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**National
Liberation
Movements and
the Question of
Socialism**

**Marxism and
Christianity
by Archibald
Robertson**

Book Review

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National Liberation Movements and the Question of Socialism

The Twentieth Century has witnessed a rapid growth in and an intensification of national liberation movements. This is particularly true since the end of World War II, and this point is evident to everyone. Such political processes are to be supported and commended. Since they advance the well-being of the underlying population and aim partly as removing vicious, corrupt, anti-democratic regimes, these movements are necessarily progressive in their orientation and weaken imperialism at the world level.

However, they are not to be confused with socialism. Nor is it true that every aspect of national liberation movements is desirable from a socialist point of view. In fact, if such movements are not examined carefully and if the correct class analysis is not undertaken, wrong conclusions will develop, wrong theory will unfold, and wrong practice will inevitably follow.

The purpose of this essay is to examine national liberation movements from a general theoretical position, place these movements within the larger political context of the modern period, and subject some incorrect theories of national liberation processes to criticism. We have observed that, increasingly, those in the socialist camp have become confused over the nature of these movements and have allowed Marxist theory to become infected with capitalist ideology, vulgarizing and distorting that theory in the process. Thus, this essay can be viewed as a modest attempt to redress this problem and facilitate the process through which a Marxist (scientific) view of the

world is, once again, placed at the forefront of the communist movement.

Definition

A national liberation movement is, by definition, a political process, involving whatever means are dictated by the prevailing situation, to take the economic, political, and social control of a country out of the hands of a foreign power and place it under the rule of some of the population within that country. By definition, a national liberation movement does not identify the class interests of the contending forces: It appears, superficially, as a nation-nation contest in which whole populations of these nations are in opposition to each other. But, in the modern world, this cannot be the case: Nations that have been brought under the control of another contain classes just as the dominant nations do. And it is this class content that requires examination.

Modern national liberation movements are a response to imperialism, the monopoly capital stage of capitalist society. Under conditions imposed by this form of organization, businessmen maximize profits through various collusive forms of control. With the monopolization of the means of production, capitalists are able to extract greater-than-normal profits through the control of prices that can be raised above the competitive level through the restriction of output. That is, monopoly capitalists are in a position to "charge what the market will bear" because they can reach agreements as to the most profitable level of output to produce. As their control over prices and, thus, profits, is determined by their control over production, it is absolutely imperative that capitalists lay hold of the strategic variables of the production process, from the starting point (the gathering of raw materials) to the end point (the distribution channels through which the finished product is sold). To this end, the modern colonial system was developed in the second half of

the nineteenth century in order (principally) to control sources of raw materials, thus allowing the monopolization of output. Obviously, one result of this control was growing poverty among the majority of the colonial population. As the colony lost control over its own resources, it also lost control over its economic environment. Economic stagnation and increasing immiseration of the bulk of the population resulted.

Modern colonization must be distinguished from colonization under conditions of competitive capitalism (roughly 1600 to the mid-1800's). In the latter case, the principal function of the colonial system was to provide outlets for manufactured products. As competitive capitalists maximized profits by maximizing output (as opposed to monopolistic restriction of output), they required an enormous extension of the market. Thus, the capitalists' governments secured markets abroad by imposing control through whatever means necessary (military invasion, etc.), destroying, for the most part, the portion of the indigenous economy that threatened to compete with the colonial power's production (for example, the English destruction of the Indian textile industry), and established a kept foreign market for the home country's output.

In any case, regardless of whether the colony is imposed as a result of competitive or oligopolistic pressures, necessary relationships develop that are of a class nature. To impose their control over the population of a colony, capitalists require the assistance of a portion of that population to act as their surrogates or allies. Generally, they find this segment within the class of feudal lords who, as a result of economic development, find themselves in a tenuous position. Because they are increasingly decadent and reactionary, they are increasingly challenged by other classes within these countries (primarily the native capitalists) and, without outside assistance, would not be able to hold on to power. Thus, they willingly assist the foreign capitalists in subjecting the rest of the population to foreign

domination in return for the maintenance of their internal power (curtailed though it is) and a cut of the income generated by foreign exploitation. The native capitalist class finds itself in opposition not only to its internal class enemy, the feudal lords, but also to the dominant foreign capitalists, who are restricting their growth and accumulation process. However, since these natives are capitalists, their opposition is not of a basic class confrontation, but rather a disagreement within a class. The colonial capitalists are not opposed to capitalism (obviously) but merely want greater internal freedom within the world capitalist system.

The classes that are in fundamental opposition to both the foreign capitalists and their own feudal lords and capitalists, are those of the workers and petty producers (mainly peasants and craftsmen). Since it is from these classes that the bulk of the economic surplus generated is derived, this portion of the population is the most oppressed and would reap the greatest benefits from complete liberation and fundamental transformation of the social structure. (For a more complete argument of these points, see, Science, Class, and Politics, Numbers 3, 10, 17.)

It is seen, then, that a national liberation movement can be led (technically) by any class within the colony that establishes itself as the leading force. Basically, though, in the modern period, this question reduces itself to that of capitalist or worker leadership. To facilitate their ends, capitalists will not put forward an overtly capitalist program: This would clearly distinguish them as a minority of the population that had no objective interests in the long-run well being of the rest of the population, thereby reducing the amount of support they would receive in undertaking their liberation from the control of foreign capitalists and their own internal lackey class. Hence, the program normally adopted by this class is that of a populist or petty-bourgeois variety that seems to contain elements particularly favorable to the petty producers (mainly peasants)

and, to some extent, workers. Essentially, capitalists attempt to forge an alliance that serves their interest in promoting their class goals but that will be severed as soon as possible following successful "liberation." Thus, the ideological position of a capitalist program is designed to convince the underlying population that they have a stake in promoting a full-fledged capitalist society controlled by the colony's capitalist class.

The working class, however, is not interested (objectively) in mere "national" liberation. This class requires class liberation: The establishment of a socialist society in which it is the ruling class. To this end, therefore, a national liberation movement led by workers requires the development of a socialist program within the context of national liberation. That is, national liberation is merely the first step in a political process that results in victory--not for "everyone," as the capitalist program would appear to indicate, but only for the producing classes, the workers and the petty producers (who, of course, will become workers in the long run). National liberation, in and of itself, is part of the capitalists' political and economic agenda: Concern with the "nation" as the primary political unit is inevitably capitalist in its orientation, just as the modern nation itself, in most cases, was formed by the capitalist class in its own interest. Workers, objectively, desire an international, world economic and political system in which nations as sovereign states will disappear. Basically, for long-run success, the working class must break fundamentally with the capitalist system and thus with all those aspects of the modern world that support that system--including that of the "nation."

Marxists have always supported national liberation movements as part of their democratic program, just as they have supported (as well as led) movements designed to increase the suffrage, reduce racism and sexism, etc. At the same time, national liberation is not an end in itself from the Marxist point of

view but only part of a long process that, in the end, sees the end of nations (and the end of racism, sexism, etc.). Moreover, as has been noted by major Marxist theoreticians, the call for national liberation by itself is a call of and by the capitalist elements and their supporters:

Not only the demand for the self-determination of nations but all the items of our democratic minimum programme were advanced before us, as far back as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by the petty-bourgeoisie. And the petty bourgeoisie continues to this day to advance all these demands in a utopian way, without seeing the class struggle and the fact that it has become intensified under democracy, and believing in "peaceful" capitalism. (Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution"... , p. 271.)

As one example of Lenin's position, the great Irish* writer, Jonathan Swift, spent his life promoting the interests of national liberation for Ireland and, in particular, independence for the Irish peasantry and other petty producers from English domination. (See, Rubinstein, The Great Tradition in English Literature, Vol. 1, pp. 224-251.) His most famous (and, from the British point of view, notorious) works, Gulliver's Travels and A Modest Proposal, are nothing more than political tracts designed to propagandize and popularize the aspirations and interests of Irish capitalists and proto-capitalists. Given Swift's time, however, this can only be seen as most progressive and advanced.

Jumping to the modern period, one can observe that national liberation movements still serve the same class's interests. Consider, for example, the case of

*Though born of English parents, Swift lived in and was a citizen of Ireland and dedicated his life to the cause of Irish nationalism. For this reason, he can be viewed as Irish in his orientation.

the very strong Indian nationalist movement of the 1930's and 1940's. Nehru, one of the chief leaders of this movement, makes the essential point very clearly:

"[the Indian national movement] has not been [for] a change of the social order, but political independence...It is absurd to say that the leaders betray the masses because they do not try to upset the land system or the capitalist system. They never claimed to do so."

(J. Nehru, Autobiography, pp. 366-7.)

With this perspective in mind, the Indian National Congress Party set forward an ideological program designed to enlist the support of the majority of the population and, then--as one would expect--consistently stabbed the workers and peasants in the back, betraying them on every occasion in which they had the opportunity. And, of course, they promoted Gandhi, one of the current darlings of the liberal (capitalist) camp, as the great leader: Gandhi was in the pay of the single largest Indian capitalist and always at the service of the Empire--as long as the Empire would make some concessions to the Indian business class. What the Nehrus and the Gandhis accomplished was the defeat of the Indian lower classes, the sabotage of a revolutionary national liberation movement and the preservation of India for the continued rule of imperialism. Every child now starving in Delhi and elsewhere should be laid at the graves of these immortal "heroes" and the class they represented.

The Marxist Position on National Liberation Movements

Marxists have always stood for national independence and have supported national liberation movements even though it is realized that these movements have severe limitations and small chance of success. The Marxist position clearly recognizes that these move-

ments cannot be seen as ends in themselves (as is often the case) but as one part of a much larger whole.

Socialism is not instituted all at once but arises as a result of a long historical struggle on many fronts and within an uneven and sporadic development. National liberation is thus part of a socialist program even though it is not, in itself, socialist. Basically, national liberation movements (as movements for the suffrage, against racism, war, etc.) are part of the democratic program which, if it is to be successful, must be advanced by the working class and within which the working class is trained to pursue its long-run interests in the establishment of a socialist society:

The proletariat cannot be victorious except through democracy, i.e., by introducing complete democracy and by combining every step of its struggle with democratic demands formulated in the most determined manner. It is absurd to contrast the socialist revolution and the revolutionary struggle against capitalism with one of the questions of democracy, in this case, the national question. We must combine the revolutionary struggle against capitalism with a revolutionary programme and revolutionary tactics relative to all democratic demands: a republic, a militia, election of officials by the people, equal rights for women, self-determination of nations, etc. While capitalism exists, these demands can be achieved only in exceptional cases, and in an incomplete, distorted form. Basing ourselves on democracy as already achieved, exposing its incompleteness under capitalism, we demand the overthrow of capitalism, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, as a necessary basis both for the abolition of the poverty of the masses and for the complete and all-sided achievement of all democratic reforms. Some of these reforms will be started before the overthrow of the

bourgeoisie, others in the process of this overthrow, and still others after it. The social revolution is not a single battle, but represents a whole epoch of numerous battles around all the problems of economic and democratic reforms, which can be consummated only by the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It is for the sake of this final aim that we must formulate every one of our democratic demands in a consistently revolutionary manner. It is quite conceivable that the workers of a certain country may overthrow the bourgeoisie before even one fundamental democratic reform has been accomplished in full. It is entirely inconceivable, however, that the proletariat, as a historical class, will be able to defeat the bourgeoisie if it is not prepared for this task by being educated in the spirit of the most consistent and determinedly revolutionary democracy.

(Lenin, "The Revolutionary Proletariat"..., pp. 283-4.)

One of the historical missions of the proletariat is to advance capitalist democracy for the capitalists (in a sense). The capitalists themselves are too timid, too fearful of the underlying population to fully undertake this goal. Witness their actions in the Revolutions of 1848: they unleashed the Revolution but then, frightened by what they did unleash, retreated in cowardly fashion and embraced their feudal enemies and the big bourgeoisie lest the workers and peasants take things into their own hands and end up holding power over both feudal lords and capitalists (Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire..., pp. 82-120).

In the context of national liberation movements, the working class must organize to fight for independence and, if possible, seek the leadership of this movement. To the extent that it is so organized and does command a leadership position, that is the extent

to which the independence movement will be pushed to its possible limits. Within this context, there will be greater democracy, greater independence (in the economic as well as the political sense), and, thus, greater freedom for the working class itself. Socialism simply cannot be built within the context of colonial oppression: The first requirement for colonial workers is to free the state from the control of foreign capitalists, i.e., national independence. In the course of the drive for independence, various changes will be wrought (say, voting privileges or parliamentary participation rights) that can be used to advance the working class' interest and, thus, make the transition to socialism all that much easier. That is, the stronger the working class relative to the capitalists at the end of a successful national liberation movement, the better will be its opportunity to make the transition to socialism. A revolution will still be needed, of course, but the greater the strength of the working class elements, the easier will be the necessary task of educating the population.

Furthermore, even if workers cannot gain a leadership position, they must maintain their ideological and organizational independence. In no circumstances should they merge with or become subservient to capitalist parties or fronts.

Thus, national liberation movements, like all democratic demands, must be advanced by the working class and, wherever possible, led by that class. At the same time, workers can only succeed in their efforts if they go beyond narrow bourgeois demands, including that of national independence, and establish their own society:

In contrast to the petty-bourgeois democrats, Marx regarded all democratic demands without exception not as an absolute, but as a historical expression of the struggle of the masses of the people, led by the bourgeoisie, against feudalism. There is not a single democratic demand which could not serve, and has not served, under certain

conditions, as an instrument of the bourgeoisie for deceiving the workers. To single out one of the demands of political democracy, namely, the self-determination of nations, and to oppose it to all the rest, is fundamentally wrong in theory. In practice, the proletariat will be able to retain its independence only if it subordinates its struggle for all the democratic demands, not excluding the demand for a republic, to its revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. (Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution...", p. 273).

The Problem at Hand

The basic problem in the modern period has been the rejection (ignorance?) of these fundamental Marxist positions regarding national liberation movements by many leftist organizations and individuals, and the confusion of national liberation movements with the socialist revolution. Thus, any country that seems to have gained independence from imperialist oppression is labelled socialist and is said to have undergone a revolutionary transformation. For an example, one need go no further than the accolades being heaped on Nicaragua and the Sandinistas by leftists. If this position were correct, then the world has been witnessing major socialist advances in the last decade and more are underway. In fact, it would seem as if capitalism is on its last legs.

What is seen by these leftists is the ostensible victory of a colonial people: What is not seen is that these colonial peoples are made up of various classes and that there is an underlying class struggle within the context of national liberation. The question is, liberation for which class(es)? For such leftists, the nation overrides and subsumes classes. Hence, it appears that everyone within the nation has the same interests.

But bad theory leads inevitably to bad practice.

If unqualified support is given to a national liberation movement, it may well mean support for capitalists. Further, since the capitalists of these colonial countries do not want to establish a decent, humane, working class society but want to continue to exploit and oppress--on their terms rather than those of the foreign capitalists--(in fact, they do not even want total independence but prefer to remain within the framework of the world capitalist system) then these leftists are objectively supporting exploitation, degradation, etc.; assuming they are honest, they will eventually be disappointed in the performance of the liberated country and may become so discouraged that they drop out of the left political movement altogether.

Thus, it is vitally important that national liberation movements are not confused with socialism and that realistic support be given to these movements and a class analysis be undertaken to make sure this support is well-placed. But this demands correct (Marxist) theory. Bad practice results from incorrect (capitalist) theory. This raises the question: Where does this incorrect theory come from?

In "the good old days", when an international communist movement existed in practice and there were solid Marxist theoreticians sallying forth to do deeds, national liberation movements were analyzed from a class point of view. These movements were supported, to be sure (in fact, more so than in today's period), but they were not supported from a noncritical, "non-class" foundation. Rather, evidence was gathered, Marxist analysis undertaken, positions set forth and support was directed toward assisting the lower classes in their attempts to improve their lot. Thus, one can examine the work of Lenin or Stalin on this question in general, or people such as R. Palme Dutt on India to observe that, indeed, a class point of view was presented and national liberation movements were not appraised merely as to their national content. Now, we have deteriorated sufficiently so that even the Catholic Church finds itself supported by ostensible Marxists in its efforts to direct the

movements in Latin America (and Eastern Europe) into safe, non-revolutionary, capitalist channels.

With the triumph of revisionism in the Soviet Union and, for all practical purposes, the destruction of the international communist movement, theoretical leadership was wrested from the Marxists and was handed to various non-Marxist theoreticians who, nonetheless, paraded as Marxists. This should surprise no one. In the modern period, theory will either be of a working class variety (Marxist) or that of a capitalist perspective (in practice, everything else--even that which appears to be non-capitalist such as the feudal positions taken by the pro-Khomeini Iranian hooligans). In the post-war period, the dominant progressive political movement was that of national liberation. In the 1960's, with the upsurge in political activity in the imperialist countries, those who were active were looking for theory to guide their actions. Given the significance of the national liberation movements, many turned to individuals who either came out of those movements or who addressed themselves specifically to those movements for that guidance. Thus, in the 1960's, the heroes of the left in the United States and Europe were not Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin (especially not the last) but Mao Tse Tung, Che Guevara, Frantz Fanon, Regis Debray, Herbert Marcuse, Kwame Nkrumah and those who have come to be recognized as the Monthly Review School--Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank, et. al. The influence of these theoreticians is enormous: Even people who have never read a single word by any one of the above (and others) have absorbed much of the political perspective they have disseminated.

In this article, we shall not present a critical review of all the specific features of the general theory as set out by the above-mentioned theorists. In the past, we have subjected some of the Monthly Review authorities to scrutiny and have undertaken an analysis of one of the variations of this general theoretical approach (see, Science, Class, and Politics, Fall, 1978, #3); and an extensive critique of the perspective of Mao Tse Tung is forthcoming. Here,

we merely want to demonstrate that unless one argues from a working class point of view and understands imperialism in class terms as opposed to merely national relationships, the conclusions reached are supportive of imperialism and represent a petty bourgeois--capitalist--position. Whether the central point is that of unequal exchange, third world, super-powers or center-periphery, the general theory surrounding the particular variation will be the same in essence--pro-imperialist.

Nationalist Theories of National Liberation

Examining social processes from the standpoint of the nation, it appears to many theorists that all those in the imperialist country have an objective interest in continuing the oppression of the colonial populations. As evidence for this position, it is noted that workers in the capitalist powers have higher incomes, etc., than most of the colonial peoples. Thus, it is reasoned that workers in the imperialist countries have an interest in exploiting the colonies because this exploitation serves as the basis for their incomes. Hence, workers are bribed and thus corrupted; they become the allies of the capitalists. (For our criticism of the bribe theory, see Science, Class, and Politics, #10.)

This bribe, though does not stop at the frontiers of the imperialist nation; it extends into the colony itself. It is observed that workers in the urban areas of the colonies have higher incomes than their fellow citizens in the country (the writings of many of these theorists display a distinctly anti-town bias). Thus, as with the "evidence" cited in the imperialist country, the fact of higher incomes "proves" that this colonial working class is hopelessly mired in the machinations of imperialism and, therefore, cannot serve as a revolutionary focal point. It tends, in fact, to be conservative.

The great mistake, the inherent defect in the majority of political parties in under-developed regions has been, following traditional lines, to approach in the first place those elements which are the most politically conscious: the working-classes in the towns, the skilled workers and the civil servants--that is to say, a tiny portion of the population, which hardly represents more than one per cent.

But although this proletariat has read the party publications and understood its propaganda, it is much less ready to obey in the event of orders being given which set in motion the fierce struggle for national liberation. It cannot be too strongly stressed that in the colonial territories the proletariat is the nucleus of the colonised population which has been most pampered by the colonial regime. The embryonic proletariat of the towns is in a comparatively privileged position.

(Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, p. 88.)

Since the working class is rejected as the leading revolutionary force, then who serves in this role?

The peasantry is systematically disregarded for the most part by the propaganda put out by the nationalist parties. And it is clear that in the colonial countries the peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The starving peasant, outside the class system, is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays.

[The]...peasantry precisely constitutes the only spontaneously revolutionary force of the country...

...the peasants, who are all the time adding

to their knowledge in the light of experience, will come to show themselves capable of directing the people's struggle. (Fanon, Wretched, pp. 48, 99, 114.)

As the peasants or small farmers are those who suffer the most from colonization, then this class is the one with the most to lose from continued subservience and the most to gain from revolution. But why is the small peasantry so oppressed and what does it want in the way of a solution to the problem?

Peasants, as noted by Stalin some seventy years ago, are drawn into the national movement when land becomes an important issue (Stalin, Marxism and the National Question, p. 20.) And, given the nature of modern imperialism with its control of natural resources, land is, in most colonies, a major issue. The peasants' response to this issue is to demand the return of the land over which they lost control as a result of the monopoly capitalists' economic interests in the colony. That is, the peasant--in the main--wants to restore the individualized control over the means of production that existed prior to colonization. This, of course, is a petty producer position. And the petty producer position is a capitalist position (of the petty bourgeois variety).

Because these theorists take on the peasants' point of view, they necessarily suggest solutions that are of an individualist, anarchist or semi-anarchist temperament:

The guerilla force is the party in embryo. This is the staggering novelty introduced by the Cuban Revolution.

Any guerrilla movement in Latin America that wishes to pursue the people's war to the end ...must become the unchallenged political vanguard.

The people's army will be the nucleus of the party, not vice versa. The guerrilla force is the political vanguard in nuce and

from its development a real party can arise. (Debray, Revolution in Revolution?, pp. 106, 109, 116.)

Thus, we observe something of a return to the nineteenth century anarcho-syndicalist position in which a "militant minority" begins and leads a revolutionary process, the majority eventually coming over to the side of this nucleus as a result of the educational force of the revolution itself. This, of course, is the foco theory of Guevara and others and places primary emphasis on the armed struggle rather than the long-run education of the lower classes prior to and following this phase of the revolution. In other words, it is a petty bourgeois program with its theoretical base lying in the ideology of the peasantry. But, as the peasantry is incapable of leading and consolidating a revolutionary process (given its individualist outlook and contempt for any state apparatus), such a program amounts to handing leadership to the capitalists who will use it for their own purposes.

Marxists have always held that the small peasantry is the natural ally of the working class and cannot be dismissed as a revolutionary force. At the same time, these theoreticians have argued (correctly) that only the working class, as a concentrated, centralized force is capable of bringing about the fundamental changes necessary for a socialist transformation. In the nationalist view of national liberation, this class composition is turned around: The peasantry is the only possible leading force while the working class is, at best, a secondary force.

This anti-working class, petty bourgeois theory extends to the treatment of revolutionary processes in the advanced imperialist countries as well. Herbert Marcuse, one of the most influential ideologists of the 1960's--and former (?) C.I.A. agent--expressed utter contempt for the working class, charging it with being "one dimensional" and hopelessly corrupted as a result of alliance with the capitalist class. His revolutionary "class" was that of the "outsiders", those who had been left outside the mainstream of

modern social life:

...the struggle for the solution has outgrown the traditional forms. The totalitarian tendencies of the one-dimensional society render the traditional ways and means of protest ineffective--perhaps even dangerous because they preserve the illusion of popular sovereignty....However, underneath the conservative popular base is the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colours, the unemployed and the unemployable. They exist outside the democratic process; their life is the most immediate and the most real need for ending intolerable conditions and institutions. Thus their opposition is revolutionary, even if their consciousness is not. Their opposition hits the system from without and is therefore not deflected by the system; it is an elementary force which violates the rules of the game, and, in doing so, reveals it as a rigged game.
(Marcuse, One Dimensional Man, p. 200.)

Moreover, for Marcuse the main "revolutionary" element among these outsiders is the lumpen.

This basic theme, the rejection of Marxist theory and the working class itself coupled with the adoption of a petty bourgeois ideology with its emphasis on the peasantry, runs through the literature of the 1960's and 1970's. Given the void created by the domination of the revisionists in the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies, this nationalist, individualist perspective could not but find itself in an increasingly dominant position, thus permeating the ideas of those who entered left politics during the period (not to mention those who had established positions but found their ideological bearings gone awry as a result of revisionist teachings). And, in the current period, this misplaced theoretical perspective continues to

haunt the left, making it impossible to form correct judgements on national liberation movements, leading to political support for the wrong section of the colonial population. But this means that national liberation itself will not succeed because political leadership falls to the capitalists of those countries who do not want complete liberation, nor liberation at all. And this means that the underlying population of those countries, including the peasantry, will continue to suffer. Let us illustrate.

On Modern Liberation Movements

Consider as one example of the above argument the situation in El Salvador. Let us make it clear at the outset that we assign the blame for the carnage in that beleaguered country to the U.S. Government, which is acting at the behest of large businessmen who have interests in Central America and who are concerned that any change in the political and economic arrangements of El Salvador (or Nicaragua or wherever) will injure their long-run well-being in that area. At the same time, it is reasonably clear that the strategy and tactics of the FMLN-FDR have not resulted in the victory that was once thought to be in its grasp. More important, though, is the fact that recent developments in the program of the FMLN-FDR have made it increasingly clear that the working class does not have political leadership in either the FMLN or the FDR and that if independence is won (which, of course, would be a good development) El Salvador will come under the internal control of its native businessmen--which means continued control by imperialists.

A recent report in NACLA summarizes the current program of the FMLN-FDR:

The FMLN-FDR's proposal for a Government of Broad Participation seems to reflect a decision to abandon revolutionary idealism in favor of a political realism. Its principal elements include:

--the demand for a direct share in power,

without that meaning a monopoly of power;
--far-reaching agrarian reform, and reform of the finance system and foreign trade;
--a mixed economy in which private enterprise would enjoy a reasonable place, without the abusive privileges or prerogatives it has enjoyed throughout Salvadorean history;
--political pluralism, which does not imply immediate elections, but neither does it rule out elections whose exact form would be agreed upon later.

--restructuring of the Army and security forces to remove those responsible for killings and human rights abuses, and the formation of a new Army from a merger of the present Army and the troops of the FMLN.

The main means of achieving these goals is armed struggle. Not that this closes the door to dialogue and negotiation; on the contrary, the Left has made repeated positive offers in that direction. The Government of Broad Participation is a compromise program. The goal of popular power based on a worker-peasant alliance has been postponed if not abandoned, and any notions of alignment with the socialist bloc or the export of revolution in the region long ago gave way to a nationalist pledge to non-alignment. Now, the FMLN-FDR offers a reciprocal security pact with the United States.
("El Salvador 1984", NACLA, p. 16.)

Now, it's well known that both the FMLN and the FDR are compromised of various organizations representing various positions. These umbrella organizations have formed an alliance and have come out with the above, common program. Historically, the FMLN was considered to be the more radical organization, containing groups claiming to be Marxist in their orientation, while the FDR was ostensibly the more moderate wing with a strong social democratic tendency. Given the alliance and common program, it is clear that no fundamental

differences remain (if they indeed ever existed) and that agreements have been reached as to the policy to pursue in order to reach desired ends.

But what is that policy? What does the above program amount to? In its essence, the program is the same as that adopted by the FDR in the late 1970's and represents a political and economic arrangement that would establish a society controlled by El Salvadoran capitalists under the overall direction of imperialism (though not necessarily U.S. imperialists*). Consider the following two clauses from that earlier program:

Turn over to the people, by means of nationalizations and the creation of collective and social enterprises, the basic means of production and distribution, which are today owned and controlled by the oligarchy and U.S. monopolies: the land of the great landholders, companies which produce and distribute electricity, oil refineries, the industrial, commercial and service monopolies, foreign commerce, banks, the large transportation enterprises. This will take place without affecting the small and medium private businesspeople, who will receive economic stimulation and support in every sense, through the various branches of the national economy.

The Democratic Revolutionary Government will be made up of representatives from the

*It should be remembered that the German Social Democrats have been pouring large amounts of money into El Salvador in direct support of the FMLN-FDR. Since the Social Democrats represent the interests of the large German businessmen, there is no doubt that German capitalists, seeing a potential weakening of the U.S. position in Latin America, sense the possibility of increasing their involvement and possibly control in this region.

popular and revolutionary movements, and those democratic parties, organizations, sectors and individuals who are disposed to participate in the carrying out of the present programmatic platform.

This government will stand on a broad social and political base formed primarily by the working class, peasantry and advanced middle sectors; closely tied to these will be all the social strata agreeing to carry out this platform: small and medium industrial businesspeople, merchants, artisans, small farmers. It will also include those honest professionals, progressive clergy, democratic parties like the National Revolutionary Movement, advanced sectors of the Christian Democrats, and worthy and honest officers of the army who will agree to serve the interests of the people; and all other sectors, groups or individuals who will abide by a true democracy for the people, independent development, and popular liberation. (Platform for the Democratic Revolutionary Government, pp. 3-4.)

Nowhere in this program, either in the old or the new form, do we observe a demand for a fundamental change in the economic arrangements of the country where workers would come into control of the means of production. Rather, there is proposed a "mixed" economy, in which medium and even large businessmen would participate as long as they were patriotic and were not tied to the oligarchy now controlling El Salvador. This, of course, is in reference to the national, supposedly independent, bourgeoisie that ostensibly has the interests of the "nation" at heart. But if the capitalists of El Salvador are to be allowed freedom to accumulate and expand, then, by definition, workers must be denied the freedom to effect their interests--they must be denied effective control of the means of production. And, if capitalism is to be fostered in El Salvador, the small

peasantry will also suffer in the long run, even though they would be attracted to such a program in the short run given their individualist ideology.

The post-"revolution" political arrangements would give rights to all (excluding, presumably, the oligarchs and their lackeys) even to the point of guaranteeing the U.S.'s security in that area (including the security of U.S. business interests?). The "Government of Broad Participation" will certainly expand the rights currently allowed in El Salvador, but it will not fundamentally change those rights--and fundamental change is the very essence of a revolutionary process.

Thus, neither in the economic nor in the political sphere is a radical transformation of El Salvador's society suggested. Rather, we suggest, arrangements would be effected that would greatly enhance the material welfare of the capitalists of that country. This is not to say that the majority of the population will not benefit--at least in the short run. But, when the capitalists are firmly in control and the lower class movement has been dispersed, what will be observed is yet another "disappointment"--capitalist growth will produce the same effects as in any capitalist country. Further, the small "independent" El Salvadoran businessmen will continue to be dominated by foreign capitalists.

One can observe this process in Nicaragua. As previously analyzed in Science, Class, and Politics (#26), the anti-Somoza, anti-U.S. liberation movement fell under the direction of capitalist forces. Given the success of that movement, the capitalists of that country were initially forced to grant concessions to the lower classes. However, we now observe that this class is doing everything in its power to break the political force of the underlying population, making concession after concession to both the United States Government (the withdrawal of Cuban technicians, guarantees concerning U.S. property and political interests) and to the overtly counter-revolutionary forces of Nicaragua (granting the "contras" the right to return and hold responsible positions in the new government).

In other words, the true face of the Sandinistas is showing itself. And, increasingly, this organization will demonstrate its willingness to "betray" the revolution; that is, establish the economic and political form of social organization that it always wanted.

And what is true for El Salvador and Nicaragua may be true for Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, etc., if the class relations are the same. Regardless of what the leading force calls itself, it must be analyzed from a class point of view in order to determine its true character. Only then can an accurate understanding of any given national liberation movement be developed and the correct kind of support be given.

Conclusion

In the present period, national liberation movements form a primary focal point of international politics. These movements must be supported and used to help undermine imperialism and to demonstrate the nature of imperialism in its relationship to colonial populations. At the same time, they cannot be given uncritical support. Rather, they must be analyzed as to their class content and the leading class identified. Also, support must be given to the proletarian elements and, if communist forces are present in these movements, these must be promoted in whatever ways possible. If such a class analysis is not undertaken, support will almost inevitably fall to non-working class forces and capitalist elements will be promoted in this struggle. If these elements are successful in their attempts to gain a modicum of "independence," they will assuredly "betray" the revolution and disappoint their supporters in the imperialist countries.

In the final analysis, to the extent the capitalist class is supported in the colonies, imperialism is also supported. In order to seriously weaken and, thus, help to destroy in the long run this system of exploitation, national liberation movements must be led by the working class and socialist regimes established. Then, the working class on a world basis is strengthened and greater clarity will be given to the questions of international politics.

This can only occur, however, if the nefarious, anti-scientific practice of confusing national liberation movements with socialist revolutions is ended and a Marxist-Leninist theoretical and practical approach is undertaken to this political movement. And this requires objective analysis, not prejudicial assertions. ■

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