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# Leninism, a fascist ideology

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*“Liberation! It is remarkable how persistent human criminal instincts are! I use deliberately the word ‘criminal’, for freedom and crime are as closely related as—well, as the movement of an airplane and its speed: if the speed of an airplane equals zero, the airplane is motionless; if human liberty is equal to zero, man does not commit any crime. That is clear. The way to rid man of criminality is to rid him of freedom.” Yevgeny Zamyatin, We, 1920.*

Today, the existence of more or less virtual immobilist sects that proclaim their loyalty to Lenin is more related to the neuroses that haunt individuals immersed in the modern conditions of capitalism, than it is to the war of ideas waged by rebels against the ideologists of the ruling class. Time is not forgiving, and the final collapse of Leninism that took place between 1976 and 1980 has caused those true believers who still exist to live in a state of schizoid survival. As Gabel has already pointed out, the price they pay for their faith is a split consciousness, a kind of double personality. On the one hand, reality refutes their dogma right down to its smallest details, and, on the other

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hand, the militants' interpretation must distort, constrain and manipulate reality to the point of delirium in order to make it conform to their dogma and to manufacture a Manichaean fairy tale without any contradictions. As if it was a Bible study class, the fairy tale has all the answers. The Leninist fairy tale overcomes the anxiety engendered in the believer by the contradictions that arise from practice, and constitutes a powerful means of escaping from reality. The result would be merely pathetic as far as the rest of us were concerned if the debates that once flourished among a combative proletariat like that of the sixties were taking place today, but given the current state of class consciousness, or, which amounts to the same thing, given the spectacular inversion of reality, where "the true is only a moment of the false", the presence of Leninist sectarians in the few rank and file discussions that are taking place today only contributes to the reigning confusion.

The objective role of the sects consists in the falsification of history, the concealment of reality, distracting attention away from real problems, sabotaging reflection on the causes of the capitalist victory, obstructing the formulation of adequate tactics of struggle, and, finally, preventing the theoretical rearmament of the oppressed. The fossilized Leninists of our time are no longer (not being capable of such a thing) the vanguard of the counterrevolution that their predecessors were thirty or even sixty years ago, but their function is still the same: to work for domination as agents provocateurs.

Given the current decomposition of the Leninist ideology it might be more fitting to speak of "Leninisms", but rather than lose ourselves in the nuances that separate the various sects we shall attempt to set forth their shared characteristics, the ones that most clearly define all of them, that is, their resolute denial that a workers revolution took place in 1936, and the equally steadfast assertion of the existence of an always-advancing working class and the belief in the advent of the leading party, the guide of the workers on their march to rev-

covered by means of organizational methods of the kind that characterize trade unions or parties, or parliaments, or state institutions, or any institutions or groups that are in any way involved in any aspect of domination. Second, that activists must place the highest emphasis on the capacity for association, the fortification of the will to act and the development of critical consciousness, and these factors must be emphasized even more than immediate interests. And third, that the masses must choose between experiencing and instilling fear.

olution. The first trait was bequeathed to them either by the defeatist and capitulationist analyses of the Belgian journal, *Bilan*, or by the triumphalist dictates of the Komintern and the Communist Party of Spain. Whereas the former considered it an imperialist war, the latter considered it a war of independence; in both, the proletariat had to allow itself to be crushed.

In the Leninist universe, Lenin is the Virgin Mary; the working class that his devotees talk about plays the role of Christianity. A Shi'ite of Leninism, that is, a Bordiguist, complains on the internet: "If you take away the working class, what is left to us?" In effect, the working class has a ritual, therapeutic or, if you prefer, psychological function for the Leninists. It is an ideal entity, an abstraction, in the name of which power must be seized. The problem, however, is not just that it does not exist; it has never existed. Invented by Lenin on the basis of the Russian model of 1917, a minority working class in a feudal country with an overwhelmingly peasant population that was amenable to an external leadership composed of intellectuals organized into a party, is not exactly something you see every day. It belongs to a dead past. It is an anti-historical, utopian ideal. No kidding: the "Posadista" Trotskyist sect believed that it was located among the extraterrestrials of a distant galaxy, and that these extraterrestrials sent flying saucers to Earth with socialist messages. The messages of the UFOs must have been spread far and wide because the Leninist proletariat is found in every planetary soup; according to the Leninist press its epiphany could take place at any moment, in the civil war in Iraq, for example, or in the demonstrations of the French students, or in the formation of a "leftist" trade union federation, although most often it is thought to be expressed in labor struggles.

Since there is no history for Leninism after the storming of the Winter Palace, it would seem that since the Russian Revolution there have been neither significant defeats nor significant victories; at most there have been minor setbacks along

the course of an otherwise unswerving evolutionary line that leads to a pure working class, one that awaits the priests of the church, their leaders, the rightful members of the “party”. For the real historical subject of the Leninists is not the class but the party. The party is the absolute criterion of truth, which does not exist by itself but only within the party, in the correctly interpreted sacred scriptures. Within the party, salvation; outside the party, eternal damnation. This hallucinatory vanguardism is the most anti-proletarian feature of Leninism, for the idea of the one messianic party is foreign to Marx; it comes from the Masonic and *Carbonari* bourgeoisie. For Marx the party was the whole ensemble of forces that are fighting for the self-organization of the working class, and not just an authoritarian, enlightened, exclusive and hierarchical organization.

It is very revealing that the Leninists now see particular economic interests as class interests, when they are no longer class interests, while, during the 1970s, when they were class interests, they treated them as trade union affairs. The difference lies in the fact that in the 1970s the proletariat was fighting in its own way, with its own weapons, the assemblies. This is what transformed partial demands into class demands. But Leninists despise the really proletarian forms of struggle and of organization: the assemblies, the elected and revocable committees, the imperative mandate, self-defense, *coordinadoras*, councils.... They despise them because, as forms of workers power, they ignore the parties and dissolve the State, even the “proletarian” State. This is why the Leninists were just as careful as the mainstream media to conceal the existence of the Assembly Movement during the 1970s, because they are the enemies of a real working class that in no respect resembles the one they imagine, and they hate its specific organizational forms for obvious reasons. Unlike Marx, for Leninists existence does not determine consciousness, because the latter has to be inculcated by way of the apostolic ministry of leaders. According to Lenin, the workers cannot attain any more than a trade unionist con-

the Stalinist fascism of yesterday was simply the Leninism of the day before yesterday. His essay was the inspiration for the title of this article.

The parallels that can be drawn with respect to the Spanish situation in 1970–1978 are obvious. On the one hand, the official Stalinist communist party advocated an alliance with sectors of the ruling class to force a democratic conversion of the Francoist regime. Its power derived principally from its manipulation of the workers movement, which it attempted to enroll in the fascist trade union apparatus. All the Leninist methods to prevent workers self-organization were faithfully practiced by the Spanish Communist Party. The left wing parties, which emerged for the most part from the disintegration of the FLP and splits from the PCE and the Workers Front of the ETA, did the same thing. All of them attacked the PCE for not being Leninist enough and for not pursuing, as Lenin did, a bourgeois revolution in the name of the working class. They competed with the PCE for the leadership of the Workers Commissions, which was futile because by 1970 the Commissions were no longer a social movement but the organizations of the Stalinists and their sympathizers in the factories. In order to get elected they made concessions to the genuine working class forms of struggle, the assemblies, but they never gave them any real support. After the events at Vitoria on March 3, 1976, the differences between the splinter groups and the PCE evaporated and they followed the PCE in its politics of compromise. They participated in elections, reaping the most resounding failures. They disappeared, leaving a trail of small sects in their wake, but their political suicide was also that of the PCE, which after 1980 was transformed into a token, symbolic party, with a mercurial ideology, supported only by some proletarianized fragments of the middle and small bourgeoisie.

We can learn a few things from the classical critique of Leninism upon which our essay is based. First, that the foundations of action that tip the social scales against capitalism are not dis-

Workers Councils and advocated a return to the corrupt trade unions and the social democratic party. The German council revolution collapsed under the pressure of the calumny, intrigue and isolation that resulted from the activities of the Bolsheviks. Upon its ruins the old social democracy and the postwar German State would rise, with Lenin's blessing. Lenin did not hesitate to fight the defenders of the council system by heaping them with insults in his followers' favorite pamphlet, *Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. In this text, he took off his disguise. Smothering the left communists and the councils under an avalanche of false accusations, Lenin defended his All-Russian pseudo-socialism, whose further elaboration by Stalin would reveal it to be a new kind of fascism. He was utterly incapable of perceiving that the liberation of the oppressed can only be achieved by way of the destruction of power, terror, fear, threats, and constraints.

One could not imagine better preconditions for the establishment of a bourgeois order than the absolute separation of masses and leaders, class and vanguard, party and trade unions. Lenin sought to bring about a bourgeois revolution in Russia and formed a party that was perfectly fitted to that task, but the Russian revolution took on a working class character and spoiled his plans. Lenin had to use the Soviets to achieve victory so that he could later destroy them. Communism plus electrification gave way to the NEP and Stalin's Five Year Plans, thus inaugurating a new form of capitalism where a new class, the bureaucracy, played the role of the bourgeoisie. It was State Capitalism. In Europe, the working class was stifled, discouraged and led to one defeat after another until it was demoralized and lost faith in its own slogans, a path that would lead to its submission to Nazism. Hitler seized power so easily because the social democratic and Stalinist leaders had so corrupted the German proletariat that the latter did not hesitate to surrender without a fight. "Brown Fascism, Red Fascism" was the title of a memorable pamphlet in which Otto Rühle demonstrates that

consciousness and they must submit to playing the role of simple executors; the trade unions that regiment and control them are therefore the transmission belts of the party. This does not prevent the Leninists from praising the assemblies and the councils if this allows them to exercise some influence and to recruit some disciples. During the 1970s they even supported these institutions but as soon as they felt themselves strong enough they betrayed them, just as Lenin did, *mutatis mutandis*, with the Soviets.

The journal *Living Marxism*, edited by Paul Mattick, expounded the slogan, "the struggle against fascism begins with the struggle against Bolshevism". During the 1950s managerial capitalism evolved towards the totalitarian modes of Soviet State Capitalism. Today, when the communist bureaucratic class has converted to capitalism and the world is being dragged towards fascist domination by the technological road, Leninist ideology is a leftover, dusty museum piece. It does not study capitalism because capitalism is not its enemy; of course it does not want to fight against it. It just makes like garlic, and "repeats". The principle labors of each sect consist in competing with the other sects by emphasizing "... the *particular shibboleth* which *distinguishes* it from" the class movement (Marx).

The theoretical battle against the Leninists is therefore no major undertaking, something like kicking a zombie, but insofar as Leninism constitutes the basic framework of the new ideologies of the counterrevolution, such as Hardt-Negrism, this battle should not be entirely neglected, and it is with this purpose in mind that we shall recall a few basic banalities concerning Leninism that anyone can find in the works of Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Korsch, the councilists (Pannekoek, Gorter, Rühle) or the anarchists (Rocker, Voline, Arshinov). Leninism, by way of Negri and his followers, as was previously the case with Stalinism, its most extreme form, is undergoing a complete return to the thought and the practice of the bourgeoisie,

concretely displayed in the totalitarian stage of globalization, as manifested in its defense of parliamentarism, political compromise, the cell phone and spectacular movements. Negrism is ideologically based upon the weak and losing fractions of domination, the administrative political bureaucracy, the trade union apparatus and the middle classes, who are interested in upholding capitalism with State intervention. But Leninism has not changed. It has always defended interests contrary to those of the proletariat.

In the Russia of 1905 there was no bourgeoisie capable of leading the struggle against Czarism and the church as a future ruling class. This mission had to be assumed by the Russian intellectuals, who sought to clarify their nationalist impulses in Marxism and found their best allies among the working class. Russian Marxism assumed a completely different form than Orthodox Marxism, since in Russia the historical task that had to be fulfilled was that of a bourgeoisie that was too weak to carry it out: the abolition of absolutism and the construction of a national capitalism. Marx's theory, as adapted by Kautsky and Bernstein, identified the revolution with the development of the productive forces and of the corresponding democratic State, and favored a reformist praxis that, although appropriate for Germany, was not at all appropriate for Russia.

Although Lenin integrally accepted the social democratic revision of Marx, he knew that the mission of the Bolshevik social democrats to overthrow Czarism could only be fulfilled by means of revolution, and greater forces than those of the Russian liberals were needed for such a revolution to succeed. A bourgeois revolution without the bourgeoisie, and even against the bourgeoisie. The workers revolt of 1905 left the absolutist regime badly wounded and the revolution of February 1917 finished it off. Although the latter was a workers and peasants insurrection it did not have a revolutionary program or explicit slogans, which is why the representatives of the bourgeoisie took their place. The bourgeoisie, however, could not rise to

the occasion, while the proletariat was politically educated and conscious of its goals; soon, the revolution lost its bourgeois character and adopted a decidedly proletarian air. During July-August, 1917, Lenin was still advocating a bourgeois regime with workers participation, but seeing the progress made by the Soviets or workers councils, he changed his mind and proclaimed the slogan of 'all power to the Soviets', and even wrote a theoretical work on the extinction of the State. But the idea of horizontal power was foreign to Lenin, who had organized a party on the vertical, centralized model of the bourgeois military, with orders always being given from above, with the leadership and the rank and file clearly separated. If he was in favor of the Soviets, it was only for the purpose of using them to seize power. His primary goal was not the development of the Soviets, which had no place in his system; it was instead the conversion of the Bolshevik party into a bureaucratic state apparatus, and the introduction of bourgeois authoritarianism into the army and the power structure. As for the Soviets, the protagonists of the October Revolution, their power was soon usurped by a "proletarian" State they did not know how to destroy. In the name of "the dictatorship of the proletariat", the Bolsheviks fought workers control and the spread of the revolution to the workshops and factories, and generally any sovereign manifestation of workers' initiative in institutions characterized by direct democracy. In 1920 they put an end to the proletarian revolution and the soviets were no longer anything but castrated and decorative bodies. Later, the last strongholds of the revolution, the sailors of Kronstadt and the Makhnovist army, were annihilated.

At the same time that the Bolsheviks were destroying the Soviets, the Bolshevik emissaries arrived in Germany, where councils were being formed by the working class, councils that were on the verge of becoming effective institutions of proletarian power, in order to deliver a stab in the back to the revolution. Wherever they went they discredited the slogan of