

# Resistance stand in Leeds

Three candidates were fielded in the local elections, by the Leeds anti-cuts campaign 'Resistance' (see article on the group's origin and platform in LC 7). The decision to stand followed a record public meeting on the theme 'What Leeds Needs', attended by nearly 60 people. The meeting was addressed by workers from the various public services in the city—hospitals, public transport, schools, housing. They outlined the problems and the requirements of the services as well as the appalling record of both Labour and Tory administrations which have left Leeds services at the bottom of the municipal league.

The election campaign was concentrated in Headingley ward which was twice fully leafletted door to door. The campaign in the other two wards was restricted to the distribution of a

weekly newsheet at the local shopping centre in the middle of the area.

Under the pressure from 'Resistance' and the interest shown in its campaign by local union branches, community groups and sections of the Labour Party, the Labour leaders moved their rhetoric sharply to the left. Their election address was full of worthy promises. Now, after the election, with a safe majority of 25 seats, we've had weeks of silence which do not augur well for the future.

Nonetheless many people are now aware of the real issues in the city and what the cuts will mean in detail to life in Leeds. The Labour leaders will not find the going easy despite their massive majority; there is a small group of new councillors who will not be easily sat on; painfully slowly the trades unions are coordinating and

planning for the future; and, though small, there is the definite threat of a continuing attack on Labours' electoral base.

The Resistance candidates polled 604 votes, 383 in the ward where the campaign was centred. The local people involved feel that their 7%+ of the poll represents a good response to three months work of public education and organisation. The campaign so far has brought together a wide range of people and in the near future will concentrate on three areas—the production of a monthly newsheet, the extension of its organisation to other areas of the city, and a long term discussion involving as many people as possible on how to carry the campaign for decent public services forward.

If you'd like to get in touch write to RESISTANCE, c/o 6, Graham View, Leeds 4.

## THE JIM PARTIAL AWARD 1980

That astute political commentator and friend of the people, our very own Jim Partial, has decided to open his column in Libertarian Communist to the cut and thrust of free enterprise. For this, and forthcoming issues, extracts from the rest of the Fleet St. press will be printed. They will be selected for their insight and compassion. We hope our readers will be struck by this note of true competition and send their favourite pieces into us.

This issue's award goes to the Daily Telegraph for a recent item called 'The Dehumanising Threat'.

Our Medical Consultant writes: "The more we are together the merrier we shall be". So ran the pre-1938 ditty. When the togetherness is accompanied by the flashing lights and tom-toms of the disco the merriness becomes hysteria.

All sense of proportion is lost, inhibitions disappear, the veneer of civilisation vanishes and human nature appears in all its crudity, bestiality and cruelty.

When the disco atmosphere is accompanied by alcohol and drugs the result can be catastrophic. It is the male members of the species who become most repellantly anti-social under the influence of this dehumanising threat to civilisation.

The female vents her baser nature largely by noise and gesture and is usually physically exhausted before she gets to the stage of violence.

The male's reaction is more quickly physical. As long as he is under the direct influence of the disco he is largely hypnotised, so concentrated on what assails his ears and eyes that rhythmic movements or raucous noises provide an outlet for his unloosened carnal cravings.

Once his attention ceases to be held in this way, as happened at Neasden, he becomes little better than a wild beast and literally, as well as metaphorically, hell is let loose.

# Libertarian Communist



The war  
scare

This is the first issue of Libertarian Communist in our new magazine format. We have for some time had problems selling a paper that contained theory, analysis and review articles but looked like a traditional agitational paper. We hope that we will be able to sell the new style paper over a longer period of time and also that our bookshop sales will increase.

The change in format is also a product of our changing political outlook. As the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists and as the Anarchist Workers Association our concern was to build a mass class-struggle anarchist association. Unfortunately we were hampered by the lack of a libertarian tradition of any significance within the working-class movement in this country and also by the lack of analysis, and opposition to theory, of the anarchist movement.

These problems have led over the first ten years of existence of our tendency to splits, expulsions and recriminations. Nevertheless, we feel now that some of our problems are behind us. We have begun to avoid the dogmatism and purism that characterises not just sections of the libertarian movement but also much of the Leninist left. We have moved away from the idea of building a mass organisation in the short term, though we are still keen to recruit. Instead we have concentrated on our work as militants within trades unions and campaigns and also on developing our ideas. We have attempted to take what is best in the anarchist and the revolutionary marxist traditions and relate them to the problems of today.

It has been necessary to face up to the problems in this country. With Thatcher in power it is now crucial that a mass movement of opposition is built. We hope that the resistance of the unions to the Tory laws, of the women's movement to the assaults now being made on their gains of the last ten years, of black youth to police harassment as shown a few months back at St Pauls in Bristol, can be the start of this process. We need not only to unify the various movements of opposition to the Tories that do exist, but also to develop their awareness of the importance of waging a political struggle against all the policies of this ruling-class government. We hope to analyse the problems that confront the working-class as they come up, as well as detailing the sort of socialism that we feel it is necessary to fight for.

In this issue we have devoted some space to an article on the role of the peasantry that raises the question of the nature of socialism in underdeveloped countries. We also examine the war scare and discuss how socialists can oppose the current wave of patriotic propaganda and the lobby in favour of nuclear power and nuclear bombs.

The present paper is produced by a small collective, with the articles coming from a small organisation. We are all activists and writing, editing, producing and selling the paper is by no means our only political work. We therefore need articles, letters, shorts and cartoons for the paper. We also badly need money. Please note that we have so far only collected about £200 towards our Press Fund target of £1,000.

We do need both your money and your help. This is not just the standard appeal. We are short of funds and we also hope to open out the paper more to our readership. We can be contacted at 27, Clerkenwell Close, London EC1

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# COLD WAR



## A NEW FUTURE FOR THE CND

When President Carter called the Russian occupation of Afghanistan the most serious crisis since World War II he wasn't merely indulging in Cold War rhetoric. Recent developments in nuclear weaponry and western military strategic thinking, coupled with America's recent defeats in the Third World and the increasingly vicious competition for declining world resources between the West and the Soviet bloc, make the Afghanistan situation a greater menace than the Cuban missile crisis ever was.

The resurgence of Cold War hostilities is being taken seriously in the West. Chancellor Schmidt of West Germany described it as being similar to that existing in the months preceding the First World War. The Western press and media seem to wish to encourage an acceptance of the inevitability of nuclear conflict. In Britain in recent months the press, ITV, BBC and Radio 4 have all carried material detailing the civil defence preparations that have been made in the event of a nuclear attack.

Indeed, the inspired leak of the official pamphlet 'Protect and Survive' on BBC's Panorama programme prompted the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament to publish a booklet by E.P. Thompson called 'Protest and Survive' and it is around this booklet that a debate about the necessity for a nuclear disarmament campaign is germinating. Thompson also produced an excellent article for the December

issue of the New Statesman entitled 'An Alternative to Doomsday', and a new issue of Laurie's 'Beneath the City Streets' has also come out recently. From these publications a number of points emerge.

First, there exists an all-Party consensus in the House of Commons. Expenditure on nuclear weapons is not to be debated and is not a matter of controversy (although this state of affairs is obviously not satisfactory to one or two left Labour MPs). Evidence exists for this assertion. For instance, the decision of the last Labour Government to spend an extra £100 million on updating Polaris missiles was taken by only Callaghan, Owen, Mulley and Healy. Similarly, when the Tories nuclear expenditure was being debated in January Peter Shore, Labour's Shadow Foreign Secretary, confined himself to querying the NATO programme of missile modernation. He felt not enough money was being

spent on it!

Secondly, recent changes in military strategy have led this all-Party consensus and President Carter to believe that they have the option open to them of what is termed, coyly, a 'limited nuclear exchange'. This idea has come into favour largely as a result of the failure of the Salt 2 talks to come to a decision over 'theatre' nuclear weapons. NATO's conception of how a nuclear war will be conducted has now crystallised into that of a first-stage 'theatre' war. The 'theatre' is of course, Europe, and that is why 'theatre' nuclear weapons like the Cruise missile are so important as they are highly mobile, have a short range and are very accurate.

Thompson explains that the Pentagon believes that a nuclear war of this type would obliterate most of the NATO and Warsaw pact countries in Europe and also a lot of damage to Russia west of the Urals but leave most of Russia, and all the USA untouched. Carter and Brezhnev could then negotiate while holding their Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles in reserve as counters. Britain's role in all this madness is to act as America's front line, hosting a high proportion of NATO's short-range nuclear weapons and thus presenting a disproportionately high number of priority targets to the missiles of the Warsaw Pact countries.

This brings us to the third point, that the Cruise missiles in this country will be sited and controlled exclusively by the Americans. The Conservatives who have so enthusiastically demanded that Britain take a larger share of these weapons than was originally planned, do not even know where the wretched things are going to be! At times of crisis they will be moved around the country to confuse the Russians and any angry trades unionists and socialists who might not want to be incinerated.

It is also clear that Cold War hostilities and the recent blurb over civil defence in the media have the dual purpose of in the short run neutralising resistance to official nuclear policy and in the long run nudging public opinion into a fatalistic acceptance of the inevitability of nuclear war.

It can be seen that the possibility of a 'limited nuclear exchange' does actually heighten the chances of a nuclear war. It is vital that socialists realise that this is not simply an awful fate imposed on us by nasty capitalists. It is a possibility that depends on a number of economic and political factors that we can influence. War depends partly on who the incumbents of the White House and the Kremlin are. Many analysts feel that the Cold Warriors are in the ascendant in Russia,



# THE WAR SCARE

The feeling that we are living once again through the summer of 1914 gives an urgency to attempts to understand the world we live in. We have little choice but to understand why Thatcher/the Daily Express/NATO and all are preparing to fight to the last handful of the rest of us to save Thatcher/the Daily Express/NATO from violation/loss of status, pension rights/and so on at the hands of the Russians.

If we don't try then there will be little we can do about it before it comes to our turn to be a candle for democracy.

and certainly the US Presidential campaign is resulting in vote-winning displays of anti-Russian hysteria by most of the candidates. Also the Americans may well be attracted to the idea of a war in Europe if it appears that socialist revolution is a possibility there, and the Russians might find themselves thinking in a similar direction if the Warsaw pact countries start to display a wish for greater economic and political autonomy. Certainly one thing we can do right away is rid ourselves of the idea that any form of nuclear conflict automatically means the destruction of the planet. This is untrue and can encourage a dangerous passivity.

Peter Laurie's book 'Beneath the City Streets' is fascinating. Whilst providing some unique insights into the effects of nuclear bombs and Soviet and NATO strategy (and drawing some controversial conclusions!) his main theme is that the purpose of civil defence is not to defend civilians but to defend civilian government. An alternative post nuclear governmental system has already been constructed with a bomb resistant communications system. Thompson's view is that in preparing such a system, and by taking the development of nuclear weapons away from any form of accountability, the government derives the immense side benefit of establishing a stronger and more oppressive hold over all

forms of political dissent.

The labour movement and the revolutionary left are being very slow to respond to the new climate of nuclear sabre-rattling. An international European protest movement is now a possibility. However, Mike Simons in an article in Socialist Worker a few months back foolishly characterised the CND's European Nuclear Disarmament Appeal (END) as "CND with the old blend of labour and church traditions; a list of barely radical signatories; an appeal to trades union leaders but not to the working class". This seems symptomatic of the lack of urgency of the left. Simons forgets that the ANL was precisely launched on the basis of a list of 'barely radical signatories' but that it was the labour movement and the revolutionary left that subsequently built the campaign.

A new CND does have to be built, and quickly, with a specific campaign to get the nuclear weapons out of Europe. END provides the basis for a European-wide mass campaign. The vigour and direct action tactics of the old CND, Committee of 100 and Spies for Peace must be rediscovered and linked with the political aim of turning the TUC and the labour movement against the existence of nuclear weapons in Europe.

After all, the whole future of the European working-class is at stake.

John Bangs

Half the battle in getting at the essence of any problem is in asking the right questions. For example, if we start out on the lines of 'democracy' versus 'dictatorship' our view of the real world will be obscured by the mounds of dead people who have been judged expendable in the defence of 'democracy'—American blacks, millions of Vietnamese, Chileans, Angolans, Zimbabweans... If we start on the road of 'freedom' versus 'socialism' then we have to ignore further millions on the dole. If we talk in terms of 'individual liberties' then we have to remember Blair Peach, Liddle Towers, Jimmy Kelly, victims of a police force which the bentest judiciary in Western Europe has over the last year given the right to commit murder.

So we have to get down to basics. Where is the world moving? Why is it doing so? What are the tensions and cracks that this process creates?

Though it's not a straight path by any means, human history traces a story of greater complexity of society, greater differentiation, greater capacities of the average members of society, all contributing and in turn deriving from a continuing struggle of ordinary people for greater control over their lives. First the environment is changed and subordinated by the development first of agriculture and then industry. Secondly a parallel development in social relations, as power is forcibly



taken from all-powerful monarchs, then from aristocratic élites. This struggle by the common people is the main force in history and it is the resulting social relations of a society which determines the level of its technological development—for example a steam engine existed in Alexandria over 1500 years ago but society was at a level which could use it only to open temple doors.

The century we are living in has seen the social changes in human society grow at a rate every bit as fast as the much publicised technical revolutions. We have seen the end of world empires of the sort the Romans would have been familiar with; within a hundred years we have seen the rise and obvious decline of capitalist industrial society; however misled at times the common people now play a leading and public role and their interests have to be taken into account even though these are frequently betrayed.

Part of this tremendous burst of change created the Soviet Union when a country mostly still in the middle ages, but with one of the most advanced industrial sectors (a common feature of client status of the West even today), broke out of the backwardness. The ordinary people refused to stomach any more the ruling class, its participation in the First World War and all the misery that entailed. In Russia they went a long way out of the middle ages but the isolation of their revolution, the distrust of the leaders of the revolt in the creativity of ordinary people, the intervention of all the powers of the old imperial age—Britain and France in particular, all combined to free the country from stagnation enough to become a major industrial country but insufficiently to advance its social relations to the full democratic control by working people which is necessary for socialism.

Russia represents many things—it is an enemy to capitalism and its control of the world through client states. This is because it shows the possibility of industrial development

whilst capitalism offers the majority of the world's people the simple choice of exploitation under conditions of no development. (Except perhaps in very small areas of enormously advanced technology which do not affect the society as a whole very much.) Or repression by the US world policeman or the local agents—Israel, South Africa, Japan, Indonesia etc. That such development under the top heavy Russian bureaucratic model means little democracy is not much of an argument to the third world peasant family whose children die more often than they live and who may associate democracy with the napalm that is one of its most famous products.

—to the working class in the capitalist countries Russia represents a weapon which their own leaders use to blacken the idea of socialism. Between Stalin and the Labour Party it's not surprising that British working people are often unsure of things and are likely to fall for the Daily Express line. For workers in Britain Russia represents an enemy of our own enemies. Our interests may coincide as in the case when the liberation movement in Angola, the MPLA, was backed by the Russians. The liberation of Angola had important repercussions in the whole of Southern Africa and weakened the position and endangered the investment of our own beloved rulers (which is also the reason we have solid, selfish interest in helping the liberation of South Africa which is now underway). Too often the movements which represent the interests of the ordinary people of other countries are not supported by any great powers or even attacked by them all eg. the Eritrean liberation movement.

The pace at which the world is changing is getting faster. In recent years, Iran, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe have seen great steps made by ordinary people. Each change still has hangovers from the past and none is totally good. The change is evident and it's coming faster. In the last few months the future liberation of South Africa, El Salvador, South Korea have all been

publicly put on the agenda. Nor have things been quiet in the Soviet Union and its satellites—the Hungarian rising, the Poznan rebellion, the Czech Spring all testify to the same force at work. If the life of the great empires was measured in hundreds of years, the supremacy of industrial capitalism in less than a hundred years, then the bureaucratic industrial society has had less than a few decades of being the most advanced social form.

So the capitalist West is threatened by the Russian's acting as a model out of poverty and backwardness however imperfect it is, and it is threatened by the elemental force of the mass of ordinary people fighting for a decent life in many different ways—through trade unions, through national liberation struggles, through all the movements of personal liberation which undermine its social controls.

Western capital is losing clients and markets hand over fist. Since Vietnam it can no longer police the world's poor people.

The purpose of the war scare is to cement together the internal cracks in Western and Soviet societies—nothing like a good war scare to enable you to make any internal opposition into national traitors. The Daily Express can make sure that every underpaid nurse who wants to strike is painted as a potential terrorist. Every 'red' can be painted as an actual terrorist, and if our police kill a few 'reds' then they surely asked for it.

However it's even more serious than that. The 'backs to the wall', 'we're all in the same boat' war-scare spirit can be used temporarily to keep the ailing system going. Sooner or later the weapons will be used in calculated risk to reassert control of the world's trade and peoples, or in desperation as the popular liberation of further areas of traditionally cheap labour and high return of investment advances. Whilst we cannot rule out the use by the the Soviet bureaucracy of any means to suppress a peoples' revolution, it is the Western ruling classes that are in the position of being under greatest threat at the moment. They are therefore more paranoid and more dangerous. The greatest war danger comes from our own ruling class.

We are responsible for striking the weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of our own ruling class. This cannot be done with any abstract propaganda for 'peace'. We are not threatened simply by the technology of the nuclear age so much as by its possession by a decaying ruling class, crazed by the clear signs of its approaching end.

Keith Nathan

# CIS Report: The Wealthy

I was pleased to see the appearance of this pamphlet. It deals with a subject which interests me, but which I have not studied in any depth. I have also felt for some time that one deficiency of the left has been its failure to provide accessible presentations of its view of the inequality of wealth and power in the contemporary world.

It never really occurred to me until recently how important the rich were. I knew before, of course, that wealthy people existed, but I didn't see them as having much to do with my own situation or with the problems facing "ordinary people". It was almost as if they lived in a separate world—a world I envied and even wished to be part of, but one which was essentially set apart from the banalities of workaday reality.

The authors of this CIS pamphlet are only half correct when they write that "Part of the myth that a wealthy class no longer exists relies on the fact that the rich inhabit a society that thrives beyond public view". Many of us, I suppose, don't have a very clear picture of just *how* different life can be for the privileged. But they *are* quite widely portrayed on television, and in films, books and newspapers. The real problem, I think, lies in linking what these people are and do with the conditions which dominate our lives.

What sort of questions should we ask about the rich? Obvious starters are things like "How rich are they?", "How do they compare with the rest of us?" and "How do they get to be where they are?". But for a full appraisal of their importance, we must also attempt to relate them to society as a whole. "What is their effect on its development?", "What part do they play in creating its problems?"

The CIS suggest answers to some of these questions better than they do to others.

Just how rich some individuals can become is neatly displayed in the thumbnail sketches which are dotted about this publication—Lord Vesty, who inherited three quarters of a million at the age of 13, and went on to take over his father's vast fortunes while still in his twenties:



Lord Inchape, who inherited £2m. and a 13,000 acre estate at the age of 21, and took up the family stake in and chairmanship of Inchape and Co., the trading company reckoned to be worth some £330m.: Michael Pearson, son of Lord Cowdray, who inherited £7m. at the age of 21, together with a 10,000 acre Sussex farm and a house in Kensington valued at over £1m.

The impression of tremendous social inequality given by these examples is backed up by the CIS with a survey of statistical analyses of differentiation in wealth and income. In 1976, for instance, the "top" 1% in the population owned 54.2% of privately owned company shares, 52% of private land and 8.6% of housing. Despite, moreover, a statistical pattern which does show substantial inequalities, the CIS argue that the reality is more polarised still: "Any attempt to analyse statistically the distribution of wealth in Britain", they write, "will always be inadequate. Not only are the rich able to successfully conceal the full nature and extent of their assets, but often the profits of the wealth creating capacity of the country, often tied up in small companies, are never fully revealed".

The CIS report does not give much explicit attention to explaining exactly how the rich come to be where they are. The potted portraits give examples of significant inheritances, but there are also those who seem to have "worked their way to the top".

A greater amount of coverage is given to the environment in which wealth reproduces itself. "The



wealthy", we are told, "are constantly occupied in preserving and increasing their wealth and to do this a number of methods are used. The way they do it affects all of us".

The main areas of concern here are enterprise (both manufacturing and service), property and finance. The report gives an indication of the scope of some of the major "owner-operators" of industry and finance, and provides information on the personnel link-ups between leading corporations through multiple directorships. (It must be said, though, that it doesn't investigate different paths to directorship, or go deeply into the patterns of power and influence which one can imagine surrounds corporate decision making—how crucial are individual shareholders according to whether or not they sit on the board, etc.) The central point remains clear enough: "In our society power is conferred on capital... It is the few men who sit on the boards of the banks, insurance companies, the giant corporations, nationalised industries and other official advisory committees who control the main sources of capital".

The CIS devote an interesting section of their pamphlet to the growth of the pension funds, unit trusts and

investment trusts, the "institutional investors" which seem to have displaced the private investor on the stock exchange—nowadays they hold over half the shares of British companies quoted. The CIS argue that these funds—often originating from workers' contributions—act as an adjunct to economic inequality rather than as a "communalisation" of wealth. The logic of the institutional investors is to seek a return on investment from the established economic order. On the one hand, the proportion of this return finding itself back in the hands of each individual participant is so small that it does not give them as individuals the *degree* of personal wealth needed to participate in strategic economic activity on a par with the rich. On the other, the concentrated sums of money at the centre have, according to CIS, "been used to prevent bankruptcies of property companies and fringe banks... have forced up the price of property and agricultural land and... have paved the way for the tightening up of government spending and the forcing up of government spending and the forcing up of interest rates". The pension funds ironically emphasise on the one hand that it is the *concentration* of wealth in individual

hands which defines its characteristics as a motor force in production, and on the other that the appearance of chunks of "collectivised" wealth on the financial markets is itself no panacea to the circumstances of economic organisation around essentially privatised conglomerations of wealth seeking their own accumulation.

Ultimately, the significance of the wealthy is not just that they are comfortable whilst others must "make do". It is not just that they give orders, whilst others must obey. They are important because their preservation and accumulation of wealth is a crucial armature of our social order. The wealthy are our central nervous system, and we are not so much agents for ourselves as for their desires.

The CIS pamphlet is as usual boldly presented. There are inevitably areas that have had to be left uncovered—the role of the army and the civil service, for instance—in addition to the gaps already suggested. No doubt even the central concern of the interrelation of "individual" and "business" interests could be more fully investigated. But the work is certainly helpful as a compilation of basic information and insights, and is ideal for lending to anyone as part of the and fro of friendly discussion.

# IRELAND

## The Irish Labour Movement

One of the reasons for the low priority given Irish affairs within the Labour Movement in Britain is the stance the Irish Labour Movement has taken itself over the past few years. In short it has little or nothing to say over Britain's presence in Ireland. Indeed it has often been studious in its determination to avoid commentary over any matters it considers political. To understand why this is so, and to understand what future developments there might be, it is well to come to an understanding of the history of the Labour Movement in Ireland.

### Origins

Combinations of journeymen established themselves very early in the 18th century and like their British counterparts struggled against repressive legislation. They had to establish themselves in the face of ecclesiastical and liberal nationalist condemnation. In 1780 20,000 protested in Dublin against the enactment of draconian anti-union legislation. Part of the force mobilised against them consisted of the Dublin corps of the Irish Volunteers.

In the first half of the 19th century the unions became heavily defensive and 'luddite' as a response to the decline in trade which resulted from restrictions imposed by Britain after the Act of Union in 1800.

In 1826 Dublin experienced the first general strike in Irish history. It was a protest against inflation. Although there was no general foundation of unions there was, as here, frequent cooperation between unions in disputes.

The Irish brought their militancy to the British movement when they emigrated. John Doherty was the founder of the first national union—the Grand General Union of Cotton Spinners of Great Britain and Ireland. A year later, in 1830, he was elected the general secretary of the first proto-TUC, the National Association for the Protection of Labour.

Another Irishman, Feargus O'Connor, became a leading figure in the Chartist movement in Britain. He advocated cooperation between the Irish working class and English workers against their common enemy—the English ruling classes.

Although wary of, and largely unaffected by, revolutionary Chartism, the unions in Ireland were at this time frequently involved in the campaign against the union between Britain and Ireland.

### After the Famine

By the 1850's the situation had changed completely. Irish agriculture, governed by British Imperial needs, forced a large section of the Irish population to feed themselves on a potato based diet. Disease, crop failure and the insistence of the British in maintaining crop exports from Ireland had produced massive famine and dislocation in the 1840's.

In Britain Chartism had petered out, giving way to the more narrow minded 'new model' craft unions. The bold visions of O'Connor had faded completely from the scene. Nevertheless in Britain the Industrial Revolution had firmly established itself. The urban working classes, though defeated, were now a major force to be reckoned with.

In Ireland, however, British economic domination suffocated and distorted the development of native industrial capitalism. This obviously restricted the growth of the urban working class and limited the degree to which the Labour Movement could become a major force. Opposition to British rule, as in other colonies, was most acutely expressed by the peasantry who were frequently subjected to harassment and eviction by a British based landlord class. The middle classes too became frustrated by the restrictions imposed by British rule. Increasingly they came to see Home Rule, though not necessarily

independence, as the only solution to their problems.

Irish Trades Unionists, although individually perhaps home rulers or even fenians, seldom found themselves questioning British rule in quite the same way. The reasons for this were threefold:—

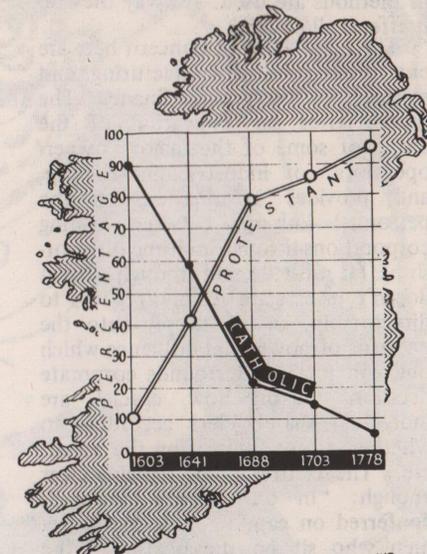
1) Despite their long establishment the unions in Ireland were still small and therefore concerned with more immediate problems.

2) British based 'amalgamated' unions began to make inroads in Ireland often competing with long established unions. Mergers frequently took place, the Irish unions seeing in the size of their British competitors greater strength and security.

3) Industrialisation was chiefly taking place in the north east. There the workforce was largely recruited from a protestant community still fearful of a displaced catholic peasantry.

Ironically, therefore, Irish trades unionists for the sake of unity refrained from discussing what they had most in common—their oppression by British capitalism.

Indeed unity was a prime concern for the Irish trades unions. They were in the process of setting up their own national federation when in 1868 the British TUC was formed. Again many Irish Trades Unions looked to this body for greater strength and solidarity. They could not have been more mistaken, congress after congress relegating discussion, if any, of Irish affairs to the Friday afternoon slot.



The transfer of land ownership: 1603-1778

From the 17th century the Irish were dispossessed as a nation and on a religious basis. The social foundations for the form future conflict was to take were thus built.

# Libertarian Communist

## Special Supplement

20p

## THE PEASANTRY IN ACTION



### Spain

### Mexico

### China

There are numerous and obvious historical/practical problems that confront socialist theory in the age of imperialism. Understanding is hampered by the relatively small amount of discussion, in terms of Marxist theory, of the vast majority of humanity—the peasantry.

Between the '18th Brumaire' and the 'Hunan Report'; between a formless and *unformable* reactionary mass and a poor peasantry providing the leadership and main force of a revolutionary movement, lies a great gap which ought to be susceptible to Marxist study—viz. the conditions (social, economic, historical) under which groups of men and women develop and change their view of themselves and the world they create, and further, the possibility or impossibility of their adopting common goals and methods.

The historical examples chosen were dictated, unfortunately, by the likely amount of material available in English. Nonetheless they span the period of the last 70 years. As such they reflect the world development of the period and 'test' the

movements we are interested in in a variety of contexts.

Mexico in 1910—at the period of the height of imperial and colonial division of the world prior to the First World War; reflecting the problems of the national bourgeois revolution, a nascent proletarian struggle and combined with these a struggle of over three centuries of resistance by the indigenous peoples beginning with the first imperialist expansion of Castilian Spain.

Spain in 1936—presented a popular movement (urban and rural) made up of strong currents reflecting various stages of historical development (from peasant millenarianism to Marxism) pitted against an equally composite enemy—feudal landowners, the Catholic Church, a military elite and modern fascism. All this in the context of international capitalist decline, working class retreat in the West and Stalinist isolation in the USSR, and as a clearly understood prologue to an approaching international war.

The Chinese revolution spanned a longer period than the others and was composed of elements as historically diverse combined and multiplied many times. 'Semi-feudal, semi-colonial' suggests a part of this complexity.

## Debate of the deaf

Nigel Harris (International Socialism 41, Dec/Jan 1969/70) 'The Revolutionary Role of the Peasantry' presents the 'orthodox' marxist view succinctly. Pointing out the diversity of rural populations and their economic and social forms (from owner-occupier peasants, subsistence tenants, share croppers, landless labourers, serfs of Latin American haciendas, or tribal farming groups in sub-Saharan Africa) he admits that the importance of this, the majority of the world's population, makes an attempt at generalisation necessary.

Harris briefly mentions the Bakunin/Marx arguments, Social Democrat/Narodnik and Bolshevik Social Revolutionary debates. Since we have discussed these in our earlier supplement on Trotsky (1) we shall move straight to the foundation of his position. This is Marx's statement: (2) "The small peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar conditions but without entering into manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another, instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. The isolation is increased by France's bad means of communication and by the poverty of the peasants. Their field of production, the small-holding, admits no division of labour in its cultivation, no application of science, and, therefore, no multiplicity of development, no diversity of talent, no wealth of social relationships. Each individual peasant family is almost self-sufficient; it itself directly produces the major part of its consumption and thus acquires its means of life more through exchange with nature than its intercourse with society. . . . Insofar as millions of families live

*under conditions of existence that divide their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of other classes, and put them in hostile contrast to the latter, they form a class. Insofar as there is merely a local interconnection among these small peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no unity, no national union, and no political organisation, they do not form a class. They are consequently incapable of enforcing their class interests in their own names, whether through parliament or through a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented."*

Nigel Harris extrapolates from this to create the following generalisations

- i The peasant's isolation from national society
- ii The peasant's dependence upon himself or his family for his way of life. Consequently little division of labour, a primitive production and therefore economic, cultural and technical poverty.
- iii Consequent on ii. peasant egalitarianism is that of identical independent participants rather than collectivist.
- iv The enemies of the peasant are seen as local and obvious—the landlord, the policemen, the merchant—rather than as a national class. Thus peasant resistance tends to be localised, often limited to reprisals against these individuals—eg. Russian peasants would commonly worship the Tsar, their 'little' father, whilst hating local nobles. (Lewin suggests a similar attitude to Stalin during the collectivisations (3)).
- v Opposition is commonly expressed as social banditry.

vi When peasant rebellions do seize the centres of power they are unable to make use of them eg. Wat Tyler's seizure of London; Villa and Zapata's capture of Mexico City from Carranza; and one would add the experience of the Makhnovists in the Ukrainian cities.

In summary, peasants do not act as a national class, formulating demands at the level of State policy and capable of implementing them by directing the State if necessary.

Harris briefly mentions the perennial problem of differentiation among the peasantry with the parallel complexity of the social and economic mobility of peasant families through stages of family growth and hence greater productivity at times. This gives difficulties when generalising about possible alliances of urban classes with peasant strata.

The classical Marxist programme with regard to rural development derived from the 1850 Communist League proposals to take into State ownership the Royal and large feudal estates rather than distribute them to the peasants (4). The Bolshevik programme in Tsarist Russia similarly demanded the nationalisation of commercially important estates. Lenin attacked the Social Revolutionaries with the charge that they assumed a basic unity in objectives between the proletariat and peasantry (5).

Harris summarises by quoting Marx Selected Works Vol. 1 p. 166

*"The relation of the revolutionary workers party to the petit bourgeois democracy+ is this; it marches together with it against the section which it aims at overthrowing, it opposes the petty bourgeoisie in everything which*

*they desire to establish themselves" (+ "comprises not only the great majority of the bourgeois inhabitants of the towns, the small industrial businessmen and guild masters, it numbers among its following the peasants and rural proletariat).*

and Lenin. Selected Works Vol. III. p. 150.

*We must "support the peasant movement to the end, but we must remember that it is a movement of another class, not the one that can or will accomplish socialism"*.

In a praiseworthy attempt to present a debate Harris' article was printed along with a contribution by Malcolm Caldwell. Unfortunately the articles argue past each other rather than confronting the opposing positions.

Caldwell also looks for his foundation in Marx with an interesting argument on the imminent or alternatively contingent nature of the revolutionary role of the proletariat. He, reasonably, establishes that this is contingent with the aid of quotation from Paul Sweezy and Marx's "The Holy Family".

His next stage is more questionable. By selective choice of the contingent factors, specifically the depth of exploitation, Caldwell argues that the working class in the West no longer fits the required categories whilst the peasant masses subjected to imperialism and neo-colonialism do. A less subtle version of this view is expressed by Fanon (Wretched of the Earth p. 48). "In colonial countries the peasants alone are revolutionary, for

*they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The starving peasant, outside the class system, is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays. For him there is no compromise, no possibility of coming to terms"*.

Caldwell correctly points out that Marx did not hold a unilinear stages theory of social development and that his chapter on primitive accumulation in Capital traces the path of development in Western Europe only. Caldwell alludes to Marx and Engels' sympathy for the Russian populist position (see supplement on Trotsky (6)) on the possibility of avoiding "all the fatal vicissitudes of the capitalist regime".

Caldwell's next stage in establishing the foundations of his argument is to underline the integration of the world economy. "Backwardness" and "underdevelopment" are not laggards in a unilinear development. They are products of imperialism and an integral part of the world division of labour. "This being the case it is impossible for a true industrial proletariat to appear BEFORE the social revolution that alone can tear such countries violently free of the neo-colonial empire . . . their (the proletariats) total numbers remain insignificant . . . in comparison with the poor rural masses. Therefore this tiny proletariat fails to meet (Caldwell's definition of—KN) Marx's desiderata . . . swelling numbers that give the ABILITY to conduct revolution, and

inhuman conditions that provide the WILL". Thus Caldwell engineers a choice. The traditional theory means there can be no revolution, (according to Caldwell). This is unacceptable so the theory has to be fitted to the only candidate available. The peasantry.

Caldwell moves quickly into Hamza Alavi's discussion (Socialist Register 1965) on the importance of the different strata of the peasantry in the succeeding stages of revolution. Finishing with exhortation from the Hunan Report and a celebration of Chinese and Indo-Chinese achievements he ends with Lin Piao's schema ('Long Live the Victory of People's War') of a global repetition of the Chinese Revolution.

Many questions are left unanswered by this exchange. Among them the nature of the 'socialism' which Caldwell asserts it is 'hardly contestable' that the Chinese people have established. This would involve Harris' point (from Lenin) about differing class objectives; examining Caldwell's immiseration theory; and Alavi's interesting distinction between the interests and capacities of poor and middle peasants and particularly (a feature Caldwell ignores) his conception of the INDEPENDENCE of the Chinese Communist Party/Red Army from its peasant base.

These questions can be more fruitfully considered after we have attempted some generalisations from our examination of the three historical examples chosen.

## Mueran los gachupines... Mexico 1910

As we have noted, the elements of the Mexican revolution were an extremely complex conflict of class and proto-class movements, the encroachment of the world capitalist economy (7) and the drive for development of the Mexican economy itself (8).

The regime of Porfirio Diaz, long incumbent dictator, represented a small latifundia oligarchy, based on haciendas, and foreign capital. Opposed to it were liberal bourgeois groups (initially around Madero and then Carranza) who desired a national bourgeois democratic revolution; wealthy northern landowners excluded from the oligarchy, such as Carranza; a nascent labour movement influenced by the anarcho-syndicalist propaganda of a progressive intellectual strata around the brothers Flores Magon, who also had some links into the countryside among the provincial intellectuals (schoolteachers etc.), and, through them, to sections of the rural population; movements of the rural population such as the communalist Zapatistas and Villa's army of northern ranchhands and cowboys.

The production relations in the countryside varied greatly—serfs (in all but name) of the great estates; the

free villages, farming communally-distributed lands, (the ejidos) for centuries—natural enemies of the haciendas and the local state apparatus that reflected its dominance; the independent small farmers and ranchhands of the north (in many ways the least affected and effective section of the population during the decades of change).

Our interest is centred on the inhabitants of the central plateau. In the states of Morelos, Guerrero, Mexico, Puebla and Tlaxcala. The despised indian majority of the population lived in free villages (ie. they had not yet been absorbed by the officially sponsored expansion of the haciendas) in marked contrast to the majority of the other 24 states (9).

The rupture of central authority, by Diaz' announcement of impending retirement, and the botched imposition of an outsider to the vacant governorship of Morelos by the sugar oligarchs, began the process of mobilisation. An opposition candidature by the bourgeois enemies of Diaz carried through to a real campaign rather than the usual accommodation before the poll (the result was foregone but a real campaign was an almost unknown

feature). The campaign involved the masses, even if, initially, as spectators.

This crack in the oppressive apparatus, and the greatly increased pace of the assault of the free village lands, waters and labour which had been accelerating since the railway boom of the 1870's and 80's. A cycle of cheaper freight rates; encouraging the development of exporting sugar cane and the importing of machinery for milling; entailing the expansion of the lands and water supplies of the estates; produced a climate of open resistance long before Madero raised the call for revolt after the failure of his opposition to Diaz in the rigged Presidential election of 1910.

Emiliano Zapata headed a young generation of leaders who the village elders of Anencuilco pushed forward in the place when they judged the time had come to replace the counsel of the aged with the strength of warriors (10). Zapata was already the leader of several hundred armed peasants and acknowledged head of the forces of several villages who had reclaimed lands by force when Madero's case became known.

We do not have the time or space to deal with more than the most salient



features of the movement and its progress. From being one small and localised rebel group among many in the revolt the Zapatistas were distinguished by their explicit fight for the restoration of communal lands. By 1912 the movement had forced the Madero government to consider far-reaching land reforms. Zapata's Plan of Ayala was accepted by the victorious revolutionary armies which defeated Huerta's reaction in 1914. In 1917 the Mexican Constitution was revised "to provide a legal basis for the end of the system of great haciendas and the restoration of communal land tenure, the ejido" (11). These expropriations were maintained in the 1920's and 1930's.

Not that we would suggest that the peasants were the main beneficiaries of the revolution. Indeed the continuation of rural poverty and exploitation in Mexico suggests that the long term balance sheet of the revolution is exceedingly complex. The movement did not capture the State (actually it did capture the State, briefly, but it didn't control it or remould it in the movement's image) although its programme became part of the official ideology and contributed strong elements of 'indianismo' and 'agrarismo' to the national consciousness (in marked contrast to the racism and urban positivism that were previously dominant).

Zapata fought a classic guerrilla campaign—small bands would harry the enemy and spread social war over a wide area, concentrating to seize

a key point and then disappearing again when the enemy concentrated. Government columns would find only peasants tilling their fields—the guns would be dug up when the enemy passed. In this manner the movement could sustain itself whilst spreading from village to village, state to state, until tens of thousands could be rallied to seize major towns—including Mexico City. At this point the weaknesses of the movement became obvious. When the Zapatistas, and 'Pancho' Villa's farmers and cowboys from the North, took Mexico City from the forces of Carranza they could not run either the City or the National State. They were strong enough to be a force that excited repression, co-optation and concession but not to create a state apparatus to rule the country and adopt a programme to draw other classes to their banner.

The more prominent leaders of the military bands might, without violence to the category, be described as middle peasants. They were not in the main the most exploited rural workers—the serfs on the haciendas. They came from 'respectable families' with a history in the local communities. Zapata was also a horse trader. Salazar, his cousin, although poor, came from a respected family in Yautepic. De la O was a recognised village leader of Santa Maria, early active in Leyva's campaign as opposition candidate for Morelos' governorship.

The Zapatistas recruited rebel groups around individuals and occupations but these were among the

first to leave them when the pull of stronger groups and interests were opposed to the peasants. Among these can be counted Jose Rouaix a Protestant preacher from Tlatizapan, Francisco Mendoza a rancher/rustler from Chietla, Jesus Morales a saloon keeper from Ayutla. The movement failed to make links with the urban interest groups in the main except with some important groups of intellectuals.

The programme of the movement, the Plan of Ayala, was the result of a conference of the Zapatista leaders in November 1911. The local school-teacher, an anarchist, Otilio E. Montano took copious notes of the discussions and he and Zapata withdrew for three days to draft the document which was typed by the sympathetic local priest.

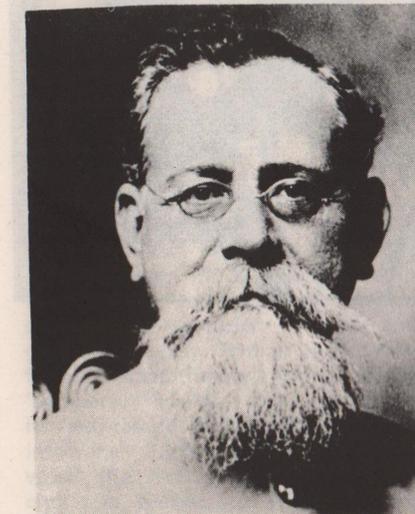
The first five articles of the Plan denounced Madero's inaction since gaining the Presidency and declared him no longer head of the insurgents. The revolutionary junta of Morelos declared that it would make no political agreements until the former Porfiristas remaining in the Army and the bureaucracy had been purged and Madero defeated. Article 6 provided for the immediate return of illegally seized lands. Article 7 provided for the expropriation of 1/3 of the lands of the haciendas, and its distribution to the landless. Article 8 stated that all opponents of the Plan, open or secret, would have all their goods nationalised and 2/3 of these would be sold to provide indemnification of war expenses, pensions for the widows of those killed, and so on. Article 9 argued the basis for article 8 in the already existing legislation derived from the 1857 reform. Articles 10 to 15 provided for an interim government upon the triumph of the revolution, and subsequent democratic elections (12).

The Plan of Ayala projected the Zapatistas and the question of agrarian reform on a communalist basis as a, if not the, central national issue. Large sections of the radical intelligentsia made common cause with the agrarian rebels (eg. Dolores Muro, Francisco and Carlo Mugica, Rodolfo and Gildaro Magana). After his murder of Madero, Huerta's repression drove many other radicals from Mexico City. Many anarchists and syndicalists associated with the working class movement escaped south to join the Zapatistas. Among these latter were the brothers Diaz Soto y Gama (Ignacio was Professor at the National School of Agriculture and he and his students provided great technical assistance to the agrarian movement, Antonio became the main ideologist of the movement); Octavio Jahn, a french syndicalist; Rafael Perez Taylor and Luiz Mendez (who Robert White (13) identifies as "both of vaguely marxist background").

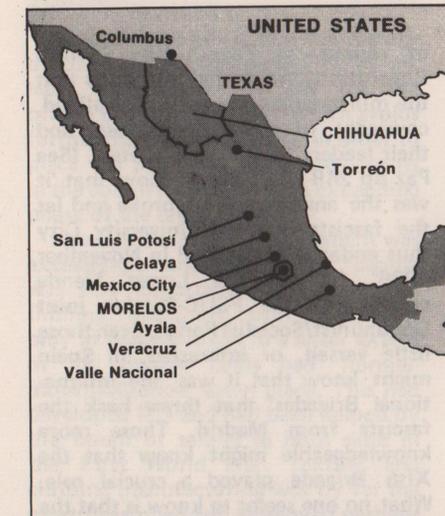
With Madero removed by the reaction, the revolutionary movement was



Villa. Although a formidable fighter, neither he nor his followers were able to tackle state power. (p5)



Diaz. Weak in appearance and military power, his understanding of the mechanisms of the modern state secured victory for the status quo. (p5)



once again united against Huerta's attempt to restore 'Porfirismo'. Within the alliance the agrarians carried greater weight. Villa, representing the rural workers of the north, was won by Magana to the Plan of Ayala thus

unifying all the agrarian rebels.

The victory of the alliance against Huerta left the Zapatistas in control of most of the south. More importantly the war had been fought as a social revolution, advancing peasant armies swept away haciendas and the local officials who were not of known revolutionary views. Revolutionary chiefs took power in the states (Rouaix became governor of Durango) and officially sanctioned the expropriations and redistributions.

The height of the movement was the Convention of Aguascalientes, September 1914, dominated by the worker and peasant delegates from the revolutionary armies. These brushed aside the attempts by the conservative group under Carranza to dominate the event, and forced through acceptance in toto of the Plan of Ayala.

The Carrancistas withdrew from the Convention, setting up their own government in the eastern state of Vera Cruz. The revolution had swept away the old order and transformed the countryside, an aroused and self-confident peasantry was master of the countryside. Opposed to it were the remaining landowners (mainly in the north), the industrialists and other urban bourgeois groups.

By a clever policy of co-optation of rebel leaders, and certain demands of the agrarian and proletarian interests Carranza countered the ideological weapon of the Plan of Ayala. Rouaix joined Carranza and formed an agrarian advisory group for him. Obregon guaranteed favourable labour legislation and union organising rights to the Mexico City Workers Centre. US support strengthened Carranza's hand.

The agrarian position gradually weakened. The better equipped armies of the Carrancistas under the brilliant generalship of Obregon defeated Villa whilst Zapata remained isolated in the south because his armies could not be persuaded to undertake long term campaigns far from their homes. The

intelligentsia, in the main, made peace with Carranza, one by one.

Within two years Carranza ruled Mexico but the peasants were not broken and the situation in the countryside was beyond the restoration of the latifundia even if this were desired. (Carranza certainly was not enthusiastic for the land reforms he was forced to espouse (14)).

The Zapatista movement remained as a communication network among potential revolutionaries, with a limited military potential of armed bands hidden in the mountains. Nonetheless it controlled the policies officially implemented, in many areas by their threatened retaliation for any misdemeanour, in other by the influence of Carrancistas by no means opposed to the Ayala reforms.

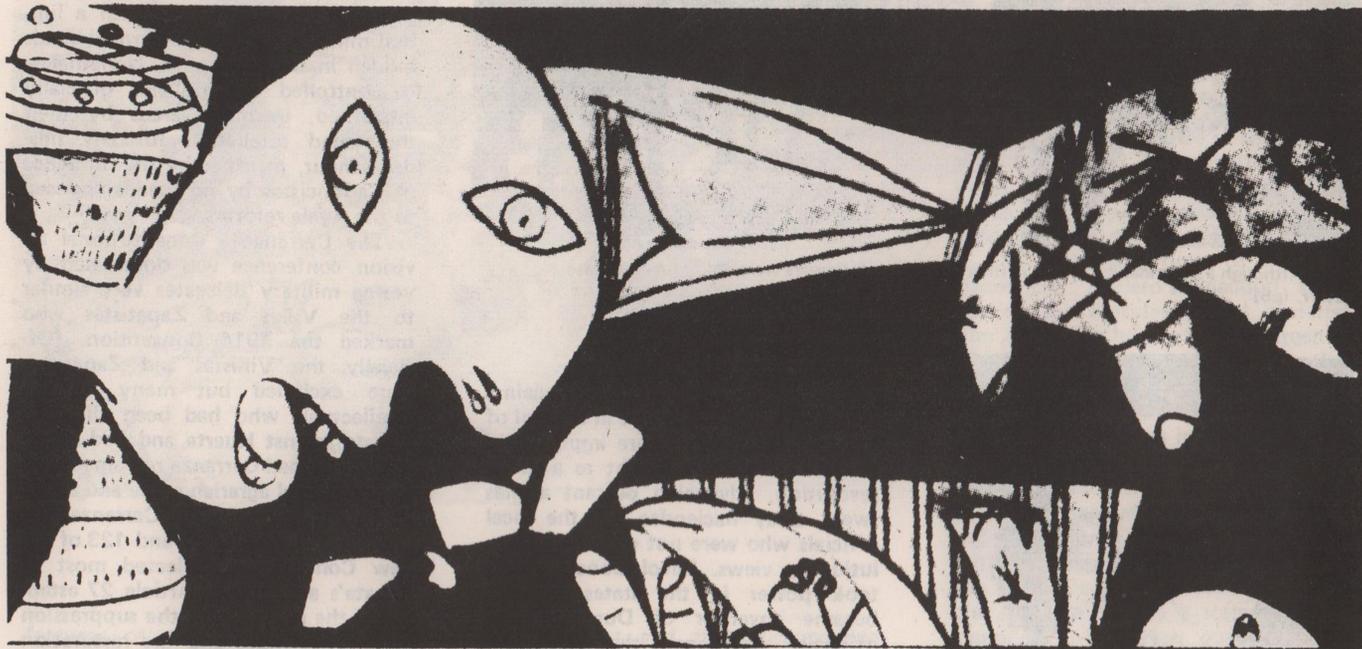
The Carrancista Constitutional revision conference was dominated by young military delegates very similar to the Villas and Zapatistas who marked the 1914 Convention. (Officially the Villistas and Zapatistas were excluded but many of the intellectuals who had been allied to Zapata against Huerta and had subsequently joined Carranza remained won to the general agrarian cause and active in its espousal). Again Carranza lost control and articles 27 and 123 of the new Constitution reflected most of Zapata's aspirations. Article 27 established the principle of the suppression of the haciendas and the restoration and creation of ejidos. Article 123 has been judged by many commentators as "the most progressive piece of labour legislation in any country of the world of 1917" (15).

Zapata maintained a steady pressure, influencing the establishment of schools in all the communities he controlled, issuing manifestos on the Carrancista betrayals of the revolution, maintaining contact with Villa and others.

The war of attrition broke the coalition on both sides. By 1919 Zapata had lost most of his intellectual supporters and a number of military chiefs—favorably influenced by the Constitution and promises of peace and government non-interference in 'their' areas. On April 9, 1919, Zapata was lured into an elaborate trap by the feigned defection of a government army regiment, and shot. This weakened further but did not eradicate or destroy his movement. Carranza experienced a gradual split with the more radical of his generals—Obregon, Calles and Hill, until in June 1919 Obregon announced his opposition candidature for the Presidency. During the ensuing war Obregon attracted most of the remaining Zapatistas and those who had earlier joined Carranza.

With Obregon's triumphant entry into Mexico City the nation settled down to the long task of institutionalising the results of the ten year struggle which is really outside the scope of our study (see Hellman for this).

# A new world in our hearts; Spain 1936



*The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world here in our hearts. That world is growing in this minute—Durruti. Interview with Van Paassen of the Toronto Daily Star*

The truth of the Spanish revolution of 1936-37 has survived despite the mass of books, pamphlets and films dealing with it. The great bulk of these have ranged from narrow self interest and unworthy fabrication to grandly orchestrated propaganda campaigns. On the side of the Republic alone we have the ridiculous fabrications of Ibaruri's 'biography', the mass of memoirs of the ministers of the Popular Front (Alvarez del Vayo; Azana; Largo Baballero; Prieto etc.) to the international campaign of outright lies and denigration uniting the books of Ehrenburg, Koltsov, Fischer etc. to

all the conscious and unconscious agencies of the Comintern.

The effectiveness of this overt and covert rewriting of history is reflected in the history of the best known english-language work—Hugh Thomas' *The Spanish Civil War*. The 1977 edition was extensively rewritten in order to do credit to the social revolution which was seriously misrepresented in the earlier editions due to the authors' reliance on the 'mass of published evidence' for their writing. Bolloten's 'Grand Camouflage' and Paz 'Durruti; the People Armed' do much to unearth, trace and correct a number of the major assaults on the revolution, but for some reason they do not attract large publishers or lengthy reviews.

Many of the big and little lies are still in circulation as good coin. Koltsov's 'interview' with Durruti in August 1936 which is extensively quoted (or worse its conclusions are given as established fact without note

of source—see Payne 'The Spanish Revolution', Weidenfield) to show that the militia columns were undisciplined, cowardly or militarily useless, and their leaders fanatics or gangsters. (See Paz pp 248-252.) Many 'know' that 'it was the anarchists who broke and let the fascists into the University City thus endangering Madrid in November 1936' (it was the Lopez Tienda column of the PSUC-Catalan joint Communist/Socialist Party). Even those little versed, or interested, in Spain might know that it was 'the International Brigades' that threw back the fascists from Madrid. Those more knowledgeable might know that the XIth Brigade played a crucial role. What no one seems to know is that the XIth fought for the last two crucial days in a joint force with the Durruti column which had fought for five days. They were both under the command of Durruti who was responsible for that sector, who planned the counterattack and who died at its

height. The Durruti column had 1400 killed out of its total of 1800. Then there is the frequent talk or hint that Durruti's death was mysterious—he is reported as being shot by 'disgruntled militiamen' or 'in the back' (pause for innuendo to sink in, etc.). There is no basis for this in fact at all.

We have laboured the above point because these small and easily disprovable lies are accomplished by far grander conceptions which are more generalised and thus more difficult to uproot and expose. Of interest to us at this point is the 'terror in Aragon' organised by the anarchists (fanatics and gangsters etc.) who forced the peasants into collectives until Enrique Lister's stalinists established good sense and law and order (to the delight of the remaining landlords).

The whole 'popular front' 'anti-fascist' line of the socialists and stalinists was one huge fraud in the interests of social democratic reformism and the vicissitudes of Stalin's diplomacy. To gain and maintain allies against the expansion of Hitler Germany meant selling the revolutionary general strike wave and mass occupations in France in 1936 with the infamous Matignon Agreement ("we must know how to end strikes"—Thorez). Thus saved 'democratic' and 'anti fascist' France under Blum's FrontePopulaire could weep crocodile tears for Spain whilst collaborating in the farce of Non-Intervention which starved the revolution of arms and guaranteed open German and Italian fascist expeditionary forces. Since 'democracy' couldn't move, how could its 'anti-fascist ally' the USSR openly intervene? Such a thing might 'provoke' the fascists and worry those circles in 'democracy' who could be made 'anti-fascists' — progressive politicians like Churchill, radical colonialists, democratic military men and press lords—such as abounded in Britain in the 1930's!

Having established that the history of the war and revolution is, at the least, contentious, we will try and offer a background sketch which avoids further dispute at this level, in order to place the profound social movements in the countryside during the expanding phase of the revolution.

Spanish economic development was exceedingly uneven. Foreign capital was very important in key industries (Mining, Transport, Iron and Steel); only in Barcelona and to a lesser extent in the Basque lands had 'normal' industrialisation taken place. This had developed late and had been helped by the boom of selling to both sides in the First World War. Textiles and clothing manufacturing was by far the most developed and employed perhaps as much as 40% of the labour force in industrial Catalonia. Labour relations were extremely antagonistic. In the first three decades of the century the struggle between labour and capital moved in successive phases of mass strikes and then street warfare between

the militants of the anarchist labour movement and the bosses' pistoleros. Those arrested by the authorities for 'social crimes' were frequently 'shot whilst trying to escape' (the 'ley de fuego'). The CNT (anarchist trade union federation) was the overwhelmingly dominant organisation amongst workers in Catalonia. The UGT (social democrat union controlled by the PSOE, a social democrat party) had a late start but gained in numbers by its collaboration with the military fascist regime of Primo da Rivera (1923-30) whilst the CNT went underground and many of its militants into exile. The collapse of the dictatorship entailed the collapse of the Monarchy which had brought Rivera to power. In 1931 the Republic was proclaimed. Only a small section of the bourgeoisie, and the social democrats were interested in the development of bourgeois democracy. The CNT surfaced stronger than ever. The right remained very strong in the Cortes and basically hostile to the Republic. In the Army reactionary elements organised openly. By 1936 unemployment was over 30% in many towns and industries, estimates of the total number unemployed in an industrial work force of 3 million vary between ½ million and 1 million.

Agriculture was also badly affected by the depression but here the basic problem was a structural one, with 20,000 latifundia owners holding 2/3 of the cultivated land. Forms of land ownership varied but outside the belt of Catholic tenant farmers between Leon and Navarre small holders and peasants were discontented and prepared to seize the land. Seventy per cent of the population still lived on the land.

The weak Republican/Socialist governments of 1931/33 had done nothing to solve the social problems or to break up the latifundia. Their anti-clerical measures had served to continue the plotting of the monarchists and military. The army had been well practised in repression against the urban and rural risings which were endemic in the period, the most famous of these occurred in the Asturias. The right wing government 1933/36 maintained the repression and restored the power of the Church. The Republic was palpably not working and the question recognised by many was whether the revolution of the masses would sweep away the Republic first or whether a military/clerical/fascist conspiracy would precede it. The military revolt of July, 1936 settled this question. The Republic simply disappeared. In half of the country the militant workers and peasants defeated the rising. In the other half the conspiracy succeeded and began the massacre of the best elements of the working population. Forces available to the Republic consisted of a few air force units and the navy. Most sections of the army which did not join the revolt immediately waited whilst the workers and the rebels fought for mastery and

then declared for the victor.

In the brief period before the Republican state could be reconstituted, with its backbone the Spanish Communist Party; before Russian influence and PCE activity built a new army loyal to the bourgeois republic, power in most of the Republican zone was in the hands of the workers and peasants organisations. In the North East, industrial Catalonia and rural Aragon (divided in half by the front line between the fascists and the revolution) were dominated by the militants of the 1½ million strong CNT-FAI (the FAI—Iberian Anarchist Federation). This period lasted for almost a year (until the events of the Barcelona May Days of 1937 when the bureaucratisation of the CNT and the reassertion of the Republic over the revolution became dominant factors). During this time the results of sixty years revolutionary propaganda (since Fanelli's mission to found the Bakunist section of the First International in Spain) were seen in the widespread collectivisation of industry and agriculture, the organising, dispatch and maintaining of voluntary militia columns to all the fronts of the civil war. The anarchist emphasis on the reorganisation of economic life—and its management by the workers themselves—was one of the touchstones of these revolutionary developments. For a discussion of the political developments of the revolution, the currents in the CNT and their history which are outside the scope of this essay see "Spain 1936—Libertarian Communist supplement no.4".

Most of the sources (see bibliography) accept that the anarchist movement in its millions was mainly an urban organisation by this time (although Fanelli's work had spread into the countryside in the earlier years). Before May 1936 the CNT counted only 34,000 members over all of Aragon, Navarre and Rioja. Undoubtedly the propaganda influence of the Catalonian columns was very significant (see Paz, Mintz, Leval, Dolgoff) but there is no evidence of forced collectivisation suggested. Instead Durruti selected local men from the volunteers of the column and told them that the work of construction would be more important in the long run than the struggle for Saragossa. Thus many of the best militants were returned to their villages, providing the leadership of the movement and maintaining contact with the militia columns. The villages provided food to the columns and through the columns supply organisations the villages were linked to the cities of the coastal plain and thus the exchange of food and machinery organised. Of the 430,000 inhabitants of the revolutionary zone of Aragon 69.5% were involved in collectives, farming 70% of the land. The 275 collectives were organised into 23 federations represented on the Council of Aragon along with delegates of the militia at the front. The Spanish

libertarian movement had always placed great emphasis on social services. Schools were established for the first time in many villages. Medical help was organised through the Federation of Professional and Intellectual workers. Rationing was commonly introduced (usually described as 'the abolition of money') by means of cards, collective's credit notes, although in some places free distribution of basic products was achieved. Priorities were decided by general assemblies with everyone present. Delegates were chosen who were responsible for the administrative tasks of the collectives. These were subject to recall by the assemblies and were regularly changed.

Bolloten reports (p. 55) that the initial wave of collectivisations began among landless labourers on the large estates. The CNT-FAI carried out a propaganda campaign against the inefficiency and lack of culture of individual farming (echoes of the '18th Brumaire'). It was also seen as a base for bourgeois developments which would endanger the revolution in the long run.

One characteristic of the majority of CNT collectives which had a considerable attraction to peasant families initially outside was the system of payment by means of the family wage. Wages of goods paid according to the needs of members and taking account of the number of dependents and not according to the labour of the individual peasant.

To diverge for a moment, we are struck by this means of stabilising and guaranteeing the peasant family income in contrast to the 'stages' of family growth which enter into consideration of problems of differentiation for Chayanov et al.

The prospect of the abolition of their debts and an assured equal standard of living brought many independent peasants and village artisans and shopkeepers into the collectives (see Souchy, Kaminski, Prats in Dolgoff ed.).

Along with the 'caciques' (bosses) the priests disappeared (many small village priests joining the collectives). The social role of the Church was too obvious in Spain to command widespread following among the poor. The Bakunist tradition laid great stress that "the existence of a god is incompatible with the happiness, the dignity, the moral sense, and the liberty of men", "if god existed it would be necessary to abolish him". Brenan suggests an element of delayed (!) Reformation in the puritanism of the Spanish anarchists—certainly tobacco coffee and alcohol were commonly abolished as unhealthy and frivolous. In the towns brothels were closed and their inhabitants rehabilitated by being given jobs (see Orwell).

The collectives themselves maintained, a not always disinterested, pressure on the remaining independent peasants, and it is difficult to judge the extent of unwilling collectivisation.

The continued existence of a 20% independent sector demonstrates that the wholesale forced collectivisation by the militias is a myth. The CNT-FAI propaganda organs were extremely careful to oppose such methods as dangerous and ineffective. (see Bolloten).

Dolgoff, resting on Mintz and Brenan, argues that the latifundia had been established directly onto primitive communist rural communities and that this tradition maintained in rural collectives (not just land but labour and goods) on a large scale until the early C19th, and in some cases up to the 1930's (pp20-23). Dolgoff argues that this peasant collectivist tradition found its expression in Bakunist anarchism; in this form it was carried to the developing towns during industrialisation and provided the basis for the social movements during the revolution when its offspring, the anarchist militias, swept from the coastal cities driving towards Saragossa and eliminating the ruling classes and their servants.

The development of the new Republican State itself checked, reversed and destroyed the revolution long before the rising strength of the military/fascist rebellion defeated the Republic itself. The Ministry of Agriculture, under Communist control, returned lands to the landowners and starved the collectives of credit (see Bolloten pp. 189-201). This began in the areas under the PCE and PSOE control. With the regimentation of the armies, the disbanding of the militias and the development of PCE controlled units (such as Lister's XIth Division) the policy was extended. It was at this stage that the military direction of the peasantry began. Lister methodically and with great brutality broke up the collectives, restored and armed the landowners and murdered the militants.

The CPC developed without roots in a preceding social democratic labour movement, indeed even trade unionism was preceded by the founding of the Party.

Because of the time scale involved we shall, again, be forced to isolate features which we consider significant to the question of the peasantry. We must therefore assume some familiarity with the course of the revolution's development and select as useful—the early influences on the CPC, the nature of the peasant movement, and the strategy of the CPC in the countryside.

It is significant that the Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung begin with the first steps in the development of what was to be proved a successful rural strategy. Consideration of earlier works and of the ideas of Mao's mentors places this in context.

An interesting essay on the development of Mao (The Thought of Mao Tse Tung Red Vanguard Spring 1970),

from a pro-Liu ShiaoChi, pro-Stalin position, gives some detail of these questions. Between Sept. 1918 and Feb. 1919, while Mao was working as a library assistant at Peking University, he came under the influence of Chen Tu Hsiu, the radical Dean of the Faculty of Literature who, in July 1921 became the first General Secretary of the CPC. (17) Chen Tu Hsiu's Marxism was arguably more a form of positivism. He long held the view that westernisation — democratic forms and scientific development—was the key to China's development (18). Chen's link with the CPC lasted only until 1927. In August he was expelled from the Central Committee and in November from the Party (there is little space for us to consider the responsibilities for the mistakes of 1927, Chen was undoubtedly a sacrifice for the errors but whether he was a scapegoat for Stalin's mistakes is a question for debate—See Snow pp. 482-483 Penguin ed. Red Star over China).

A more important influence was Li Ta Chao who was then the Chief Librarian at the University (19). Much more of an activist and organiser than Chen (he was killed in an anti-communist purge in Peking in April 1926), Li's politics were strongly influenced by nationalism (20), strongly idealist (21) and closely sympathetic to anarchism (as was Mao for a period) (22).

In January 1920 Li anticipated Lin Piao by fifty years with the concept that China was a 'proletarian nation', so that the Chinese national-democratic revolution would be a proletarian revolution (23).

In phrasing reminiscent of the Russian narodniks and social revolutionaries, Li Ta Chao saw the most important force of the Chinese revolution as the peasantry: "In economically backward and semi-colonial China, the peasantry forms more than 70% of the population; among the population they occupy the principal position, and agriculture is still the basis of the national economy. Therefore, when we estimate the forces of the revolution, we must emphasise that the peasantry is the most important part". Selected Works of Li Ta Chao Peking 1959 p. 535).

"The significance of the intelligentsia is that a part of it . . . becomes the vanguard of the mass movement." (ibid p.308)

In the last article he wrote, in the summer of 1926, commenting on a peasant defence movement linked to a secret society—the Red Spear—Li Ta Chao noted

"The fact that the Red Spear Societies are adopting new and modern forms of weapons will open a new era in the history of the armed self-defence movement of Chinese peasantry and can be regarded as a great advance in the Chinese peasant movement" (p. 565). Li placed great emphasis on his earlier ideas of the leadership of the intelligentsia.

"Enlightened youth of the village,

elementary school teachers of the villages, intellectuals, and all who have gone to the countryside to participate in the peasant movement! You should hurry to join the masses in the Red Spear Societies develop and assist them . . . Allow them to understand clearly the position and responsibilities of the peasant class in the national revolutionary movement, to recognise who are their enemies and who are their friends, and to understand the nature of the Red Spear Societies and the road they should follow . . . Comrades, several hundred million peasants are waiting to be released from the deep waters of the sea and the burning fires of hell . . . They longingly wait for you to lead them out of this vile pit on to the road of brightness" (pp. 569-570).

We may note strong echoes of this earlier essay in the Hunan Report of March 1927. Mao at this time was one of the young intellectuals to whom his teacher addressed his call and he had returned to Hunan from Shanghai in 1925 to work among the peasants (there is some question about criticism of his urban work for the KMT and CPC—see C. Brandt 'Stalin's failure in China' New York 1966 p. 37).

The inequality in landholding in China was much less extreme than in Tsarist Russia, Mexico or Spain. In the late C19th the basis of the autocracy in Russia was some 28,000 landowners whose holdings were on average some 200 times that of the peasants (Lenin Collected Works Vol I pp. 57-58). Harris (Marx and Mao in Modern China p. 132) states that in China landlord holdings were between five and fourteen times the average. Harris points out that the social base of Chinese society was thus much broader, being based on relatively small landowners, officials, merchants and in the developing coastal cities capitalists. This land seizure in China did not assume the central feature of the liquidation of the old social order, which required parallel movements in trade and industry.

Nonetheless the conditions for the rural population are almost beyond imagination. Chesnaux quotes estimates that conditions deteriorated throughout the period from the Republican revolution (1912) to the War of Resistance against Japan. Rents rose over the period some 300%. This was compounded by the devaluation of the peasants main currency (copper coinage) against the silver yuan. The peasants revenue was calculated in copper, his debts (rent, taxes) in silver. Taxes were commonly collected in advance, in Szechuan in 1933 taxes were already collected for 1971!

The political and economic disruptions of the incessant wars between military cliques meant requisitions, forced labour and pillage. One essential feature of the peasant movement, historically associated with riots, social banditry and secret societies in the 1920's, was the organisation of village

self-defence against soldier/bandits. As we have noted from our brief look at Li Ta Chao's ideas the Red Spear's movement extended these local groups until large areas of the northern provinces of Shantung, Honan, Shensi and Shansi (the areas where the Yanan Republic was later active) were under the control of these armed peasants. Chesnaux states that the movement was at this point mainly defensive against bandits and looters and did not become actively involved in social questions. (pp. 84-5) though he seems to contradict this slightly when he reports that they included tax collectors among their enemies—surely a significant generalisation of their problems! Village industry (handicrafts etc.) were destroyed by the penetration of foreign capitalist production.

On top of these, natural calamities—floods and famines—underlined the absence of overall policy in any field and the decline of central power. Millions died. Millions migrated to Manchuria, to the South Seas, Malaya, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines and Hawaii. Millions flooded into the cities. But the great majority remained in their villages, in misery. Chesnaux (p. 80) reports 'even where commercialised agriculture developed to supply food and raw materials for the industrial centres, it did so within the framework of 'feudal' landlord economy, and not as capitalist (kulak) agriculture. The peasantry became increasingly impoverished within the traditional system of social dependence, while the power of the landlords grew'.

One social development of great importance was the removal of the landlords to the cities. This was a key element in the disruption of the machinery of social cohesion because traditionally this class was responsible for charity and government as well as their own economic interests. Their migration left control in the hands of underlings who had every interest in the exploitation of the peasantry but little in the maintenance of the social fabric.

As conditions changed resistance developed new forms, at first in the old clothing (such as the Red Spears who maintained all the oath taking and quasi religious elements of the secret societies, as incidentally did the early English agricultural workers unions—the Tolpuddle Martyrs—'crimes' included oath taking) but with the important additions of provincial wide activity and new weaponry.

The defeat of the CPC in the cities as Chiang Kai Shek rose to power and then consolidated his hold on the KMT and the expanding Nationalist zone (see Trotsky 'Problems of the Chinese Revolution'; Stalin, 'Questions of the Chinese Revolution' in 'On the Opposition') forced a consideration of the rural strategy that Li Ta Chao had begun to map out. Mao's Hunan Report was an important call to adopt

## The Peasantry and the Chinese Revolution



A Chinese woodcut symbolising the unity of the peasantry and the party. (p6)

In considering the Chinese revolution we have to concern ourselves with a considerable period of time (perhaps 1912-1949, 1927-1957 and any number of permutations) and not only with the characteristics of the historic peasant movement but also of the Communist Party of China over the period. The question of the relationship of the CPC to the peasant movement is further complicated by the character of the Party's development. Founded as late as July 1921 with only 57 members, the early influences on its members, and of course Mao in particular, assumes an important position. This is of a vastly different order of importance to applying the same question to Mexico, where modern revolutionary ideas played a significant though not central role in the development of the Zapata programme though little if any in the movement's origins; or to Spain where 60 years of anarchist activity and propaganda marked the social movement beyond any question.



China: The peasantry in arms during the \*1930's.

this approach. Hamza Alavi (Socialist Register 1965) raises some crucial questions about this. The questioning of 'abandoning the leading role of the proletariat', which he raises quoting Stuart Schram, we have shown to be a far wider question of how much this had been accepted by the CPC to begin with. Certainly the Manifestoes from 1921 onwards are fully in line with Lenin's Theses of the National and Colonial Questions (Selected Works Vol. 10) and the Reports adopted by the 2nd Comintern Conference on the independence of the proletariat and its party whilst participating in the national democratic revolution. However lines adopted under Comintern guidance vary greatly from that argued by Li Ta Chao. The transition might be better described, as Chesnaux suggests, as a forced union of the peasant movement—to that point a product of the internal and spontaneous development of the peasantry itself—and also, more than Chesnaux suggests, experimenting with new more modern forms and goals; and the CPC, at that time a movement of the towns (though driven from them by massacre) and bringing with it modern conceptions of socialism, the concept of 'national salvation'. The point is that the CPC did not 'abandon the marxist conception of the peasantry' in a flash of genius by Mao but that it had never held this conception at more than a cosmetic level.

The union created a movement that can in no way be described as evidence that the peasantry is a kind of inherently revolutionary force such as Fanon suggests or even Mao, with his emphasis on the leading role of the poor peasants, hints at. Alavi, analysing the Hunan report, demonstrates the extraordinary weakness of the section "Dealing Economic blows against the landlords" where Mao presents the movement's prevention of an *increase* in rents and then an agitation for lower rents (after the harvest had been collected and the rents taken) as the highest points of the movement in this field. Alavi's conclusion is that the movement remained

significantly under the control of the section which began it—the middle peasants whose interests are reflected in these demands. For Alavi the key to understanding Maoist strategy in the countryside was its ability to mobilise the middle peasants on such reasonable demands and even include sections of the landlord class (to whom in the main an opening to join the 'national' and 'patriotic' block was always left open); once the movement was begun its success could be used to mobilise the poor peasants who would then be encouraged to voice their own demands (when the situation of civil war and struggle against the Japanese invaders allowed such 'risks' to be taken and the social base of the new social order extended).

The important factors of the union are the secure basing of the CPC among the peasantry, drawing recruits and educating cadres from its base, whilst maintaining itself as more than a peasant movement and then maintaining its ability to 'lean' on different sections of the rural population as the political and military situation demanded. There is considerable tactical genius in this.

The initiative remained firmly in



The Civil War and the struggle against the Japanese allowed the CCP to extend its base and increase its military power.

the hands of the CPC and to describe the movement as "a peasant revolutionary war led by the Communist Party" (Lin Piao 'Long Live the Victory of People's War') is more confusing than clarifying. At all the various stages the CPC fought tendencies associated with peasant wars—egalitarianism, violent settling of accounts with the local enemy etc. The price of success for the long struggle of power was exactly the control of those elements of jacquerie which would create more social unrest than the CPC desired. In return for their support the peasantry received the benefits of good municipal administration, a carefully controlled mobilisation towards defence of its interests, protection from soldiers, bandits and tax collectors. This is not to slander the achievements such advances represented in terms of the living standards and opportunities for development that were created for the peasantry—they were sufficiently striking to cement the union of the CPC and the peasantry—but merely to clear away some of the confusing rhetoric such as Lin Piao's. As we have noted, the openness towards the peasantry of its early leaders (in contrast to the ideas of any of the factions within the CPSU), rooted in their non-marxist origins, left the CPC in a unique position. A brief thought of the host of lost opportunities the Marxist movement experienced at the same time illustrates this graphically. 1927 saw the beginning of the turn to forced collectivisation in the USSR; the block to the KPD represented by its inability not only to defeat the SPD but also to make inroads into the countryside—where the movements of small farmers in Thuringia, and Saxony and the peasants on the Junker estates in East Prussia began extremely radically and ended up allied with the only urban force to offer sympathy, the Nazis; the restriction of many third world communist parties to the cities leaving the countryside to successful nationalist rivals (eg. the CPI and Congress).

## Conclusions

Many of the conclusions we can draw from a consideration of these movements are not really contentious. We shall begin with these and ascend (or descend?) in order of acceptability.

It seems to us obvious that revolutionary capacity (or even the potential for rebellion) is not automatically determined and measured by depth of exploitation. The classical jacquerie may fit this pattern but we regard this as a feature of late feudalism in Western Europe and outside our scope and probably not relevant to conditions found in even the most backward latifundist regions today, marked as they often are by production for export. Fanon is wrong and so are Lin Piao and Malcolm Caldwell.

There is undoubtedly often a strong collective tradition amongst peasant communities. This means that they can act as political and military units as well as social and economic ones. The Mexican experience of 'respected' families maintaining a leading role may be corresponded to Alavi's point about the involvement of middle peasants being the prerequisite for the mobilisation of the poor.

With the rather special condition of the presence of the militias and the proximity of industrial Catalonia we believe that the initial outbreak of collectivisation in Aragon coming, reportedly, among the landless labourers on the big estates can be more attributed to the example of revolutionary Barcelona being transmitted and taken up firstly by the *unionised* labourers. That is to say that it was membership of the CNT rather than any special feature of the landless labourers as a social group. The speed and thoroughness of the collectivisations do not suggest any large differences between the landless and the perennially-in-debt but nominally independent. That the collectives frequently included the whole community, from the Priest and (if any) schoolteacher to the shopkeeper and the blacksmith, reinforces the point about the strength of community feeling.

This question, and that of the family wage (see page 15), we believe undermines the problematic element of the differing status and relative prosperity of peasant families at successive stages of family growth.

That peasant communities may not easily be differentiated into poor and middle peasants does not mean that they cannot be mobilised against the local ruling class or its representatives.

Obviously the communal/collectivist tradition was a central element in the Zapata movement—which was based on its defence. Its importance in Spain is suggested, as we have noted, but is open to question.

The Zapata movement is sometimes

viewed as 'conservative'. From a Kautskyan-menshevik view of inevitable stages succeeding each other it obviously is. The approach of Marx in his 1881 letter to Vera Zasulich (see the article referred to in footnote 1) is obviously at variance with this, and considerably more fruitful. The question of whether pre-capitalist communal forms can serve as a basis for socialist developments depends upon the current viability of these in the face of capitalist development. As such the question is empirical/practical rather than theoretical/philosophical.

Despite the cosmetic appeal of the labour legislation of 1917 and the deals made to win the support of Mexico City labour leaders, we think it reasonable to explain the success of the Plan of Ayala and its continuing (if now principally ideological, in the sense of false consciousness) importance as being due to its position as the most advanced (as well as *at the same time* the most conservative) platform being advocated in the course of the revolution. This explains its capacity to draw the best of the intellectual groups to the banner of Zapata.

The weakness of the Zapatistas was their inability to build a coalition of interests with the urban workers and the individual smallholders and ranchers of the northern states. This capacity, by Carranza sheer opportunism, by Obregon a more complicated mixture of policy and manoeuvre

The weakness of the Zapatistas was their inability to build a coalition of interests with the urban workers and the individual smallholders and ranchers of the northern states. This capacity, by Carranza sheer opportunism, by Obregon a more complicated mixture of policy and manoeuvre (which contributes to the complexity of Mexican development in the 20's and 30's, which we have studiously avoided but see Hellman) was the reason for the Zapatistas failure to maintain their power as an independent movement.

The course of the Spanish revolution saw industrial Catalonia and rural Aragon develop in remarkable harmony. What might be termed the common diversity that typifies the libertarian view of social revolution. The revolutionary movement in the cities sparked the most extensive and longest lasting of the series of rural libertarian communist risings that marked the Spanish revolutionary movement from its early beginnings. The clear-sighted policy of Durruti in releasing the militants to their villages and establishing early lines of communication to the coast was an obvious aid but the social transformation was undoubtedly the unaided activity of the Aragonese peasants. The chance to carry it out depended upon the revolution in Barcelona but Aragon's experience of libertarian communism was all its own work. In this the anarchist insistence upon each group of working people creating its own

part of self-managed socialism played a great role. Instead of seeking to 'proletarianise' the peasantry, to find and encourage its divisions to this end (the Bolshevik model) the emphasis on the collective solution of communal problems proved most effective.

The Chinese experience really depended upon the peasantry giving up its own 'programme' and autonomy to the CPC. That this was successful in bringing the CPC to power and in transforming the situation of the peasantry so that, in the long term, collectivisation took place in which the peasants' acceptance or enthusiasm was crucial, should not hide this fact. From 1949, once power was gained, the key decisions and key struggles increasingly became those of urban elites and movements (of which the Cultural Revolution and the current Modernisations campaign are clear examples). That the discipline, and generally puritan virtues of the peasant are extolled at various times does not make the peasantry the, or a, ruling class in China. For twenty years the revolution lived in the countryside. That important sections of the CPC were marked by this (Lin Piao an obvious example, Mao himself, of course) is as obvious as the readaptation of the bulk of the current generation of leaders. Whether the campaign for industrialisation and modernisation will create problems in the relation between the State and the peasantry (from whom the bulk of the accumulation to fund this must come) remains to be seen.

The above cases would seem to demonstrate that, as Marx argued of the C19th French peasantry, the peasantry does not exist as a *national class in itself*.

If this is the case then the question of the peasant and socialism (seen as a national and international economic and social order) is only clear cut in the manner in which Harris poses it. For beneath this question lies that of the State itself and socialism. Only if we accept that socialism entails a centralised state structure do we exclude the peasantry from an active, conscious, direct and continuous role in its creation (all too often this also entails excluding the proletariat also).

In the face of such traditional state apparatus or the construction/reconstruction of such the peasant movement is weakened and its position reduced. Mexico demonstrates this clearly and we believe it is arguably the case in China.

The alternative view is that demonstrated in Spain, discussed by Marx in "The Civil War in France", to some extent dealt with by Lenin in "State and Revolution" and celebrated consistently in the Bakuninist tradition. This overcomes localism by federalism and a form of revolutionary pluralism more familiarly described today as 'socialist democracy'. In this way the interests and energies of peasants and workers can be jointly harnessed to

sweep away the old social order, the conquests of one group strengthening the other.

This returns us to the questions raised at the beginning, how to understand the regimes led by 'proletarian' parties at the head of peasant masses.

Peasant movements can be mobilised to overthrow feudal and colonial societies. Their incapacity to construct centralised states and the capacity of these, once constructed, to control and dismantle peasant movements returns the central problem of socialism to the struggle between bureaucracy and the working class.

Classes and layers interested in national economic development—among the national bourgeoisie, sections of the military (eg. Bolivia, Peru) and bureaucratic layers dominant in newly independent states (Tanzania?) can to varying extents encourage and bring about peasant mobilisation to break feudal, colonial or simply economic (productive) brakes on development. That such a route to development by means of a command economy, with the ideological covering of Marxism is possible, does not automatically mean that this is socialism, progressive as

this situation may be in terms of the improved standards of life (or even the simple guarantee of life for millions in the 'Third World'). The war between Vietnam and China demonstrates this.

We would conclude that the peasantry can, in favourable conditions, be a revolutionary force; that its movements can be socialist (here strong links with urban revolutionary movements are necessary) or, even in relative isolation, collectivist; and that in a libertarian socialist revolution the peasantry can play an important and equal role in the creation of a socialist economy and society.

## Footnotes

1. Sketching the Limits of Trotsky.
2. 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon. Penguin Marx. Surveys from Exile pp. 238-239.
3. M. Lewin. Russian Peasants and Soviet Power, a Study of Collectivisation. p. 452.
4. Address of the Central Committee of the Communist League. Selected Works Vol. 1. p. 166.
5. Lenin. Selected Works Vol. III. p. 150.
6. See footnote 1.
7. John Womack Jr. Zapata and the Mexican Revolution. Penguin. Chapter 2.
8. Womack.
9. See Tannenbaum. The Mexican Agrarian Revolution. p. 56. Landsberger (ed). Latin American peasant movements. p. 116.
10. Womack. p. 22.
11. Landsberger (ed). p. 102.
12. Womack. pp. 543-5.
13. Landsberger (ed). pp. 153-4.
14. *ibid.* pp 158-9.
15. Judith Adler Hellman. Mexico in Crisis. Heinemann 1978. p. 20.
16. Bolloten. The Grand Camouflage—the Spanish Civil War and Revolution 1936-39. Pall Mall 1968. pp. 199-200.
17. Edgar Snow. Red Star over China. Penguin 1972. pp. 174, 179-80.
18. "The Basis for the realisation of Democracy" New Youth. Dec. 1919. Vol. 7 no. 1.
19. "under Li Ta Chao, as assistant librarian at Peking National University, I had rapidly developed towards Marxism" Mao Tse Tung in Snow. pp. 182-3.
20. "For more than four thousand

21. Dec. 1919. "There has developed in the human heart a voice of authority that down to the present day still echoes in our hearts. It has a mysterious quality that is not due to the stimulus of the outside world . . . The power of human conscience is completely spontaneous" Source Materials for the Study of the History of Modern Chinese Thought. Peking 1957. pp 1220-1221. 1922 (when Li was a leading figure in the CPC in northern China). "We can search for the roots of socialism in three aspects of our psychology. In the aspect of knowledge, socialism is a critique of the presently existing order. In the aspect of feeling, socialism is as emotion that makes us capable of replacing the present order with a comparatively good new order; this new order is the result of our intellectual critique of the capitalist system. . . . In the aspect of will, socialism causes us to exert our efforts in the objective world upon things that are already known to us in our intellectual and emotional images, that is, to exert our efforts to replace the capitalist system which is the final form possessing the characteristics of ruling and authority, with a workers administration" Selected

works. pp. 399-400.

22. See above quote and:— on Kropotkin's Mutual Aid". "The spirit of mutual aid has definitely not been destroyed . . . the final class struggle is the means to reconstruct society. The principle of mutual aid is the creed that will reconstruct the human spirit" Selected Works. p. 224. and Mao: "My interest in politics continued to increase . . . But just now I was still confused, looking for a road, as we say. I read some pamphlets on anarchy, and was much influenced by them . . . I often discussed anarchism and its possibilities in China. At that time I favoured many of its proposals". In Snow. p. 177.
23. "An Economic Explanation of the causes of the changes in Modern Chinese Thought" in New Youth. Vol 7. no. 2. 1920. "The whole country has gradually been transformed into part of the world proletariat". "The Race Question". New Republic. Vol. 1, no. 6. 1924. "The white people . . . place themselves in a superior position and look down on other races as inferior. Because of this the race question has become a class question and the races, on a world scale, have come to confront each other as classes . . . The 'class struggle' between the lower-class coloured races and the upper class white race is already in embryonic form, and its forward movement has not yet stopped."

By 1894 all the Irish unions, whether based in Britain or Ireland, had become so exasperated with this state of affairs that they decided to set up their own congress—the Irish TUC. Despite the fact that it was the logic of Britain's imperialist relationship to Ireland that had forced the Irish unions to make this move no anti-imperialist solution was arrived at until Connolly and Larkin upset the boat.

At the beginning of this century a sense of conservatism had embedded itself in the established union organisations of both Ireland and Britain. In both countries the old unions gave an inadequate response to the massive need for organisation amongst the now rapidly growing 'unskilled' sections of the workforce. It was here, in the docks and elsewhere, that Connolly and Larkin were able to step in and provide a militant syndicalist alternative in the fierce struggles before the First World War.

## Socialism and Nationalism

Fenianism since the Famine had always had a 'socialistic' component to it. It challenged British dictated property relationships and saw a redistribution of ownership, either through nationalisation or individual control, as the solution to the misery of the Irish people. These populist ideas gained wide currency amongst the propertyless and small tenant farm workers during the agrarian struggles of the late 19th century. It was this mass of people who were to propel Sinn Fein to power after the First War and who have since remained one of the chief bulwarks of Republican sentiment in Ireland.

However, until the arrival of Connolly in Ireland 'urban' socialism was almost entirely an offshoot, organisationally and theoretically of socialism in Britain. These groups often had no policy on Independence, though they often supported Home Rule. This reflected current thinking in the Irish Labour Movement, the socialism of loyalist workers and also the predominant strain in European socialism which saw Imperialism as being progressive.

Connolly's Irish Socialist Republican Party was wholeheartedly in favour of Independence. It saw the oppression of Ireland as a nation by Britain as being as key a barrier to the emancipation of Irish workers as the most antagonistic domestic capitalist. It was the job of the working class to ensure that the struggle for national liberation became also the struggle

# IRELAND



The Famine. Mass death and immigration resulted from a disaster that many came to see as avoidable.



The Irish Citizens Army. The first workers militia in Europe.

for social liberation. It was no good waiting for the working class to become the majority of the population, for under Imperialist domination this would never happen.

The Irish Citizens Army, a workers defence force set up by Connolly during the bitter days of the Dublin 1913 lockout, thus naturally found itself putting muscle into the Easter Rising of 1916 alongside the Republicans in the Irish Volunteers.

However with Connolly dead, the Labour Movement was content to adopt a low profile during the struggle for Independence. This allowed traditional Republicanism to become the focus for those workers who opposed

the British connection. It also gave the northern unionists the opportunity of driving a wedge into the working class of Ulster, directly by creating the Ulster Unionist Labour Association, and indirectly by creating an atmosphere in which loyalist trades unionists could hold sway.

By 1920 the Unionist politician Carson, not a poor man, raised the cry of 'No Popery' to split the unity of catholic and protestant workers which had been developing over the past year in the docks of Belfast. Again in the wake of the successful outdoor relief demonstrations of 1932 when the catholics of the Falls and the protestants of the Shankill united,

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Loyalist workers driving Catholics out of work in the 1930's. The Orange ruling class used sectarianism to divide the working class.

the Unionist leaders were quick to rekindle the flames of sectarianism. The Labour Movement remained powerless.

It was not merely through rhetoric alone that the protestant ruling class was able to stave off the move for complete Independence and split the working class of the north east. It had the power whether or not to provide employment, housing and through this after 1921, basic democratic rights. Protestant workers were led to believe that not to accept those sectarian conditions of existence would lead to economic misery under the tyranny of the Catholic Church. The paralysis of initiative on the part of the Labour Movement since the First World War prevented any challenge from within the protestant working class being mounted.

In the South popular politics thus focussed firstly on Sinn Fein and then Fianna Fail—neither of which have

ever been the political mouthpieces of the Labour Movement.

The trade union movement itself became divided between catholic nationalists and the amalgamated largely northern and British based unions. From 1945, for over a decade the movement split into two federations: the Confederation of Irish Unions and the Irish Trades Union Council.

Despite the fact that the ITUC and its successor the ICTU had an increasingly autonomous northern committee, the trade union movement was not even recognised by the Stormont government until 1964. This impelled trade union leaders to put forward as acceptable a face as possible in order to gain legitimacy. Political repression, discrimination and partition therefore became subjects not to be touched. Economic issues were to be their sole concern. The Movement in the north by strictly

adhering to the unionist rules thus straight jacketed itself throughout the 50's and 60's.

## Civil Rights

By the end of the 60's some trade unionists were involved in the Civil Rights campaign. Decades of 'political stability' and a climate of relative economic prosperity had convinced many that it was now possible to beg a few concessions from the Unionist regime without fear of pogrom as reprisal. The demands of the campaign, although liberal, revealed the northern state to be riddled with discrimination against catholics in employment, housing and democratic rights. Disgruntled loyalist workers, for decades having been given ideological and material sustenance by the Orange ruling class, saw the Civil Rights Movement as undermining the very existence of their state and acted accordingly. The

Labour Movement, in order to preserve its position of 'neutrality', soon afterwards began to dissociate itself from civil rights, as hostility to the campaigners became physical. With the RUC and 'B' Specials mounting increasingly vicious attacks on the catholic communities, the beleaguered population had no alternative but to resort to armed self defence. And in the circumstances this could only be done, not through the organs of the workers movement, but through a reborn Irish Republican Army.

## Bread and Butter

From the arrival of the British troops through Internment and Bloody Sunday the Labour Movement in the North remained largely quiet. It was unable to prevent its own loyalist members from mounting a general strike against the abolition of Stormont.

Eventually, under international and rank and file pressure the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU launched into the Better Life for All Campaign. Despite the campaign's incredibly short life the assumptions surrounding it strongly appealed to British trades unionists, and today still retain some level of credibility. Sectarianism exists in the working class of the north, so the argument went, because of economic inequalities. Before the working class can unite these have to be evened out. Huge subsidies must be pumped in by Britain to develop capitalism in the deprived regions of the province. This strategy, totally impractical as it is, requiring a capital input far beyond the means of crippled capitalist Britain, was unlikely to appeal to the unionist ruling class who would thereby lose their source of strength. Furthermore it actually strengthened the position of British Imperialism by not recognising the ability or right of the Irish to govern themselves, by demanding that Britain should, once more, put things right for Paddy who can't manage his affairs himself.

On other fronts the BLFAC advocated various rights; for free speech, education and social services. Primarily, the emphasis was on "The Right to live free from threats of violence". By this it meant the violence of the 'gunmen'. It never took up the violence of the State regularly employed against the catholic community.

The BLFAC was only one facet of the NIC/ICTU's long term attempt to present itself as a non sectarian body slowly abolishing evils through



Burntollet January 1969. The official use of force convinced many of the irreformable nature of the Northern Ireland State.

economic reform. It has proved unsuccessful on all fronts. Wages are lower and prices and unemployment higher than anywhere in Britain. Its record on unionisation amongst women—43% of whom work—and incorporating women into the union structure is poor indeed. It has proved unable to oppose oppressive legislation or to take advantage of progressive legislation.

Of course, not all trades unionists, members or officials, are this over-cautious either on issues of pay or repression. There are numerous instances of both individual and rank and file upsurges over the past ten years—the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression being one of the more recent. But in a climate where repression is intense, where every peaceful march is harassed by hostile men, organising politically becomes a problem. Even when the unions have been pressured into voicing their objection, it all seems futile when no action is subsequently taken.

There does, however, seem to be a mood of change in the air at the moment. Recently, members of NUPE in the Royal Victoria and other hospitals have been taking Industrial action in objection to the disruptive presence of troops. They want them completely out of the hospitals. Typically the British appointed district official accused the leading steward of sectarianism in an attempt to break the strikers resolve.

More recently still conference has forced the NIC to withdraw its delegates from the standing committee on the Royal Ulster Constabulary. This represents a significant victory for those in the trades unions who have been campaigning against police harassment and torture for many years.

In the South too there has been a resurgence of interest in opposing

## TROOPS OUT



For regular coverage of events in Ireland and activity the monthly paper Troops Out is invaluable. Contact can be made at Box UT, c/o 2a St Paul's Rd., London N1.

the oppression taking place in the north. In the South activists in the labour movement critical of the Government's policy on the north have experienced their fair share of intimidation, harassment and arrest. But as opinion polls have shown, they are not acting without a good deal of public support. What these activists, both north and south, need is our support. We believe that can best be given by people in the British trade union movement by demanding the withdrawal of our troops from Irish soil, and by recognising the right of the Irish people to determine their own future.

In the next LC we will be looking more thoroughly at the Labour Movement in Ireland as a whole today. There will be later in the year, a Supplement on the Republican Movement. Any comments, criticisms, would be warmly welcomed.

# IS THIS THE END ?

The CNT (Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo—the anarchosindicalist revolutionary union of Spain) held its fifth congress in 69 years of existence on December 8th to 16th in the Hall of the Casa de Campo in Madrid. A revolutionary union with a paid up membership of 85,000 and 300,000 adherents is a matter of great importance for the Spanish working class. Unfortunately it appears that the CNT is at present more a closed shop than an outward going organisation responding to the needs of the workers. It appears that it is being controlled by purist anarchists who are more concerned to preserve their doctrine than to make it a constructive force in the class struggle.

If the LCG supported the CNT from its reconstruction in 1976, it was because it represented then an initiative to construct a class and mass movement that was both anti-capitalist and anti-statist. We have always taken a critical position on anarcho-sindicalism, but we thought that a CNT implanted in the working class by its practice in the workplaces could bypass the errors of the Spanish libertarian movement, coming to grips with the questions that anarchosindicalism has, even today, never clearly responded to. For that, it was necessary that the CNT had democratic structures, and was implanted in the workplaces, leading a political drawing from the real practice of its militants and advancing towards a revolutionary libertarian alternative.

We supported the CNT because some of its militants seemed to be in agreement with this schema and the entire libertarian workers movement was rallying to it. This support did not mean that we stopped criticising all the mistakes of the past, the lack of democracy and the temptations to make the CNT a sanctuary of purist ideology. (See previous articles in LC, Libertarian Spain 1 & 2, and our supplement on Spain.) Unlike some anarchists and libertarians, we did not want to enshrine the myth of the CNT still further, but to support its practice, in the workplaces, and its part in the construction of a libertarian workers movement.

1979 was a year of diminishing struggle in Spain. The movement that had developed after the death of Franco outside the reformist unions (the Socialist UGT and the Communist CC.OO) in the factory assemblies has been undermined and isolated. Even where militant strikes have succeeded,

# CNT

e.g. the victory of the petrol pump attendants in January, there have been victimisations of militants. The government has been introducing legislation to make strikes illegal (contracts with employers would be binding for their duration) although lockouts were legal. Likewise, political and solidarity strikes were to be forbidden, and factory committees could order a return to work above the heads of the workers themselves. New legislation also facilitated redundancies, and made payment of the national minimum wage dependent on productivity.

Much of this has been accepted by the CC.OO and UGT, who have campaigned mainly over the issue of redundancies arguing for negotiated procedures.

## AS THE CNT CRUMBLES

This decline in militancy, especially outside the Basque country—has left the militants of the CNT exposed. There have been two reactions—either to concentrate on activity outside the legal framework wherever this framework prevents direct action, or to adopt a more flexible approach, working from within the factory committees for revolutionary strategies. The proponents of the first option have been called purists and idealists; the proponents of the second course have been denounced as reformists and marxists.

Readers of Libertarian Spain No.2 (copies still available, send 30p in stamps to LS, Box 3, 73 Walmgate, York) will be familiar with the expulsion of the ASKATASUNA current of

anarchist communists by the CNT of the Basque country. This expulsion was a precedent for the treatment given to Sebastian Puigcerver, a former member of the CNT national committee and a tendency with which he was associated, the Anarcho-sindicalist Affinity Groups. The grounds for this expulsion were that the individuals expelled had set up parallel groups which aimed to control the CNT. This had already been used against the comrades of the Movimiento Comunista Libertaria (MCL). If one bears in mind that the CNT was only reconstructed on the merger of different tendencies—the councillists, the libertarian communists, Askatasuna, autonomists, traditional anarchists, etc,etc,etc, and that the basis on which it attempted to function was the reconciliation of different points of view, then his change is quite amazing. BICICLETA, an independent anarchist collective, who had themselves been expelled from the CNT, published a letter outlining the links between the Federacion Anarquista Iberica (the grouping that had dominated CNT internal life for so many years) Luis Andres Edo, a dominant voice in the Barcelona building workers' CNT union, and the old CNT exiles in Toulouse. Let two facts suffice on this point: 1) Juan Ferer, a central leader of the FAI, had proposed at an intercontinental meeting of the anarchist federations that the exiles should take the reins of the CNT; 2) a statement made by Federica Montseny, leading Toulouse exile and one of those who had served as minister in the Republican government in the Civil War, at the Mutualite Hall in Paris that rather than let the CNT escape from their hands they would prefer to see it dead.

There can be little doubt that the charge made against the "reformists" was that the parallel organisation set up by the "orthodox" anarchists had decided to put the boot in. The expulsions were associated with physical attacks on some "reformists". The voting of expulsions had been accompanied by counter-charges that the meetings were fixed deliberately. At any event the internal power struggle has been effective in driving workers out of the unions - for example the voting on the expulsion of Puigcerver and 11 comrades was 48 to 18 with 18 abstentions in a union of 1,000 members.

Following this and other expulsions in April and May last year the editorial of Solidaridad Obrera, the CNT's largest paper, a fortnightly, was voted out. "Soli" changed from a paper that was open to debate on all points to a more boring but orthodox uncontroversial paper. The orthodox political justification for this is, in the words of the new general secretary of the CNT Jose Bondia, that they should have dared to question the historic basis of the CNT and its anarchosindicalist theory. Dogmatism rules OK!

Given such a polemical background it was only to be expected that the 5th Congress should be traumatic. The first two days were filled with discussions on credentials. 737 delegates representing 350 unions were present. (The CNT is made up of regional unions of trades.) The conference was a meeting for many international observers, including sections of the International Workers Association, the syndicalist international, in Norway, Italy, France, Venezuela, Germany, Britain, Chile, Cuba, etc. The third day was taken up with procedural discussions largely on how the

main conference motion should be discussed, and on the report of the national committee.

The actual debate on anarchosindicalism and libertarian communism (the method and aim of the CNT) left many problems.

How are these principles to be put into practice? The classical slogans of anarchosindicalism: antiparlamentarism, anti-capitalism, anti-militarism, federalism, direct action etc create as many problems as they solve. The reaffirmation of the Zaragoza 1936 Congress motions ignores the many obvious criticisms that the '36 motions on sexuality, libertarian communism, education etc are open too. These criticisms were not allowed to be debated at Congress.

The debate on organisation became the last straw for the minority of delegates who were unhappy with the proceedings. Disagreement centred on the question of "double" militancy - should a member of the CNT be allowed to be active in another organisation? The traditional answer was "no" - it meant that communists had no power in the CNT but it caused controversy in relation to the FAI since "double" militancy in the CNT and FAI was always allowed. Today, with the development of many libertarian currents, the problem is accentuated since the FAI is still allowed a privileged position that is refused to all other political groups. When this position was reaffirmed 50 delegates including the Aragon federation left the Congress, angry that the FAI and exiles' hold over the CNT could not be challenged in the Congress.

Thus the major part of the conference appears to have achieved little beyond sterile sectarian debates which will only have pleased traditionalists

# 5<sup>o</sup> CONGRESO CNT-FAI



who wanted to reaffirm principles of the past.

The last two days of the conference were taken up with re-election of the new national committee and debates on all the questions of day-to-day strategy. The new General Secretary was voted in by only 45 of the 350 unions which were present at the start. Many unions had left in disgust, others were clearly committed to supporting attempts to question the validity of Congress, or attempts to set up a rival libertarian revolutionary union. Whilst a definite majority does exist for the orthodox anarchists, this hegemony has been won partly by default since all its opponents are divided into smaller tendencies, and partly because some unions have not taken sides.

Congress decided against the previous policy of working in assemblies, and voted for the establishment of CNT committees in each factory. It also decided not to stand in the state-organised elections to factory committees, and made commitments to alternative strategies, sabotage and unlimited strikes. Whilst it did not rule out the possibility of participating in collective bargaining, congress argues that it should only take part when it could do so directly without intermediaries. These final debates on union strategy, unemployment, the press, prisoner international organisation, the CNT exiles, privileged relations with the FAI, education, ecology etc received little attention and were passed over hurriedly.

The main impression created by the conference was one of disarray and division. Doubtless the purified CNT may still play a role as a bunker for the revolutionary opposition, but given its sectarianism, its lack of democratic debate, and maximalism, it is doubtful if it can play a role as the centre for an opposition.

The congress has confirmed the splintering of the CNT. In the weeks that followed entire regions refused to accept the result of the conference. On 26 and 27 January a national meeting of unions declared that it did not recognise the new general secretary and set up structures to permit coordination between these unions, including the appearance of the paper "CNT".

A national plenum followed in Zaragoza where the unions represented decided that the process of appeal against conference decision was over of only recognising the secretariat elected at the plenum, and to regard as exterior to the CNT all those who had sabotaged its democratic functioning (including Bundia, the General Secret Secretary elected at the December congress, and the FAI exiles). It was decided to prepare for a congress on the 25, 26, 27 and 28 of July to restore a democratic structure and to plan a union strategy.

These militants have been attacked as fascists, marxists and reformists. It has been alleged that they are a small minority acting outside the factories. Certain "anarchosynicalists" have attacked and ransacked the offices of

unions in opposition, like the "Water, Gas and Electricity" in Barcelona in mid-January, and the entertainments industry union in Barcelona in the beginning of March.

The worst incident was on the 16th March, when 60 "anarchosyndicalists" attacked the office of the CNT in Maturo, near Barcelona, where a regional plenum of the unions in opposition was being held. Firing shots in the air and laying about them with iron bars, they wounded several militants, including Enrique Marcos, the former general secretary, and a militant of Maturo who risks losing an eye.

Far too many people who tried to pull the CNT out of the crisis it was in were expelled by those who are tragically incapable of anything else other than threats and aggression, expulsions and fixed ideology.

Today the comrades who did not recognise the congress are trying to construct an organisation capable of real debate and real union strategy. They are united in the need to construct an organisation based on worker's democracy and affirming its attachment to the libertarian workers' movement. Their political positions are not as yet well developed, but we must support them in their desire to confront problems in practice and without sectarianism. If these comrades reappropriate the CNT, then we still support the CNT. We have political differences with these comrades, but they are differences that can be argued in debate.

Some lessons to be drawn from the disarray of the CNT are that:

1) Revolutionary strategy for unions must be dialectical: it must *advance* the general level of class consciousness *towards* revolutionary goals by drawing on the strength of the class as a whole. The small impact that the CNT made was due to its support for factory assemblies in the period 1976-78, its fall is due to its failure to find a realistic policy in a period of downturn of class struggle where it should have played a decisive role in the struggle for worksharing against unemployment.

2) The policy of the purist orthodox anarchists is vanguardistic, since it places the needs of their small groups above that of class struggle.

3) The disarray of the CNT flows from the ideological confusion of the Spanish working class as a whole—the massive apathy developed by the reformists and the government has defused the radicalisation following on from the dismantling of Francoism.

Terry Sheen and Billy Williams

## Italy a year after Negri's arrest

### WHOSE TERROR, WHOSE TERRORISM?

In the first six months of 1980 over 200 presumed terrorists have been arrested, in the daily police swoops in different parts of Italy.

Together with those arrested last year—including professor Toni Negri, who after 13 months in jail is still no nearer a trial—there are 320 comrades accused of belonging to the Red Brigades (BR), 130 of Prima Linea (Front Line - PL), and 50 accused of belonging to the Libertarian guerilla organization, Revolutionary Action (Azione Rivoluzionaria - AR). In fact just a month ago the entire editorial collective of the magazine ANARCHISMO directed by comrade Alfredo M. Bonnanno, were arrested on the formal charges of "conspiring to overthrow the democratic republican order and participation in armed insurrection".

What has changed over the last year in Italy in the light of these disturbing facts?

Well for a start Toni Negri, Oreste Scalzone and the other Autonomia Operaia comrades are still in jail. The charge of participating in the assassination of Aldo Moro has been dropped against Negri, but he still has a couple of dozen other serious charges against him.

He and the 500 other comrades arrested now risk up to twelve years in custody before they may be tried. This is just one of the measures passed with PCI (Communist Party) support in the special anti-terrorist laws.

On the other hand we are treated daily in the media to the latest installments of the "repented" BR guerillas, Peci and Fioroni. Their seemingly endless attacks of verbal diarrhoea have succeeded in securing the arrest of many comrades. However the mode, method, timing and "spontaneity" of their confessions don't convince many people of the Left.

To add to the overall variety, the son of Christian Democrat leader, Donat Cattin, is in hiding, being searched for by the police on suspicion of being a BR. No one can say that politics in Italy are dull!

But does all this police activity of late mean that the guerilla organizations are on their knees? It certainly doesn't look that way. Last week a BR commando attacked a Carabinieri

Barracks, and also of late two leading Christian Democrat exponents have been shot in the legs by the BR. Also two university professors have been killed in broad daylight surrounded by students in the university halls.

And the intrigue doesn't stop here. A couple of the arrested suspect BR are PCI union militants. All very interesting, as in parliament ex-communist and now Radical MP Leonardo Sciascia (a famous writer) has stated that none other than the PCI general secretary Enrico Berlinguer, told him that in Czechoslovakia there was a BR training camp. Naturally Berlinguer denies ever saying such a thing!

To the revolutionary the present situation is one of constant intimidation at his workplace and at home. Vigilante Communist unionists are quick to denounce any worker who steps out of line or who dares to criticise, as a BR flanker. Sixty-one Fiat workers were sacked recently on similar accusations (unproven). Out of the factory or office, intimidation consists of ubiquitous armoured road blocks with machine guns galore. This is a time-worn (South American guerillas are past masters of this technique) tactic to disseminate fear amongst the population. Showing them with all this force that the situation is very grave indeed, but thanks to the state "heavies" all "decent and

law-abiding" citizens are protected.

The revolutionary left groups are too tied up in parliamentary haggling, whilst each tries to outdo the other in verbal homage to the democratic institutions (so "democratic" in a country of the Lockheed scandal, parliamentary tie-ups with all kinds of mafia, corruption proven over and over again by politicians... not to mention the ignoble exit made by ex-president Leone!). These "democratic" institutions are still applying juridically the Rocco Code, written when Benito Mussolini was prime minister!

The Libertarian revolutionaries, are either locked away in their never-never land criticizing everything and everyone (that's the position of the FAI - Italian Anarchist Federation), or on the other hand they're trying to build a broad-based mass revolutionary movement as the only viable alternative to the armed struggle. USI (the Italian Syndicalist Union) is following the latter course. Not without big problems. However USI is rapidly becoming a gathering point of various libertarian revolutionaries, ranging from: Anarcho-Syndicalists, Left Syndicalists (ex-New Leftist militants in the communist union CGIL), Anarcho-Communists (ex-FAI worker anarchists), and Libertarian Communists (an eclectic current of Platformist Libertarian Communists, Councillists and Marxist Humanists).

The major social problem in Italy today is not so much as to fight terrorism, but to fight the causes of terrorism, which are Capitalism and its Bourgeois state. Create the prospect of the Social Revolution in short. It seems too obvious that current guerilla activity is the mere *effect*, a subjective choice of how to combat the cause (capitalism). Unfortunately the media and reformists are only too happy to scare the proletariat into passivity, through increasing militarization, and witch-hunting any kind of opposition. To this end they are at present having success, but there are clear signs of deep cracks appearing in this design. Cracks that are inherent to the capitalist system of government (increasing unemployment, marginalisation, not to mention the overall corruption of government which also makes the headlines, when all attempts to cover-up fail).

If the state is at present succeeding in its objective of criminalizing revolutionary opposition of all types, at the same time, the state doesn't enjoy a very high reputation amongst Italians, under the biased weight of the media, probably see the state at present as the lesser of two evils... but for how much longer I wonder?

Nissim, Milan, Italy June 1980