

IDEAS AND INTERNATIONALISM

By Dayan Jayatilleka

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One of the shortcomings of Socialism Past which will have to be rectified by Socialism Future, is the lack of political structures in which *identity* can be expressed and contained. I should say identities, not just individual but also ethnic, national, religious. In other words political structures which can reflect pluralism and therefore simultaneously manage conflict. We have not had structures of that sort in Socialism past. Our structures were ones in which conflict was fought to a conclusion culminating in victory or defeat. This was a historic necessity at that time. But now we need structures that are capable of managing conflict. Capitalism has such structures. What we call bourgeois democracy is precisely such a super structure. Socialism has not been able to produce that kind of structure so far.

The structures that we need are not only those in which identity can be manifested and conflict managed, but also structures in which *solidarity* can be fostered. Here I believe we have had more success than any other system. The examples of Cuba and of Nicaragua under the Sandinistas are cases in point. But Capitalism, particularly in its social democratic variant, also has some lessons and experiences to offer in this regard. What is it in those societies of Holland and Scandinavia for instance, that produce youth movements and organizations

capable of expressing such great solidarity with the struggles in the Third World? How can we explain 'Hollanditis' — as Reagan put it? Certainly that consciousness is not an automatic by-product of capitalism. But something in the dialectics of those societies has generated this consciousness. Therefore a solidaristic consciousness can be produced not only by a post revolutionary society such as Cuba but also by different types of experience in other types of societies. We must be able to identify what those are.

The challenge then is to forge a formation in which pluralism and solidarity can co-exist and reinforce each other. At an obvious level these are dichotomies. Pluralism has much to do with individual identity. Solidarity requires, to an extent the subsumation of individual identity for collective good. If we are able to balance and blend identity and solidarity then we may have chalked out the outline of the new, humane socialist paradigm.

Throwing out class would be a classic case of throwing the baby out with the bath water. What we need to do is to get away from *class reductionism*. But in no way does this mean abandoning *class analysis*. Class contradictions, class struggle, class alliances are all phenomena which have to be analysed if we are to make sense of society and history. But

vulgar sociology in which class is the dominant and the determinant factor has to be put an end to. The question must be posed however whether class struggle is still the motor of world history and if so in what sense.

Primordial

Marxist methodology must now grapple with the *primordial*. This is because the primordial is not just the past, as we have often thought but if new developments in Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are anything to go by, probably also the future. Ethnicity which has bedevilled Marxism and Socialist states for so long is an example of primordial identity. It's a cross class, primordial, collective identity which has to be interrogated as a phenomenon by the most rigorous Marxist methodology.

What is the class character of ethnicity? Or does each and every manifestation of ethnicity have its own distinctive class character? Does it have a class character at all? Why do class contradictions sometimes manifest themselves in the form of ethnic strife? Or is it the case that these are not in any sense class contradictions manifesting themselves? How does one explain the persistence of ethnicity across modes of production (or if you prefer, social formations) which one would have thought were the diametrical opposite of each other?

The Nationalities Question and Historical Materialism

May I touch briefly on a vital question of theory – that of nations? Nationhood, the nationalities question and nationalism have been the rocks on which Marxist practice and theory have foundered over the past decades. I would even go as far back as Poland, 1920, as the first example of the defeat of class at the hands of nation.

Stalin's definition of nationhood is well known but its theoretical richness has been underestimated. It has either been merely acknowledged as a workman like definition or dismissed as dogmatic. But I believe that his definition not only deserves a great deal more attention than it has received, but that it unlocks the many doors in Marxist theory. Stalin of course referred to a common psychological makeup manifested in a community of culture, as a defining characteristic of nation. This factor is not present in Lenin, for instance, and is uncharacteristically 'superstructural' and 'subjective'. But in bringing in this dimension and linking it with other factors such as Geography, economy and territory, Stalin links the objective and subjective, base and superstructure in a manner which is distinctive and original. We therefore do not have to await the Frankfurt school and subsequently Erich Fromm and Franz Fanon for the incorporation of the psychological element into materialist analysis – though this is not to be 'orthodox' and denigrate their contribution.

Stalin's definition of nationhood must be taken into account alongside his theorization on language contained in his slim, very important essay 'Marxism and Linguistics' authored in 1950. In it he rejects the notion of language as being directly class determined or divisible on the basis of class. Stalin accords language the status that is supra class or perhaps even non class. This is an example of the recognition of 'relative autonomy' that far antedates contemporary theoreticians and goes completely against the almost universal notion of Stalin as a vulgar dogmatist and economic determinist. When one recalls that language was held by Stalin to be one of the defining characteristics of nation and when one bears in mind Stalin's non class definition of language, then one's whole notion of the relationship between class and

nation must inevitably change. The idea of culture and common psychological makeup are seen as determinants of nationhood. These are then (at the least) autonomous, superstructural, supra or non class factors in Stalin's definition – language, psychology/culture. This is an almost unprecedented interweaving of material and non material factors of base and superstructure, within the corpus Marxist theory. Not only does this give the lie to the common critique of Stalin as a post theoretician but it also opens up the possibility of a complete re-orientation in our understanding of Historical Materialism itself.

Glasnost's Blank Spot

Glasnost had one very glaring lacuna. It was so glaring that perhaps like Edgar Allan Poe's 'Purloined letter,' it was for that reason, never remarked upon at all. Glasnost extended to everything *but* to the history of the World Communist Movement. Glasnost was supposed to fill in the blanks of Soviet history – so the phrase went. And this was done as concerned the history of the Soviet Union, though perhaps not in a way that we would have liked it to be. But we must not forget that the history of the Soviet Union is also the history of its relationship to the World Revolutionary process, the history of the relationship of the Soviet Communist Party to other Communist and Socialist Parties – in short the history of the World Communist Movement.

This 'external' dimension was left untouched with the notable exception of the relationship of the Soviet Union to the capitalist countries such as Germany, Poland and so on. The Nazi Soviet Pact, the secret protocols etc. were unearthed. But there was no attempt to excavate the relations of the Soviet Union, to for example, the Spanish Revolution, the German Communist Movement. There was no attempt to explore the Sino Soviet schism! These omissions are glaring because the history of the World Communist Movement and in large measure the history of the Soviet Union has been the articulation of Russia and Germany; and in it's latter phase the history of World Communism has been that of the split between the Soviet Union and China. That is a pretty large blank spot which was untouched.

This tells us that there was something wrong in the nature of Glasnost and

Perestroika. But it also leaves us with an important problem. In their initial phases, Perestroika and Glasnost were designed to reform socialism. But even during that period nobody opened up or sought the opening up of the archival material concerning the problems of the World Communist Movement! Had this been done perhaps the political outcome in Eastern Europe may have been somewhat different. This radical absence in the process of Glasnost has to be examined. Furthermore this is one task that the Marxists in the Soviet Union, in Europe and the rest of the world must address, using the opportunities of openness that current Soviet politics provide.

A related but distinct question is why the history of the Soviet Marxism itself did not provide points of reference and role models for Soviet politics today. Let us concede that Stalinism was discredited – justly or unjustly. But how did it come to pass that the project of reviving and restoring Leninism also went by the board? And what of the popularity that Bukharin experienced in the first phase of Perestroika? Why is it that persons belonging to the Right or Left oppositions did not become the sources of inspiration? What of Trotsky, Preobrezhensky, Radek et al. What of shlyapnikov, Kollontai and the Workers Opposition? What also of the anti Leninist strand of Russian Marxism – that of Menshevism? Why is there no strong social democratic movement in Russia today? What of the Jewish Bund? In other words what of the non Leninist, non Stalinist strands and even anti Stalinist and anti Stalinist with Russian socialism? How have these disappeared from the popular memory and from the political arena? I believe that these two issues are interlinked. If there has been an excavation of the history of the World Communist Movement, of the relationship of the Soviet Communist Party to other Socialist and Communist parties, then that would have provided the overall matrix and generated the intellectual ambience in which trends of Russian Marxism could have been situated and perhaps regenerated. But neither of this happened.

This was also the case in Eastern Europe. There has been no revival of Lukacs or Luxemburg. Therefore it was only bourgeois ideologies of various forms that were able to provide anything

like a *total alternative*. The bourgeoisie had its economic doctrine and its political doctrine; its social theories and its history. So Liberal democracy and market economics came together as a holistic alternative for Soviet and Eastern European politicians. But in the absence of the rediscovery of the various trends of Russian (and Eastern European) Marxism in their interaction with the World Marxist Movement as a whole, there were only sporadic attempts at reviving the socialist project in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

The NEP's External Dimension

Must we reject central planning as a whole or is it a question of instituting democratic planning? Why was democratic planning not possible in the post revolutionary period in Russia? Is it possible today? What do we mean by democratic central planning? Is it at all feasible - this notion of democratic decision making from below? Is worker control compatible with rapid rates of growth? One of the necessities seem to be to combine democratic planning with meritocracy. Perhaps if the party state had been done away with and the combination of meritocracy and democratic planning instituted then a planned socialist model may have been salvageable.

Is the question today that of what kind of capitalism we can institute or is still the question of socialism? Or is it one of what kind of socialism? Certainly the market does not equal capitalism nor is the State sector coterminous with socialism. This is a truism. The market must be understood as an instrument and mechanism. How can one utilise this to subserve the socialist project? Perhaps what we need is the market mechanism, a streamlined public sector in which meritocracy is the governing law, and broad indicative planning. Is there a contradiction between democratic planning and indicative planning? And what are the proportionalities, if such a thing is relevant, between these components and mechanisms of the economy.

The NEP model has to be studied in its internal aspect *and* in terms of the relationship that Lenin envisaged or hoped for between NEP Russia and the World Capitalist economy. Certainly that relationship did not come about, largely due to the intransigence of imperialism. But had it done so what would NEP

Russia would have looked like *within* the capitalist world economy? What is the role and the function it would have played within the World Capitalist System?

Once we have that abstract model erected we then have a number of other questions to ask ourselves. In the Leninist vision what would have been the path of transition from the NEP model to that of socialism? What did Lenin's various models of socialism look like? How did they differ from the NEP model? And if NEP Russia had the relationship with the World Capitalist economy that Lenin hoped for, how then would the weakest link in the capitalist chain have turned into the base for the World Revolution? Would then World Revolution be abandoned for Peaceful co-existence? Would Genoa and Rapallo have been the models of Russian interaction with the rest of the World? Was the Comintern a Track B; was it something of a fall back? These are the questions we must grapple with.

IF NEP Russia had got the massive investment and made the massive concessions that Lenin envisaged, how would the Bolshevik Party have addressed the task of World Revolution? What would have been its relationship with the socialist and communist parties in the other parts of the world? What would have been the strategy of World Revolution and its organizational form? Would we have seen a replay of Lenin's policies towards Turkey when a cordial relationship with Kemal Attaturk was maintained despite the fact that he was engaged in the brutal suppression of Turkish Communists?

Another vital theoretical task is to identify what Lenin and other revolutionary leaders envisaged as the *political superstructures* or systems corresponding to each phase of the transition(s) to Socialism and Communism. (Mao's theorization of the New Democratic State and the post-war discussion on People's Democracy being examples).

The Need for Theory

The crisis of socialism is not unrelated to the ebbtide of theory. By theory I refer to usable theory, not to the absurd abstractions of Marxologists.

Stalin and Mao incessantly strove to theorize their practice. Che Guevara

was probably the last on the Latin American continent to try to consciously and explicitly wrestle with theoretical problems and enrich the storehouse of Marxist theory. In the Tricontinental world, perhaps the last figure in the World Revolutionary Movement to engage in theoretical praxis was Le Duan. Since then there have been very little attempts to theorise, to conceptualize, to generalize and to abstract. Even the critiques of Glasnost and Perestroika which have emanated from Cuba for instance, have not been accompanied by an alternative balance sheet of the World Communist Movement. While Perestroika and Glasnost were filling in the blank spots of Soviet history in a way conducive to the Right, there has been no attempt on the part of the ruling communist parties to provide a *counter history* of the World Revolutionary Movement.

Problems have been posed - problems of transition to socialism and communism. But these problems have been posed primarily at an empirical level. There have been many remarks on the question of moral vs. material incentives but there was no fully fledged theoretical working out of these problems. So these two areas - the history of World Communism and the problem of transition - remain untheorized. Without this overarching and holistic intellectual structure, we have been on the defensive in the face of imperialism's offensive. Imperialism has its own total, holistic, consistent and historical critique of socialism, while we do not have such a holistic defence of our own history! We do not have a global theory of our own history! Perhaps the pressure of national crises and national events have prevented communist leaders the world over from undertaking this task. But then the price that has to be paid has been tremendous. Because finally, the absence of internationalism *intellectually* - internationalism as distinct from affirmation of solidarity, even the practice of solidarity - has meant the indefensibility of socialism domestically. Internationalism is therefore no longer a luxury. It is a way to prevent the erosion of socialism, nationally. It is an imperative for survival.

Consider the very valuable interviews conducted by people like Mario Menendez, Margaret Randall and Marta Harnecker with revolutionary leaders. Con-

sider also the excellent books written on Latin America and Central America by George Black, Robert Armstrong et. al. A glaring omission is the absence of any exploration of the ideas and theories that motivated these movements and personalities interviewed. The emphasis and the subject matter is almost exclusively on the personal experiences of these revolutionaries. Certainly a chronicle of the struggle is important. Certainly testimony is of inestimable value. But why has there been no attempt to pull out the theoretical and conceptual ideas that motivated and guided these revolutionaries and revolutions? Why has there been no attempt to discuss with, let us say, Tomas Borge or Humberto Ortega and Jaime Wheelock, their views on communism, socialism, Marxism, on the problem of these that were implicit in their strategic formulations? The last writer I can think of who attempted to do anything like this was of course Regis Debray. Debray's double volume 'A Critique of Arms' and 'Revolution on Trial' was the only effort I can think of to locate the revolutionary experiences, struggles and tragedies against the overall backdrop of the history of the World Revolutionary Movement and to understand these in terms of the problems of Marxism Leninism. The valuable Hameker interview with Humberto Ortega did approximate the level of analysis that we should strive for but there again it remained at the level of strategy rather than that of theory. Frei Betto's conversations with Fidel, contained in 'Fidel and Religion' are a grid example of what we need.

Even such basic tasks as the publication in English of the Collected Speeches or even the Selected Speeches of Fidel Castro has not been undertaken. The complete works of Che should have been available in world languages many years ago. So too should be those of the better known Sandinista leaders. An attempt should be made to bring together the speeches, writings and interviews of the guerrilla leaders in Central and Latin America. In other words the basic tasks of compiling and disseminating the revolutionary political thought of the socialist leaders remains to be undertaken. Alongside this, the task of systematizing the political ideas of Fidel, Che, the Nicaraguans and so on has to be taken as an urgent and decisive mission. This inattention to doctrine as distinct from dogma is almost inexplic-

able. That then should be one of our points of departure if recovery is to be ensured.

Internationalism & The Battle of Ideas

We have abandoned internationalism. I do not mean 'organizational internationalism' because that is understandable. The history of the First and the Second Internationals after all have been very sad. I don't believe that we need another International in an organizational sense. But we have abandoned even *intellectual internationalism*; internationalism in the realm of ideas. Our thinking is not internationalist. Our politics is not internationalist. Our perspective is no longer internationalist. Which is why there has been no coming together, no sharing of the experiences of struggle; no pooling of analyses.

At the level of human resources, at the level of personalities, we still have some of the great fighters for socialism and Revolution alive today. If Marx, Engels and Lenin were the equivalents of the American Founding Fathers and the leaders of the French Revolution, we still have alive the equivalents of Roosevelt, De Gaulle and Churchill. General Giap is alive. Deng Hsiao Peng, Fidel, Tomas Borge, Rolando Moran and Pablo Monsanto (Guatemala), Joe Slovo (South Africa), Alvaro Cunhal (Portugal), Joaquin Villalobos and Jorge Schafik Hnadal (El Salvador), Pascal Allende (Chile), Manuel Marulanda (Columbia), Raul Sendic (Uruguay), Hun Sen (Kampuchea), Lula (Brazil), George Habash and Nayef Hawatmeh (Palestine), Douglas Bravo and Teodoro Petkoff (Venezuela), Gerry Adams (Ireland), Mario Firmenich (Argentina), Renato Curcio (Italy), EMS Namboodiripad, Harkishen Sinh Surjeet and Jyoti Basu (India), Jose Maria Sison (Philippines), Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe), Jose Eduardo dos Santos (Angola), Joachim Chissano (Mozambique), Santiago Carillo (Spain). What memories and impressions these names conjure up; what magic they evoke! Each one of these people have, in their own national space, had to survive and struggle in conditions of considerable adversity. Some have survived and others have won. All of them have faced correlations of forces which were adverse in the extreme - certainly at the inception of their struggles. In a word each one of these leaders has had to face at a micro level the same situation

now obtains globally. Surely their experience and reflections, particularly if taken in a comparative sense, can provide a guiding light for revolutionaries in this dark night of reaction.

Why is it that there are no such ingatherings; no meetings; no forums; not even journals or publications that bring together the views of such living legends? One recalls the way in which imperialism, intuitively probably, responded to its deep crisis circa 1975. Entities such as the Trilateral Commission spearheaded the fight back. Such attempts at coordination have culminated in the G-7 Summit meetings. Why have there been no equivalents on the side of the revolution and socialism?

This then should be our starting point. This is the answer to the question 'where to begin'. A collective effort to review, assess and search; efforts that bring together experiences and analysis of the finest practitioners of revolution alive today.

Let us not forget that General Giap for instance, a teacher by profession, started the nucleus of the Vietnamese Liberation forces with only a few dozen men, finally defeated the French at the Dien Bien Phu and went on to defeat the greatest imperial power the world has ever known. Surely the situation we find ourselves globally is analogous to that which the Vietnamese Revolution found itself in, in the first decades of the century? Surely the philosophy, perspective and methodologies that General Giap evolved in transforming this balance of forces from the grossly unfavourable to the favourable are of relevance to us on a global scale? Surely these methodologies and perspectives can be transposed and adapted, not automatically or mechanically of course, or can at least be used to throw light on strategy for survival and counter attack?

We need the testimony of these men; these giants. We need the counsel and insight of these men of genius. We must gather out shamans, our medicine men, around the campfire, and pray for rain. Next year, 1992, marks the 25th anniversary of the death of Che Guevara. We need another Tricontinental Conference or OLAS - as a forum, a conclave, not as a permanent organization. We need a *Third Declaration of Havana*. We must do this while these near mythic heroes are still alive, before they gather together on Mt. Olympus.