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Abstracts

Attila Melegh

The Betrayal of Workers. Counterrevolution in the 1980s: the Transitory Class and their Hegemony.

In dismantling a socialist, non-capitalist mixed economy Hungarian elites were following a clear line of neoliberalism with an almost unconditional West-centrism. In this process intellectuals and expert technocrats played a specific role and the paper argues that they formed a transitory “new class” which could start a large-scale privatization process in the name of “Europe”. This formation in a specific global historical moment can explain how the voices opposing the capitalist transformation and the critical left were silenced already in the 1980s. We can also see the specific circumstances of how and why the new class could establish hegemony through civilizational discourses for a while, and how their later control collapsed. This betrayal of workers by a supposedly socially minded professional and intellectual elite needs further analysis in order to understand how through a historic dialectic logic the later authoritarian/illiberal rule can consolidate its positions so easily at the end of a globalization cycle.

Keywords: Transitory class, privatization, hegemony, intellectual elite.

David Mandel

The Legacy of the October Revolution

This article discusses the lasting legacy for the Left today of the October Revolution and of the role played by the Bolshevik party. It argues that the October Revolution was motivated by a widespread popular determination to realize the goals of the February liberal-democratic revolution in the face of the imminent threat of counterrevolution at the hands of political forces allied with the propertied classes. The leadership provided in October by the Bolshevik party, a predominantly workers’ movement, was far from a criminal, ideologically motivated act, as often presented by historians. It provided the workers and peasants with the political leadership that they

both needed and desired, and did so in full cognizance of the daunting odds that this new revolution faced.

Keywords: October Revolution, Bolshevik party, political leadership.

Eddie Cottle

Lenin and Trotsky on the Quantitative aspects of Strike Dynamics and Revolution

Lenin and Trotsky took a keen interest not only of the qualitative aspects of strike dynamics but also the quantitative aspects to examine the changing levels of consciousness, the organisational capacity of the working class and the overall temporal dynamics of the class struggle. They examined the close connection between the strike weapon and economic fluctuations and the detailed movement from the economic to the political strike in order to gauge the path to revolution. The main purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the quantitative method used by Lenin and Trotsky's integration of the quantitative aspects in explaining the qualitative dimensions of strikes and protest.

Key words: Strikes, quantitative analysis, revolution, capitalism, Russia.

Michael Seidman

May '68 Fifty-One Years Later

The French workers' strikes of May 1968 reflected traditional working-class demands for less work and more pay. The student movement of the sixties confronted both left and right by advancing a cultural revolution of gender equality, expansion of personal freedoms, and eventually multiculturalism. During the long sixties, antiwork ideologies gained popularity and unprecedented public exposure by attempting to synthesize the New Left's desire for simultaneous personal and social liberation. Antiwork movements also provoked a powerful counterrevolution that endorsed labor and the work ethic. Nevertheless, in France, Spain, and other Western nations, much of the sixties' cultural revolution has survived, even if challenged.

Keywords: antiwork, strikes, 1960s, France, Spain.

Raquel Varela

The Crisis of 1929, the Revolutions of the 1930s and Nazism

In this article, we analyze the history of the 1929 crisis, and its political-economic outcome, with emphasis on employment fluctuations in Roosevelt's New Deal in the USA and the country's entry into World War

II; the Spanish revolution, the French popular front and the civil war and the rise of Nazi-fascism as a product of the defeat of social revolutions. The absence of support on the part of the USSR and the social democracy for the revolutionary projects of the 30s of the 20th century contributed to this defeat; it resulted from the militant support of the German industrial and financial sector for this Nazi project, and of the inaction, if not active complicity, of social democracy and its alliances with semi-Bonapartist powers before Hitler's rise to power. Its outcome was the greatest tragedy in human history.

Keywords: crisis of 1929, social revolution, nazi-fascism, WWII.

Verity Burgmann

Trade Unions and the Alter-globalisation Movement: a Lost Moment for Labour?

Criticism of neoliberal globalisation has become associated with xenophobia, racism and nationalism, enabling far-right populist demagogues such as Marine Le Pen and Donald Trump to exploit working-class discontent with globalisation. Yet less than two decades ago a radical left-wing movement was seriously challenging globalisation and demonstrating that critique of corporate globalisation was compatible with internationalism and working-class solidarity across national borders. Where was labour in this important movement? Did unions participate in blockading the citadels of corporate power? Evidence from case studies of four mobilisations (Seattle November-December 1999, Melbourne September 2000, Québec City April 2001 and Genoa July 2001) suggests strong working-class involvement, especially of white-collar workers from the public sector, and important contributions from union activists and particular radical unions as organisations. However, trade union officials often preferred union contingents keep a safe distance from centres of action. Significant conflicts were apparent within unions between class-conscious activists, who wished to embrace the growing left-wing movement against globalisation, and more conservative officials. It confirmed the truism of union movement scholarship: the problem of full-time bureaucracies with interests distinct from those of rank-and-file workers; and the existence of the “universal tension” between the contradictory elements of “movement” and “organisation.” Ambivalence and prevarication did not present the union movement in the best possible light to workers angry and distressed by the effects of globalisation. Did the hesitant role played by unions in alter-globalisation campaigns contribute to union decline and prepare the ground

for right-wing populist opposition to globalisation? Was this a lost moment for labour?

Keywords: right-wing populism; anti-capitalist globalisation movement; labour unions; Seattle; Melbourne; Québec City; Genoa.