

Is the People's Flag Deepest Red... or Brightest Green?

(Reflections on the New Social Movements Internationally)

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1. Introduction: Not only in Latin America

Visiting India for the first time in 1980 I was repeatedly confronted with red flags, hammers and sickles, portraits of Lenin and Stalin, newspaper reference to 'red-flag unions', the common left-wing use of 'Communists' to refer to party and non-party socialists. In Western Europe these symbols and terms were not simply condemned by flinching cowards and sneering traitors but ignored by new generations of radical activists. However, in India they seemed to be leading an energetic national life of their own, capturing at least a part of the popular imagination. While in Europe, even Communist parties were abandoning Leninist practice and even socialist language or slogans (Samuels 1985), Indian communist leaders discussed with me the 'economism' of their own unions, worried about shortcomings in the 'worker-peasant' alliance and condemned either the 'infantile disorder' of those to their left or the 'parliamentary cretinism' of those to their right.

In West Bengal, which is governed by a communist-led coalition, I was introduced to the Minister of Finance, Ashok Mitra. He sat distantly behind his huge ministerial desk, flanked by a frame containing, on the one side, a vastly-enlarged Constitution of India, and on the other, an equally-sized portrait of Lenin. Mitra was justifiably more concerned

The green colour adopted by the European environmentalist movement and parties may be familiar to less readers than the red of the French and Russian Revolutions, the labour movement in general and communism in particular. Both in my title and in the Introduction there is reference to the British labour movement song, 'The Red Flag'. This runs in part:

The people's flag is deepest red,
It sheltered oft our martyred dead.

...

Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer,
We'll keep the red flag flying here.

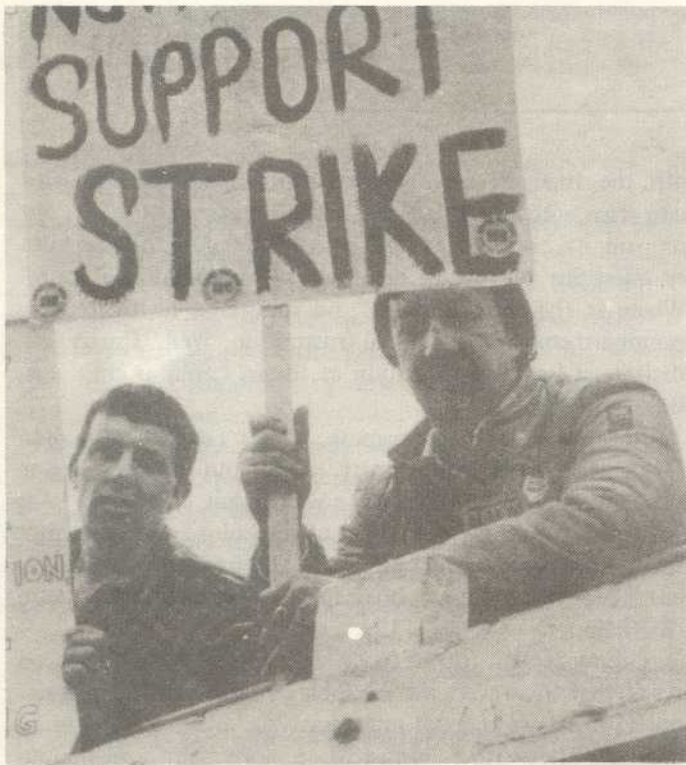
with the financial management of this least-likely socialist state than with myself or my Bengali communist guide. My companion was chagrined both by Mitra's failure to respond to my questions and by his incongruous combination of icons. "Where is the logic in that?" he spluttered in his leftwing communist embarrassment and frustration. "Well," I suggested, "dialectical logic? Constitution as thesis, Lenin as antithesis, Mitra as synthesis?"

From this same companion I later received a colored photo of an Indian bullock cart, tricked out in festival splendor. At first you *don't* see it, your mind convincing your eye that the portrait at the top of the color and glitter must be the Lord Krishna or one of the hundreds of other Hindu gods. Then you *do* see it. It is a local Indian communist deity, J.V. Stalin.

On my second trip to India a year later, I had convinced myself that these were not symbols or signs of rising popular consciousness, of original social analysis or effective political strategies. They rather seemed to be more akin to the bountiful Indian expressions of caste, creed, ethnicity, and faction that found their richest expression in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981). It is in the shape of jugglers, magicians, and mountebanks that Rushdie affectionately satirised his communists. A Delhi friend questioned demonstrators who had come to attend India's largest ever anti-nuclear demonstration. It was organized by one of the major communist parties and was protesting only against warlike imperialist American nuclei, not against the peaceful proletarian Soviet variety, nor the non-aligned national-capitalist (or is it national-democratic?) variety. They had been mobilised by their party-controlled peasant associations, unions, and women's organisation. The train was free, and they were having great fun with so many comrades in Delhi. However, the demonstrators questioned by my friend did not know

exactly why or against what they were demonstrating. In visiting party offices, in party-led squatter settlements and at union rallies, I increasingly felt that the countless red flags and endless chants of "Inquilab Zindabad" (Long Live Revolution) were comforts for survival in a brutal environment and substitutes for that much-desired, scientifically-determined but repeatedly-postponed apocalypse.

In my two Indian journeys (Waterman 1984), and through visitors in Europe since then, I have come into contact with militant unions independent of the traditional communist (or other) political parties; tribal miner-peasants who carried a green 'regional independence' flag alongside the red one; non-party activists from environmental, popular-science, and



human rights groups; and women's, rural labor, and other movements. I have also met and read the work of intellectuals who - often after intense activity in a parliamentary communist party, with Naxalite (Maoist) rural insurrectionism, or with Trotskyist *groupuscules* - are seeking for *something else*. This search is not something, either, that is confined to those from the Marxist tradition. Activists of other background are also involved.

The 'something else' would be a movement that was neither ritualized nor authoritarian, which was not hierarchical or manipulative, which did not reproduce those patterns of thinking, acting and relating which obstruct social transformation in India. Above all, they are seeking for something rooted in peoples' experience - in the daily experience of significant collectivities of laboring people under contemporary

conditions of Indian life, and death, and struggle. Something that puts together the communities that capitalism repeatedly destructures, or creates the new ones that capitalism tries to obstruct. Something that allows ordinary people to do a little revolutionizing each day, around the water tap rather than depending on the professionals of revolution, following the flag, concentrating politics in public arenas, and waiting for the trumpet to sound .

Back in a Western Europe depleted of revolutionary light and sound, we are still as dependent as the Indian Left on organizations and practices that took shape in the late 19th and early 20th century. Each country has its collective-bargaining unions (moderate or militant by tendency or turn). Each has its reformist party of labor. These, as Przeworski (1985:248) points out of the social-democratic variety, have done much to make capitalism more efficient and humane but have had little or nothing to do with a struggle for socialism. Today these countries each have their considerable women's, peace, and environmental movements. Some have Green parties in parliament (Hulsberg, 1985). When the Dutch organized their biggest peace demonstration in late-1984, it was reported that of the 400,000 or more demonstrators, 90% were Labor Party voters and 50% trade union members. Thus, the old social movement does seem to have provided *some* kind of basis for the new. Yet the Labor Party could not even get 360,000 people on a demonstration, not for **peace**, not even for free beer. And if the Dutch trade unions want to get just a few thousand unionists together, they have to hold the meeting in a hall and offer, if not free beer, free railway tickets. Ironically, these old movements lay claim on the new ones that in the Netherlands, it repeatedly damps down the peace movement, attempting to channel and phase it to fit the logic of parliamentary politics.

The Communist states, of course, still have not only their communist parties but their red flags and portraits of Lenin - even if those of Stalin are confined to the more primitive areas. Travelling across East Germany just after Soviet troops had crushed the Prague Spring, I asked my Czechoslovak companion what was the significance of the larger number of internationalist banners and slogans in the German Democratic Republic compared with Czechoslovakia. 'Bigger internationalist banner-and-slogan-producing industry' was his laconic reply. Since then we have seen the rise and fall (though not the death) of Solidarnosc, the most widely-supported European social movement since the Russian Revolution, and one that hopefully reminded Bahro (1977) of what he had denied or ignored - that workers can lead contemporary social struggles, that unions are not condemned to an intermediary or collective-bargaining role. And as I wrote this item, I heard on the radio of three successive demonstrations in China against nuclear-weapons testing. These demonstrations combined three of the demands that find expression in the new social

movements worldwide: the right to associate, regional/ethnic interests, environmental concerns.

Despite the worldwide loss of authority or legitimacy of the dominant order, despite analogous or even identical demands and forms of protest in countries or world areas that have so many differences and so little mutual contact, there is not much written on the new social movements as an international phenomenon. The collection edited by David Slater (1985), attempting to deal with a whole continent is, therefore, not so much timely as overdue. This is not so much due to the case studies, which have their strengths and weaknesses and which leave lacunae, as to the two more theoretical papers and to the introduction by Slater himself. In the rest of this review article I will follow the main structure of the book (the complete contents of which is appended to the end), dealing in turn with Theory, Urban Social Movements, Regional Movements, Revolutionary Change and Women's Movements. Slater's introduction will, however, be left to the end, allowing me to take up issues that go wider than the collection itself.

2. The contributions

1. *Theory*. There is one major problem with Ernesto Laclau as theorist and advocate of the new social movements - that his language (discourse?) reproduces or even increases the internal mental-manual (theorist-activist) division that is one of the main problems of the old social movements. This is regrettable since those equipped and determined to fight through the jungle of abstract concepts will find an important argument. Laclau seems to be making more of an effort but he does not do so in a manner enough to communicate to the motivated and at least partially-qualified reader. Nor does he sufficiently explain or define his particular technical terminology. 'Signs', 'discourse', 'articulation' remain opaque. So do their uses, though they carry much of the weight of the argument.

The essence of this argument seems to be a radical rejection of Marxist theory and strategy concerning class identity, revolutionary agency, and societal transformation, along with an assertion of the transformatory potential of a multiplicity of social groups struggling autonomously for immediate and limited ends in a restricted social area. Laclau argues that 20th century conditions have

weakened the ties which linked the various identities of the worker as producer, consumer, political agent, etc. This has had two results: on the one hand, the social agent's positions become autonomous - it is this autonomy which is at the root of the specificity of the new social movements - but, on the other hand, the type of articulation existing among these different positions become continually more indeter-

minate. . . Categories such as 'working class,' 'petty-bourgeois', etc., become less and less meaningful as ways of understanding the overall identity of social agents. The concept of 'class-struggle', for example, is neither correct nor incorrect - it is, simply, totally insufficient as a way of accounting for contemporary social conflicts.

While, on the positive side, such an argument would seem to require us to take seriously the specific and self-determined aims of empirically existing social groups and movements, it would seem, on the negative side, to make invisible or insignificant such hegemonic and dynamic sources of exploitation and oppression as the multinationals and dominant nation states (i.e. imperialism). The weakness becomes evident in the conclusion, where Laclau is left reflecting on the significance for struggles of the new 'opening up of the political systems' (42) in Latin America, rather than considering how and where, and in how far struggles can be articulated to maximum effect. Nonetheless, Laclau has original and challenging things to say about traditional categories, situations and social protest strategies both in Europe and Latin America, and his radical critique - or surpassing - of Marxism requires a serious and non-defensive response.

His latest book (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) has received a serious-enough response from Ellen Meiksins Wood (1986: Chapter 4). This, however, is largely concerned with the defense of traditional Marxist theory and strategy. We therefore still need to see a positive response, taking account of the crisis of traditional labor movements in the West, with their



fossilization in the East, and with their frequent paralysis in the South. While Meiksins Wood is required to appeal against Laclau by using the problematic case of the British miners' strike of 1984, we can appeal to the more significant cases of Solidarnosc in Poland and the new 'social movement' unionism in South Africa (Webster 1986). Such phenomena suggest that the key to social transformation in the late 20th century lies neither in 'the working class movement' nor in the 'new social movements' but precisely in the articulation of the one with the other.

In contrast with Laclau's item, that of Tilman Evers is a model of clarity. Starting, like Laclau, with a European background and with general theoretical reflections, he moves in toward an interpretation of the new social movements in Latin America. Along with a rejection of the traditional understanding of the political, he asserts that the new social movements are rather socio-psychological or cultural in nature than political in that old sense. He sees in these movements less an attempt to capture some traditionally understood place of power than to assert specific collective identities and to re-connect the exercise of power with daily life where it is lived and as it is experienced. Evers also recognizes *the problem* faced by movements that reject the traditional political arena: they tend to remain separate and marginalized. While he evidently does not wish to see these movements subordinated to a political party playing the traditional political and power game, he does recognize a need for concentration and coordination that Laclau seems to ignore. In a paper that is continuously fresh and speculative he asks if we do not need a new kind of political party that would *support* such movements rather than a vanguard that would enforce a 'higher'

interest and power logic (reproducing rather than undermining traditional power relations).

2. *Urban social movements.* Vink's contribution on 'base communities' is actually on base communities of the Catholic Church. This is an informative and thought-provoking item, since it raises a question of increasing international importance:

why religion, a basic element of Brazilian subculture, and working traditionally as an alienating factor, can become an element of change (96).

Vink rejects not only an interpretation in terms of recent transformation in Brazilian society but also the idea that changes in church organization and ideology are even 'related to' such transformations. This seems a somewhat overstated rejection of economic or technological determinism if the point is simply to study the autonomous dynamics of the church itself. Here, however, is where Vink is most informative, particularly on the Church Base Communities (CEBs) themselves. The mode of operation of the latter is evidently inspired by liberation theology, and links up the middle class Catholic activists with urban, rural and industrial movements of laborers carrying a popular Catholic tradition that is independent of - though not separate from - the official church hierarchy and doctrine. Vink considers in detail the relationship between the hierarchy, the CEBs and the new worker unions and political party. Here we get a useful account of a major strike movement, and detailed account of the attitudes of some of the actors. The conclusion suggests the dialectical interplay between the three forces above mentioned. However, it is a pity that no comparison is made with Poland - not



known to be a particular site of liberation theology. The point of a comparison would not be to make simple analogies but to explore both the extent and the limits of popular Christianity in relationship to social movements. The church's power would seem to lie in the iteration of certain humanistic principles and its personification of these (local priesthood, animators) in a situation in which other forms of opposition are either suppressed, estranged from the masses, or ritualized in meaningless forms. The Brazilian case study shows - and the Polish case suggests - that the problem comes for the church when it either has to relate to a powerful popular opposition, or to act as intermediary between social movements and the state. And how would these powerful but simple church doctrines operate where, for example, options have to be made between complex social alternatives?

3. *Regional movements.* Slater's item on regional movements in Peru consists of some general historical and analytical background and a couple of case studies, the whole being introduced by general theoretical comments on the new social movements. Slater ends with the suggestion - somewhat trite in relation to his rather sophisticated introduction - that such movements pose new questions for the political organizations of the Left. But, along the way, we have been shown the very considerable differences between two major movements in very different regions, one in a city heavily penetrated by multinationals, the other in a recently industrialized city.

The question raised somewhere in the collection is that should the *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) insurrectionary movement in Peru be considered a 'new' social movement at all. The paper by Gianotten, de Wit and de Wit reveals that it should not be, whatever its current effect or popular appeal. The paper, largely journalistic in character, gives the geographical and political background to the movement, describing its ideology and strategy. It is informative and critical, particularly in comparing the peasantist and nativist ideology of the movement with its rather different strategy. Should not *Sendero Luminoso* be seen as an extreme expression of vanguardism - a grotesque caricature of an old political movement that has at its other extreme a Eurocommunism decreasingly distinguishable from social democracy? Once again the obvious comparison - with the Khmer Rouge - is not made, nor is there any attempt to relate the paper to the subject of the collection as a whole. A less obvious comparison would be with the various Red Armies, Proletarian Fractions and so forth in Western Europe, organizations which may raise questions about a profound social malaise and the impotence of the organized Left whose practices make it difficult to distil a drop of respect for popular experience and mass capacity that hallmarks the new movements.

4. *Revolutionary change and women's movement.* The Coraggio paper on Nicaragua is an implicit critique of the positions taken by Laclau and Evers, in so far as it seems to

begin by reasserting the necessity for a vanguard party. In doing so Coraggio is drawing from Gramsci, or returning to him. What is not, however, clear is the extent to which Coraggio's argument is tied to his case. Nicaragua would seem to be a special case in its blending of traditional and new forms and demands. In Coraggio's elegant presentation, Nicaragua offers a model demonstration of a Gramscian vanguard, leading and following, teaching and learning from the masses.

However, as Gramscian as Coraggio might be, he seems to forget that the Gramscian vanguard was of the *proletariat*. It has been argued that the organized workers in Nicaragua played a passive or conservative role, the urban 'drive force' being the petty bourgeoisie (Smith 1986). Once again, orthodox Marxism-Leninism is put into question and the necessity arises for theorists and strategists prepared to confront social structures and processes that have not been dreamed of in their philosophies. Coraggio not only explains but also justifies or rationalizes a certain subordination or postponement of specific popular interests (of women or wage-earners) but argues that the pluralistic system that came out of the insurrection preserves the fruitful dialectic between the FSLN leadership and such interests. The paper gives careful consideration to relations between the revolutionary leadership and the bourgeoisie, and also to the pluralistic political system developing at the time he was writing (before the 1984 general elections). It is only at this point that he raises problems concerning the relations with social movements (unions, women's organisations, etc.). Here he makes also his first strategy proposal: that given imperialist pressure, the FSLN might opt for the mass-party form as less vulnerable than the vanguard one. Finally, Coraggio returns with the Nicaraguan case to consider social movement theory. His most important criticism of such theory is

the tendency that can be observed in certain authors to predict (or indeed wish) that the political party system will be replaced by the social movements . . . It is far more useful to think in terms of a hypothesis which would posit that the presence of social movements on the political scene is indicative of a genuine critique of the parties' ability to provide a channel for the expression of contradictory social development, and that their actions will, of necessity, result in a transformation of this political system (226).

In so far as Coraggio generalizes internationally, this seems to be a realistic prediction of what is *likely* to happen, whether desired by movementist theorists or not. Whether it can succeed, or continue, in Nicaraguan conditions is surely more doubtful. Outside support to the popular social movements in Nicaragua (from democratic forces internationally) might make a significant difference.

Molyneux, treating the role of women in revolutionary Nicaragua, treads the tightrope between the 'feminist version' of the "revolution betrayed", and a Coraggio-type rationalization for the 'subordination of their specific interests' to the goal of establishing a new social order. She does this by distinguishing between 'women's interests' and 'gender interests', dividing the latter into 'strategic' and 'practical' interests. She rejects the concept of 'women's interests' as one which assumes women to have a set of already constituted common interests, across nation, class and ethnic group. She offers 'gender interests' instead, as a term relating solely to gender attributes. She distinguishes 'strategic interests' as those drawn from an analysis of women's subordination and the related 'feminist' consciousness and demands required to overcome them (ending sexual division of labor, institutionalized discrimination, control over women's bodies, etc). 'Practical interests' are those raised by women positioned within the existing division of labor, rather than as perceived by others, and they usually represent an immediate need rather than a strategic goal. She then points out that a state can gain women's support by satisfying their practical demands or certain class interests, but can hardly claim on *such* grounds to be supporting the strategic objective of women's emancipation. Having set up this theoretical framework she then considers the Nicaraguan case, being one in which women have formed an exceptionally high and active proportion of the revolutionary forces and have demonstrated support for the revolutionary government. Molyneux considers the evidence and argues that redistributive measures have benefitted women of the working class (the majority) and have served practical gender interests (housing, childcare, etc.). She also claims 'significant if modest' progress on strategic interests, in so far as there has been land reform, reforms of family law, challenges to female stereotyping, and self-mobilization through the women's union. Limitations on such strategic interests are implied by a narrow and economic definition of women's emancipation, and a tendency to subordinate gender interests to economic development. Finally, she stresses the necessity for political guarantees since



it is a question . . . not just of *what* interests are represented in the state, but *how* they are represented. (original stress) (257)

I have summarized rather than criticized the argument here because it seems to me that Molyneux's paper represents a model of balance - theoretical and political - indicating dangers and necessities rather more directly than that of Coraggio, and expressing them in an eminently clear language.

3, Social movements and a new understanding of the political

We can now turn to the more general issues raised by the collection as a whole. We will do this by dealing in detail with David Slater's introductory piece. This is one which can be profitably read by anyone teaching or studying the new social movements. Slater goes beyond the materials in the collection and picks up not only a wider Latin American literature but also much of the European debate. Here he does not simply confine himself to the theorists or ideologues of the new social movements but also refers to their critics. Defenders of the *old* social movement might therefore also draw some cold comfort from it.

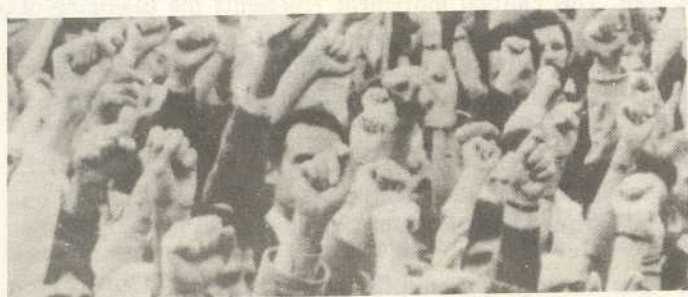
Slater added in his exegesis of the author: 1) a summary on the 'newness' of the new social movements, 2) a consideration of the specificity or generality of these (basically a Latin America-Western Europe comparison), 3) reflections on the relationship of these movements to revolution (they may be social but are they socialist?). Within Slater's third category I would like to identify a shift to a rather different issue: 4) the role of the political party in relation to the social movement.

1. *Novelty*. The novelty of the new lies for Slater in 1) new forms of struggle in relation to new forms of subordination and oppression (i.e. the generalization of commodification, bureaucratization and massification); 2) the fact that these new forms of subordination and oppression are not necessarily connected with or concentrated within the proletariat: they take autonomous form and expression, they are not necessarily anti-capitalist, and a new revolutionary subjectivity has to be created (rather than being assumed to inhere in the proletariat); 3) the high value given to empowerment at the base of society, to democracy within movements, to respect for differences and to a high standard of inter-personal relations.

2. *Specificity/generality*. On the specificity/generality question Slater is less than satisfactory. While he points out more or less obvious differences between Latin American and Western European economies, states and societies, he does not really link this to the nature, structure, power and effect of the new social movements in each. This is a rather crucial issue and one to which I do not myself have an immediate

answer. I mean, we do have here a phenomenon which expresses itself in Holland and China as well as Peru. Moreover, as Tilman Evers points out, this is a phenomenon not positively correlated with degrees of democracy or defeats for the traditional Left. That the new social movements are, as Slater has earlier told us, the result of the transformation of *advanced* capitalist societies, does not necessarily seem to mean that they are going to be more powerful in West Germany than in Argentina. There are powerful retarding, incorporative and dispersive forces in the North as well as in the South. It may be that we should be not so much concerned with *identifying the differences* as in *increasing the similarities*. The new social movements, after all, are not simply phenomena to be studied; they are a project to be developed.

Slater does point out that one of the conditions for the development of the new social movements in Latin America has been their existence in the North. He then seems to feel obliged to refer to the long history of women's movements in Latin America, as if to defend himself against charges of



Eurocentricity. Personally, I have no problem with the origin of the new wave of feminism in the North, any more than I do with the fact that along with many of the new social movements it came to Europe from the USA. The USA, after all, has more commodification, bureaucratization and massification than the rest of us, and has also lacked the advantage/disadvantage of a significant labor party. They really *needed* community, equality, consumer and environmental movements more than we did. They (we) can in their (our) turn later learn from social-movement unionism in the East and the South.

3. *Social movements and socialism.* What of the relationship between the new social movements and socialism? Slater here draws our attention to a British debate for and against the new social movements as once again unlocking the door to a post-capitalist future. Like Slater, my sympathy is all with the movementists. This is not necessarily because I accept their positions uncritically, but because they are struggling to come to terms with a new socio-political phenomenon, sticking their political and theoretical necks out, and they are original and challenging. The defenders of the Old Faith, meanwhile, sit in their Marxist-Leninist dustbins, waiting for the revolutionary working class to make its historically necessary appearance.

What I further admire about the movementists is that they do not claim that the new social movements *are* revolutionary - a point made by Slater - nor are most of the writers he refers to anti-working class. They see anti-capitalist potential in the new social *movements* that they do not see in the old labor *organizations*, but many also stress the necessity in any transformatory project of articulating wage-worker interests, demands and capacities with those of women, peace-lovers, environmentalists, etc. In advanced capitalist countries many of the latter must, of course, be in wage-earner families anyway.

In shifting attention from this British debate back to Latin America, Slater argues that the workerists (my term, not his) *are* Eurocentric, failing to take account of the experience of the capitalist periphery where anti-capitalist revolutions have taken place. There is no suggestion by Slater that the British-based movementists *do* have a world view (not the same as a worldview). Nor is any attempt here made to really connect the British debate with that on Latin America. In point of fact, one of Slater's movementist works (Williams 1983) is both aware of the periphery and, in its profound critique of nation-statism, seriously internationalist in a way that I have found no other recent British socialist work to be. His other reference (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) is as Eurocentric as its critics. This is as true of the seminal essay by the same authors (Laclau and Mouffe 1981) and despite the fact that Mouffe has worked in Latin America, and that Laclau is not only an Argentinian but a major contributor to the Slater volume!

4. *The rôle of the party.* The shift back to Latin America does permit Slater to reflect on the role of the party - or does he have in mind the role of the Party (the Marxist-Leninist vanguard)? Under discussion here is not only the relationship between party and population but also the party-type (vanguard or mass) and also of inner-party practices. These are fairly old New Left issues and I am not sure whether in posing Coraggio against Laclau here, Slater really advances new *principles* for party organization. This is partly because we have the Nicaraguan case study of Coraggio posed against the theoretical work of Laclau. The *new* principle, in so far as there is one advanced in the volume, would seem to me to be that of Evers (66), even if it is not further developed:

[N]ew parties would have to accept the role of not only *not* being the vanguard, but of being the *rearguard* in relation to the contents of these movements. They would have to be conceptualized as *servants*, not as masters of these movements. Of course, this excludes from the beginning any idea of control. And it imposes open, democratic structures, in which the open expression of variety, including contradictions among participants, is more important than unity of outward action. (Original emphases).

I myself do not know how such a party could develop in Latin American conditions. Nor do I quite see the implication of such a party-type. It would, however, seem to me to be in tune with general political transformations under late-capitalism. The target today is not so much the Winter Palace (requiring the vanguard party), or the Houses of Parliament (requiring the mass party), but 1,000 sites and fronts at which people must empower themselves both before and after any insurrectionary success, any parliamentary victory. For this they need to be not so much led from the front as supported from below - with a broad range of the kind of services being currently offered on a rather unstructured and uncoordinated basis by 'support groups'. The support or service group is a form of political activity increasingly adopted internationally by radical professionals, academics and students wishing to relate to mass struggles in a way that does not turn the capitalist brain/hand division into a socialist leader/follower or organizer/organized one. A party, or parties, that systematically and generously offered such services - which could include the traditional ones of discussing theories and developing strategies - could provide the new social movements with the ideas, information and techniques needed, while in themselves continually seeking for coordination and compromise between the otherwise possibly contradictory forces and centrifugal pressures. Before leaving this issue, here are two relevant citations from Manuel Castells; the first about the importance of social movements relative to political parties, the second on the relationship of each to the other:

[A]ll over the world conscious people have continued to mobilize collectively to change their lives and propose new ones against those who want to preserve the old order. People mobilized, in a variety of historical contexts and social structures, without parties, beyond parties, with parties, against parties, and for parties. The parties' role has not been a discriminatory variable; the crucial phenomena have been self-conscious, self-organized social movements (Castells 1983:299).

And

[S]ocial movements exist, develop, and relate to civil society, and are not necessarily limited to, or bound by, the rules of the game and the institutionalization of dominant values and norms. This is why social movements are the sources of social innovation while political parties are the instruments of social bargaining . . . Without social movements, no challenge will emerge from civil society able to shake the institutions of the state through which norms are enforced, values preached, and property preserved. Without political parties and without an open political system, the new values, demands and desires generated by social movements not only fade . . . but

do not light up in the production of social reform and institutional change. (Castells 1983:294)

The political struggle to develop appropriate party-types, and the theoretical effort to conceptualize them, will no doubt continue.

4. Weak links in the social-movement chain

1. *Communication.* The Slater collection lacks any contribution on Chile or on cultural/communication movements. Chile has a particularly rich experience in the development of grassroots movements under the most difficult conditions (Autogestions 1985). To a considerable extent, furthermore, Chilean resistance has been cultural (Dorfman 1976, Foxley 1985). Elsewhere in Latin America there has been a growing struggle around the democratization of communication (Chasqui 1983). The process is, of course, not confined to Latin America or the Third World only but is marked in North America, Western and Eastern Europe (Downing 1984) as well. This cultural movement represents the beginning of resistance and struggle on the new front opened by capital as it shifts from an industrial to an information economy. What begins in the hands of capital as a series of industries, processes and commodities (computers, satellites, videos), appears in the hands of the nation-state as a series of devices to divert, supervise, control and punish. As a recent document on information and socialism (Jusocan 1986) puts it:

The monopolization of information is the culmination of capitalist *alienation*. It is no longer a question of extracting surplus value from the product. It is no longer a question of domination by coercion, threats or fear. It is now a question of extracting and dominating *consciousness* itself. The problem is that data and information concerning persons, groups and peoples is no longer within their reach but within that of their dominators. (Original emphases)

For the worker-support organization that produced this document, this situation is not a matter for pessimism: the recognition of the problem is 'essentially an invitation to find a solution'. The document then goes on to spell out such a solution in terms of principle, then at the level of the political parties and state, at the level of the unions, and at the level of the alternative (socialist? libertarian?) movement. The paper, produced for a European seminar of portworkers, even spells out the implications for the portworkers specifically.

I know of little writing on the new social movements that recognizes, as this labor movement declaration does, the importance of communications. But it provides precisely the underlay necessary for the self-styled 'coda' of Arrighi,



Hopkins and Wallerstein (1984(?)) who, while admitting they have not argued the connection, nonetheless stress the importance of communication to the new social movements. Referring back to the old social movement and the *Communist Manifesto*, they say;

The kind of concern flagged in the Manifesto, the material means of unity among those geographically separate, remains central. The means themselves, and the very form of their materiality, have been fundamentally transformed. More and more anti-systemic movements will find their own cohesion and coherence forged and destroyed by the newest of the means of mediating social relations.

While for this trio, the thought remains at the level of suggestive insight, for Castells (1983) it is rather more central. He speaks of 'industrial and informational modes of development' (310) within the capitalist mode of production and recognizes the significance of the shift toward the latter, even if it remains inextricably connected with the former. The information mode allows for the spatial disconnection of work and management, for a hierarchical organization of production on a world assembly line, for homeworking, for the disconnection between people's lives and the place where they live them:

Each place, each city, will receive its social meaning from its location in the hierarchy of a network whose control and rhythm will escape from each place and, even more, from the people in each place . . . The new tendential urban meaning is the spatial and cultural separation of people from their product and their history. It is the space of collective alienation and individual violence, transformed by undifferentiated feedbacks into a flow that never stops and never starts. Life is transformed into abstraction, cities into shadows. (Castells 1983;313-4)

It is against this background that we can understand why Castells sees identity, cultural autonomy and communication as one crucial aim of urban movements. The product of the information mode of capitalist production is technocracy. The technocrat seeks 'Monopoly of messages, one-way information flows: mass culture; standardization of meaning; urban isolation'. Against this, the urban community movement fights for the 'city as a communication network and source of cultural innovation' (Castells 1983:320, Table 32.1).

While Castells forcefully stresses the role that the developing informatization of society is international, he is talking only of *urban* movements and therefore inevitably stresses community and communication within cities. Even the most internationally-conscious of new social movement theorists rarely get to *internationalism*.

2. *Internationalism*. We need not here again rehearse the decline of the old labor internationalism as the labor movement - now in the form of separate labor parties, unions and cooperatives - began to win a place (in capitalist states) in the parliamentary, industrial relations and economic sun (Olle and Scholler 1984). The impasse of labor internationalism was shown with tragic clarity during the great British miners' strike (see ILR 1986: 11-15). The National Union of Mineworkers had made no preparation for international support. It was busy breaking with the 'free-world' and social-democratic Mineworkers International Federation, of which it had long been the backbone, in order to set up a 'peaceful-coexistence' International Mineworkers Organization with the state-controlled unions of the communist world. The NUM's leader had earlier criticized Solidarnosc as being anti-socialist. But it was Jaruzelski's 'socialist' regime that was shipping coal to Britain while, underground, the 'anti-socialist' Solidarnosc was declaring solidarity with British miners. Desperate for support, the NUM turned to the state-controlled unions of Khadafi's Libya ('anti-imperialist solidarity?'). The main light to shine

in this darkness was the solidarity of Solidarnosc, that of rural migrant miners in South Africa, of even poorer unionists in Bombay, and the informal support that streamed in from Europe, North America and Australia, pit by pit, community by community. It was often organized by local socialists and communists, thus reminding the world once again that international solidarity is a relationship between human beings, not the progressive tendency within inter-bloc or inter-state relations. But, as was stated by an NUM officer (Howells 1986: 14-15), this solidarity had little or nothing to do with the leadership of his union.

It is, surely, more than evident that in so far as there is today a principled and effective internationalism, it is that of the human rights, women's, environmentalist, peace and anti-imperialist movements. The new social movements are able to be seriously internationalist because they are essentially opposed to militarism, bureaucracy and technocracy - to the concentration of power and information in the hands of small numbers of officials. In so far as such an increasing concentration of ever greater powers is a universal phenomenon, the new social movements are necessarily internationalist. Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein (1984 (?)) see the new social movements as having been called into existence by the increasing 'stratification' of society, as well as by what I would call an increasing 'inter-stratification' (Common Market, International Monetary Fund, etc.).

When the early labor movement was most internationalist, was this when it best represented specific wage-labor interests, or when wage-labor (along with the rest of the poor) was excluded from citizenship? Labor was at this time outside the state and therefore was able to be anti-state. Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein show that the old social and national movement played a major role in the stratification of society, demanding the *independent* state, the *socialist* state, the *welfare* state. They demanded power literally within these states, as party of independence movements and independent regimes, as the single party of the victorious proletariat, as 'social partners' within socio-economic councils.

We can today just about identify the outlines of a new kind of labor internationalism. This is of the grassroots, shopfloor, community kind revealed by the miners' strike. It is, significantly, frequently interwoven with the internationalism of the new social movements. If labor was most internationalist when, in the past, it was most closely articulated into popular-democratic struggles, it is becoming once again internationalist where and in so far as it re-articulates itself with these. Maybe labor internationalism declined because it became *simply* labor internationalism - the wages-and-conditions internationalism of the unions, the trading internationalism of the cooperatives, the one-eyed sectarian internationalism of the parties. It is impressive to see how the involvement of the South African trade unions in anti-racist



and other democratic struggles leads them to identify with not only Third World workers but British miners, and not only workers in capitalist countries but with the rebellious workers of Hungary in 1956 and of Poland in more recent times.

In any case, the internationalism of the new social movements is not simply the cream on the cake, it is the kernel of the nut. All the more surprising, one might think, that this is not recognized by the movements themselves, or at least by the movementist theorists. But within the movements - which sometimes consider ideology and theory as rather more dangerous than the Black Death - the internationalism is spontaneous. And as for the theorists well, maybe they have simply not yet freed themselves from a nation-state framework of thought and action.

Among the theorists, however, let us grant credit, or recognize signs of grace, where these are due.

Raymond Williams (1983) points out (though the thought may not be original to him) that 'the nation-state . . . is at once too large and too small for the range of real social purposes' (197). This does not lead him, when considering a larger community, to leap to universalist propositions of an ideal kind, such as the international proletariat overcoming its national divisions (196). Nor, obviously, to overriding national and international bodies which do not derive their powers from meaningfully self-governed local communities. He proposes, rather, 'new forms of *variable* societies' (original emphasis), and a 'variable socialism' to inspire and coordinate them (198). It seems that what he is suggesting is both the preservation of meaningful traditional communities and the creation of necessary new ones. It is not clear whether the 'new' here include international communities. But Williams in any case stresses the necessity of first going down to the local level to see what, in practice, internationalism could be meaningfully constructed from (180). Down at this level, there are



real grounds of hope. It is by working and living together, with some real place and common interest to identify with, and as free as may be from external ideological definitions, whether divisive or universalist, that real social identities are formed. (196)

From this level, it is implied, it would be possible to move out to an international one that would not be an interstate one:

[T]here would be a necessary openness to all the indispensable means of mutual support and encouragement, directly and often diversely . . . negotiated from real bases. Moreover, much of this negotiation would be at least in part direct . . . The true advantages of equal exchange and of rooted contacts and mobilities, would be more fully realized . . . than in the current arbitrary mobilities, or in any merely defensive reversion to smaller societies and sovereignties. (198-9).

Williams' argument here allows us to see how Castells' urban communities could become meaningfully internationalist. It also links us with the argument of D.L. Sheth (1983; 8):

Specially among the grassroots workers the awareness is growing, albeit slowly, that the local power structures they are fighting in their respective areas derive their power vertically from the macro-structures of the prevalent national and international order. The politics of these action-groups and movements is therefore getting progressively dissociated from

national politics and gradually acquiring an orientation to global-level problems, an orientation quite different from that of the ruling elites of those societies.

What Sheth, and Rajni Kothari (1984) after him, rightly reveal is the internationalism of the new social-movement *activists*. This is slightly different - and probably slightly more accurate - than what I have suggested earlier in this section. The internationalism of the women's movement is widely recognized and effectively organized. But it is, of course, the internationalism of *feminists*, i.e. of the most-educated, ideologically-convinced, politically-active and geographically-mobile of women. While they may consider themselves as an international community, Williams' stress on spatial community reminds us of the necessity for a geographical base . . . and a grassroots internationalism.

3. *Strategy*. The papers in the Slater volume are largely concerned with interpreting the world. The point, however, is to change it. This is an idea, expressed in slightly other words, by a well-known theorist of the old social movement. It is a curious paradox that those, like Laclau, who are trying to develop what might be called a social-movement Marxism should **not only speak in language unintelligible to activists** but should avoid explicit address to strategic problems of the movement. Perhaps he could cite in his defense Evers, who seems to be arguing at the end of his contribution to the Slater book that since "we" (social-movement-oriented intellectuals?) cannot liberate the masses, we should be struggling to overcome our own intellectual sterility and will thus be making our most effective contribution to the new movements (67-8). Maybe he is trying to say something different; the passage is not unambiguous. But it is, in any case, taking a stance different from that of Castells.

Castells is not interested in merely producing elegant tabular typologies. He provides readers with a formula for the development of successful urban movements (Castells 1983: 322-3). This is:

1. It must articulate the three goals of collective consumption, community culture and political self-management;
2. It must be conscious of its role as a social movement;
3. It must be connected to society, particularly through the media, professionals and political parties;
4. It must be organizationally and ideologically autonomous of any political party;
5. The first condition must be the one that commands all the others.

There seems to me a practical and comprehensible set of suggestions, and one that could be adapted to the needs of other social movements. Castells does not, of course, hand this down as an instruction. It is a conclusion from research that is

made available to activists. I see nothing wrong with such an intervention and, indeed, I would like to recommend it. It depends, of course, on the spirit in which any such suggestion is made, and on the place from which it is being enunciated. The best spirit would be a dialectical one, in the sense of a mutual learning process. The best place would not probably be on pages 322-3 of an immensely expensive book. The place would, rather, be within the social movement, or from places where the risks of social-movement activists are being shared. This is, in fact, where increasing numbers of radical intellec-

tuals are to be found. Think only of the KOR group in Poland, still being harassed today for their past and present services to the social movement in that country. Or the South African intellectuals associated with the *South African Labour Bulletin*, whose modest but continuing work over the years has made a significant contribution to the rebirth of social-movement unionism there. It is, surely, only in so far as we are in such a position that we can end, as does Evers in the Slater volume, with the declaration that 'we are the new social movements' (68). **K**

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