



THE FIRST THREE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONALS

BY

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Peoples Democracy
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This pamphlet provides a concise history of the first three Socialist Internationals; the International Workingmen's Association, The Second International and The Comintern. It will be of particular interest to Irish readers as it sets developments in Irish Socialism against this international background.

To the memory of Bob Armstrong and Johnny Byrne, dedicated and lifelong fighters for socialism.

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PEOPLES DEMOCRACY, CONWAY MILL, FALLS ROAD, BELFAST.

Cover from a mural, "Man at the Crossroads" by Diego Rivera.

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Cover from a mural, "Man at the Crossroads" by Diego Rivera

BACKGROUND

Understanding Socialism is particularly important today, when it is attacked by its open enemies and betrayed by those who claim to defend it. Against the 'realism' of those who accept readily the division of labour being expressed in the globe's division into armed States, each composed of a majority of isolated individuals being manipulated by a minority possessing economic power, it is necessary to assert once more the practicability as well as the desirability of the idea of one world order in which the interdependence of each person is expressed in their basic equality in making decisions that affect their individual and collective lives.

That this work is concerned with the first failures of attempts to organize to achieve this aim may seem to contradict the above statement. In fact, it reinforces it. Despite defections, the consistent Socialist Internationalists have advanced their cause as those who have compromised their ideals have not. Moreover, even though the world Socialist revolution may seem to have slowed down since 1979, its advance from 1945 until then was a consistent expression of the desires of large sections of the oppressed and exploited of the earth. If successive Internationals failed, the revolutionary people pushed them aside to win many struggles.

Even before the founding of the official **First International** (*The International Workingmen's Association*) in 1864, three attempts were made to form an International Alliance of workers against their common oppressors. Two of these were based in Britain, one in Germany and France. The British attempts were those of the earliest of modern working classes, created by the original **Workshop of the World**. Its length in history of Socialist theory was equalled only by that of France, which it surpassed in numbers and technical development. This British pre-eminence would soon reveal its drawbacks. As yet, it was a positive factor.

In 1845 the British Chartist (democratic working class) leader, George Julian Harney (1817-1897), founded a Society of Fraternal Democrats, Chartists and foreign political refugees. It never developed outside Britain and disappeared with the Chartist movement itself after 1848. Shortly after its foundation, the **Communist League** began in France - a working class movement which, though weak, had had its consciousness stimulated by its democratic revolution - and in Germany, where such a revolution had yet to occur and where the bourgeoisie would not be able or willing to lead the country's still tiny working-class to achieve it.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) were leading theoreticians of the Communist League, writing its *Manifesto* in the revolutionary year of 1848. After that year's defeats the League declined, under the pressure of European reaction. In 1852 it was liquidated by Marx and Engels to save comrades imprisoned in the German State of Prussia.

During the 1850s, the British skilled workers built up their industrial strength in a series of 'new model'

trade unions, which were to survive as such bodies had not done before. This encouraged the ex-Chartist Ernest Jones (1819-1869), to start a third International Association, named thus, in 1855. Marx was invited to join but refused because it included (already) among its leaders the Russian Liberal refugee Alexander Herzen (1812-1870), who was making his peace with the new Czar. The Association lasted four years before it collapsed.

THE INTERNATIONAL WORKINGMEN'S ASSOCIATION

The traditions set by these three bodies were strengthened by events after 1860. Not only had British trade unionism grown but the French workers were also active and were even helped, for a time, by the Government of what was then the Second Empire, against the Republican capitalists. This misalliance did not last long, but resulted in a delegation of French workers visiting the British World Exhibition of 1862. There the more radical of them met their British comrades and agreed to work jointly on matters of common interest. On their return home they sponsored election candidates and agitated for the repeal of

the anti-trade union laws, which were reformed partially in May 1864. In what was then merely the German Confederation, in 1863 a mass agitation to form a working class political party was started by Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864). Lassalle claimed to be a follower of Marx yet he kept his belief in an 'Iron Law' by which real wages could not rise under capitalism, which Marx had renounced. He was also opposed to the emancipation of women.

Consciousness was raised too by several international democratic struggles: by the War of Italian Unity (*Risorgimento*) from 1859; the American Civil War from 1861;

and what was, in fact, the most effective of these as a catalyst for Anglo-French working-class unity, the Polish Uprising of 1863.

Just after Lassalle's murder, on 28 September 1864, a meeting of representatives of English, French and German workers was held in London. It resolved to set up a Committee to form a new International Workingmen's Association (I.W.M.A.). Twenty-five out of forty-nine seats on this Committee were occupied by British representatives, mainly from the skilled unions. Karl Marx was just one of six who represented the German workers. However, he wrote the new International's *Inaugural Address* and its *Rules*.

The I.W.M.A. was, in practice, a European body [albeit with branches in the U.S.A and, eventually, Australia]. In 1871 an attempt to start an Indian section was agreed on the understanding that it be open to native Indians, but it never prospered. In fact, both Marx and Engels insisted on limiting the new International's scope to "countries in which modern capitalism exists", as the *Rules* put it, and emphasized the role of the "most advanced countries" in the struggle. Their reason was that large areas of the world were still pre-eminently tribal, Asiatic, or even, as with Cuba and Brazil, dominated by slave economies. Few of these had a proletariat in the modern sense.



Karl Marx (1818-1883)

The new International had more immediate problems. The largest national working class political organization was that of the German followers of Lassalle, organized around the paper *Sozialdemokrat*. Their new leader, Johann von Schweitzer (1833-1875), declared that they were in full solidarity with the I.W.M.A., but asked to remain only as an associate member due to the laws of Prussia, the largest German State. Though this was later to be agreed in this and other cases, the International rejected this proposal, with Marx and Engels in full agreement. They had always considered Lassalle's perspective too much limited to Germany and they may have suspected what has been established since: that Lassalleanism was helped on its way by a Prussian State bribe. The International's German Section remained limited to Marx and his small group of German followers, led by Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826-1901).

Within the International too, the Marxists were in a minority. To their right was the largest group: the British craft union leaders, whose initiative had started it. Their perspective was limited to the need for democratic rights, particularly for their unions which were still handicapped by Combination Acts, and for the vote for all heads of household in general elections. Beyond these demands they would be content to conform to the British Liberal Party but, as they had yet to be won, they stayed loyal to the International and practically militant. To Marx's left were the groupings dominating French socialism: the **Proudhonists** and the **Blanquists**. The former were followers of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), who is best known as the pamphleteer who exposed the moral and legal illegitimacy of private property titles. He advocated a system of communally-based craft economics rather than the new factories. The Proudhonists agreed with the Lassalleans about the uselessness of trade union action and in their opposition to women's rights. They also opposed claims for national self-determination (particularly the Poles). The followers of Louis-August Blanqui (1805-1881) were formally more extreme since they advocated that the working-class leadership be organized as a secret society to seize State power by a coup. When no

coup was obviously possible, however, they were ready enough to accept Marx's lead.

Their support and that of the British trade union leaders - who recognized his ability to relate to the situation's practical needs - enabled Marx to give the I.W.M.A. guidelines to make it relevant to the Socialist and democratic struggles of the time. Though it was only being formed at the end of the American Civil War, it sent a goodwill message to Abraham Lincoln on his reinauguration and received a very friendly reply from the first President of what has become the party of Nixon, Reagan and Bush. Partly to radicalize the British, an overture was made to the head centre of the **Fenian Brotherhood**, James Stephens (1826-1901) but though he is said to have agreed to join, nothing seems to have developed beyond this apart from the International's defence of his Movement against its repression by the British State.

The I.W.M.A. was more immediately effective in other democratic and trade union campaigns. In the first, it was most successful in Britain, its campaign bringing about urban household suffrage in 1867. For the latter, it did not initiate so much as support the trade union struggle that developed over Europe and America. By 1869, even the Proudhonists had been involved in these struggles. Regularly defeated

in the International on issues in which their principles proved irrelevant, they were disintegrating. The Lassalleans too were forced to recognize that trade unionism had its uses. However, their intervention in them was handicapped by excessive political control, particularly the dogma of the Iron Law of Wages. Weaker vis-a-vis the International, they voted to affiliate in 1868.

The next year, the I.W.M.A. reached its highest point at its Congress at Basle. Its previous assembly had demanded workers' control of production and resources and the nationalization of transport and communications. Now it called for the nationalization of the land.

However, it also saw the first appearance of a Russian delegate, Mikhail Ivanovich Bakunin (1814-1876). Against Marx, he passed a proposal to abolish the rights of

inheritance, which he claimed would win the peasantry to Socialism. His contributions challenged Marx from all points. He intensified Proudhon's hostility to the State and to religion and his mistrust of trade unionism. He developed Blanqui's concept of the coup into counterposing to the working-class party a small international society ready to organize acts of 'propaganda by deed'. Even the British were wooed through Bakunin's opposition to the International's support for the Fenians and his demand for a Federal Committee, independent of the International's General Council, to run the British struggle. For all this, other than on inheritance, Bakunin won little support immediately. In the eighteen months after Basle, his supporters' chief achievement was to split the International's affiliated Franco-Italian-Swiss Federation.



Mikhail Bakunin (1814-76)



Engels (1820-1895)

DECLINE OF THE I.W.M.A

The I.W.M.A's chief problems were still those set by its class enemies. Basle was followed by a general intensifying of class war. In Britain, the Liberal reluctance to run working-class candidates was answered by the forming of a Land and Labour League as a distinct independent working-class political body. In Germany, the Liberals who had sought to ally with the Marxists ended their approaches. In France, the Imperial Government raided the International's bureau.

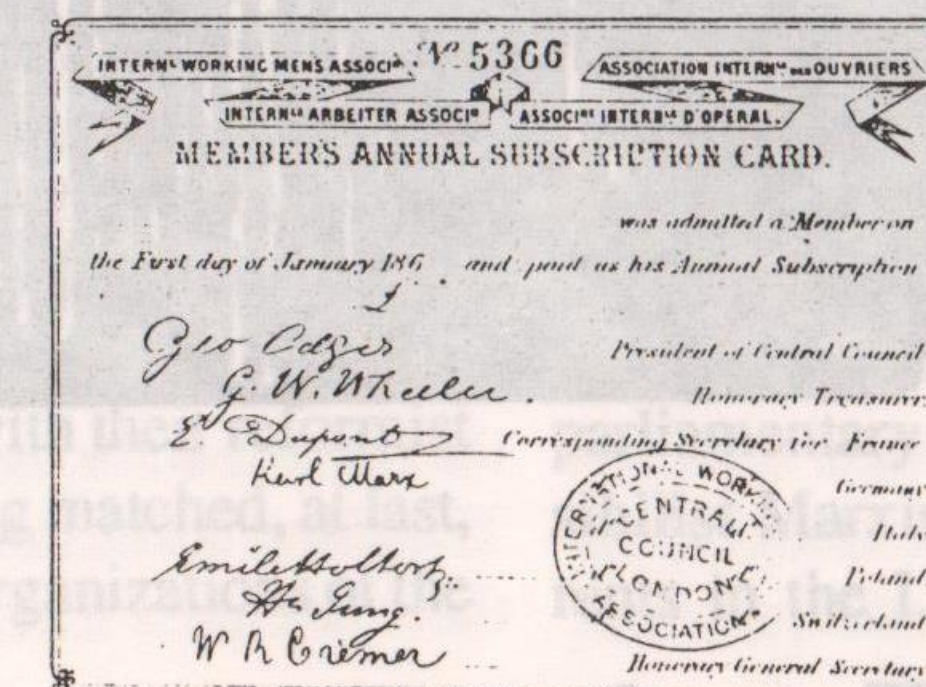
However, these problems were reduced by the French defeat the following year in the Franco-Prussian War. Not only did the French Empire fall as a result, but most of Germany was united as an Empire under the Prussian hegemony. This encouraged further Socialist unity between the Marxists under the anti-Prussian Liebknecht and August Bebel (1840-1913) and the pre-Prussian Lassalleans, all of whom could oppose the new capitalist order and its first repressive move - the imprisonment of the Marxists for opposing the new Empire's seizure of Alsace-Lorraine. In France, the new regime's attempt to hold back too radical a change had the immediate result of provoking the Paris Commune.

This first, localized workers' state

was influenced less by Marx than by the communal perspectives of Proudhon and the insurrectionism of Blanqui, the followers of both of whom dominated its government. Nonetheless, Marx drafted the I.W.M.A's statement of unconditional support for the Commune as a working-class state in insurrection against the state of the capitalists. The Commune's defeat intensified the pressures weakening the International. Their identification was used to justify new repression of working-class bodies in France, Spain and Germany. The I.W.M.A. was not strong enough to weather the storm. Its more right-wing British trade union leaders had achieved their aims as regards the franchise, expected to get freedom for their unions and were, in any case, annoyed with Marx because he supported both a successful rank-and-file movement for a nine hour day and the Commune. His support for the latter gave them an excuse for resigning. In Germany the growing unity of the Socialists, both Marxist and Lassallean, was stimulated by the persecution of the new Empire but this also gave both groups the excuse to distance themselves from an International body that compromised them more than it helped them. At the same time the Commune's

rising and its suppression by the new French Republican State encouraged illusions in the local communalist hostility to all (save, in effect, localized) state power: the illusions of Bakhunin's followers, the Anarchists. Marx's support for the insurrection could not be related accurately to his belief in working for political reform. The Anarchists grew in number to dominate the International's sections in Switzerland, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy; in France itself the Blanquists remained dominant. The I.W.M.A. tried to remain united. At its London Congress in September 1871, it promised to investigate many of the issues raised by the Anarchists. The remaining British members were allowed their own Federal Committee, though a separate Irish section with its own place on the General Council was formed at the same time. The attempt failed: mutual ill-feeling increased as European capitalism's attacks increased. Marx and Engels blamed the Lassalleans as well as the Anarchists for disrupting the I.W.M.A.

This merely caused their German followers to react towards national unity and against internationalism. However, the Anarchists themselves were divided; the Italians broke with the I.W.M.A. before the next Congress. There, at the Hague, their comrades were expelled. The Blanquists were alienated by the decision to move the International Centre to New York. Finally, the remaining British leaders, who objected to Ireland's independent section, attacked Marx when he reasserted the principle of independent working-class political action against class collaboration. They left the International to block with the Anarchists, whose objections were to political action as such. From 1873 world slump weakened the working-class and hence the I.W.M.A. It liquidated at Philadelphia in 1876. The Anarchist breakaway survived it by a year. Harried by capitalist economics and politics, particularly in Germany, the Labour movements retreated tactically to concentrate on immediate matters.



I.W.M.A. Membership Card



Woman Commune

Picture courtesy of the Illustrated London News Picture Library

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

Attempts were made to revive the I.W.M.A. In 1878 an international bureau was founded after a Congress at Ghent but it only resulted in a new Congress in 1881, after which it expired. More significant were efforts made by groups of French Reformist Socialists [*Possibilists*], from backgrounds unconnected to the I.W.M.A., to start an International based on the trade unions. Between 1883 and 1889 they called four World (in fact, again, European and American) Congresses to discuss the demand for an eight-hour working day. Stimulated partly by this and partly by opposition to these Congresses' refusal to admit political parties, the French Marxists counterposed to the 1889 event an International Congress in Paris. It founded a Labour and Socialist International : **The Second International**.

It was able to do so partly because the world's Labour and Socialist movement had grown stronger since 1876. Recognizable Marxist parties or groups existed in most West and Central European countries (though not, yet, in Ireland) and in the U.S.A and Argentina. In Britain the skilled workers unions with their reformist leaders were being matched, at last, by more radical organizations of the

unskilled. In the German Empire in 1890 the Socialist Party won 1,650,000 votes.

Though the numbers of Socialists had increased, the divisions between them had been rationalized. The chief ideological division in the new International was now clearly between Marxism and Anarchism. Though there were different degrees of enthusiasm in approaches to the programmes of each, this was as yet an academic question when so much of either programme had to be won. Outside the International there was a third current, equivalent to that of the British skilled unionists in the I.W.M.A., though distinguished from them by its commitment to independent working-class political organization. Closer to Marxism than to Anarchism, it rejected much of what it regarded as the political dogma of each, committing itself only to lead the workers to improve their lot. They often accepted Marxist economics, but so did many Anarchists. Their chief stronghold was not Britain where, in 1889, there was still little mass support for any Socialist organization, but France. There the *Possibilists* held more parliamentary seats than the *Impossibilist* Marxists. Of the other currents in the I.W.M.A., Lassalleans

and Proudhonists had their traditions remain an influence within the mainstreams, particularly German and American Marxism (Lassalleism) and Anarchism (Proudhonism - but unadulterated Proudhonism would be revived as an inspiration for French proto-Fascism, which could accept a Socialism opposed to trade unions and women's rights). Blanquism survived as a distinct current in French Socialism but, weary of preparing for a re-run of the Paris Commune, its members found themselves dividing increasingly on Possibilist-Impossible lines.

What had not changed was Socialism's Eurocentrism. During the Second International's quarter-century of life, only three Afro-Asian countries had their workers represented at its Congresses. These were the white proletariat of South Africa, the new industrial proletariat of Japan and, at the end, the workers of Armenia. This fact was not because the other Afro-Asian countries lacked modernity: though less advanced than Japan, they *were* developing. Increasingly, Eurocentricity reflected a general political problem in the Second International.

In its early years it looked as if the new body's major crisis would be a repeat of that which had hastened the collapse of the I.W.M.A. Marxists and Anarchists fought a battle for control. This was expressed in the programmatic issue of 'political



Karl Kautsky (1854-1938)

action': recognition of the State so that the organized workers could seize its power. Against this Marxist idea, the Anarchists posed the view that any State was bound to be the workers' enemy so their class could only be the loser by having dealings with it. At the new International's Third Congress at Zurich in 1893, the Marxists had a motion passed limiting affiliation to organizations that accepted political action. This was reaffirmed at the Fourth Congress, in London in 1896. From then on, the Anarchists were outside the Second International. Their exclusion came at the same time as another development moved the organization further to the right. The French Possibilists abandoned their attempts to form an Interna-

tional and affiliated to the Marxist body. This did not mean that they abandoned their politics. In fact, in this year, these were restated by one of their leaders, Alexandre Millerand (1859-1943), as being the aims of gradual reform within the nation state. This emphasized the fact that, even without the Anarchists, the International was far from being an homogeneous Marxist body. Most French Socialists were influenced by Possibilist views. Most British Socialists were similarly inclined. The comparative seniority of the latter's working class, which had caused its union leaders' opportunism in the 1860s and which had since delayed the appearance of its own independent party, was now ensuring that the one party that made the breakthrough into parliament was the Possibilist **Independent Labour Party**. Of the genuinely mass affiliates, those of what were then the separate colonies of Australia were similar. Only the mass **German Social Democratic Party** seemed to provide a bastion of Marxist politics and this appearance was itself being challenged.

The party was based mainly in the new Empire's industrial north: the states of Prussia and Saxony. The country was organized federally, with each state maintaining its own electoral laws. In Prussia, the system was loaded to give extra representation to the landlords (junkers) and hardly any to the workers. The

southern states had more nearly democratic franchises but were less industrialized so that the party had a weaker base. These two factors made it seem both possible and necessary for the South German Social Democrats to proceed by collaborating with sections of their class opponents. In 1891, those in Wurttemberg voted with the Liberal State Government to pass its budget. In 1894, this practice was accepted by the Party's National Congress as being justified by local conditions, despite a protest from old Friedrich Engels.

The next year, the South German tendency suffered a setback. The Party Congress defeated its members' proposal to adopt a land policy aimed at winning small farmers. This defeat was significant, less in itself than in its revelation of forces far more important to advancing reformism than were the south Germans. For the proposal was not defeated only on its merits, though these were few enough. The Party Leader, the Marxist, Bebel, supported it. It was defeated by the vote of officials from the new Social Democratic trade unions, who preferred to allow the small farmers to be proletarianized (and hopefully, members of their trade unions) rather than make a political effort to win them. They were supported in this, and their assumptions rationalized, by the party's leading theoretician, Karl Kautsky (1854-1938).

THE RISE OF REVISIONISM

Kautsky's fatalistic approach would not be strong enough to keep him allied to the developing Social Democratic bureaucracy without disagreement. In any case, that bureaucracy did not need him. On the other hand, German Social Democracy had come to need the bureaucracy to organize it. A further complication was that it was only since 1890 that the Party had been able to develop legally; the German Anti-Socialist Laws were a recent memory and a standing threat against too radical political action. And the reformists could argue that they were facing problems that orthodox Marxists ignored. However inadequately, they recognized the political problem of the need to win the small farmer. A year after their defeat on this, they could claim a further justification of their class collaborationism. In Saxony, the advance of Independent Social Democracy was answered by the capitalist parties uniting to replace the comparatively democratic franchise with a form of the Prussian system. The South Germans argued that intelligent class collaboration could have avoided this: the Party's majority had no answer.

The time was ripe for German reformism to be given a theoretical

dignity that would make it appear more than a system of surrender to events by alleged Marxists. In Britain, the Fabian Society was providing such a rationalization but it was not yet part of the working-class movement, nor was it trying to be. Nonetheless, its members' writings did influence Engels' former secretary, Edward Bernstein (1850-1932). Between 1896 and 1898, Bernstein published a series of articles that defended the practice of most Socialist Parties and counterposed it to the stated Marxist aim of the Socialist Society. He summarized his approach better than he realized in his comment that, for him, *the aim is nothing . . . the movement everything*. He reduced Marxism's value to one of historical analysis of economic pressures and class struggles. He denied the possibility of capitalist economic collapse, whether general (for society as a whole), or individual (small concern liquidating into monopoly). He substituted for the Marxist dialectic a combination of empirical investigation and moral purpose. For him a Socialist Party's chief role was to produce a series of piecemeal reforms through Parliament. His proposals were a revision of Marxism: **Revisionism**. In this haziness as to ends, Bernstein

was arguably more honest - if less radical - than the reformist spokesman, the Bavarian Georg Von Vollmar (1850-1922), who asserted that it would be possible and desirable to achieve a Socialist society within the State boundaries of one country. Bernstein's attack provoked a reaction from the Marxists who claimed the majority in German Social Democracy. Two foreign recruits, the Byelo-Russian Parvus (Alexander Helphand, 1869-1924) and the Pole, Rosa Luxemburg (1870-1919), published pamphlets defending Marxist principles. So too did Kautsky, another of Engels' proteges and a far more prominent figure, but he did so only after persuasion by his Russian counterpart, George Plekhanov (1856-1918). What was more, although Bernstein's ideas were condemned at successive Party Congresses between 1899 and 1903 and at the International's Amsterdam Congress in 1904, many known revisionists, including himself, on occasion voted for the condemnation. His political career flourished and he was elected to the German Parliament (**Reichstag**) for his Party in 1902.

The sun of mass political growth was nurturing bureaucratic interests in German Social Democracy. Their relationship to Bernstein's Revisionism differed between the bureaucracies of the trade unions and that of the Party proper. Having trade unions organized by Party members

had been expected to frustrate the opportunism that developed in Britain. In practice, their work's necessary concentration on bread-and-butter issues with little political support and their own relative but increasing material privilege compared to their members, made the German Social Democratic trade union leaders the readiest to accept Revisionism.

The Party's own bureaucracy was organized at a higher political level; it was concerned more directly with advancing the Programme passed originally at Gotha (1875) and renewed at Erfurt (1891). This theoretical base was made less effective by the Programme's division into a minimum list of reforms compatible with capitalism and a maximum or full Socialist programme. Basing themselves on the latter, the majority leaders of German Social Democracy attacked the theory of Revisionism, without being able to offer any alternative to the Revisionists practical solutions to the short-term problems. Both theory (against the Anarchists) and practice tended to limit Social Democracy's strategy to one of parliamentary means. Against the Anarchist demand to abolish the State it had asserted the need to take State power. But what did this mean? It was all too easy to interpret it as did the Revisionists: the electoral struggle every few years to win the right to administer the existing state ma-

chine. In itself this provided the reason for a major part of any Social Democratic activity, in Germany or elsewhere, at the time. In most countries manhood suffrage, without which electoral victory was impossible, did not exist and women had no national vote outside Australia. In Belgium and Austria, indeed, the workers struck for the right to vote. Bernstein himself supported such a means for an end, since democracy was a necessary precondition for achieving the greatest reform. He disagreed with the political strike for other causes and had the agreement of most trade union leaders. Eventually, it would be the workers of Russia who would bring back the revolutionary seizure of



Eduard Bernstein
(1850-1932)

State power as, in effect, the missing and crucial part of any Socialist programme without which it would remain, at best, Marxist in theory and Revisionist in practice. [When Bernstein's articles appeared first the Social Democratic Party Secretary, Ignaz Auer (1846-1907) wrote him: *'My dear Ede, you don't pass resolutions. You don't talk about it (Revisionism). You just do it'*]. Until 1899 the controversy over Revisionism remained centred in German Social Democracy. Although French Socialism seemed even more divided (organizational as well as politically) between Possibilists and Impossibilists, the debate between the two was less developed and deemed likely to end in reconciliation as common (Reformist) practice tended to unite the participants. However, in 1899 the Possibilists broke even with that practice in a way that defied the basic principle of independent working-class political organization even more definitely than the South German budget votes.

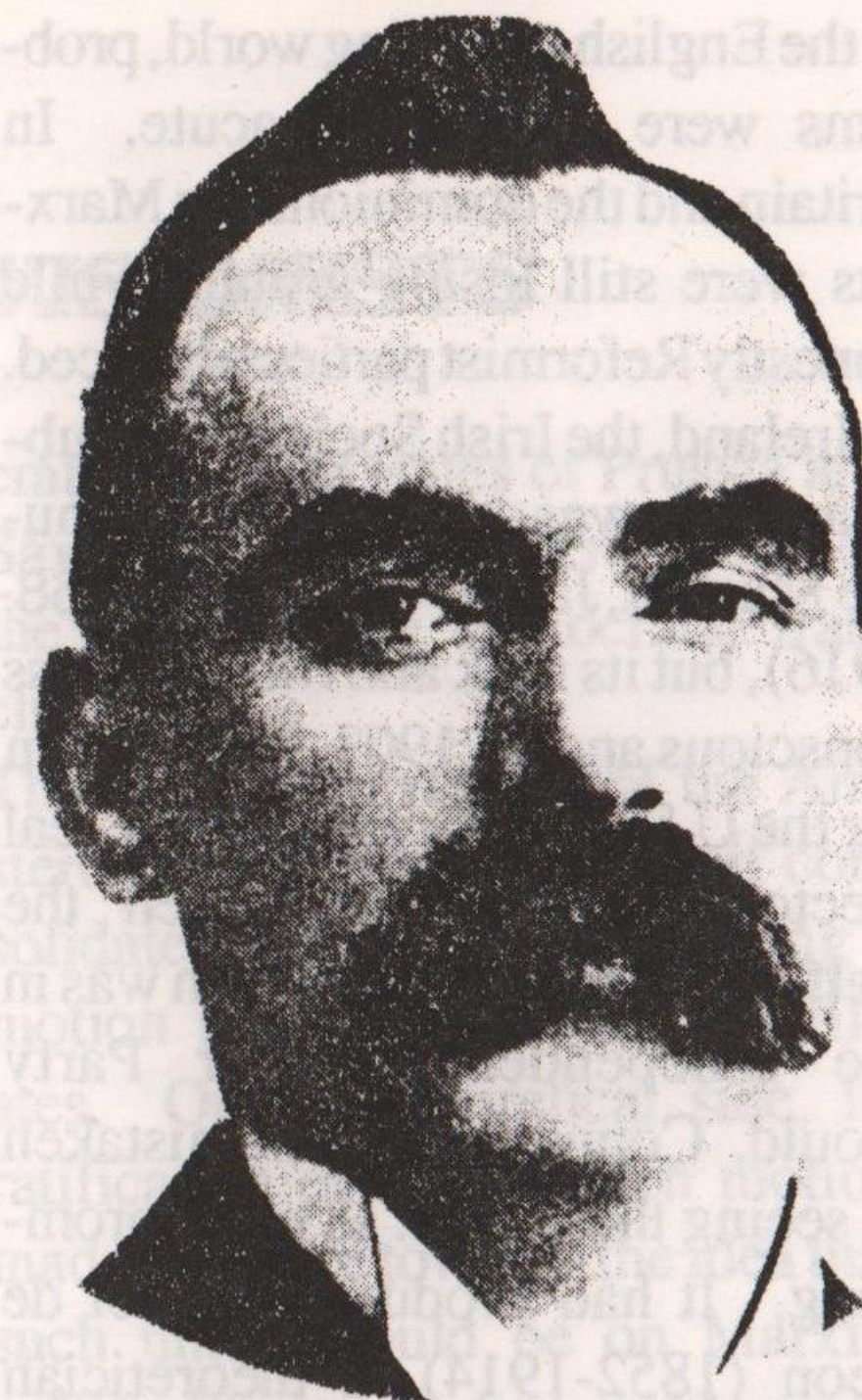
The Anti-Dreyfusards, a powerful Anti-Semitic movement supported and used as a front by Monarchists, Clericalists and Militarists, had influenced successive French Governments and seemed to threaten the Republic itself. To defend it and to open the way for possible reforms, Alexandre Millerand did not only pledge support for a new Government but joined it as Minister for

Commerce, with the support of his Possibilist colleagues.

The following year the matter was discussed at the International's Fifth Congress, in Paris. After much debate, Kautsky drafted a compromise. It was passed, despite some opposition which included that of two united national delegations, those of Belgium and Ireland (the **Irish Socialist Republican Party**; this was the only Second International Congress at which Ireland was represented). It was agreed that, in future, no member of an affiliate of the International would be allowed to take office in a State Government without his party's permission. The central political issue (the relationship of the Party to the capitalist state) and the central person (Millerand) were both ignored.

This was less than satisfactory, in that Millerand's action was not even justified by political results. He and his Ministerial colleagues did break the influence of the Anti-Dreyfusards, get their victim, Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935) released from jail and begin a series of educational reforms, but they did little more over three years and ended by using the army against striking workers and colonial peoples. As would happen in all such future alliances, Millerand had not captured a bourgeois ministry but had been captured by the capitalist state.

However, the controversy he had started reflected the fact that French



James Connolly 1868-1916

Marxism was starting from a theoretical basis even less developed than that of Germany. Its leader, Jules Guesde (1845-1922) was far more influenced by Proudhon's anti-political views than Bebel or Kautsky were by Lassalle. For Guesde, the Dreyfus case was irrelevant to the working class. French Socialism's most able thinker, Jean Jaures (1859-1914) was a Possibilist and a defender of Millerand. On the other hand, many genuinely revolutionary Socialists were abandoning Marxism or else trying to merge it with a new form of strategy that opposed the International's definition of political action by action through industrial unions: **Syndicalism**.

In the English-speaking world, problems were even more acute. In Britain and the dominions the Marxists were still losing ground while honestly Reformist parties advanced. In Ireland, the Irish Socialist Republican Party was organized by a genuine Marxist, James Connolly (1868-1916), but its rank and file were less conscious and, in 1903, he left them for the U.S.A. In any case, more real electoral support was given the **Belfast Labour Party** which was in the Independent Labour Party mould. Connolly was not mistaken in seeing the U.S.A. as more promising. It had produced Daniel de Leon (1852-1914), a theoretician whose writings were admired by Lenin and whose **Socialist Labour Party** became the centre of the major Marxist tendency in the English-

speaking world before 1914. The trouble was that it had been founded by German-American Lassalleans and, far more than the German Social Democrats, it upheld the Lassallean principle of close party control of its associated trade unions and their indoctrination with the Lassallean Iron Law of Wages and the resultant futility of strikes for wage rises. This weakened the Party against its country's non-political union organization, the **American Federation of Labour**. By 1901 it too had provoked Revisionists and genuine Marxists into joining to form a looser, less homogeneous (in effect less Marxist) **Socialist Party of America**, which would soon win more support than de Leon's organization.



"Bloody Sunday", St. Petersburg, Jan 9, 1905.

THE ANTI-REVISIONISTS

The most effective opposition to Revisionism and to the more subtle degeneration of world Marxism was being developed in central and eastern Europe. Rosa Luxemburg was fighting for greater clarity in a revolutionary approach to the issues raised by Bernstein. In Russia, where the movement was less developed, Plekhanov and Lenin (Vladimir Illyich Ulyanov, 1870-1924) were fighting to build a **Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party** with the norms they believed existed in the German Social Democracy.

This last body condemned Revisionism firmly at its 1903 Dresden Congress. At the same time it avoided accepting its practical challenge, as Luxemburg demanded. It sent the motion it had passed to the International, which itself passed it at its sixth Congress in Amsterdam the following year.

The Amsterdam Congress was to the Second International what the Basle Congress had been to the first. It was the organizational highpoint that preceded its highpoint in practice. Its affiliates were advancing everywhere. In the Commonwealth of Australia that year, the Labour Party formed a Government. In Belgium, Austria and the less demo-

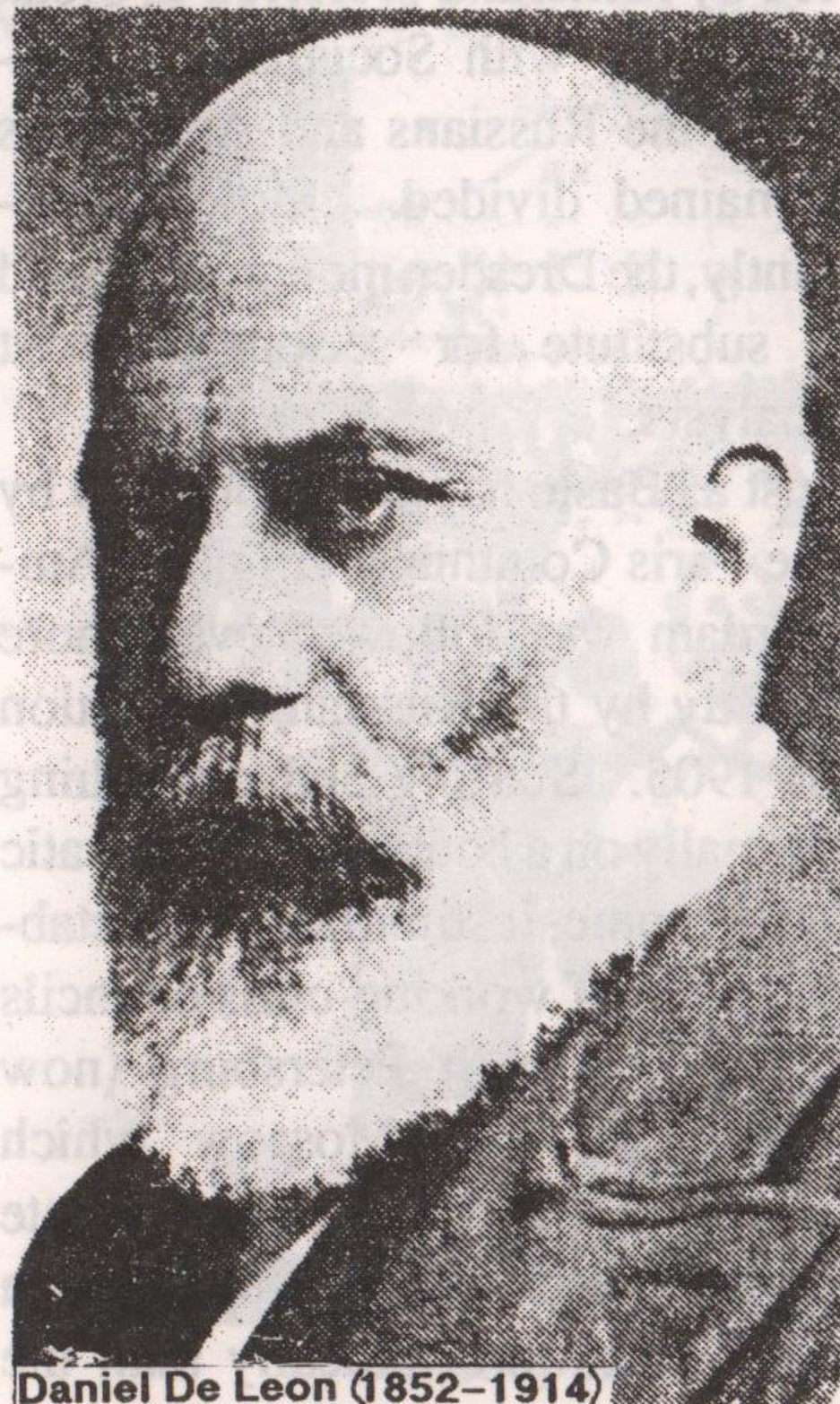
cratic German states of Prussia and Saxony, the Social Democrats led the fight for the democratic franchise.

The chief achievement of the Amsterdam Congress was that it consolidated this growth by passing a motion to unite its national affiliates. On the theoretical side, its ratification of the Dresden motion made a gesture towards the idea that such unity should be on Marxist political lines. In fact, neither was really successful. The French united, though the right-wing Possibilists led by Millerand preferred to break altogether with Socialism. However, the Russians and Americans remained divided. More importantly, the Dresden motion remained a substitute for serious Marxist analysis.

Just as Basle had been followed by the Paris Commune, so, now, Amsterdam was followed even more swiftly by the Russian Revolution of 1905. Starting and continuing formally on a bourgeois democratic programme, it stimulated the establishment of working-class councils or soviets in St Petersburg (now Leningrad) and Moscow which posed practically the seizure of state power by workers in a way not seen since and more radically than the

Paris Commune. For a time it threatened to spread westward. The German and Austrian Emperors considered intervening to save Czarism. Radicalized by the upsurge, the normally Revisionist German trade union leaders threatened a general strike if this occurred.

Helped by the Russian Liberals, the Czar did manage to crush the Revolution with the minimum concession of a Parliament (Duma) with limited powers and elected on a limited franchise. The Austrian Government bought off its own radicalizing workers with manhood suffrage. In the U.S.A., the most radical trade union leaders formed the **International Workers of the World (I.W.W)** with the support of the S.L.P.



Daniel De Leon (1852-1914)

For the International, the Revolution was followed by intensification of existing trends. Though capitalist Europe did not move to repression immediately, it had done so by 1910. Unlike the I.W.M.A. after the Commune, the workers' movement was now too strong for its world organization to collapse. Rather, the Revisionist challenge to its politics intensified and was now matched on the Left by revolutionaries, mainly in Eastern Europe, seeking to develop these politics so that the working-class could take State power and begin to institute Socialism. In the centre Bebel, Kautsky and their equivalents led a majority into trying to reconcile two increasingly opposite trends. This position came to give its name, **Centrism**, to the practice of Social Democratic Party bureaucracy.

At first, Revisionism made the advance. In 1906, Auer and the German Social Democratic Party Executive met the trade union leaders and agreed not to call for any future political strike. The following year, at the International's seventh Congress in Stuttgart, the Executive's Report included a proposal for it to accept colonialism. The Socialist Party of America and the Labour Parties of Australia and South Africa went further, moving to bar non-white immigration, particularly to their countries.

The International was still principled enough to reject these proposals.

However, it could not move decisively the other way. The problems created by colonialism were not faced. Moreover, though there was support for an attack by Luxemburg's friend and political ally, Klara Zetkin (1857-1932) on the Austrian compromise that fell short of women's suffrage, proposals for an international campaign for universal suffrage in all the States were shelved.

The most significant debate at Stuttgart concerned the prevention of war. From 1905, each frightened State Government had been trying to consolidate support by calling for national unity against others. Now the International debated four motions, three from tendencies in the French section. The most radical was that debated by Gustave Herve (1871-1944): influenced by Syndicalism, it called for a general strike in the participating countries. It had the sympathy of Connolly, in America, who tended to Syndicalism, but was attacked not only by the German trade unionists but by Lenin and others of the Revolutionary Left as being impossible and, hence, diversionary. Jules Guesde's proposal argued that militarism was just another aspect of capitalism and thus not to be opposed in a single campaign. Jaures and the old Blanquist, Edouard Vaillant (1840-1915) called for action against war but recognized a right of national defence. Bebel was close to this position but

stressed both the central role of capitalism and went further in distinguishing between offensive and defensive war. In the end, a compromise was passed unanimously. It included two paragraphs drafted by the Leftists Lenin, Luxemburg and the Russian Centrist Menshevik, Yuli Martov (1873-1923). They provided the theoretical core for the movement from which the Communist International would arise:

"If a war threatens to break out, it is a duty of the working-class in the countries affected and a duty for their Parliamentary representatives, with the aid of the International Bureau as an active and co-ordinating power, to make every effort to prevent war by all means which vary naturally according to the intensity of the class struggle and to the political situation in general."

Should war break out nonetheless, it is their duty to intervene in order to bring it promptly to an end, and with all their strength to make use of the economic and political crisis created by the war to stir up the deepest strata of the people and precipitate the fall of capitalist domination."

These guidelines for future action were vague enough but they did represent a position from which Socialists could advance their cause even in the teeth of a crisis such as that which would eventually smash their International.



Rosa Luxemburg (1870-1919)

In the meantime, this continued to grow. Australia had more Labour Governments. The German Social Democrats became the largest single party in the Reichstag. The Socialist Party of America had a member elected to Congress.

Yet, increasingly, this organizational advance was accompanied by political fudges by the centre to keep the movement united. The International's last two Congresses, Copenhagen (1910) and Basle (1912) showed little political advance and were mainly irrelevant to the debates being conducted within the International's Left wing. The projected Vienna Congress, which the outbreak of the 1914 War aborted, was expected to move to expel the most vital political part of this wing, Lenin's Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party (Bolshevik).

Few of the old-guard took part in this new left. In 1908 Kautsky tried to relate the day-to-day struggle to

the ultimate revolution. He succeeded less in clarifying the probabilities than in annoying his Party's leadership. Under pressure from it, he rewrote the offending sections, making the work more moderate. Plekhanov still blocked with Lenin on the need to maintain a tightly-disciplined and conscious working-class political party in Russia: he opposed him on nearly everything else. In the U.S.A, de Leon had failed to win control of the I.W.W. - his party became an isolated sect.

The big weakness of the Left was that its varying answers to the questions it faced kept it divided against itself, weakening what was already numerically small compared to the Centre and the Right. Its members were ready to block with some who can be seen now as its political opponents to defeat other Leftists. After breaking with de Leon and before he returned to Ireland in 1910, Connolly worked with both Leftists and Reformists in the Socialist Party of America. By 1910, after five years of repression, the Bolsheviks within Russia itself numbered less than fifty. Lenin blocked with the Right Centrist Plekhanov against the Left Centrist Martov and against Leon Trotsky (Lev Davidovich Bronstein, 1879-1940), who tried to act as honest broker in Russian Social Democracy between the Bolsheviks and the more Right-wing Mensheviks. Trotsky related better to Kautsky than to Luxemburg and Lenin

himself could not understand Luxemburg's opposition to Kautsky. For her part, she was not too upset when it looked as if Lenin and Bolsheviks would be expelled from the International.

Of all the Left, history would prove Lenin the greatest. His position as citizen of the most oppressive State in Europe made him less ready than his comrades in countries of the West to compromise on the need for revolution. However, he insisted, against the Mensheviks, that this revolution would have to be led by the workers and small farmers who would provide the revolutionary government, rather than by the bourgeoisie who had done this in democratic revolutions previously. His Stuttgart provision showed him ready to turn even imperialist war, if it could not be stopped, to advance this end. More generally it required an International of tight homogeneous revolutionary parties to lead the workers; though Lenin did not yet realize this, such parties would be as different from German Social Democracy as *that* was to Britain's Independent Labour Party. Such parties would be firmly dialectically materialist; the 'private' nature of religion asserted by Marx and Engels and used by Centrists and Revisionists as a party norm could not be maintained as the latter.

It was on the concept of the party as a professional elite that Luxemburg and Trotsky had their first disagree-

ment with Lenin. They also differed with him on two other points, one of which he did not consider significant. This last was the question of how the revolutionary proletariat would take state power and what it would do with it. Lenin accepted simply that, at least in an underdeveloped country such as Russia, it would administer what would be a bourgeois democratic state until the revolution spread to establish worldwide Socialism. Trotsky and to a certain extent Luxemburg recognized that the revolutionary Government would have to move against the capitalists immediately on a social and economic as well as a political front: the strategy of **Permanent Revolution**.



Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924)

On the other hand, Lenin recognized far better than his fellow-revolutionaries the nature of the issue of national self-determination. Marx and Engels had seen this according to three overall principles for recognizing the validity of a national claim: the extent of its popular support; its helpfulness to progressive movements in Western Europe; and, not least, its weakening effect on the Russian Empire. Lenin and Luxemburg (with Trotsky closer to the latter) went beyond this to develop more general theories. Luxemburg's view was coloured by her experience in Poland, where the 1905 Rising had not stimulated nationalism. She rationalized this by referring to the growing independence of world industry and trade which made real national economic independence a mirage. In some cases - such as the Balkan States' independence from Turkey - national freedom might help social and economic development but in general the most a nation could expect was cultural autonomy. Against this, Lenin insisted on the political nature of national self-determination. Its denial blocked the way to Socialism for the proletariat of both oppressed and oppressor nations. It encouraged the first to concentrate support on movements led by its national bourgeoisie (as in Ireland when Labour left the leadership of the national struggle after 1916). Even more certainly, for the second, it offered

bribes from the product of the exploited nation and developed in it habits of racism and chauvinism. A third disagreement between Lenin and Luxemburg was their concept of Imperialism. Lenin saw it as centred in the export of capital: Luxemburg in the export of surplus commodities. In practice, they did not argue about it. In all this, Ireland was at the periphery. After 1900 its Socialists moved away from active participation in the International, partly in contempt for the prevailing Centrism but partly, after 1907 as they moved towards the Syndicalist view that the industrial union, rather than the party, was the workers political vanguard. Even so, in 1914 most Irish Socialists opposed their country's nationalist leaders' support for the **First World War**.

What was more, Connolly, the Irish movement's most able theoretician, had positions similar to the International's left wing on the State, on national self-determination and on Permanent Revolution. All this was brought to little consequence by his political isolation, expressed most disastrously in his Syndicalist concepts.

The International grew and, despite criticism from the Left, so did its bureaucracy, Centrism and Revisionism. Then, in July 1914 on the eve of its Jubilee Congress, the latest Imperialist war scare became a reality. The International could not

react. First Austrian Social Democracy voted its Government war credits, then the extreme right wing of Russian Social Democracy (including Plekhanov) and then, most devastatingly, the German Social Democrats, followed by the French (including Guesde and Vaillant and with Herve's support) and most of the British. Most of these found democratic excuses for their actions. The Austrians and the Russians recalled Marx's fears of Tsarist Russia. The French insisted on their superior democratic rights (they had maintained manhood suffrage since 1881) compared to Prussia. The British cited Germany's breach of Belgian neutrality. Only the Russian war effort could not be masked as democratic. None considered their own States' colonies and op-

pressed nations. Revisionism had beaten both Centrism and the Left. The Second International had ended. It reappeared after the War, after a series of conferences held by those who could not bring themselves to accept the new Russian Workers' State, in 1923. Organized on such a basis it was completely reformist and, in Lenin's view, by its relationship to its affiliates' national States, bourgeois. It liquidated itself again with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939; this time it was revived only in 1951. Today, more than the sum of its affiliated parties, the Second International is *per se* an instrument of the American C.I.A. It could not agree even to condemn the U.S.A's occupation of Vietnam. For over seventy years, the Socialist vanguard has been elsewhere.

THE COMINTERN

It reappeared as the Third International demanded by Lenin when he heard of the disintegration of the Second. For most of the subsequent war he was alone in his demand. Delegates of his Party attended Congresses of anti-War Socialists in neutral Switzerland at Zimmerwald in 1915 and at Kienthal in 1916. At these, their calls for a purged International were opposed by those who wanted to make it easy for the pro-war Socialists (Social

Chauvinists) to reunite them. Lenin isolated the Bolsheviks and their allies further by insisting on Socialists having a duty to turn their imperialist war into civil class war, rather than just calling for peace. Isolated in Ireland, Connolly did just this in Easter 1916.

Then, in March 1917, the workers of Russia overthrew the Czar. The country's bourgeoisie began a struggle to assert its claim to State power over their employees. Against

this Lenin developed his views to accept Trotsky's concept of Permanent Revolution and a programme, less than Socialist, but on which the workers could take State power. Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks. In November they led the workers to establish the world's first countrywide Workers' State.

Despite Lenin's early call, it was not until the First World War had ended in November 1918 (and not until a month after a Congress at Berne had started the process of exhuming the Second International) that, in May 1919, what had now become the Communist Party of Russia convoked the founding Congress of the **Third, or Communist, International (Comintern)**.

Two points must be understood about the new International. In one important way it was very different from its predecessors. For the first time, more than two Asian countries were represented in a Socialist International. Besides a Japanese Communist Party there was formed, either in time for the founding Congress or in the next four years, the Communist Parties of China, India, Indonesia, Korea, Persia (Iran) and Turkey. As yet these were small, yet they made the Third International more truly international than the first two and were a pledge that, unlike the Second, it would not hesitate to oppose colonialism.

But how would colonialism be opposed? How indeed would capi-

talism be fought. These questions were set by the nature of the International's non-Russian sections. Although it had been founded by revolutionaries, it was not composed of revolutionary parties. The French Socialist Party had been among the most revisionist before the war. It had been among the firmest in supporting its bourgeoisie war effort; now, it was equally notable in that the majority of its conference delegates voted to affiliate with the Comintern. The Parti Communist Francais being based on this internal majority, its real political change was doubtful. A more subtle confusion was in the position of Socialist Feminists like Luxemburg's old ally Zetkin and Alexandra Kollantai (1872-1952). Both had opposed the War; Kollantai as the world's first woman Commissar had decreed for women's rights beyond the expectations of the Second International. Whether from age or demoralization, neither would fight to maintain these standards later. On the other hand, Rosa Luxemburg had doubted the need to found the Comintern though she was murdered before its first Congress. Friedrich (Fritz) Adler (1879-1960), leader of Austria's Anti-War Socialists and killer of that country's War Minister, wavered between Second and Third International, tried to build a Centrist (Two-and-a Half) International in 1921, but joined the resurrected Second International in 1923.

Although the founding of the Comintern was a major move towards a genuine revolutionary World Party of Socialism, its simple existence could not guarantee such a Party. It could be produced only as a result of a period of revolutionary struggle and sympathetic but firm guidance from the best elements among the Russian Communists.

Certainly, the years after 1918, there were plenty of revolutions. The trouble was that, with the considerable exception of the Russians' struggle against counter-revolution, they were all defeats. Germany and Hungary in 1919, Italy in 1920, Germany again in 1921 all failed to gain for the workers State power. Save in Hungary, all were defeated by the weakness and treachery of the Revisionists. Instead, they tended to demoralize the vanguard membership, closing doors even against the Left Centrists or Zimmerwald, with their ideas of class collaboration and peace under the bourgeoisie at home and abroad. The Third Congress the following year passed a set of *Guiding Principles* for the Communist Parties in their work which, though regarded by Lenin as based too much on the Russian experience, included, even then, useful advice. In 1922 the Fourth Congress agreed to Lenin's *Guiding Principles on the National and Colonial Question*, which directed co-operation between - but not amalgamation of - Communist

and Revolutionary National bourgeois parties in oppressed States. It also passed proposals for joint action on a principled basis between Communist and other non-revolutionary parties of the working-class where, as in France and Germany, the Communists organized between a quarter and a third of the State's workers. This was the strategy of the United Front.

Yet the Communist Parties remained weak and under pressure from a reviving bourgeoisie. This was most aggressive and successful in Italy, with the Fascist takeover of 1922. (The leader of this, Benito Mussolini, 1883-1945 was, like Guesde and Herve in France, a former Left Socialist turned Social Chauvinist). The non-Russian Communists remained dependent on Russia and were thus open to infection by a new form of bureaucratic degeneration: one that occurred within the Russian Workers' State as it developed.



Leon Trotsky (1879-1940)
addressing Red Army Unit

RISE OF STALINISM

The new regime had been affected by its comrades' post-war defeats as much as they had been. On the one hand it continued to be isolated without aid from any possible new Workers' States, particularly that which it had hoped to see in industrial Germany. At the same time, its victory over its own counter-revolution had been bought at the price of weakening further its own economy. It suffered from famine and shortages of consumer goods. It suffered too the loss of some of its best political cadres. Many were promoted to succeed them in State office, among them those who tended to be either greedy or over-cautious or both. They began to look to the protection of their actual status as their first priority. This bureaucracy found its mouthpiece in 1922 with the appointment of the new Communist Party General Secretary, Joseph Stalin (1879-1953). This growing Russian State and Party bureaucracy was the major basis for the degeneration of the Comintern. The bureaucracy's immediate political expression was in its opportunistic readiness to take short cuts to achieve its ends. It attempted to end the State monopoly of foreign trade and it reacted, literally, brutally to what it regarded as the

awkwardness of the Georgian Communist leaders. Such examples multiplied on Lenin's illness and eventual death over 1923 and early 1924. They were encouraged in the Comintern by its President, Gregory Zinoviev (1883-1936), who chose to block with Stalin to isolate Trotsky (who had been Lenin's ally in an abortive attempt to stop the rot).

Zinoviev's period as President of the International without Lenin to guide him lasted from 1923 to 1925. These years are often excused by the ultra-left, who tend to date the Comintern's (as distinct from the Russian Party's) decline from the latter date. Certainly Zinoviev's failures were less extensive than those of his successors. Nonetheless, there were enough of them to show a pattern.

They were stimulated in 1923 by the defeats of risings in Germany and Bulgaria. These were held to justify a policy that the Comintern's Fifth Congress ratified in 1924 (two years after its predecessor : a shift to a long-term period of decreasingly frequent Congresses). This policy comprised a series of adventures involving far closer alliances of Communist Party and bourgeoisie than could have been permitted under

the decisions of the International's first four Congresses. Such moves were not initiated everywhere (the British Party enjoyed its best political period) but they occurred too widely for the organization's health. In the U.S.A., it inspired the Communists to organize a **Farmer-Labour Party** as a front, albeit under a bourgeois figurehead. In China, the Party was directed to do entry work in the national bourgeois *Kuomintang*. In Ireland, the tiny Party was liquidated into a **Syndicalist Irish Worker League** to keep James Larkin (1876-1947), then the leading Irish Socialist figure, loyal to the Comintern. These moves were covered by an ultra-left phraseology. For example, it was at this time that Stalin first described Social Democracy as *Social Fascism*.

Zinoviev allied with Stalin but found, eventually, that he could not accept fully the logic of the politics of the Russian bureaucracy. Its short-sighted, essentially conservative perspectives caused it to centre its attack on Trotsky in a denial of his strategy of Permanent Revolution, in particular the idea that the International extension of the Russian Revolution was necessary if that Revolution were not to be reversed. However, at the end of 1924 Stalin capped this denial with the old Revisionist idea of the possibility and desirability of "Socialism in a single country." When Zinoviev

and his third ally, Lev Kamenev (1883-1936) protested, Stalin used his position in the bureaucracy and the intellectual prestige of a new ally, Nicolai Bukharin (1888-1938) to force them out of power.

A new factor in this coup affected the International. In many cases, as in Germany where the national leadership had been too identified with Zinoviev, it was purged on orders from Moscow. Elsewhere, in America for example, Moscow's plenipotentiaries overturned the national Congress's decision in order to ensure a leadership more favourable to Bukharin, who led the Comintern from 1926, and his ally Stalin. All this was accomplished without any new World Congress. Bukharin's period as head of the Comintern did not suffer from the contradictions of Zinoviev's later years in this role. On the other hand this was only because it abandoned the latter's ultra-left excrescences and took a consistently reformist and class-collaborationist line. 'Social Fascism' was pigeonholed while the short-cuts initiated by Zinoviev were codified and elevated to the level of an International strategy. This was codified finally in the International's *Programme*, which was presented to its Sixth Congress in 1928 and which is best known today for Trotsky's *Critique* of its draft. Close collaboration with 'friendly' trade union bureaucrats (as in Britain and indeed Ireland)

and, in the colonial world, entry into bourgeois nationalist parties (as in China) became the basis for action. The justification for this was no longer the immediate possibility of quick gains to extend the revolution but the need to struggle against war and, in particular, against the capitalist's desire to resume their war against the Soviet Union and abort Socialism in that one country. Trotsky and his concept of Permanent Revolution were denounced more than ever.

Even before the Comintern's Programme had been passed by the International's Bukharinist Congress, three of its chief national strategies had been defeated. In 1926 in Poland, Joseph Pilsudski (1867-1935) - like Mussolini an ex-Social Democrat albeit a Revisionist - overthrew the Parliament and established a weak form of Fascist regime, at first with the support of the Communist Party. In Britain, the Communist Party there concentrated on working with left trade union bureaucrats apparently friendly to Russia who supported the right-wingers in abandoning the 1926 General Strike and then turned to witch-hunt their former allies and accept the Conservative Government's ending of Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations. In China, the Communists' allies in the Kuomintang turned and massacred them. The Party sought to ally with the Kuomintang's left wing, which

repeated the attack.

Such defeats did not hurt the Stalin-Bukharin leadership of the Comintern. In the first place it did not pretend to expect much from the non-Russian Communists. (Stalin did not expect a successful revolution outside Russia for 90 years). Rather than trying to educate the latter as it had before 1922, it accepted their weakness. This both stimulated and was stimulated by the perspectives of "Socialism in one country". Second, the said perspectives were justified and made to fulfil real emotional needs created precisely by these defeats. Once again, the leaders of the Comintern had been betrayed by its member parties but, happily, the U.S.S.R. could yet build Socialism in its own country. Only the Left Opposition of Trotsky and Zinoviev suggested differently and it was accused of breaking national morale in a time of emergency caused by these defeats. Its leaders were forced either to conform (Zinoviev) or go into exile (Trotsky). Despite the latter's *Critique*, the Sixth Congress of the International passed Bukharin's *Draft Programme*. Even so, the *Critique* did win, at the eleventh hour, a nucleus of what became the 100 North American Communists to support Trotsky.

What *did* lead to Bukharin losing the Comintern's Presidency was the failure of his economic policy in Russia itself. He preached that So-

cialism could be won by allowing the peasants to 'enrich yourselves'. All that happened was that the peasants, particularly the larger peasants, got richer at the expense of the town workers. A famine began to threaten. Stalin reacted in two ways; based on the State and Party bureaucracy, he moved against Bukharin, (whose strengths were prestige and popularity) with a programme of an even stronger regime (on the excuse that as Socialism approached, class struggle intensified) and forced, panicky industrialization at the peasantry's expense. He tried to block with Trotsky on this, but Trotsky wanted more democracy, not less. However, many of Trotsky's followers were recruited and their leader was expelled from the Soviet Union. Stalin then moved against Bukharin and his supporters, who were stripped of their power. As in 1925-1926, this was an International purge. Such figures as Jay Lovestone (1898-) in the USA and Heinrich Brandler (1881-1967) in Germany were expelled from their Parties with their followers. They formed with Bukharinites in other countries, an international Right Opposition. This was larger and more impressive at first than the 200 or so in Trotsky's Left Opposition but it declined during the thirties, mainly because it had no programme save that it be readmitted to the Comintern: it disappeared, like the revived Second International,

when the Second World War began in 1939. At the top of the Comintern, Bukharin was replaced by Stalin's leading supporter, Vyacheslav Molotov (1890-1987), the only other consistent Russian Stalinite to have been a leading Communist in Lenin's time, but even less of an Internationalist than his leader. In 1930 he succeeded the Bukharinite, Alexei Rykov (1881-1938) as President of the Soviet Union. His post remained vacant. The International was now headed by its new Secretary, Dimitri Manuilsky (1883-1952), a complete nonentity but a competent demagogue and loyal to Stalin. None of these changes were even reported to any new World Congress.



Joseph Stalin (1879-1953)

This was the more blatant in that the personnel turnover reflected a major political one. Socialism was still held to be possible and now, indeed, probably in the single country of Russia. Now, however, the bureaucracy reacted to the lessons of the Bukharin era by prophesying that this was to be supplemented by revolutions elsewhere. Coalitions with the bourgeoisie were no longer necessary. Communist parties were to be built to fight alone. In Ireland, this meant breaking with Larkin and his *Irish Worker* league in favour of building revolutionary workers' groups as nuclei for a new Communist Party. But the new line did not abandon class collaboration only. The new **Third Period** was held to mean greater class division and also treachery in the workers' ranks. So the United Front was scrapped. No alliance was allowed between Communist and Social Democratic Parties. The latter were again denounced as Social Fascist. This was developed, albeit in different ways, to prove that no common ground was possible. In many countries this was extended to the trade union movement; in America, the admittedly corrupt leaders of the craft unions in the American Federation of Labour were condemned as Fascist and an attempt was made to found an alternative trade union

movement. It failed; the **Congress of Industrial Organization** developed independently.

The climatic disaster of the Third Period (after those of post-war revolution and of 1920s stabilization) occurred in Germany where what was, by 1933, the world's largest Communist Party outside the U.S.S.R. was outlawed by the victorious Nazi dictatorship. This had been prepared by a consistent refusal to accept the reality of the Fascist danger or to act with the Social Democrats for the common defence of the working class, except eventually and under pressure, at rank and file level (United Fronts From Below). On one notorious occasion, the German Communists even supported a Nazi-initiated Referendum against the Social Democratic Government of Prussia (the **Red Referendum**). Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the Nazi leader, was dismissed as no worse than the Right-wing capitalist democrats who preceded him and as likely to be a purely temporary prelude to the Communists seizing power. Instead, when he did become German Chancellor, they were smashed with little resistance. This event convinced Trotsky that the Comintern was incorrigible and he set to work to build a **Fourth International**.

THE POPULAR FRONT

This is not the end of the story of the Third International as an organization. Stalin as well as Trotsky was shocked by the establishment of Fascist rule over the strong imperialist State of Germany. Over the eighteen months after Hitler became Chancellor he moved away from the Third Period politics, though he never abandoned them formally. Officially the German defeat was blamed, like that of the Chinese before it, on the national section's leadership. Those of it who escaped to Russia would find themselves eventually in the same circumstances as those whom the Nazis had captured. At the head of the Comintern, Manuilsky was downgraded in 1934 by the appointment as Executive Secretary of the Bulgarian Georgei Dimitrov (1882-1949). He had distinguished himself in the previous year by his courage and intelligence (particularly compared to his German comrades) as one of the accused in the Nazis first (and because of him abortive) major show trial, the *Reichstag fire trial*.

Dimitrov's policy was formulated at the Comintern's Seventh Congress in 1935. It represented a return to Bukharin's class-collaboration only schematized and carried to new extremes in the name of the People's

Front Against Fascism. In the U.S.A., the Communist Party Secretary, Earle Browder (1891-1973), was to run in the 1936 Presidential election only to emphasize the respectability of President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945). After this the Party gave up running its own Presidential candidates until 1968. In Britain not just trade union bureaucrats but the Liberal Party and, on occasion, 'progressive' Conservatives such as Winston Churchill (1874-1965) were offered Stalinite support, to little effect. In Ireland, though the Communist Party there was not liquidated again, it wasted its resources by maintaining its Popular Front embryo, the **Republican Congress** long after it was clear that it was supported only by itself and a group of sympathizers and Socialist Republicans.

But the Popular Front was a disaster in those countries where United Front work with the Social Democrats was a real option, where the Communist Party had a certain mass support. In France, the Party was allied with the Socialists but insisted on the coalition being extended to the **Radical Socialists**. This was a party that had broken with Social Democracy shortly after Millerand but for the same class-collabora-

tionist reasons, surviving (unlike him) by becoming the party of the anti-clerical capitalists : it was like Fianna Fail with the positive virtue of anti-clericalism and the vice of commitment to imperialism. The Popular Front thus founded won the general election of 1936. Although it nationalized the Banque de France and the arms producers, it could not get votes for women. After several changes of Government posts it collapsed in 1938 when its Radical Socialist members formed a coalition with other bourgeois parties to try to appease the demands of Nazi Germany. In 1940, after the invasion of France, the Popular Front Parliament voted overwhelmingly to surrender its authority to a Collaborationist non-parliamentary regime based in Vichy.

Even in its most successful period, the French Popular Front hesitated to break with Britain in the latter's refusal to help the Popular Front Government in Spain. Here, where there had been no successful bourgeois revolution, the contradictions were producing a permanent revolutionary development which the Popular Front could not withstand. A counter-revolutionary putsch of Army officers nearly won overnight but for the opposition of the workers. Due to the latter's organizational weakness (the Anarchists were particularly strong), the Popular Front was able to divert the energies of many to defend the Spanish

Republic in a purely military struggle against Fascism and then, led particularly by the Communist Party, to massacre the Left-wing. Because of these manoeuvres, much of Spain was lost to the counter-revolution either because of its opponents' diversions (or non-recognition of either side in the Civil War) which was followed by France but ignored by the Fascist States, the Republic was defeated in 1939. Stalin made his agents in Spain, including his State's Consul, scapegoats for the failure of his political line.

Three further points must be noted. Another reason for the Spanish Republic's defeat was the fact that the shock troops of the regime were colonial levies from Spanish-occupied Morocco. The Popular Front could have neutralized these by granting the colony self-determination. It refused to do so, partly because French control of the rest of Morocco would thereby be jeopardized and because the French Popular Front, mainly through its Radical Socialist members, was committed to holding its State's colonial empire. In 1939 this practice was formalized by the Comintern Executive : it was no longer in favour of immediate self-determination for all colonies; only for those few under actual Fascist control. It renounced one of the more essential differences between itself and its predecessor.

On the other hand, one country where

the Popular Front strategy was not the disaster it might have been was China, partly because the Communist Party there had learnt empirically from the massacres of the 1920s. From 1935 the Party sought to ally with their comrades' murderers against the pro-Fascist Japanese who had invaded the country. However, it had already fought successfully to establish a base in the north-west where the Kuomintang had no presence. The latter was also under pressure from Japan. When, in 1937, the two organizations did come to an alliance agreement, the Communist Party's concessions were mainly formal rather than real. The most important, the official merger of the Chinese armies, was negated by Kuomintang weakness. The Communist Party of China did grow in the Popular Front period and did so without the disasters that affected Parties elsewhere. It was still the exception to the rule. Another apparent exception was Chile, which elected a Popular Front Government in 1938. Unlike France and Spain this broke up without catastrophe. However, its comparative success led to its revival (**Unidad Popular**) in 1970. After some initial reforms it was paralyzed by its self-imposed limitations and fell to a military coup in 1973.

Meanwhile by 1939 it was clear that the People's Front strategy was not stopping Fascism in Europe. To protect Russia (since 1936 officially

'a Socialist society' and with millions of framed trial victims to prove it), Stalin made a pact with Nazi Germany in August. The subsequent partition of Poland between the two powers was the beginning of the **Second World War**, though only Germany was involved immediately. The Communist Parties outside Russia divided. Those in the countries opposing Fascist States and their allies (the Chinese Party was an exception because Japan did not enter the War until 1941) preached revolutionary defeatism in the most formal Leninist fashion. Those existing under Fascism began, as Trotsky remarked, to make Social Fascism a reality. Many Stalinists were demoralized but the leaderships remained firm.

The Comintern's next and final policy change was less traumatic. In June 1941 Germany invaded Russia. Once again the Popular Front was the order of the day. The only national casualty was the Communist Party of Ireland. It liquidated the remains of its twenty-six county branches into the Labour Party rather than advocating Irish alliance with Britain against the Fascist invaders of the 'Socialist Society'. In Northern Ireland the Stalinist militants became, as the **Communist Party of Northern Ireland**, upholders of the status quo.

There was one other casualty. In the new war conditions, the U.S.S.R. was allied to the 'democratic' impe-

rialists far more certainly than it had been in the Popular Front era. The Comintern had lost any real importance as a representative body of Socialist Revolutionaries. For the U.S.S.R orders from Moscow, as such, were quite as effective as anything the Comintern could do. Yet it remained as the symbol of world revolution and an affront to democratic imperialism. So, in May 1943, Stalin liquidated it. Manuilsky became Foreign Minister for the Ukrainian Soviet Republic and Dimitrov prepared to return to his native Bulgaria with the Red Army which installed him there as Prime Minister from 1945.

Unlike the Second International, the Third has never been revived. Between 1947 and 1956, a shadow of it, the *Cominform*, acted as sorting office for mail between Moscow and its client parties. Only the year after this body had been dissolved as a gesture, this time, of de-Stalinisation by Stalin's successor, Nikita Krushchev (1894-1971), was there a

World Congress of Communist Parties, mainly to take stock after the Hungarian Rising against Russian domination. Another Congress was held in 1961, this time to unite world Stalinism alongside Moscow and Peking. These Congresses emphasized merely that world Stalinism was divided. In any case, they were Congresses of Parties, not of a single International Organization as such. Since then, too, these Congresses have been held on a regional rather than a completely International basis: a retreat to the norms of the Second International, again without any such body in existence. An exception occurred in 1978 when Moscow tried to nullify a new threat of division in the form of Euro-Communism. The Congress was held not at Moscow but in East Berlin, as a sop to the Euro-Communists. The Russian invasion of Afghanistan the following year did more than the Congress to weaken Euro-Communism by dividing its advocates.

After The Comintern

Yet this is not all. As early as Pilsudsky's Polish coup in 1926, Trotsky had remarked that the Comintern was aiding rather than thwarting counter-revolution. This became truer over the following years until, in 1933, he proclaimed the need for a Fourth International. It continued until the Comintern ended formally ten years later. To point to the moral, it was only after that event that revolution began to advance successfully again to produce new claimants to the heritage of the Third International.

Despite Trotsky's own expectations, the excesses of the Nazi terror helped provoke Russia to mobilize against it. Its own nationalized economy enabled it not only to survive the Second World War but to export revolution on the bayonets of the Red Army as far as the centre of Germany. The Governments thus founded were open clients of the U.S.S.R. The cautious Stalin agreed to persuade Communist Parties elsewhere not to claim State power. The one exception to this strategy was Yugoslavia which had been divided, like Germany and Austria, into spheres of influence with the Imperialists. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia, led by Josip Tito (1894-1980) ignored this agreement, seized

State power and, later, broke altogether with Russia. Tito made no attempt to extend his political influence abroad. Instead he settled for trying to build Socialism in his own country as a buffer between imperialism and international mainstream Stalinism. The limitations of this approach were soon revealed. In 1950 he supported the United States' inspired war to prevent South Korea being united to the North Korea People's Republic.

Before all this, in 1949, despite continuing pessimism on the part of its Russian allies, the Communist Party of China, headed by Mao Dzedong (1893-1976) seized control of its country from the palsied hands of the Kuomintang. This created a potential rival more formidable than Yugoslavia to Russia's claim for allegiance as being a Socialist party in a single country. Perhaps recognizing this or perhaps extending to China the dominance the U.S.S.R maintained over other Workers' States, Stalin maintained what was an effective colonial authority there, even maintaining direct semi-colonial rule around the Manchurian city of Port Arthur. After his death, his successors renegotiated Russia's relationship with China to give the latter equal status.

Its Government, building what it saw as Socialism in its own one country, was not satisfied. From 1956 it began to draw away from its earlier acceptance of Russian policies. At first, and ironically considering his attitude, the Chinese Government defended Stalin against his heirs' denunciations. Then the polemic deepened qualitatively as China's less developed bureaucratic regime attacked the Russian's increased concentration on peaceful co-existence with imperialism rather than encouraging world revolution. In 1960 Russian technologists were withdrawn from China. In 1961 the International Congress of the Communist Parties held in Moscow for that purpose condemned the Chinese political line. This reflected the attitude of the majority of Communist Parties though some (like that of Rumania) were less enthusiastic than others. Only the Communist Parties of the Workers' State of Albania, of Indonesia and of New Zealand opposed Russia, though Maoist tendencies developed within most others. The Chinese international perspective was in itself more realistic than that of Moscow. The trouble was that it did not develop beyond third period Stalinism into revolutionary Marxism. Its split with Russia arose, indeed, partly from its belief that it could build Socialism in its own single country. It attacked Russia for trying to maintain a centralized

international Communist movement, not because of the undoubted bureaucracy of its approach, but in the name of the independence of each national Communist Party. So, having split from Russia, China did not seek to recreate a Comintern but continued as Stalin had done after 1943. It limited its influence further by tending to throw it behind the smallest sects that supported it within any one country.

In practice, Maoism proved no more successful after 1949 than the third period of Stalinism on which it modelled itself. The Communist Party of Indonesia led its followers to be massacred in 1965. Worse still, when a pro-Chinese body did take State power in Kampuchea in 1975, the results were almost as disastrous as if it had failed. Moreover, China's hostility to Russia deepened to the point where the U.S.S.R. was seen not just as an appeaser of the imperialists but as a greater danger than they to peace and Socialism. To stop it, China was ready to sign any Hitler-Stalin pacts. Since Mao's death it has retreated from this position but a Beijing Comintern is less possible than ever.

In 1959 there occurred the Cuban revolution. It triumphed under leadership that was quite separate from the country's Stalinist party. The same leadership is still distinct from mainstream Stalinism. During its first ten years of State power it made

a serious attempt to build a separate international organization and to advance thereby the world revolution.

The trouble here was the essential eclecticism of what must be called *Castroism*, after the Cuban Premier Fidel Castro (1925-). This involved the new International's being a *Tri-Continental* one - based on the guerrillaist movements of the three continents of the **Third** (or Colonial) **World** and taking little notice of developed countries or even formally Leninist Parties. After two Congresses it disappeared, as its own impotence and Cuba's economic weakness forced its initiators closer to Russia. This alignment had further unfortunate results. Cuba defended the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. Its leaders made no clear criticism of the disastrous Chilean *Unidad Popular*. (It supported a military Government in Peru). More recently, it sent troops to support the bourgeois (but pro-Russian) military junta in Ethiopia in its oppressions of subject peoples. Today it supports the military junta in Poland. Nonetheless, Cuba has not - perhaps

because of its leadership's empiricism-centred its perspectives around protecting itself for its building of Socialism within its own boundaries. It retains the aim of spreading the revolution and, from 1979, it has contributed towards this end around the Caribbean Sea through supplying aid to revolutionary Nicaragua and Grenada. Such victories, if continued and extended (and Grenada has been defeated) can only reduce Cuban dependence on the Russian bureaucracy.

Finally, of the major international working class victories there remains that of Indochina. This has been spearheaded (save for the early fiasco in Kampuchea) by parties associated formally with Russia. Whether and how they will outgrow this it is too early to judge.

At the moment, then, the World Revolution advances empirically, and more through the weakness of the exploiters than through the strength of the revolutionaries. Its speed can increase only with the development of mass support for an International Party for its advance. Such a party is being built. It is the *Fourth International*.

FURTHER READING

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