Powys is celebrated for his 'individualist anarchism' — a type of anarchism owing something to Max Stirner's concept of 'egoism'. Despite the fact that this 'lifestyle' anarchism has nothing to do with socialism, Goodway, while not uncritical, seems to find it worth devoting not one but two chapters to exploring it. Powys, we learn, was 'a bookish solitary, who enjoyed contemplating Nature on long walks', yet apparently developed 'a major, liberatory body of practical advice' for 'other bookish solitaries who also enjoy contemplating Nature whilst walking' (p 121). Great.

I suspect that whether Goodway is right to focus so much attention on Powys' politics depends on Powys' wider literary status as a novelist. I cannot personally comment on whether the fact that Powys is largely forgotten is a fate deserved or not, though I admit to being intrigued when Goodway writes that 'I (an admirer of Dickens, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Proust) have read no finer novel than his masterpiece, *Porius*' (p 337). One great strength of Goodway's work in general is that it is full of recommendations of all sorts of obscure literature and articles that you would be unlikely to come across referenced elsewhere.

For example, it is fascinating to read of Emma Goldman's private despair as the CNT and FAI compromised their principles by entering government during the Spanish Revolution. 'I have been extremely distressed over the events in Spain early this month', she wrote to Powys on 29 May 1937, 'not that they have come as a surprise. I saw clearly that entering any Ministries and making concessions to the various political parties would bring dire results', though she continued to defend the disastrous CNT-FAI strategy in public against critics (pp 130-01). George Orwell's political evolution towards revolutionary socialism during the

Spanish Civil War is also detailed, as are his subsequent arguments with anti-militarist and anti-war anarchists over his 'revolutionary patriotism' during the Second World War. These arguments have a contemporary echo, but given how often the 'pro-war "Left"' attempt to use Orwell, Goodway's discussion provides plenty of ammunition with which to fight back. When one reads Orwell's 1944 attack on the *New Statesman* for its Stalinism, one is reminded for example of the intellectual bankruptcy of Christopher Hitchens and various other apologists for the American Empire: 'Don't imagine that for years on end you can make yourself the boot-licking propagandist of the Soviet regime, or any other regime, and then suddenly return to mental decency.' (p 139)

The political thought of Herbert Read and Aldous Huxley (whose utopian novel *Island* of 1962 is highly praised) is carefully examined, and Goodway finds much of relevance today in Alex Comfort's pacifism and EP Thompson's involvement in the peace movement. Thompson's critical relationship to William Morris is brought to the fore, though his lifelong antipathy to Orwell — despite what the two potentially had in common — is rightly seen as a 'blindness' resulting from his early Stalinism.

The rise of CND clearly seems to have been a formative experience for Goodway, and he writes:

The Committee of 100 was the most impressive anarchist — or at least near-anarchist — political organisation of modern Britain, with its collective decision making and responsibility (in a form of direct democracy) and almost exclusive emphasis on direct action as the means of struggle. (p 261)

Why the current anti-war movement, much bigger than CND in the 1950s, has not (yet) apparently given birth to anything of real significance remotely resembling it, given Goodway's convincing discussion of what anarchism and pacifism have in common, would be an interesting question to explore.

The final two writers Goodway discusses, Christopher Pallis and Colin Ward, perhaps give us a clue as to why anarchist ideas have failed to become as popular as it seems they might have done in the 1960s. Christopher Pallis, better known under his pseudonym Maurice Brinton, was the ideological leader of the Solidarity Group (a selection of his writings have been edited by Goodway into the collection *For Workers' Power*), though he himself owed most of his intellectual inspiration to the leader of the French group *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, Cornelius Castoriadis. Evolving out of the crisis of the Trotskyist movement after Trotsky's murder, Castoriadis' subsequent (partly Weberian) concern with 'autonomy' as opposed to 'bureaucracy' helped to inspire the contemporary

autonomist movement. Autonomism, which seems to lie somewhere between Marxism and anarchism, has perhaps proved more attractive to many in the contemporary anti-capitalist movement than either anarchism or Marxism because it seems to be offering something new in terms of its ideas and strategy (despite the fact that its theory was put to the test and found somewhat wanting in Italy during the 1970s).

Accordingly, the isolation of 'pure' anarchists today can be seen from an examination of the contemporary influence — or lack of it — of Colin Ward, despite the fact that his pioneering ideas on housing, planning, education, the environment, etc, are ones that one would have thought relevant to the concerns of the present movement. Yet, the autonomists of today — perhaps because they lack the kind of 'anarcho-pacifism' which might have seen them throwing themselves more effectively into the anti-war movement — have in general been slow to react to the bloody imperialist adventures waged on behalf of multinational companies by nation states. Yet it should be noted that there is also a marked silence in Goodway's work about anarchism and empire — aside from apparent uncritical praise for Gandhi and odd references such as the mention that during the 1950s 'the decolonising societies' emerged as a 'characteristic Ward topic' (p 312). There is little discussion about what, if anything, anarchists in Britain thought about colonialism and how they related to national liberation movements.

Secondly, how well does Goodway's exploration of 'British writers and left-libertarian thought' stand up as 'an intervention in current politics'? Certainly, this book must take its place as perhaps the most authoritative single-volume resource on anarchism and its intellectual influence in modern Britain — which I would have thought would make it invaluable for anyone concerned with the history of the British left. It provides a definition of anarchism — 'unremitting hostility to the state and parliamentarianism, employment of direct action as the means of attaining desired goals, and organisation through cooperative associations, built and federated from the bottom upwards' (p 3) — and is very judicious and fair in its discussion of the various thinkers, and the extent to which they embraced this 'anarchist programme'. Accordingly, Goodway concludes by stressing the relevance of the ideas of the eight major thinkers out of the 11 whom he maintains most fully embraced this 'anarchist programme'. Dramatically casting aside Morris, Orwell and Thompson, Goodway insists that 'the choice is no longer, as for Marx, between socialism and barbarism. The much starker alternatives now are: anarchism or annihilation' (p 337).

Yet while Goodway is convincing enough when he maintains that the eight other thinkers do constitute an intellectual 'tradition', no mean achievement in itself, I personally remain unconvinced that anarchism, indigenous or otherwise,

has the necessary intellectual resources to give humanity even a chance of avoiding 'annihilation'. Goodway notes that anarchist thought is notoriously heterogeneous, and indeed the contradictions in the political thought of even individual anarchists at times leap out from the page — particularly in the case of Sir Herbert Read, whose gravestone reads 'knight, poet, anarchist' (p 183). However, the anarchist stress on the critical division in political thought being between 'authoritarians' and 'libertarians' means that all sorts of reactionary figures — GK Chesterton, Herbert Spencer, etc — are, according to Goodway, seen as 'perhaps deserving of consideration' by anarchists (pp 4, 12).

If there is a dividing line in politics, then according to Hal Draper it is between those who stand for revolutionary democracy as against those who have an ultimately élitist contempt for the mass of working-class people. And while Pallis — who incidentally never called himself an anarchist — certainly stood for workers' power, some of the other 'left-libertarian' thinkers Goodway holds up look less impressive in this light. Indeed, though Goodway condemns the appalling 'aristocratic élitism' and pro-eugenics stance of Huxley during the 1920s and early 1930s (pp 218-20), and seems less than impressed with Powys' glowing praise for the arch-imperialist Winston Churchill — 'far more of an *anarchist* than [Stafford] Cripps' — during the Second World War (p 156), the issue of élitism is one that just will not go away. As Herbert Read put it in *Poetry and Anarchism* in 1938, at a time when he was the leading public representative of anarchism in Britain:

I despise the whole industrial epoch — not only the plutocracy which it has raised to power, but also the industrial proletariat which it has drained from the land and proliferated in hovels of indifferent brick. The only class in the community for which I feel any real sympathy is the agricultural class, including the genuine remnants of a landed aristocracy. (p 184)

To be fair to Goodway, he does not hide this issue away, acknowledging the influence of Italian élitist theory on some strands of anarchism, and even discussing Orwell's objection to what he called 'the totalitarian tendency which is implicit in the anarchist or pacifist vision of society' (p 146).

The final question is the relevance of anarchism for those serious about the revolutionary transformation of society in the twenty-first century. One cannot deny that historically anarchist thinkers, and among almost all — if not quite all — of the eight principal writers discussed in *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow* there are vitally crucial insights and ideas which do retain relevance for the coming struggles ahead. Yet the only one of these eight thinkers who never seems to have lost sight of the centrality of working-class self-emancipation through

revolution is Pallis, and while his reification of spontaneity is impressive at first sight, it is not without its limitations. Of course the working class is 'capable of rising to the greatest heights of revolutionary consciousness, and challenging the very basis of all exploiting regimes' (p 299) — but if this was the whole story then why argue about politics and parties at all — surely we could all sit back and wait for the revolution? Indeed, why hasn't the revolution already happened?

Overall, however, there is no red thread of discussion about questions of revolutionary leadership and the class struggle in general running through this book. This should not be surprising to those familiar with the (slightly vulgar) Marxist critique of anarchism as fundamentally an ideology of the *petit-bourgeoisie*, but what is surprising is just how much of this critique this work seems to confirm. As Goodway, an anarchist historian for whom this remarkable work represents perhaps the *magnum opus* of his lifelong study of anarchism, concludes:

... the average person has always yearned for their own house or smallholding or business or whatever. I have therefore surprised myself by coming to believe that, within the anarchist tradition, it is the American individualists and French mutualists, who saw nothing undesirable in the existence of modest amounts of property, who probably have the most going for their ideas in the twenty-first century. Of the major anarchist thinkers of the past, it is therefore Proudhon, rather than Bakunin, who is likely to be of greatest relevance in future. (p 337)

This is an incredibly honest and brave statement for an anarchist to make, though it is a logical enough conclusion. Quite why Goodway then goes on to insist that the anarchist programme has the potential to save the world from annihilation from global capitalism and war remains, however, more of a mystery. 'Liberal Middle Classes of the World Unite', anyone?

Christian Høgsbjerg

David Goodway (ed), *For Workers' Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton*, AK Press, Oakland and Edinburgh, 2004, pp 320, £12

AK Press are to be congratulated for bringing out in one volume the principal writings of Maurice Brinton (Chris Pallis, 1923-2005), author of *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control*, *The Irrational in Politics* and much else besides printed in the pages of *Solidarity* from 1959 until the mid-1980s. The collection includes material on the Paris Commune, the Belgian General Strike of 1960, France

1968, Portugal 1974, plus the Solidarity position statements *As We See It* and *As We Don't See It*, all written with an impressive down-to-earth, no-holds-barred approach compelling the reader's attention. The reportage on Belgium, France and Portugal is particularly valuable as it gives the 'feel' of the events concerned.

It is difficult to say which of the two major works of the collection is the more important. Perhaps *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control* just wins as a path-breaking study in English of the way in which Lenin & Co effectively used 'workers' power' as a cloak for their own imposition of imperatives. In the article 'Factory Committees and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat', Maurice Brinton summarises the process:

The first stage... was the subordination of the Factory Committees to the All-Russian Council for Workers' Control in which the unions (themselves already strongly under Party influence) were heavily represented. This took place very shortly after the coming to power of the Soviet government. The second phase — which almost immediately followed the first — was the incorporation of this All-Russian Council for Workers' Control into the Vesenkha (Supreme Economic Council), even more heavily weighted in favour of the unions, but also comprising direct nominees of the state (that is, of the Party). By early 1918 the Bolsheviks were actively seeking to merge the Committees into the trade union structures. The issue provoked heated discussions at the First All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions (7-14 January 1918) which saw desperate attempts, led mainly by anarcho-syndicalists, to maintain the autonomy of the Committees, against the advice of Riazanov, who urged the Committees 'to commit suicide by becoming an integral element of the trade union structure'. During the next two years a sustained campaign was waged to curb the power of the unions themselves, for the unions, albeit in a very indirect and distorted way, could still be influenced by the working class. It was particularly important for the new bureaucracy to replace this power by the authority of direct party nominees. These managers and administrators, nearly all appointed from above, gradually came to form the basis of a new ruling class. The important point, as far as the re-evaluation of history is concerned, is that each of these steps was to be resisted, but each fight was to be lost. Each time, the 'adversary' appeared in the garb of the new 'proletarian' power. And each defeat was to make it more difficult for the working class itself directly to manage production, that is, fundamentally to alter its status as a subordinate class. (pp 170-71)

The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control is in effect a blow-by-blow account of the above sequence of events. Those readers who haven't yet read it are strongly urged to do so. If I have any criticism of the book it is only that insufficient stress is perhaps laid on the suppression of parties rivalling the Bolsheviks. Maurice Brinton quite rightly asserts that if the working class loses control of production then it loses its grip on political power, but part of that grip is enabled by the presence of more than one party claiming to represent its interests: if these are suppressed, and its own party transformed into the vehicle of interests of an alien class (in this case the bureaucracy), then that is how it comes to lose power.

If Maurice Brinton's politics derive in large measure from those of Cornelius Castoriadis (1922-1997) (discussed by David Goodway in the introduction), *The Irrational in Politics* is based on the work of Wilhelm Reich, the left-wing disciple of Freud. The key insight here is a sentence at the bottom of page 107: 'A social structure containing deep antagonisms reproduces these antagonisms in variable degrees in each of the individuals comprising it.' Maurice Brinton uses this to try to explain how it is possible for individuals to act contrary to their objective interests as members of an exploited class, and how even when such people rebel they tend to reproduce exploitative patterns of control in the society emerging on the morrow of the revolution. He quotes Reich on the role of the patriarchal family:

... which creates in children a character which makes them amenable to the later influence of an authoritarian order... this characterological anchoring of the social order explains the tolerance of the suppressed toward the rule of the upper class, a tolerance which sometimes goes as far as the affirmation of their own subjugation... The investigation of character structure, therefore, is of more than clinical interest. It leads to the question why it is that ideologies change so much more slowly than the socio-economic base, why man as a rule lags so far behind what he creates and which should and could change him. The reason is that the character structure is acquired in early childhood and undergoes little change. (p 268)

One might conclude from this that the revolution is impossible or can only lead to a different form of exploitation. As Brinton emphasises, this is by no means the case:

This sombre image has far more truth in it than most revolutionaries can comfortably admit. But in the last analysis it is inadequate. It is inadequate

because it implies totally malleable individuals, in whom total sexual repression has produced the prerequisites for total conditioning and therefore for total acceptance of the dominant ideology. (p 275)

As evidence of this Brinton points to the phenomenon of adolescent revolt which occurred in the 1960s (brilliantly captured by Bob Dylan's song 'The Times They Are A-Changing'):

The assertion of the right to manage *one's* own life, in the realm of sex as in the realm of work, is helping to disintegrate the dominant ideology. It is producing less compulsive and obsessional individuals, and in this respect preparing the ground for libertarian revolution. (p 278)

It is worth noting, in passing, how this 'Reichian' approach helps to account for the presence of genuine altruistic behaviour in humans. Humans tend to pursue their own self-interest, but the processes of character formation allow for the substitution of another individual as the subject of interested calculation. This can, of course, lead to irrational acceptance of external authority, but it can also lead to genuine rational concern for other people — even for members of other animal species. (None of this is in Brinton, but seems worth mentioning.)

One or two criticisms arise. The experience of Spain in 1936-37 is dismissed rather too cavalierly 'because it only has limited relevance to the problems of an advanced industrial country, in the last third of the twentieth century' (p 135). I beg to differ (see my piece 'The Spanish Revolution', *New Interventions*, forthcoming). Secondly, 'state capitalism' is seen as in some sense 'more advanced' than 'private capitalism' — at least that seems a possible reading of a sentence on page 157. Maybe I am misrepresenting Maurice Brinton's views here, and if that is not what he means then I must apologise. Even so, it seems worth noting that nowadays, as of 2006, it would appear that any assertion of the superiority of the Russian and/or Chinese model over that of the US is unwarranted. Thirdly, on page 160 we find the bald statement, 'partisan involvement in the problems of the rulers is no help to the ruled'. This comes in *As We Don't See It*, in the context of parliamentary and trade union elections, the Common Market and similar questions. Here, again, I would disagree, in that such problems may be the concern of the ruling class now, but if the workers take power they will have to deal with them, hence it is an advantage to be informed beforehand. As Bertolt Brecht reminded us, we have to take over the leadership. (The same reasoning applies in the case of a certain left-wing organization in the UK which downplays the importance of having a political programme.)

All in all, Maurice Brinton's uncompromising defence of working-class initiative in the face of capitalists and bureaucrats is very attractive, but the reader is often left suspended in mid-air instead of being presented with clear signposts pointing the way forward. This is even the case as regards France, where the treatment is most detailed. One of Brinton's targets here is a Trotskyist governmental slogan: 'Tout le pouvoir au syndicats! Pour un gouvernement socialiste-communiste!' This slogan is not specifically mentioned, but the thrust of Brinton's criticism clearly shows. Indeed, if the established workers' parties have no intention of taking office, why demand that they do so? Similar considerations apply, argues Brinton, as regards calls on the CGT to issue a summons to a general strike (p 253). One is left with the impression that requesting the official leadership to act in the interests of the vast majority is always a waste of time; however, if mass pressure is sufficiently strong then it may be possible to force the leaders to act constructively. Also, if one is determined to write off the established leaderships, what is the alternative line of march? We have to wait till page 255 to learn (in a footnote) that the groupuscules should have concentrated on a call for workers' management of production and the formation of workers' councils. Fine, but then how does one deal with the established leadership, which is still capable of obstruction? One comes away with the feeling that the analysis could have been sharper and fuller. (And even this level is not attained in the coverage of Belgium and Portugal.)

Readers should certainly not be prevented from consulting the book by these criticisms. But still I find myself in sympathy with the leader of a certain left-wing organisation in these islands who once said that, in his opinion, no single existing group had all the answers, but each one had part of the total answer. Why did Solidarity, which had so much going for it, disappear from the political scene? Its demise suggests there was something wrong with its theory. (This is by no means proven, of course, since the best organisations can be derailed through no fault of their own, but maybe it was the case.) If the group did have its faults, were these related in any way to the sharp criticism of Lenin expressed? This criticism, be it noted, was excessive: Lenin did indeed adopt Kautsky's view that socialist consciousness had to be brought to the workers from outside in *What Is To Be Done?*, but he corrected himself later. (See Alan Woods, *Bolshevism: The Road to Revolution*, Wellred Publications, London, 1999, pp 200-01.) Example: at the Third Congress of the RSDLP, held in London in 1905, Lenin remarked:

It has been said here that the bearers of Social Democratic ideas are predominantly intellectuals. That is not true. In the epoch of Economism the bearers of revolutionary ideas were workers, not intellectuals.

Nigel Harris, *The Terrorist*, Book Guild Publishing, Sussex, England, 2007, pp 207, £17.99

NIGEL Harris will be known to readers of this journal for his political and economic work. This is his first published venture into fiction.

The political novel is one of the most difficult styles of novel. Difficult to write, because the concerns of the political activist or theorist rarely fit easily into the day-to-day patterns of speech and thought of vivid characters, without whom the novel cannot live. Where it has been done best, it has usually been through working-class characters whose articulation of political ideas is pared down to essential principles and primal responses (*Hard Times*, *Germinal*). Sometimes more complex and dense political ideas form not just a backdrop, but the living centre of the thoughts and actions of the key characters. Then it is a major challenge to the writer's narrative technique to put them into place without turning the prose into the kind of woodchip-porridge that passes for writing in most left-wing journals. Usually the solution adopted is to utilise the time and location and power of events to press the reader into the writer's worldview. This is the approach taken by, for example, Victor Serge and Maxim Gorki.

Nigel Harris set himself an especially difficult version of this problem; his central character, Michael James, is an academic expert on terrorism, whose worldview encompasses (or has been formed by) the bulk of postwar history. The action is set during his protagonist's short contract at a university in Cairo, in the months leading up to the Islamic terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre. Consequently, most of the people he meets also have complex and highly developed views, and the dialogues required to bring them out are often stilted, as if they are delivering well-prepared lectures to each other.

But this is not the limit of ambition in the form of this novel. Interspersed through the story of Michael James and his misadventure is an invented set of letters from Natalie Kolakowski to her brother about events in the household of Karl Marx, where she is a 'paying guest'. (Michael had discovered them and had them published.) Through these, the author weaves in further layers of complexity around his themes. The figure of Nechaev looms through, exemplifying 'classic' terrorism. Natalie reacts to him with abhorrence, as she does to the political manoeuvres that come to dominate the life of the First International. It seems that the author invites us to consider the two evils as equivalent. The style of these letters is, I think, the most successful part of the writing. It captures the gushy style of the young Eleanor Marx quite convincingly.

Little time is wasted on descriptions of Egypt ancient or modern, and not much on the physical descriptions of the characters. Not that Harris is incapable of imagery — in a few fine lines he tells of watching flamingos fly while listening

to Saint-Saens. But before the end of that paragraph his experience is brought down to earth again by remembering other people's opinions of the music.

Michael comes to know the central characters in the book, Khaled and Leila. (As David Renton has pointed out, the shade of the 'real' terrorist Leila Khaled flits behind these characters.) Leila grows into the centre of the novel, but her appearance and style are mysteriously unstable.

Almost in the centre of the book, in the space of just seven pages, Harris lays out Leila's story. In other hands, this might have been the substance of the book, but what we get is an edited version of how Michael hears it from a friend, who is concerned to caution him against any connection with Leila. Nevertheless, this 'back story' is powerful, and resonates with me longer than anything else in the book.

Occasionally the density of the narrative is increased to no useful purpose. For example: 'In the Assiut Hotel, he met some merry Mexican cement engineers on a consultancy to Assiut Cement, and they discussed the revolt in Chiapas.'

Nothing flows from this. The merry Mexicans don't reappear, and the contrast between mass uprisings as in Chiapas and terrorism is not developed. It almost seems that the experience of the workers in Mexico is brushed aside to allow room for the islamacists and their usurped hegemony in centre stage. (Clearly it is not possible to read or review such a book without attempting to take issue with its political themes.)

Throughout most of the book, Michael's acquaintances greet him with: 'Good to see you.' It happens so many times that I wondered if it was a clue about something I was failing to pick up.

In conversations, it emerges that Michael has studied and been in contact with almost every 'terrorist' organisation in the last few decades. His reflections do not break down the category of 'terrorism', in fact he specifically avoids doing so when challenged at one point. I need hardly point out the political difficulties this will raise for most regular readers of this journal.

For all my dissatisfactions with the book, it brings forward issues that need to be considered. Michael represents a left politics that sees itself increasingly as old and cold and weary, becoming an obstacle to the next wave of revolution. He is clearly falling prey to an admiration for the islamacist terrorists, even describing them as keeping alive the flame of revolution. Whether this is Harris' own view cannot be determined from the text. He achieves a level of detachment from Michael, a certain mild irony with which a man can understand that he has passed his peak, and that he has been absolutely defeated, almost destroyed, by a female islamac Nechaev. This saves Michael from being a completely wooden character, allows some sympathy to be extended to a Merlin taken down by his Viviane.

JJ Plant

Boris Hessen, *Les Racines sociales et économiques des Principia de Newton. Une rencontre entre Newton et Marx à Londres en 1931*, Traduction et commentaires de Serge Guérout, Post-face de Christopher Chilvers, Vuibert, Paris, 2006, pp 232, price not shown

ON 29 June 1931, the Second International Conference of the Sciences and Technologies opened in London, at the Science Museum. A Soviet delegation of eight members was announced. At its head was Nikolai Bukharin, a former member of the Politbureau of the Bolshevik party, and who two years earlier was still presiding over the Comintern. His arrival triggered a violent campaign led by the Conservative press (*Daily Mail*, *Times*, etc), demanding his expulsion from the country. Christopher Chilvers explains why, evoking the explosive political situation in Great Britain, largely obscured in the majority of the official histories of that country:

The Labour Government (on the orders of the New York bankers), reduced aid to the unemployed, unleashing one of the most violent social movements in its history. The first clashes between the unemployed and the police in the month of May redoubled in intensity during the summer of 1931, with gigantic riots in Glasgow, Manchester and London.

And this was only a beginning. 'In the autumn of the following year', continues Chilvers, 'there were veritable insurrections in Birkenhead, Liverpool and Belfast (where the striking workers transformed the streets into trenches to resist the assault of the army).'

A reduction in the pay of the armed forces was to provoke a genuine mutiny in the British fleet. Chilvers concludes: 'With the armed forces unreliable and the police largely outnumbered by the mass demonstrations of the unemployed, British capitalism was standing on the brink of an abyss.' The arrival of a Soviet delegation headed by a former leading Bolshevik (even one who had gone over to the Stalinist theory of 'socialism in one country') appeared to leading British circles as a grave menace. And the president of the congress, Charles Singer, did everything possible to place the severest limits on the interventions of the Soviet delegates and to prevent them from concluding their rare interventions.

The Soviet delegates succeeded, however, by mobilising the forces of the Soviet embassy in London, in translating their contributions into English and distributing them in the congress. One among them, reproduced in full and commented on in this volume, entered the history of science, that of the physicist and philosopher Boris Hessen.

According to Christopher Chilvers:

... his article constitutes a milestone in the history of science. Everything indicates that the modern Anglo-Saxon history of science was built, and evolved institutionally, in reaction to Hessen's article and to its influence on the generation of scientists called the 'Visible College' in the 1930s.

This importance seems to have passed unnoticed by French intellectuals of all points on the spectrum, because, as Guéout notes:

... except for some specialists in the social history of science and technology, we must note that the events caused by the important Soviet delegation to the Second International Congress on the history of science and technology, which was held in London during the summer of 1931, did not leave many traces in France and in the Francophone countries. The Marxists or the former Marxists seem hardly loquacious on this decisive episode in the great debate on science and technology in the industrial civilisation of the West.

Boris Hessen was not a simple academic scientist. A Bolshevik militant since 1917, he was one of the leaders of the Soviet of Elizabethgrad (a city earlier ravaged by pogroms, in the south of the Ukraine) in 1917, and in this capacity himself organised the nationalisation of the bank founded and led by his own father, which earned him the nickname of 'Elizabethgrad Narkotin' (Commissar of the People of Elizabethgrad for Finances).

By the time he embarked for England, he was already in disgrace. The Stalinist apparatus denounced him for belonging to the school of the dialectical philosopher Deborin and for supporting Einstein's conceptions in physics. The apparatus extracted a 'self-criticism' from him before letting him travel abroad.

He was of course to fall victim during the Stalinist terror. The party's policeman charged with supervising the other members of the delegation in London, Ernst Kolman, even after his departure for Israel in 1976, would always refuse to explain the role he played then and in the months which followed, and the contents of the report that he did not fail to write. Another of the members of the 1931 delegation, Mitkevich, was shortly afterwards to accuse Boris Hessen of having 'Trotskyist' positions. It was a guaranteed death sentence. He was arrested on 21 August 1936 during the first Moscow trial, which condemned to death the 16 accused (among them Zinoviev and Kamenev). After 15 sessions of physical interrogation and two confrontations with a co-defendant, he refused

to sign anything. Accused of belonging to 'a counter-revolutionary Trotskyist-Zinovievist terrorist organisation, which had planned the criminal murder of Comrade SM Kirov, and which, from 1934 to 1936, with the help of the fascist Gestapo, had also planned terrorist actions against leaders of the Party and the Soviet government', he was taken before the bench of the Supreme Court, chaired by the sinister Ulrich, condemned to death and shot at once.

Why have the editors afflicted this edition with the eye-catching subtitle 'An Encounter Between Newton and Marx in London in 1931'? Because Hessen studied the conception of the universe defined by Newton in his *Principia* on the basis of the concept defined by Marx in his Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*: 'The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life.' He specified, paraphrasing once again Marx's foreword to *The Critique of Political Economy*:

Newton did not see and did not solve the problem of the conservation of energy, but that was not for lack of genius. Great men, whatever might be their genius, in all fields, only formulate and solve those problems whose solution is made necessary by the development of the productive forces and the relations of production.

It was from this postulate that Hessen examined what constituted the heart of the *Principia*:

The fundamental idea of the *Principia* consists in the conception of the movement of the planets as resulting from two forces: the first directed towards the Sun, the second being that of the original impulse. Newton attributed this original impulse to God. This 'division of labour' between God and causality... was characteristic among the English philosophers of the overlap between religious dogma and the materialist principles of mechanical causality.

For Newton, he says, matter is inert, its movement can come only from an external driving force, in a word, from God. Thus Newton is strongly opposed to materialism atheism.

For Hessen, this overlap is not circumstantial or purely intellectual. It derives directly (but not mechanically) from the state of the class struggle in England at that time. Hessen traces, as Serge Guérout stresses, 'a parallel between Newton's scientific and intellectual compromises, a typical representative of the rising middle class, and the compromise that this same middle class made with the feudal aristocracy in 1688', when these two social classes gathered behind the

semi-constitutional monarchy of William of Orange. The overlap mentioned by Hessen expresses this social and political compromise on the scientific plane. He explains it clearly while emphasising:

This ideological characterisation of Newton, who was a child of his class, explains why the materialist germs concealed in the *Principia* did not develop into a fully formed structure of mechanical materialism similar to the physics of Descartes, but are blended with idealistic and theological beliefs to the point of relegating into second place, when it was a question of philosophy, the materialist elements of his physics.

While Hessen rejects the mechanical vision, entirely foreign to Marx, that reduces the various fields of the superstructure to a simple automatic reflection of the economic infrastructure, his vision obviously challenges any conception of an evolution of sciences which is due to their internal dynamics, to a simple history of ideas having its — or their — own autonomy.

The author of the presentation, of the translation and of the notes (as rich as they are precise and invaluable), Serge Guérout, describes Hessen's contribution as a '*text out of the common run*'. The English historian of science, Joseph Needham, affirmed in 1971: 'Hessen's trumpet call can retain great value for the orientation of the spirits of young researchers towards fertile analyses.'

Jean-Jacques Marie

(By kind permission of CERMTRI from *Les Cahiers du Mouvement Ouvrier*, no 33, January–February 2007. We understand an English edition of this book is in preparation. Christopher Chilvers has written extensively elsewhere on the significance of Hessen's speech.)

Gabriel García Higueras, *Trotsky en el espejo de la historia*, Foreword by Esteban Volkov, Tarea Gráfica Educativa, Lima, 2005, pp 425

TROTSKY en el espejo de la historia (*Trotsky in the Mirror of History*) is a compilation of articles and essays on the life and work of the great Russian revolutionary, which highlights his fight against Stalinism until the end of his life.

In the introductory essay, 'El regreso de Trotsky' ('The Return of Trotsky'), the Peruvian historian Gabriel García Higuera applauds the work of the institutions that devote their activity to the study of Trotskyism, among which he includes the Institute Léon Trotsky — directed by Pierre Broué until his death — the CERMTRI and the CEIP. Higuera also gives a detailed account of the activities in which each of these institutions are involved, providing a large number of

references for the further study of Trotsky's legacy. Higuera points out that the interest in the works of the founder of the Fourth International is due to the continuing validity of his ideas and programme. For example, the political revolutions against Stalinism that took place from the 1950s in Eastern Europe, such as the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, express 'the authentic relationship between the democratic content of the Trotskyist programme of political revolution, the socialist demands of the revolutions in Eastern Europe, and the criticism of the Stalinist regimes by those who participated in the uprisings'. In the same way, the events in 1989 and the death agony of the Stalinist system 'gave a new dimension to the historical and political transcendence to Trotsky's ideas'. According to Higuera, the interest in Trotsky's works lies not only in the fact that he was active during key events in the first half of the twentieth century, but also that 'the unconscious desire of the masses is a symbol of the struggle against oppression, and represents the ideal of the liberation of mankind'.

The author, who has devoted a great deal of time to studying the life and work of Leon Trotsky, and who could be defined as a 'Trotskyologist', not a Trotskyist, includes a biography that is both thorough and well written. Although he makes it clear that his research into Trotsky is undertaken from an academic perspective, he nevertheless expresses a deep admiration for the man who, as he says, 'embodies the complete revolutionary whose human and political trajectory shows the unity and coherence between thought and life'; who played an 'outstanding role in the Soviet Revolution of 1917, in the Russian Civil War, and in the opposition to Stalin's regime in the Soviet Union', and whose contribution to the revolutionary movement both in Russia and internationally was immense.

The biographical details complement the main aim of the book, which is to present a thorough study of Soviet history between 1917 and 1922. The section, entitled 'Trotsky and the Transformation of Soviet Historiography: Ideology, Politics and Historic Falsification,' focuses on the historical deformations and falsifications which were brought to light by Trotsky's political and literary work. The author shows how Stalin's various successors, such as Khrushchev and Brezhnev, maintained the distorted view of Soviet history. He analyses many official works — from the Stalin era to the time of Brezhnev — and gives a detailed account of the omissions, lies and libels in each of them, which were presented to the Russian people as irrefutable truth over many years.

Higuera devotes two-thirds of his book to an investigation of the period from Perestroika onwards, and criticises in particular the official historians Nikolai Vasetsky and Dmitry Volkogonov for their deliberate distortion of historical facts in general and for their falsification of Trotsky's politics in particular. Following the British historian EH Carr's dictum that one should first 'study

the historian before studying the facts that he writes about', because the facts of history are always refracted through the mind of the observer, Higuera exposes the biographies and approaches of historians in this period, both those who repeated the insults against Trotsky, such as Vasetsky and Volkogonov, and those who attempted to write a true history of the USSR and the role played by the founder of the Red Army. From the latter group, the author recognises the work of Aleksandr Podshchekoldin, a researcher at the Marxism-Leninism Institute in Moscow and a specialist on the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the 1920s, who also wrote the prologue to an edition of Trotsky's *The New Course*, 65 years after its first publication. According to Higuera, Podshchekoldin 'made an interesting and perceptive observation':

During the time in which Stalin lived, creative Marxism-Leninism was reduced to the level of faith, converted into a religion with its cult, hierarchy and myths. In that religion, as in any other, we could find its gods (Marx and Lenin) and its prophet (Stalin), its apostles (his assistants), its 'demons' of different shapes and sizes, and, of course, its 'devil' (Trotsky). The Stalinist model was built under the slogan of 'the struggle of Leninism against Trotskyism', and in this struggle the Stalinist inquisition liquidated physically the core of the Leninist Party.

This statement, made not by Trotsky or his followers but by a Russian researcher in 1992, is very profound because it reaffirms that Stalinism is the total denial of Leninism, a position that at present is questioned even by intellectuals who claim to be Trotskyists yet who think that Bolshevism was the embryo of Stalinism.

Another researcher highlighted by Higuera is Vadim Zakharovich Rogovin, a Russian Marxist historian and sociologist. A professor and a leading researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, Rogovin devoted the last decade of his life to writing a six-volume history of the Trotskyist Left Opposition to Stalinism within the Soviet Union, which covers the period between 1923 and 1939. In an article quoted by Higuera, we discover that Rogovin echoes the view of Podshchekoldin, this time in an analysis of the purges of 1936-37:

These were not directed alone at the extermination of the ideological leaders of the Left Opposition, but also at the spirit of Bolshevism. The purges not only exterminated hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens, but also thousands of foreign communists who lived in the Soviet Union. The attack was of such severity that the communist world has never recovered.

Higuera refers to 'The False Prophet (Trotsky and Trotskyism)', a book that was published at the start of Gorbachev's administration and which 'launched a savage attack on Trotsky', remarking that:

The appearance of a book of this nature in the first year of perestroika revealed, in general terms, the adoption of a position analogous to that which had characterised the epoch of the 'immobilisation' of Trotsky and his political current. This is because the objectives of the Soviet reforms were incompatible with the revolutionary aims of Trotskyism; and for this reason it was not part of the political establishment's agenda to reveal the truth about Trotsky's actions during the Russian Revolution. Such a task was beyond their objectives, and, for that reason, it was deemed appropriate to encourage publications that were hostile to Trotsky. The bureaucracy's official line of condemning Trotsky's criticism of the internal regime of the party would be reaffirmed in November 1987 by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union himself.

In times of 'openness' and 'transparency', it would seem to be a paradox to find 'in the official press a torrent of slanders against Trotsky on a scale not seen since the Stalin era', but Higuera thinks that this can be explained by the level of class struggle in Russia at that time, expressed particularly in the miners' strikes and their opposition to the wave of privatisation: 'These events represented a constant worry for the government because the extension of the strike movement could halt the advance of the economic reforms in Russia, which were aimed at the establishment of a market economy.' In contrast to other 'rehabilitated' figures from Soviet history, 'the case of Trotsky was much more complex because his political ideas had maintained their force, were defended by other political organisations around the world, and, most importantly, had become the order of the day...' In this analysis, Higuera follows the Marxist historian Susan Weissman when she writes:

The real threat for the regime is not Trotsky's anti-Stalinism since they also are anti-Stalinists, but the fact that Trotsky was a theoretician of the working class. In the context of the growing impatience of the working class and the wave of strikes, the danger underlying the rehabilitation of Trotsky is that his ideas represent the proletarian critique of Stalinism.

Trotsky en el espejo de la historia is a book that contributes to the rescue of one of the most important Marxist thinkers and leaders of the twentieth century. At

the same time, it provides the reader with a considerable amount of information about the co-leader, along with Lenin, of the Russian Revolution, and indicates a number of sources for further study.

Andrea Robles

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Vladimir León (Director), *Le Brahmane du Komintern*, distributed by Capricci Films, 2007

THAT a film about MN Roy should be made at all seems unlikely; that such a film should be shown in cinemas in central Paris is even more implausible. Yet the film by actor and director Vladimir León, *Le Brahmane du Komintern* (*The Brahmin of the Comintern*), has had warm reviews in *Le Monde* and *L'Humanité*, and was awarded a prize at the 2006 international documentary festival at Marseille.

This is not a biopic but a film of the quest by León to discover the truth about the mysterious Indian who appears in various pictures of the early Comintern, but who has subsequently been completely erased. León narrates the story himself, with interviews with those who knew, or knew about, Roy, and film of present-day life in the cities where Roy was active.

The film begins in Mexico City where the young Manabendra Nath Roy, born into a high-caste prosperous Indian family, was involved in socialist politics. In 1919, he founded the Communist Party of Mexico. Among those interviewed about Roy's heritage is Adolfo Gilly, once a Trotskyist of the Posadas tendency.

The story then moves to Moscow, where Roy went in 1920 to take part in the building of the Communist International. We see pictures of the famous Lux Hotel, where delegates to the Comintern Congresses were accommodated, and from where the Comintern organisation operated.

There is film of the Comintern archives, now open to historians. There are various letters and documents mentioning Roy and photographs showing him in the company of Comintern leaders. We see the original versions of various photographs which were subsequently doctored to remove people written out of history. There is a recording of Lenin talking about soviet power, and some very old archive film of Roy marching in procession with other Bolshevik leaders, including Trotsky, at the funeral of Dzerzhinsky in 1926.

Among those interviewed is veteran dissident historian Roy Medvedev. Medvedev tells how his ardently Communist father had named him and his brother Zhores after two well-known socialist figures of the day, MN Roy and

Jean Jaurès, showing what a well known figure Roy had been at the time.

While in Moscow, Roy had been involved in the establishment of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East, which aimed to train a new generation of revolutionaries in Asia. At the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920, he had confronted Lenin over the question of Communist strategy in the colonial world.

He argued that since the Indian national bourgeoisie had already become an exploiting class, the Indian Communist Party would have to head the anti-imperialist struggle without uniting with the national bourgeoisie. Lenin responded that in the coming years the Indian Communist Party would be a small organisation, and it would only be by participating in the national struggle that it could develop the forces with which it could challenge the bourgeoisie later on.

As one of those interviewed pointed out, under Lenin original thought was possible. Those who disagreed with Lenin might get sharp criticism, but they were not sanctioned organisationally.

In 1929, Roy moved to Berlin, where there was a large Indian community. Here he became linked to the Brandlerite opposition. He also had contacts with the Frankfurt School of Marxists. Among those interviewed is Theodor Bergmann, who had known Roy when he was a very young man.

Roy then returned to his native India. He was promptly jailed by the British authorities and remained in prison for six years. Einstein and others protested to the British authorities about the conditions of his imprisonment. He continued writing copiously, on crime and prison, sex and feminism, and many other topics.

Various Indians give their recollections of Roy and their assessments of his relevance to modern India. Although in the 1920s Roy was known in three continents, and was better known in the world than any other Indian leader except Gandhi, he is largely forgotten in India today.

In his later years (he died in 1954), he called himself a Radical Humanist, but it was clear that his thought continued to draw on some of the best traditions of the Russian revolution.

It is argued that because he travelled so widely, Roy had no sense of belonging, and hence was so radically opposed to nationalism. When he was in Berlin, he did not want to associate with Indians in particular or to be perceived as an Indian; he identified as a revolutionary internationalist.

While Lenin was doubtless right to criticise Roy's rather abstract internationalism, the critique of nationalism remains an important question, and some of the debates in which Roy engaged are still very relevant.

The film is in French, but interviews are conducted in various other languages

and subtitled in French.

Hopefully this movie will encourage at least a few people to find out more, not just about Roy himself, but the whole rich collection of ideas and personalities who made up the Comintern in its first few years. If it does so, it will have been worthwhile.

A selection of Roy's writings appears at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/roy/index.htm>.

Ian Birchall

Harry Ratner, *A Socialist at War: With the Pioneer Corps*, Socialist Platform Ltd, London, 2007, pp 118, £6.00

HARRY Ratner is a regular contributor to this journal and to *New Interventions*. He shares many political and historical roots with our Editorial Board in Trotskyism. His departure from the Trotskyist movement a number of years ago, and his adoption of an independent, critical position, makes his contributions more, not less, interesting. His previous volume of political memoirs, *Reluctant Revolutionary*, is an important contribution to the corpus of Trotskyist political memoirs in Britain. This new volume, while less substantial, is a valuable further contribution, being specifically focused on the author's wartime experiences.

As the author himself acknowledges: 'This book is a bit of a hybrid.' At the age of 87, a man can be forgiven for compressing his output. Here he has combined two projects — a discussion of the Pioneer Corps in the Second World War, and a personal memoir of a soldier's attempt to apply the Proletarian Military Policy of the Fourth International (which historians who have never been under fire comfortably abbreviate to the PMP).

Both aims are laudable. In the experience of the Pioneer Corps we find all the snobbery, purblindness and viciousness of the British ruling class towards anti-Nazi volunteers from other nations, classes and races. In the author's dedicated attempt to apply the PMP we see (almost uniquely, in English at least — the only exception that springs to mind is Ted Grant's description of Frank Ward's usurpation of the position of Education Officer in an RAF section, to deliver Marxist propaganda lectures) evidence of the limited extent to which the Fourth International was able to relate its policies and principles to the real experiences of conscripted and volunteer workers who believed they were fighting against a great evil.

The two aims, however, do not fit very well together as components of a single work. The reasons for this are complex, but at bottom are, I think, political. The author admires (rightly) the dedication and stoicism of the anti-fascist/anti-Nazi fighters in the Pioneer Corps, but (if I am right) feels that the PMP in

particular and the general strategic line of the Fourth International fell short of the needs of such heroic people.

The author's summaries of previously published material on the Pioneer Corps are useful. The source material has long been out of print, and the Pioneer Corps is to a large extent written out of the official histories of the Second World War. The Pioneers were a menial underclass in the military, originally established as the Labour Corps in the First World War and re-established on the outbreak of the Second World War. Always under-equipped and not provided with their own weaponry, their very existence reinforced within the army all the class divisions of the society they intended to defend.

Many of these men were volunteers and refugees from countries overrun by fascism and Nazism — Spain, France, Germany and Austria — and often with serious left-wing credentials. If a revolutionary base within the military were to be found anywhere, it would surely be among them. (Ted Grant, according to the War Cabinet report of 13 April 1944, was posted to the Pioneer Corps, but having been injured, never undertook 'active service'. That would indeed have been an interesting experience.) In a sad pre-echo of the recent treatment of the translators and other support staff to the military in Iraq, the author informs us that the foreign volunteers for the Pioneer Corps were refused British nationality until the end of the war — so German and Austrian anti-fascist fighters faced extreme penalties if captured while fighting under British colours. Much more so the many thousands of Jews who volunteered.

As Harry Ratner points out, the British ruling class saw the Second World War not as a struggle against fascist/Nazi oppression, but as a struggle of one capitalist nation against another. In the earlier stages of the war, the contradiction between the proletarian and the ruling-class points of view was nowhere sharper than in the Pioneer Corps. The shabby treatment of the Pioneers is well summarised by the author, and deserves to be studied closely by anybody who thinks about the problems of political intervention among the armed services.

The author's first five chapters consist to a large extent of summaries of previously published material, establishing the position of the Pioneer Corps at the bottom of the social and military scale. It is not until chapter six that he begins to provide us with his own experiences and insights. He describes his escape from France, where he was living at the time of the Nazi victory, on the last boat out of Le Havre. As a Jew and a Trotskyist, he was more than fortunate. As a British citizen, 'safe' in England, he was able to assist in the protection of the 'illegal' refugees Pierre Frank and Raymond Molinier (of whose group he was a member).

The author's political experiences in the Frank-Molinier group had not provided him with direct experience of the working class. This was to be received

when he volunteered for enlistment and was allocated to the Pioneer Corps. Reflecting now on his inability to agitate successfully then as a revolutionary socialist, he concludes that the Trotskyists were 'sectarian and dogmatic, and that we were wrong on many things'. He sees today that the workers' consciousness, even in the immediate postwar swing to Labour, never went further than support for reforms. Despite this, he is right to be proud of the fact that he put himself physically where his organisation's policies would have put him — in the war, side by side with the workers (and where the Trotskyist leaders were not often to be found). He describes vividly how the entry of the Soviet Union made his attempts at Trotskyist propaganda more difficult, but later how heartening was the spontaneous opposition of the British troops to the racism among the US soldiers.

The author's war experiences are well described, but from the point of view of a revolutionary socialist, were to a substantial extent disappointing. Opportunities certainly arose during the 'liberation' of Europe, and in the wave of discontent that swept across the British military towards and just after the end of the war, showing itself not only in the form of 'Soldiers' Parliaments' but also as actual mutinies, particularly in the Far East. There were also opportunities among the demobilised troops who, finding themselves and their families homeless, engaged in the widespread seizure of property from the landlords and the government. But the small numbers of Trotskyists found themselves unable to intervene effectively into these movements. Harry Ratner assesses that this ineffectiveness was at least as much to do with political weaknesses of Trotskyism as its numerical insufficiency. It is a sad conclusion to come to, but he comes to it honestly and unflinchingly. Even if you don't come to the same conclusion, he presents his personal evidence diligently and deserves to be read seriously, as a comrade who tried to implement the Fourth International's policies in the most difficult of circumstances and found it wanting.

JJ Plant

James Sheehan, *The Monopoly of Violence: Why Europeans Hate Going to War*, Faber and Faber, London, 2007, pp 400, £25.00

THIS book, by an eminent professor at Stanford, purports to show both why Europeans hate going to war and their declining belief in its efficacy — but implicitly not Americans, who remain a red-blooded lot of Rambos. Much of the book is a swift run-through of the political cum social-military history of Europe over the past century and the life experience of Europeans during that time. It starts by dealing with the mass participation on the continent through conscription prior to the First World War, looks at the correct forecasts of Bloch

and Angell on the course and results of a future war, the enthusiasm for colonial wars and the eagerness for the war at its outbreak in 1914, while noting that, except in Russia and parts of the East, 'social cohesion' held even at the end.

Sheehan goes on to put, in conventional fashion, an equals sign between Communist and Fascist regimes by pointing out that both were militarised regimes. He 'forgets' to note that immediately the left took power in Russia, it was invaded by a number of imperialist powers and was fighting a most vicious civil war which the Bolsheviks did not initiate. Civil liberties tend to be noticeable by their absence in a civil war, even in the American one, and the penalties for defeat would have been far, far greater in Russia in 1919-20 than in the United States in the early 1860s. Indeed, Denikin and Kolchak would have made Pinochet look like a mild liberal. After all, the White Finns in 1919-20 only stopped the mass shooting of the Red Finns when the capitalists complained to Mannerheim that they were running out of workers, and Kolchak's followers, let alone Denikin's, were a good deal less civilised than Mannerheim's.

Sheehan then further exposes his cloven foot by praising Ebert, the murderer of Luxemburg (who criticised Bolshevik reprisals), to the skies, while, to illustrate that political writings at Stanford are not of the same quality as when a lot of the old Russian Socialist Revolutionaries ended up there (the Mensheviks largely went to Harvard), he is guilty of some dishonesty with his quotations from Lenin and Trotsky.

The one from Trotsky's *Terrorism and Communism* (p 97, though he does not give the source) is a beauty. Sheehan says: 'Leon Trotsky who had led the Red Army to victory, insisted that it was necessary to "put an end once and for all to the papist-Quaker babble about the sanctity of human life".' Now it has never struck those of us brought up in the Anglican or Presbyterian tradition that papists were particularly given to babble about the sanctity of human life (near me are two roads named after Latimer and Ridley respectively), so he must have been thinking about the recent abortion controversy in America. But this was not a component of political debate 90 years ago, while the Catholic Church, unlike the Quakers, has never shown itself very bothered about the death penalty, or even war, so something did seem wrong. The translation given of the passage in the standard work in English with an introduction by Brailsford goes thus:

As for us, we were never concerned with the Kantian-priestly and vegetarian-Quaker prattle about the 'sacredness of human life'. We were revolutionaries in opposition, and have remained revolutionaries in power. To make the individual sacred we must destroy the social order which crucifies him. And this problem can only be solved by blood and iron.

Most people, I think, would agree that many politicians of that period might have said something similar to the first and last sentence, whatever their position on the political spectrum. So Stanford, shockingly, seems to be keen on emulating the 'scholarship' of an Arkadi Vaksberg.

The Lenin quote (p 89) is dated August 1918, and says he (Lenin) 'instructed his comrades in Penza that they should "hang (by all means hang so people will see) no fewer than 100 kulaks, fat cats, bloodsuckers"... we are at war to the death'. This is *not* in the *Collected Works*, but is from a letter dated 11 August 1918 and is contained in an anthology of which Richard Pipes is an editor. It seems to be valid, but others have pointed out to me that this is one of the few pieces of dirt on Lenin that Pipes was able to dig up. This is, I believe, in Lenin's handwriting, although it seems to be the only time Lenin went to such an extreme. A translation of this message which Professor Richard Day kindly made for us puts it in context:

Comrades! The uprising by the five kulak volosts must be *mercilessly* suppressed. The interest of the *entire* revolution demands this, for we are now facing *everywhere* the 'final decisive battle' with the kulaks. We need to set an example.

1. You need to hang (hang without fail, so that *the people will see*) *no fewer than 100* of the notorious kulaks, the rich and the bloodsuckers.
2. Publish their names.
3. Take *all* their grain from them.
4. Appoint the hostages — in accordance with yesterday's telegram.

This needs to be done in such a way that the people for hundreds of versts around will see, tremble, know and shout: they are *throttling* and will throttle the bloodsucking kulaks.

Telegraph us concerning receipt and *implementation*.

Yours, Lenin.

PS: Find *tougher* people.⁶

The whole context of this piece is therefore lacking in both Pipes' and Sheehan's quote, as are the dreadful circumstances which drove the Russian government to such brutal measures.

But the real point of the book comes in the last few chapters, and it is, if not a totally original point, something that is not often talked about and discussed, particularly on the left, which is the decline in militarist attitudes. After the Second World War, when the combatants had in any case gone to war with far less enthusiasm than 20 years earlier, there was first a political and military stand-off with the Stalinist Empire, and, as he says 'a shift in Europe's moral

calculus... a sense of what really mattered' as far as the colonial empires were concerned. In just over 20 years, all were gone, and indeed it was not just a 'subjective moral calculus' so much as the fact that economically they meant less and less, relative to the rapidly growing economies of Western Europe whose prosperity did not rest, if it ever had, on the military and political control of under-developed areas. Finally, in the 1970s, the last bastions of authoritarianism, in Greece, Spain and Portugal, fell with little resistance and were replaced by parliamentary constitutional regimes. And as time went on there was everywhere a growing civilianisation of society, a falling proportion of revenues spent on defence, and finally the abolition of conscription in most of the continent.⁷ This was, as he says, 'an invisible revolution' which was very gradual and not noted by scholars, which is quite true. This contrasted with Eastern Europe, but even there, though slower, there was a gradual shift to the 'civilian state' and an interest in economic questions rather than military ones. He contrasts Gorbachev and Lenin, and points out the former voluntarily yielded power. Imagine what would have happened in Russia to every Bolshevik, every Jew and every worker had Lenin had yielded to the Whites!

The 'invisible revolution' is indeed a significant point, but the elephant in the room is that exactly the same civilianisation process is surely true of the United States. It is after all in North America that we have seen in the highest political positions that most vile and disgusting of all species, the 'chicken-hawk', together with an enormous reluctance by the members of the legislature and the political class to encourage their children to enter the military, all the while wrapping themselves in the Stars and Stripes. (At least the head of the British State is willing that her younger grandson should go into the army and be placed at the sharp end, even if our cowardly government did not want Prince Harry a casualty, and nearly prohibited it. Readers would doubtless agree that, in Falstaff's words, he would 'fill a grave as well as any man'.) Furthermore, those I know well who were on an exercise with the American Army about 10 or 12 years ago say it is a very 'nine to five' organisation as well as a 'dry' one — not of course that a hard drinking officers' or sergeants' mess necessarily leads to greater military efficiency.⁸

There is a huge difficulty in getting volunteers for the rank-and-file US forces in wars that do not involve many casualties, certainly in comparison with two world wars and even the Korean war. Four thousand dead over five and a half years is very few, even if many wretched wounded soldiers who would have died in past conflicts are now kept alive in misery. But the 'Christian' right seems to believe everyone should always be kept alive even if brain-dead, and the alternative is murder and so I am reminded of the wife of a friend who, when he went off to the Falklands, told him, 'Come back in one piece, —, or

don't come back at all.' But her father was a soldier in the Second World War and she *knew*. But Spartan attitudes seem very lacking in the Great Republic if only because the Spartans expected their Kings to take the most dangerous post in battle — rather unlike President Bush.

But why this civilianisation and reluctance to accept death in battle has occurred, and seems increasingly to occur, in all wealthy countries is an interesting question that would take an article to answer in itself and which is answered in this work solely in terms of the horrors of the two world wars, although, as the author correctly points out, it seems to have become more and more marked as these events recede in time and memory.

So the reason for this book is something else entirely, and its conception must have occurred when the US government public relations machine was denouncing the Western Europeans for their supposedly pacifistic attitudes and contrasting them with those in the muscular United States. Ah, *tempora mutantur!* As President of the American Historical Association in 2005, Sheehan was much opposed to historians taking up an attitude to contemporary politics, but this belief was clearly rather selective. He ends pointing out the difficulties for the European Union if it tries to become a superpower, though he reluctantly concedes its 'soft' power and its role in stabilising Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Yes, as he says, Germany was not united by the Zollverein but by 'blood and iron', to which, Professor, Trotsky made reference in the passage above if you remember. There is indeed a distinct shift of tone in the last chapter and Epilogue. My final thought about the book, which often happens whenever I read many articles in the journal *Foreign Affairs*, is that Stalin and the CIA both discovered long ago that an intellectual comes cheaper than a tank. And tanks today have become remarkably expensive, while intellectuals...

Ted Crawford

Marcel van der Linden, *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union: A Survey of Critical Theories and Debates Since 1917*, Brill, Leiden, 2007, pp380, £65

THE nature of the Soviet Union was always and still remains a very contentious issue for Marxists. Readers of this journal will be well aware of the various standpoints in respect of it — degenerated workers' state, state capitalism, bureaucratic collectivism — and most of us, I imagine, have over the years argued in favour of one or another of these positions. Marcel van der Linden has done us all a great service by producing a comprehensive survey of Marxist analyses of the Soviet Union that have appeared in Western countries from the very birth of the country until its collapse in 1991. And although readers may find an omission or two — I mention a few below — it is a very wide scope,

and the bibliography contains something like a thousand references, some of which will be familiar, some probably not. For readers, such as myself, who are monolingual English speakers, this book includes much useful information about those whose writings on the subject have never appeared in an English translation.

The book is organised temporally into six sections, the early Soviet period, 1917-29; the initial Five-Year Plans, 1929-41; the Second World War to the assimilation of Eastern Europe, 1941-56; Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' to the Prague Spring, 1956-68; the Prague Spring to Perestroika, 1968-85; and the final phase of the Soviet Union and its aftermath. The various theories of the Soviet socio-economic formation and their practitioners are discussed as they emerged during those periods.

The initial analyses of the Soviet Union, promoted firstly by Karl Kautsky and subsequently by left communists such as Otto Rühle, Anton Pannekoek and Hermann Gorter — and recently reprised by Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff — considered that the Bolsheviks' seizure of power in a backward country inevitably led them to construct a state capitalist society, with the Bolsheviks from the start taking the place of the absent capitalist class. Such an outlook, as van der Linden points out, stood in the traditional Marxian unilinear schema of stages of development; namely, that capitalism superseded feudalism and would itself be superseded by socialism, and therefore if the Soviet Union was not socialist, it must necessarily be some form of state capitalism. Some subsequent state capitalist analysts, most notably Tony Cliff, held that the Soviet Union became a state capitalist society during the period of the First Five-Year Plan, when the Soviet bureaucracy under Stalin established a vast stratified industrial sector, thus following Trotsky's analysis of the rise of Stalinism, but rejecting his view of what sort of society emerged after 1929. Walter Daum's variant claimed (somewhat oddly) that state capitalism was only established during the late 1930s. Cliff and CLR James also considered that competition with the capitalist world played an important role in determining the nature of the Soviet Union. The Maoist version claimed that state capitalism emerged as a conscious political act of the post-Stalin Soviet leadership, a deliberate betrayal of the socialist society that had existed under Stalin, a view that is to me as absurd theoretically as it is ridiculous politically.

As for the historical significance of Soviet state capitalism, Kautsky felt that it was a primitive, barbaric and therefore doomed phenomenon. Some early analysts, such as Gavril Mişnikov, Helmut Wagner and Ryan Worrall, considered that it represented a more progressive form of society than normal private-enterprise capitalism. Cliff claimed that it was the most developed form of capitalism, something which, as van der Linden states, posed a bit of

a problem for Cliff and his supporters after the events of 1989-91. The idea that the Soviet economy represented a primitive form of capitalism was revived during the 1950s by the Italian left communist Amadeo Bordiga, and a few years back by the autonomist journal *Aufheben*.

Trotsky's analysis, that the Stalinist bureaucracy had politically expropriated the working class, but that the nationalised property relations of the Soviet Union nonetheless rendered it a workers' state, was pretty much restricted to the Trotskyist movement, and not to all of it at that. Its most prominent advocate after Trotsky's death was Ernest Mandel, and he maintained a strong defence of the theory against its many detractors. Van der Linden notes that Mandel was obliged to take on board various criticisms of Trotsky's theory, and whilst he continued to consider that the Soviet socio-economic formation was superior to capitalism, he ultimately recognised that bureaucratic mismanagement had robbed 'the entire economy of any form of economic rationality'.

There were some variants of the workers' state theory. Michel Pablo reversed Trotsky's forecast of a limited future for the Soviet bureaucracy, and claimed that the Stalinist regimes could last for several centuries. Isaac Deutscher rejected Trotsky's insistence that the working class had to overthrow the Soviet regime, and considered that the modernisation that had occurred under Stalin had rendered obsolete the barbaric methods of Stalin's time, and that far-going democratisation could be initiated by the Soviet regime. Deutscher was strongly criticised by other Marxists, although his prognosis was briefly resurrected by Tariq Ali during the Gorbachev period. I might add that it was popular during the 1950s with left-wing social democrats in Britain such as Aneurin Bevan.

The third main type of analysis is the one which emerged during the time of the great changes that occurred under the initial Five-Year Plans, and which concluded that the Soviet Union was neither capitalist nor socialist, but was a new form of class-based society. This theory thus broke from the traditional Marxian unilinear approach. Van der Linden states that the first example of this analysis was provided by the former Austrian Communist Party member Oskar Maschl, who wrote under the name of Lucien Laurat, during the early 1930s. Over the next decade, the French Trotskyist Yvan Craipeau, James Burnham, Joseph Carter and Max Shachtman in the US Trotskyist movement, and the somewhat eccentric socialists Simone Weil and Bruno Rizzi all came to similar conclusions, and, as readers will know, the dispute on this subject helped to rend asunder the US Socialist Workers Party. There were differences in interpretation: Rizzi and Burnham thought that the whole world was heading in the direction of bureaucratic collectivism, thus proposing a new unilinear road of social development; whilst the others considered it to be the product of a failed proletarian revolution, a parallel to capitalism.

The new class analysis was taken up sporadically after the Second World War, including by Eastern bloc dissidents such as Milan Djilas in Yugoslavia and Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski in Poland. During the 1970s and 1980s, when, as van der Linden notes, Marxist thinking on the nature of Soviet-style societies perked up a bit from its post-1945 doldrums, various analysts developed this theory. An interesting variant was promoted by the Italians Antonio Carlo and Umberto Melotti and in Britain by John Fantham and Moshé Machover, whereby bureaucratic collectivism was a parallel to capitalism, providing a means which enabled underdeveloped countries to modernise where capitalism could not do so. It was thus not applicable or relevant to developed capitalist countries.

There have also been left-wing writers who have provided analyses outwith the three outlined above, although in many cases they were effectively describing a new class society to which the author had not appended a name. Rudolf Hilferding's posthumously published work 'State Capitalism or Totalitarian State Economy?' was a pioneer in this regard, and similar theories were promoted during the early postwar period, such as those produced in Germany by Fritz Sternberg, Dieter Cycon, Paul Frölich and Leo Kofler. However, it was mainly after the Soviet crushing of Dubček's reforming regime in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and with the evident slowing down of the Soviet economy during the 1970s that a number of Western Marxists started to devise new theories in an attempt to understand the basis of the Soviet socio-economic formation. Rudi Deutschke in Germany harked back to the debate started by Karl Wittfogel about the Asiatic Mode of Production, and concluded that, after the attempt by the Bolsheviks to follow a Western approach, Stalin had steered the Soviet Union back onto the traditional Russian Asiatic course. The veteran Soviet dissident Aleksandr Zimin considered that Stalinist society was, like the Asiatic Mode, an historical dead-end, a failed attempt at transition. Other analysts, such as Rudolf Bahro and the Hungarian New Leftists, also considered that the Soviet socio-economic formation was an unspecified new form of class society. Perhaps the boldest of the newer theorists is Hillel Ticktin, whose name will be familiar to readers of this journal. Although superficially similar to the ideas of the 'new class' theorists — many people have told me that Ticktin promotes a form of bureaucratic collectivism analysis — there is a vital difference in that Ticktin denies that the Soviet Union was an actual mode of production at all. Lacking the economic regulator that either the market or democratic planning could provide, the Soviet élite oversaw a socio-economic formation that could enjoy considerable quantitative growth, but was perpetually confronted by severe problems, especially waste, that were endemic to the system and ultimately led to its downfall.

Van der Linden's book is very wide in its scope, and he covers many more writers than I have mentioned above. However, there are some who have evaded his careful eye, and whose writings could be discussed if a second edition of this work is produced. A major work that he doesn't mention is the Austro-Marxist Erich Strauss' *Soviet Russia: Anatomy of a Social History* (London, 1941). A very much overlooked work — when I borrowed a copy from a college library, the last issue date was 50 years previous! — Strauss considered that the exigencies of the Civil War, the fight for the very survival of the Soviet regime, led to the creation of a 'powerful instrument', a new state machine that 'became a social power of its own'. This new apparatus, led by the Communist Party, became after 1928 a fully-fledged ruling élite 'interested above all in the maintenance of its power', and the socio-economic formation formed under Stalin showed that capitalism could be replaced by a society that overcame capitalist anarchy without its leadership being accountable to the population. Despite its problems and repressiveness, the new society nonetheless represented an historical step forward. Strauss did not give this socio-economic formation any specific name, but his ideas closely follow those of the new class theorists.

Then we have Boris Souvarine, a former leading member of the French Communist Party who initially sided with Trotsky but after a while slid away to the right to become a Cold War propagandist after the Second World War. He is mentioned, but only as a cursory reference in a footnote. He held to a state capitalist analysis in his massive work *Stalin: A Critical Survey of Bolshevism*, which appeared in an English translation in 1939. His particular brand of the theory is unusual on account of its pessimism. He considered that the Soviet economy represented 'a return to barbarism with a superficial covering of American modernism which ill concealed its essentially Asiatic structure'; that the changes under the Five-Year Plans demonstrated merely 'slender material progress, doubtful for future generations, and with very problematical perspectives for economic progress in the present'; and that the plans actually accentuated the errors, imbalances and disorder that they were supposed to rectify; indeed, the directed economy only existed through 'an infringement of the plans'.

Another advocate of the theory of state capitalism barely mentioned here is the British Marxist Francis Ambrose Ridley. Writing in 1935, he stated in *At the Crossroads of History* that whilst the October Revolution was led by communists aiming at a world revolution, the actual low level of development of the Soviet Union precluded the existence of an egalitarian society and presupposed the existence of a ruling class. With the failure of revolutions in advanced countries, the Soviet Communist Party became transformed into a new ruling class, and, in its quest to develop the country, it adopted the general trends of capitalist

development, that is, towards state capitalism.

Also omitted is the analysis promoted by the French Lutte (previously Voix) Ouvrière group and its overseas branches. This current adheres to the standard Trotskyist analysis for the Soviet Union, but maintains that the Eastern European states remained bourgeois states when they were under Stalinist rule. Simply put, the Soviet Union was born of a workers' revolution, with the proletariat destroying the old state machine and erecting its own replacement, and only later did it degenerate into Stalinism. However: 'Nothing like this happened in the People's Democracies, where the working class never took power and never smashed the bourgeois state. These state apparatuses remain bourgeois; they are bourgeois by nature and by the part they played.' (Voix Ouvrière, *The People's Democracies: Are They Socialist States?*) This, despite the Stalinisation of Eastern Europe after 1947. I guess that there is a logic behind this, albeit one so formalistic as to render the analysis quite absurd.

Van der Linden mentions in passing the non-Marxist analyses not only of the Soviet Union but of modern society as a whole, pointing out that some of the ideas current on the Marxist left about managerialism were also being discussed by people outwith the Marxist currents (p 74), and that Hitler's coming to power in 1933 and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact encouraged people to view Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union as very similar or identical societies (p 48). Perhaps some more could have been said about this. There was a considerable correspondence of ideas between the Marxist left and non-Marxist thinkers during the 1930s and the early 1940s. The idea that the world was — for good or evil — heading inexorably towards a collectivist future, with the demise of private enterprise as the state exerted increasing control over all aspects of social life, was popular at all points of the political spectrum. Indeed, even prior to the First World War, Hillaire Belloc and GK Chesterton's *The Servile State*, a *cri de cœur* by two reactionary Catholic critics of capitalism against the encroachment of the modern state upon society, was a best seller in Britain, and was also popular amongst left-wingers. Books by such authors as Max Eastman, Franz Borkenau, Frederick Voigt, William Chamberlin, Peter Drucker, to mention just a few, were similar in many respects to the material produced by Burnham, Rizzi and Shachtman and his comrades which is discussed in this book. It is perhaps significant that both Eastman and Borkenau were, like Burnham, former Marxists on their way to the right. Similarly, the idea that the Soviet Union was state capitalist was common to a spectrum that included (amongst others) the Mosleyite fascists in Britain and Vidkun Quisling in Norway, the pioneering liberal Sovietologist Bernard Pares, the TUC General Secretary Walter Citrine, the exiled Russian mystical socialist Nicholas Berdyaev, the exiled Menshevik Aaron Yugov, HG Wells and (for a short while) George Orwell. It is reasonable

to conclude that the discussion on the Marxist left about state capitalism and new class societies was part of a broader discussion amongst intellectuals and political activists and commentators about the future of modern society, and it is a pity that van der Linden did not extend his coverage to look at this, as his book tends to give the idea that the left-wing analysts were thinking in a vacuum, which was certainly not the case.

Van der Linden makes only a few critical comments about the material on which his study is based, and he does not favour one particular theory over the remainder. This is perhaps a wise decision, although it does give an impression of agnosticism. Altogether, this is a most useful book, and whilst its price puts it out of the reach of many people who would be interested in reading it, it is worth obtaining through a library.

Paul Flewers

Vasilis Vourkoutiotis, *Making Common Cause: German-Soviet Secret Relations, 1919-22*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2007, pp 200

WHEN the USSR allied itself with France in 1935 and Stalin said that his ally needed to maintain strong defence forces, critics from the left spoke of a betrayal of Leninist principles. The veteran British Communist JR Campbell replied by recalling that when, in 1922, the Comintern's Executive Committee discussed a draft programme, this document provided for such an alliance between Soviet Russia and a capitalist state, directed against other capitalist states, with the implications that followed from this. What Campbell did not mention was that the possible capitalist ally of 1922 was Germany, the likely enemy of 1935.

Between Germany and Russia there had been, in the 1920s, more than diplomatic goodwill: it was a whole programme of collaboration in preparing the means of war. That one ally should help another with its military needs, in peacetime as well as in wartime, is normal. What was special about the military relationship between Germany and Russia in 1919-33 was that it was entered into with the purpose of enabling Germany to violate the terms of the treaty that was signed at Versailles. On its part, the Soviet government sought to upset what it called 'the Versailles system', seen as a threat, and also to profit from German military resources for the benefit of its own Red Army. And so it came about that, in the words of a Soviet publication on this subject 'the Fascist sword was forged in the USSR'.

What the Germans got from the Soviets were facilities for the construction of military aeroplanes and the manufacture of poison gas and artillery shells, together with facilities for the training of pilots and tank troops. The aeroplanes and pilots were of special importance to Germany. They enabled the Luftwaffe

to make a flying start (excuse pun) at its official rebirth under Hitler. The commanders of the Red Army doubtless gained much from their association with the German generals, the collaboration was not wholly one-sided, but much of the expertise learnt from the Reichswehr by Tukhachevsky and others through attendance at staff courses in Germany would have been lost when Stalin carried out his purge of the armed forces in 1937.

This German-Soviet military collaboration was initiated, in 1919-20, by two exotic characters. Karl Radek, having been arrested for subversive activity in Germany, found himself being visited in his prison cell by Reichswehr officers who knew that he had influence in Moscow. He eagerly joined in their train of thought and passed it on as they wished. The ball was picked up by Enver Pasha, the Turkish war-criminal who, to escape victor's justice, had fled at the end of the war first to Germany, then to Russia, where he contacted Sklianskii, Trotsky's right-hand man in the Commissariat for War. Where Radek saw advantages to be gained by the Soviets, Enver saw the prospect of revenge on the powers that had driven him from power and humiliated his country.

General von Seeckt, head of the Reichswehr — an army that Versailles had reduced to little more than a gendarmerie — was more than responsive to the initiatives of Radek and Enver. In a secret memorandum of 4 February 1920, he wrote: 'Only in firm cooperation with a Great Russia will Germany have the chance of regaining her position as a world power... Whether we like or dislike the new Russia and her internal structure is quite immaterial.' Here was a meeting of minds with the rulers in Moscow. At the Eighth Congress of Soviets, on 21 December 1920, Lenin declared that, 'because of the Versailles peace, Germany cannot even dream of a time when... her population will not be condemned to starvation and death... Her only means of salvation lies in an alliance with Soviet Russia, a country toward which her eyes are therefore turning.'

Lenin had noted, in his speech of 22 September 1920 at the Ninth Conference of the Russian Communist Party (of which the full text was not published until 1991), that during the Soviet-Polish war there came into being in Germany 'a bloc of consistent and extreme patriots with the Communists, consciously recognising the need for a bloc with Soviet Russia'. The basis for this 'bloc' was, of course, common hostility to Poland, described by Lenin as 'the lynchpin of the Versailles system'.

The Bolshevik leader appears, in this speech, to be critical of the German Communists for not exploiting the opportunities opened up by this 'bloc'. At the Executive Committee meeting of the Comintern on 25 July 1920, he had passed a note to Paul Levi in which he urged the KPD's leader to consider a situation in which: 'Germany goes to war against Britain and France. What

should the German workers do? Boycott the war? That would be quite mistaken. Participate, safeguarding their independence, and utilise the *common* struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie.' (Does this mean that, in the light of the momentary success of the Red Army in Poland and the response to that in Germany, he had modified the negative attitude to so-called 'National Bolshevism' which he had expressed not long before in '*Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder?*')

One reason why the Soviets' campaign in Poland eventually failed was that they pursued three objectives at the same time, instead of concentrating their forces. They advanced on Warsaw, with a view to establishing a Communist regime which they could then claim to be the *de facto* government of Poland. They entered Eastern Galicia, with a view to opening a line of advance into Hungary. And they pushed forwards to the north-west of Warsaw, with a view to reaching the 1914 frontier between the German and Russian empires. When the Red Army entered Soldau (Działdów), a town ceded by Germany to Poland under the peace treaty, they handed the place over to the former German administration. A Soviet emissary had told the German Foreign Office on 19 July 1920 that, when the new regime was installed in Warsaw, Moscow would urge it to yield the Polish Corridor and Upper Silesia to Germany. The Soldau incident was an earnest of their sincerity.

This was the background of the clandestine military collaboration, which got under way in Kazan, Samara and other centres deep inside Russia in 1921. The writer of *Making Common Cause* tells of the tricks whereby Seeckt concealed his dealings with the Soviets both from the Entente and from his own country's Foreign Office — in so far as the latter, out of fear of reprisals, was pursuing a policy of 'fulfilment' of Germany's obligations under the peace treaty. Only in 1922, when Soviet diplomacy made its great coup at the Genoa conference and established, in the Treaty of Rapallo, a new, official basis for relations with Germany, did the need for secrecy, such as it was, in that direction, disappear at last.

We know that, besides the Reichswehr activities in Russia, secret camps for military training were organised in the 1920s on Junker estates east of the Elbe (the 'Black Reichswehr'). It seems strange that the German generals were able to get away with so much. The thought arises that the British authorities concerned were not given to excess of zeal in enforcing the disarmament of Germany. Russia was not the only power unhappy with France's dominance under 'the Versailles system'.

Vasilis Vourkoutiotis has worked in both the Soviet and the German archives and so is able to flesh out with intriguing details a story the main substance of which has long been familiar to students of international affairs. Not the least valuable feature of his short book is a truly thorough bibliography, embracing

works (articles, books, dissertations) in Russian, German and French as well as English. Readers without a command of the German language will be able, thanks to the summaries and quotations given here, to learn much that is in those works, as well as in the archives, about the functioning of the Reichswehr as a state within the state, and not only in foreign affairs. Also highlighted is the role played by Viktor Kopp, one of Trotsky's team in the War Commissariat, in clarifying Moscow's understanding of the German internal situation, rebutting fantasies of readiness for revolution.

This useful monograph, which dots the Is and crosses the Ts of an important passage of recent history, has been poorly edited. There are far too many misprints: and a competent editor would have pointed out to the author, when he writes of 'a Second State-Secretary' in the German Foreign Offices 'named Ausamt', that Ausamt is the abbreviation for *Auswärtiges Amt*, the German Foreign Office.

The author stays within the designated period of his study and so does not mention (but I will) the grotesque incident in 1926 which brought the 'secret' collaboration into the world's press headlines. A crate being unloaded from a Soviet ship in Stettin (Szczecin) harbour burst open on the quay and some hand-grenades rolled out. This mishap enabled the Social-Democrat Scheidemann to tease the Communists in the Reichstag, pointing out that when they launched their next insurrection, the weapons used to crush them might have been provided by their comrades in Moscow.

Brian Pearce

Notes

1. For instance, they seemed only to be taught British history, or so Cruz avers.
2. The nearest equivalent of which I can think was the British Public School Battalion, part of Kitchener's Army in 1915 until it was disbanded and they all became officers (to be killed individually instead of collectively), or the very smart HAC territorials today, composed of city gents, the latter rather despised by professional gunners: 'Too many Chiefs, not enough Indians.'
3. The casual use of racist language, which we find shocking in these politically correct days, often occurred, and there is an amusing exchange between Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, the Ceylon Defence Commissioner, and Sir Andrew Caldecott, the Governor-General, about Admiral Layton when the former complained that the Admiral had called him a 'black bastard', to which the Governor General responded: 'That is nothing to what he calls me!' (p 59) The mind boggles at the thought of the imaginative naval language used.
4. After the Mutiny in 1856 no Indian artillery unit was formed until 1938. The two exceptions were the Indian Mountain Artillery and the HKSGA, the latter raised in the 1920s. Both were technically part of the British, not the Indian Army, and were paid and equipped by the UK, not the government of India. None of the Christmas

Island mutineers was hanged for, by the time they were found and had been tried, India and Pakistan were independent and protested successfully against the death penalty.

5. They both got to Ceylon via Sumatra, McLeod Cary arriving on 10 March 1942 where he was put in charge of the Colombo Coast defence artillery. See *War Monthly*, no 34, January 1977, and no 68, September 1979.
6. RTsKhIDNI, F 2, Op 1, d 6898, L I-lob. [Note by Professor Day: In the top right corner of the document there is a three-word hand-written note that is not legible.] This is now available on the Marxist Internet Archive at www.marxists.org
7. Belgium (1994), Netherlands (1996), France (2001), Spain (2002), Portugal (2003), Slovenia (2004), Hungary (2004), Italy (2005), Slovakia (2006), Romania (2006), Czechia (2007), Bulgaria (2008).
8. It is only fair to add that an officer I know present at the very sharp end in both the Falklands and the First Gulf War was very impressed, to his evident surprise, with the professional competence of many American officers he met in the latter conflict.

Letters

Pierre Broué and Vincent Presumey

Dear Editors

I have just read your special issue dedicated to Pierre Broué. As I had read his texts — of which you made a good choice — in French a long time ago, I was interested in the remainder of the issue, and, in particular, in the biography of Pierre Broué written by Vincent Presumey, a text which I had not come across until then. I have no desire to enter into a debate about it. But I would like to make one remark. Vincent Presumey finds it necessary to refer to a short obituary note which I had dedicated to Pierre Broué in *Informations Ouvrières* (issue dated 4-10 August 2005) of which readers of *Revolutionary History* will not be familiar with a single line. I'm sure they won't die for this omission. Vincent Presumey has every right to judge this little note as bad, as rubbish, as detestable or worse. But he has decided to refer to 'the obituary *signed by Jean-Jacques Marie...* a veritable non-obituary' (p 9) and then to repeat further on 'the non-obituary *signed by Jean-Jacques Marie*' (p 79) and then to come back to the point again a third time (p 89), 'the non-obituary *signed by Jean-Jacques Marie*'. I certainly don't attach any great importance to this little article, but what is it that allows Vincent Presumey to repeat three times 'signed by' rather than 'written by'. What does he want to suggest by this? That I would have agreed to sign a text written by another or by others? That I was nothing but someone who lent my name? To whom? What gives him the right to suggest this? I deny him that right. I'm sure that for British readers of *Revolutionary History*, who have no reason to be aware of my modest existence, this detail is doubtless of no importance, but this hypocritical behaviour seems to me to oblige any reader of Vincent Presumey's long text to be a little prudent in interpreting his statements.

Jean-Jacques Marie

On Pierre Broué and Ted Grant

Dear Comrades

If Aesop were alive today, and had just read the latest copy of *Revolutionary History*, he would have amused himself by writing a little story like this.

In the plains of Africa, when a lion dies, all kinds of creatures gather round the corpse: hyenas, jackals and vultures. They take some time to pluck up the courage to approach the body of an animal they feared to approach when it was alive. But eventually, they begin to take bites out of it, fighting and squabbling among themselves all the time.

Since the dead lion is no longer able to defend himself, the eaters of carrion now feel mighty brave and full of themselves. 'Ha!' says the hyena to the jackal. 'He's not so great after all. You know, I was never afraid of him when he was alive.' 'Neither was I', says the jackal. 'He was not as big as they all made out.' 'Indeed not', squawks the vulture, picking on a bone. 'All those stories about King of the Jungle were just made up. Why, I was twice as good as him!'

Just at that point in this interesting conversation the growl of a lion is heard from a distance of about three miles. Immediately the whole noisy pack scatters squawking into the veldt (or the air) just as fast as their legs (or wings) can carry them.

Now, like every Aesopian fable, this one carries a moral, but before we come to that, and to introduce a more agreeable note into the proceedings, let me congratulate *Revolutionary History* on a splendid issue dedicated to my old friend and comrade, the late Pierre Broué. It was about time that the British left paid tribute to this remarkable man, who was a dedicated revolutionary to the end of his days and surely the finest Marxist historian of the twentieth century.

Unfortunately, this splendid issue was marred by the inclusion of a so-called obituary of Ted Grant by Tony Aitman. I do not wish to take up much space in your columns on this question. I will just say the following. When Ted Grant died two and a half years ago many obituaries were published in bourgeois papers, including *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Financial Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Independent*.

This fact alone demonstrates beyond the shadow of a doubt that this man, whether you agreed or disagreed with him, made a big mark on British politics. The impact of his ideas and work went far beyond the narrow confines of small left groupings and sects. The Militant Tendency — again, whether you agreed with it or not — made an impact on the Labour Movement in Britain that really has no parallel in history. And Ted Grant was the architect of all this. That is why he was taken seriously by the ruling class, as reflected in the coverage of his death.

Nowadays the Militant is a distant memory. It took many years to build, but surprisingly little time to destroy. The ultra-left trend led by Peter Taaffe took the tendency down a road that led to its complete destruction. People like Taaffe and Aitman argued that, by splitting from the Labour Party, Militant would 'grow by leaps and bounds'. Like all the sects they were looking for a short cut.

Ted warned them it would be a 'short cut over a cliff', and who can deny today that he was right?

I say this, not in order to open a polemic with a group that I would not normally consider worthy of mention, but in order to make clear the real reasons for Tony Aitman's venomous and completely inaccurate 'obituary'. When Ted passed away, bourgeois papers wrote respectful obituaries that paid tribute to a man who had been their declared political enemy all his life. They paid tribute to his achievements. The *Socialist Worker* represents a tendency Ted had fought against ever since his polemics with Tony Cliff. But even they had the honesty and dignity to write a decent and respectful obituary.

The only discordant note was struck by Peter Taaffe, who wrote a scurrilous article, dripping with spite and malice from every line. So outrageous was this 'obituary' that it scandalised members of his own organisation (the Socialist Party), some of whom conveyed their feelings to us. It is therefore sad to see that *Revolutionary History*, which has done so much to establish the historical truth about Trotsky and Trotskyists against Stalinist falsifications, should have published Aitman's diatribe, which is on the same level as Taaffe's wretched piece.

Let me make one thing clear here. I do not for a moment object to honest political criticism and serious debate of ideas. But this piece is neither of these things. It is a collection of anecdotes, allegedly 'remembered' by Aitman (incidentally, an insignificant figure in Militant). There is no serious attempt to document any of these allegations, just 'Ted said this' and 'Ted did that'. In other words, it is mere gossip and tittle-tattle.

On Aitman's alleged 'differences' with Ted Grant, I do not need to say anything. But I will issue the following challenge. Can either Taaffe or Aitman produce a single document, article or resolution from the past 30 years inside the Militant where they ever expressed a single difference, doubt or even reservation about the political line of Ted Grant? No, they cannot. They cannot because such things do not exist.

Let them not come to us now saying: Yes, but in private I disagreed, and I said so to so-and-so. Serious history depends on written evidence, not hearsay; it requires clear statements, not whispering in corners. Which brings me back to Aesop and the African veldt. While Ted was still alive and in the leadership of Militant, they did not have the guts (or the political level) to contradict him. They all supported the ideas, perspectives and methods which they now claim to abhor.

Ted Grant is dead and cannot defend himself against slanders and calumny. As a man, Ted could sometimes be difficult. He was as stubborn as a mule, and this was one of his strong qualities. Some people felt offended by his manner. These

were small men and women whose thin skins served to cover up a complete lack of any real substance. The truth is that they did not come up to his knees, but now he is no longer around, they are strutting around like giants. It is a sight that is as edifying as the one in our imaginary episode from Aesop.

But even now Ted has been shown to be right. If anyone doubts this just let them look at the results of the Socialist Party in the recent local elections and compare these with the time when we had three members of parliament and numerous councillors all over Britain. Despite all their efforts to rewrite history, the facts speak against them, and facts, as we know, are stubborn things. For our part, we have no hard feelings. We have advanced by leaps and bounds since we parted company with them. And therefore we wish Peter Taaffe health, happiness and a long life. But when the day comes (as it must come to us all) when his obituary is finally written, its title is known in advance: *The man who destroyed Militant*.

It is a matter of deep regret that my friendship with Pierre began late, when he was already suffering from that illness that eventually ended his life. I was, of course, well acquainted with his works and greatly admired his books. For his part, Pierre followed Marxist.com and the work of our tendency with the keenest interest. We were on the same political wavelength, and this political agreement eventually led to his adhering to the International Marxist Tendency.

I remember the first time Pierre contacted me in 2000 to ask for permission to translate my article *The Real Story of Red October*, which I willingly agreed to. However, indirectly I had been in contact with him long before through the medium of my good friend Esteban Volkov, Trotsky's grandson. Esteban and Pierre were close friends for many years and he was keen that we should meet. We were both invited to Mexico to participate in a documentary on Trotsky's life, but for certain reasons we did not coincide, but spoke on the telephone.

From that time on, we developed a friendship that lasted until Pierre's tragic death. I visited him when he was in hospital in Grenoble, together with Greg Oxley, the editor of *La Riposte*, and he was delighted to see us. He said: 'This is a new beginning for me in many ways.'

He expressed his great admiration for Ted Grant and looked forward to meeting him as soon as his health permitted. Unfortunately, that was not to be. But he gave us an interview in which he gave a warm personal message to Ted. The visit had very important results. Pierre Broué agreed enthusiastically to collaborate with our *Trotsky Project*, which had just started to republish the works of Leon Trotsky.

I remained in phone contact with Pierre on a regular basis and he remained optimistic to the end. His collaboration with the IMT undoubtedly gave him a new lease of life. He frequently told me of his plans to work and write when

he recovered. He was particularly enthusiastic about our work in Venezuela, and showed his scorn for those sectarians who refused to see that there was a revolution there. He actively supported our Trotsky Project and promised to write for it. He was full of ideas, plans and suggestions. Unfortunately, his death put an end to these plans.

Finally, it would be fitting to restate what Pierre Broué had to say about Ted Grant and the tendency he helped to create.

Interview by Alan Woods

Pierre Broué is internationally renowned for his tireless work as a historian of the international revolutionary movement. His histories of the Bolshevik Party, the Communist International, the Spanish Revolution, and above all his recent *Life of Trotsky* have been widely admired. His latest book on the Left Opposition is yet another major contribution by this outstanding Trotskyist writer, who has dedicated his life to the fight for international socialism.

Already as a young man, Pierre joined the French Resistance in the dark days of the Nazi occupation of France. He later became a militant of the Fourth International and remains a dedicated Trotskyist to this day. Unfortunately, recently he has not been in the best of health, and is convalescing in the picturesque foothills of the French Alps. I found him lively and alert, with a sharp and very Gallic sense of humour. His revolutionary spirit shines through in every sentence.

I first asked him about the forthcoming Trotsky Project, with which he intends to collaborate.

AW: What do you think about our project to republish the works of Leon Trotsky?

PB: The decision taken by *In Defence of Marxism* to republish the writings of Trotsky is an excellent initiative, to which I give my wholehearted support. The youth must rediscover the extraordinary revolutionary traditions of the past. The publication of *My Life* would be a good way to start to the project. It explains a great deal about Trotsky himself, about his ideas, and about the great events he lived through.

AW: I understand that you will be writing a Preface to the new edition of *My Life*.

PB: Of course! I will start work on it just as soon as I get back to my books.

AW: Your latest book is on the Left Opposition. Would you like to say something about that?

PB: This is a very important subject, and I believe that not enough attention is paid to it. It is very important that the young people in particular should know

about it.

AW: I am afraid that this book has not been translated into English. In general not many of your books have been made available in English, and that is a great shame. I believe that in future we should publish them.

PB: That would be extraordinary.

AW: Yes, I am thinking particularly of your biography of Trotsky, which is a very good antidote to the rubbish of Deutscher.

Pierre gives an ironic gesture, rather like a man brushing aside a fly. I then asked him how he came into contact with our tendency. He replied:

PB: When I read your material on the *In Defence of Marxism* website, and on the website of *La Riposte*, I realised that we should have been in contact and that we should have been working together for a long time. I believe we are on the same wavelength politically. In terms of political analysis and theory, your tendency stands way above all the others. Unfortunately, now that we are finally meeting, I am rather ill, as you can see. I must get well as soon as I can. This is a new beginning for me in many ways.

AW: As you know, Ted Grant has just celebrated his ninetieth birthday. I wonder if you would like to say a few words to him?

PB: Certainly! Ted Grant is known to me for many years, of course. As we say in France, he seems to have been around since the days of Clovis! Unfortunately, I do not believe we have ever met, but we had a mutual friend in Raoul, who was a longstanding militant in the Trotskyist movement in France. He often spoke to me of Ted, and held him in very high esteem. However, for some reason, perhaps for fear of being accused of 'factionalism' or whatever — that's the way things happen in the organisation to which we both belonged at that time — he never showed me any of Ted's written material.

Regrettably, I didn't make the effort to get in touch with him at the time. Only in the last few years I have been reading his material, which I found very interesting. Anyway, I am now very much looking forward to working together with your tendency. We must discuss politics, and methods of work, of course, and try to arrive at the fullest agreement. I believe this is quite possible.

To Ted himself, I would like to say: 'Ted, you were always a fighter. You have been struggling for many years. You have always defended revolutionary ideas. This was very important work, and you accomplished a great deal. At 90 years old, you are not a young man any more, but I think I might yet be attending your hundredth birthday party!'

Grenoble, 9 October 2003

Fraternally

Alan Woods

We also received a letter from Bob Foulkes which expressed the same sentiments as those of Alan Woods towards Tony Aitman's obituary.

In concluding his introduction to Ted Grant's valuable anthology *The Unbroken Thread*, John Pickard thanked Cde Aitman (among others) for 'research, footnotes and photographs'. It was for these qualities that, as Reviews and Obituaries Editor, I invited Cde Aitman to obituarise Ted Grant for us. *Socialist Appeal* had already published obituary material in print and on the web, and little purpose would have been served by asking them to replicate it. At the same time, it would have been inconceivable for us to ignore the passing of such a major figure in the history of our movement. I had no knowledge of any role Cde Aitman may have played (or declined to play) in the internal affairs of *Militant/RSL/Socialist Appeal*. It remains my view that he produced a fair-minded and well-balanced assessment of Ted Grant's life and work, containing considerably more praise than criticism. *Socialist Appeal/CWI* has asked for, and naturally been given, the 'right to reply' (they declined our request to be more concise and less *ad hominem* — their text is therefore printed as we received it) and our readers, critical and intelligent, will be able to form their own views.

Cde Aitman was mistaken in describing *Socialist Current* as a short-lived venture. It survived into the 1980s as described in our obituaries of Sam Levy, Frank Rowe and Morrie Solloff. Ted Grant was only associated with it for its first half dozen or so issues.

JJ Plant

Vincent Pr sumey and Pierre Brou 

Dear Comrades

As I was involved in some way in some of the events covered by Vincent Pr sumey's account (*Revolutionary History*, Volume 9, no 4), or followed them very closely, I would like to correct some inaccuracies and in part present another view.

Surely Pr sumey, when talking of EH Carr being 'brought down' by a fake document, means instead Lord Dacre, who certified the Hitler Diaries as genuine and thus lost all credibility?

The OCRFI, Lambert's international outfit, is left as 'COR-QI', and Workers Socialist League as 'SWL' (p 53). And it's the LTT (Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency) not 'TLT'. Alan Clinton went to the Varga Enquiry on behalf of the WSL once, as I recall, and described it to me as a 'mad-house'.

The OCI did not expel the POR from the OCRFI. Guillermo Lora walked out after observing how the Chileans (CEMICH) and *Pol tica obrera* were ousted. The key issue was the question of relating to unions that are not led by workers parties, where the OCI held that the Christian, Peronist, etc, unions were not

real unions, and in consequence its followers in some countries operated in tiny socialist unions instead of mass organisations. Other issues were coming to the fore, such as the Anti-Imperialist United Front, the Constituent Assembly, etc. The PO and CEMICH wrote texts for debate, but the OCI saw them as a threat to its practice and leading role, so a case was fabricated, as with Varga earlier, and against others later.

As the Latin American delegates were leaving the building they were subjected to pushing and shoving by OCI goons, in the hope that a retaliation would justify a beating-up. The Workers League of Palestine also left the OCRFI and teamed up with the dissident sections in their new international outfit, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. I translated many of the texts by the dissident groupings and their subsequent analyses of the Lambertist materials, as well as their own political positions on Iran, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, etc. I still have copies of some of these and was hoping to get them into print at some stage. After the death of Al Richardson, I passed some on to a then member of the *Revolutionary History* Editorial Board for his website, some I wanted returned, but he drifted away from *Revolutionary History* and I was unable to find out what happened to my translations. I passed on some of the Spanish-language materials to Al for his archive. Some I still have.

The OCRFI, BF and LTT set up the Parity Committee for the Reorganisation/Reconstruction of the FI. Moreno had for many years been allied with the SWP (US) within the USFI, and had opposed the Mandel-led majority's support for guerrilla/terrorist groupings from an 'orthodox' posture. Mandel always outsmarted them. In the late 1970s, Moreno was wooing the WSL; he advised it to fuse with the IMG and wreck it from within. The WSL was given the figures of BF membership — obviously somewhat exaggerated. Events in Nicaragua led to a new line-up as Moreno intervened there with the Simón Bolívar Brigade and clashed with his old allies of the SWP who uncritically backed the Sandinistas. Moreno's intervention was seen by many who knew him well as a stunt; and monies collected for the Simón Bolívar Brigade supposedly went missing. No wonder that Lambert 'kept his hand on his wallet' — Moreno had form.

Lambert had been cosyng up to the SWP (US) until the events in Nicaragua, and in some countries fusions of their respective adherents had already taken place; in Iran if I recall rightly, where both were more pro-Khomeini than the Mandelite section. In *Klassekampen*, organ of the Danish USFI section, a leader of the pro-SWP (US) tendency wrote on how Islam was more progressive than Christianity, and explained away cutting off the hands of thieves and stoning adulterous women — I kept the article! I note that Présuney does not inform us what Broué thought of OCRFI support for the Afghan Mujahidin, who were described as revolutionary, inasmuch as they were fighting the 'holy alliance' of

imperialism and Stalinism.

The Parity Committee was a dirty manoeuvre by Lambert and Moreno from the start. The LTT was a healthy current fighting 'Pabloism' within the USFI — the capitulation to non-proletarian class forces, though Présumey says that its French section was animated by the OCI. The 'Open Conference' the PC advertised, that would set up the FI-IC at the end of 1980, was far from open. Even the theses, supposedly the basis of the discussion and advertised as available, were only given to select people. The WSL sent monies and requested them on two occasions I know about, but never received them. The PC leaders feared a rigorous examination and critique of this cobble-up. So the WSL was not an observer. In Paris at the time for a conference of the WSL's own international outfit, along with two Danish comrades I visited the OCI's Selio bookshop on various occasions attempting to acquire a copy of the theses. At first we were refused, but later the two Danes got one copy from a sympathetic old gent. Further attempts to get another copy were unsuccessful.

The LTT sections were hardly present at the setting up of the FI-IC, as the Central American sections had been ousted from the PC beforehand, and others stayed away in protest, while yet more left shortly after, owing to their inability to get debates on the unresolved issues. The German and Austrian groups couldn't get the 'German Question' discussed: the Lambertist position was German unity first, whereas the orthodox position within Trotskyism was defence of the GDR as a workers' state but political revolution and unity in socialism. The gap was too big to bridge, and such differing conceptions were left for the summits to fudge. This didn't matter to Lambert or Moreno as the whole enterprise was a typical fusion raid by both upon each other's members. Trumpeted as a great success for the Fourth International, the fraudulent FI-IC flew apart less than a year later, supposedly over Moreno's criticism of the OCI's policy towards the Mitterrand government. By the way, the Chilean Liga Comunista, the only Trotskyist grouping to maintain an activity inside the country during the Pinochet dictatorship, broke from the PC over the treatment of the Central Americans.

Présumey mentions that in 1959 Lambert and Hébert for the first time voted to endorse FO's Annual Report (p 29). An ex-Lambertist leading light told me that this became the norm, but not just that, in fact Lambert drafted the report. The same figure told me how much Lambert paid himself, and his money was in another league from that of the average skilled worker. After Charles Berg was found to be pocketing OCI funds, Présumey tells us that an 'apparatus' of full-timers was allowed to live very well from the organisation. Yes, but what about Lambert himself?

On page 64, he refers to the younger generation of apparatchiks that raised

up Barnes in the SWP (US), likening them to the 'Cambadelis' generation in the OCI, and how *The Godfather* film was an exemplar for them, a point also made by Paul Le Blanc about Barnes and his 'wise guys'. Healy cultivated the image of a gangster, and his SLL/WRP, as Lambert's OCI, was famous on the left for thuggery. Dissident members were beaten up and threatened with 'disappearance' (the sexual abuse of women and his mental condition are another subject). Healy was supposedly influenced by the classic French gangster films, but presumably, as was quite common, also by the portrayals of gangsters like Al Capone, and the acting of Robert Ryan, Jimmy Cagney, Humphrey Bogart, etc. The big hats, overcoats, trench-coats, the Camel cigarettes, and even patois. Just after the war Yankee culture exercised a great influence, just as later Marlon Brando did in *The Wild One*, James Dean, etc, would on a younger — my — generation. *The Godfather* did it for another generation. I once saw Lambert get out of a car, coat draped over his shoulders Italian style, flanked by heavies, and thought to myself 'mafioso'! He too must have had similar influences. But what we have to ponder is, what has the gangster image to do with the emancipation of the exploited from their oppressors?

Judging by Présuney's account, which covers the key points in Broué's political trajectory, he compartmentalised his life into an OCI loyalist on one hand and pioneering historian on the other. He went along with, even took part in, the vilest acts by Lambertism, and was cowardly for not fighting for what he believed, or opposing what he disapproved of, whereas in his historical work he was bold and perhaps iconoclastic. He wrote facts and analyses that ran counter to accepted Trotskyist mythology. For example, his research on Spain, where the POUM is not condemned outright but is seen more positively, with which Présuney agrees, as well as his study on Germany. Reviewing the English edition, it struck me that perhaps Broué was only paying lip-service to Trotskyist orthodoxy, as he notes blunder after blunder by Lenin, while simultaneously upholding Leninism as the last word in revolutionary practice. He also refers to disastrous decisions, like the setting up of the RILU and the method of the 'Twenty-One Conditions' (Frederik Firsov discovered that Zinoviev drafted them, but they were later attributed to Lenin). He rehabilitated Paul Levi and devoted a whole essay to him. It must have been painful for him to discover that it was the currents termed 'rightist' that pursued policies based on reality, used transitional, intermediate and immediate demands, and not only promoted but developed united front tactics, whereas Trotsky's adherents originated in the leftist and ultra-left currents which opposed this method. But the article doesn't really draw this out. Regardless of the personal weaknesses of Broué, we should remember him for his attempt to involve himself in the struggle and his most valuable historical production.

Needless to say, I do not want to imply that where I put an alternative view, Présumey is falsifying things. I am more than ready to accept that he believes his account.

Mike Jones

Editorial note: In 1955, EH Carr provided an introduction to *Notes for a Journal*, purportedly the diaries of Maxim Litvinov, but actually one of an extensive series of notorious forgeries concocted by the defector Gregory Bessedovsky (another of his books, purportedly by Stalin's nephew Budu Svanidze, *My Uncle, Joseph Stalin*, was praised by Isaac Deutscher). See Paul Blackstock, "Books for Idiots": False Soviet "Memoirs", *Russian Review*, Volume 25, no 3, July 1966. Its subsequent exposure as a fake caused Carr some embarrassment, but the damage it did to his reputation as an historian was minor indeed compared to that suffered by Lord Dacre of Glanton (Hugh Trevor-Roper) after he initially declared the authenticity of the phoney Hitler Diaries in 1983.

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