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Do the workers have a country?

*Internationalism
and the national question*



José Iriarte "Bikila"



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Presentation

In this issue of the Notebooks we are publishing one of three essays by José Iriarte — better known as Bikila — recently published in a single collection in the Basque country.¹

We have used the title of the collection: "Do the workers have a country?". This is a good expression of something of which our author has become convinced during his almost thirty years of political activity: while Marxism has contributed a lot to a political understanding of the national question, it is nevertheless time to return to certain discussions in the light of today's experience.

The title of the particular essay we publish here was "Thoughts on the national question", which is a good definition of its goal: to open up some areas of critical thinking without claiming to have all the answers.

The study made by José Iriarte "Bikila" is based on a solid knowledge of the classical Marxist authors and of the national struggles of the last few decades, from Central America to the Soviet world. Perhaps more importantly, it is the fruit of a personal involvement and an intimate knowledge of the fight of the Basque people — of the communist and socialist fight as well as that for national liberation. Bikila's experience as an activist illuminates some of the questions he raises in these pages.

José Iriarte began his active political life on the terrain of revolutionary nationalism. In 1964, under the Franco dictatorship, he joined the ranks of the pro-independence organization ETA. Detained in 1966 for his activities, he went underground in 1968, as a member of the political leadership of this movement.²

In 1970, differences on perspectives appeared within the movement. Bikila found himself in the leadership of the current known as ETA-VI (the wing of the organization that had the majority in the Sixth Assembly). Held for several months in French prisons in 1973, while he was active in the Basque exile community, he participated in that same year in the fusion of ETA-VI and the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria (LCR) section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state.³

A member of the central leadership of the unified organization, Bikila returned to the Basque country after the death of General Franco in 1975 and collapse of the dictatorship. He became a member of the leading bodies of the LKI (the name of the LCR/ETA-VI in Euskadi). From 1985 to 1991 he was also an elected member of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

In 1991, the LKI fused with the EMK (Communist Movement of Euskadi). In the Spanish state, the LCR founded, some months later,

The English edition of this study by José Iriarte "Bikila" was prepared by Penny Duggan.

For this edition we have slightly edited the original text to make it more accessible to readers from outside the Spanish state. In particular we have added a substantial number of footnotes and a guide to the people, organizations and events mentioned. In order to help readers who want to read further on the questions dealt with here, and those only touched on, we have also considerably enlarged the bibliography. However this bibliography remains quite limited relative to the scope of the subject. Given the large number of important works on the national question and the different experiences which merit study, the choice of books we have made cannot escape a certain arbitrariness.

We have taken the illustrations for this Notebook from the surrealist painter Giorgio De Chirico. Our readers can decide whether the painting reproduced on the cover "Mysterious Dialogue" fits the subject dealt with. And if the illustration on page 38, "The Trophy" illustrates as it should the failed attempt to build an integrated Spanish nation, under bourgeois rule.

1. José Iriarte "Bikila", *¿Los obreros tienen patria? Internacionalismo y cuestión nacional*, Gakoa, Donostia [San Sebastián] 1991. The text we reproduce here is entitled "Reflexiones sobre la cuestión nacional".

This 220-page book contains two other essays: "Bigarren Parte" in Euskera (the Basque language) and "Perestroika y cuestión nacional" in Castilian, like this first text.

2. For names of organizations see the appendix. Francoism was the dictatorial regime established by General Franco after the defeat of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39.

3. Refusing to conder the Spanish state as a nation — but rather as a "prison of peoples" — revolutionaries in the Iberian peninsula prefer to use the term Spanish state rather than "Spain" for the country.

the Izquierda Alternativa (Left Alternative) with the MCE, the sister organization of the EMK.⁴

Because of this Bikila is no longer a member of the Fourth International. He is a member of the leadership of the new unified organization (Zutik) which wants to be an internationalist organization without being a member of an International.

In this essay, Bikila looks at the framework for the Marxist analysis of the national question, its class content and the importance of an internationalist perspective. He criticizes the limits of the nationalist points of view — while emphasizing the point that there are very different forms of nationalism. Above all, he tries to go further than this, without fearing to touch on controversial questions. Very conscious of the specific contribution of Lenin in this field, he is just as interested in that of the Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer or the Irish socialist and patriot James Connolly.

Laying out a very sober picture of the situation in Euskadi itself, he asks what were the conditions which in certain circumstances made it possible to fuse successfully the nationalist and Marxist traditions; what is the difference between the struggle of an oppressed nation in imperialist Europe and in a dominated country;

and considers the "centralist" tradition of communist organizations which identify their frontiers with those of the existing state (he himself having had a range of different experiences on this question).

José Iriarte thus attempts to draw out some central themes for a revolutionary perspective on the national question, analysing the central role of the slogan for self-determination and the contemporary significance of independence; he seeks to evaluate what is a question of different strategic choices on the one hand and the concrete analysis of a concrete situation on the other.

Obviously Bikila does not pretend to exhaust a question which is known for its complexities and many-sided character. But the "thoughts" he presents here are interesting for all those for whom socialism does not exist without freedom — including the freedom of people and of nations.

Penny Duggan and Pierre Rousset

4. On these two fusions, see the articles by Alfonso Moro in *International Viewpoint* No 205, 29 April 1991 and No 218, 9 December 1991.

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The next issue of the *NSR* should be out in the autumn. It is a long study by Ernest Mandel of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the ideological controversy which it provokes today.

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Introduction

I could have organized my work according to a historical plan, analysing the discussions which took place in each historical period. But I have preferred to adopt a method of division by topic. Within this, my approach is to move from the theory to the strategy; from the abstract to the concrete, that is to say to the problems which are posed today in the nationalities and nations to which we belong — actors in their own process of emancipation.

In recent timeq, it has been fashionable to assert that Marxism does not have a complete body of theory covering all the circumstances in which the national question arises (in fact only such a particular person as Stalin took the risk of giving a doctrinal nature to his work). This is not an unfounded judgement. It is not by chance that we have difficulties when we deal with problems such as "building the nation" from a class point of view.

However, it should also be emphasized that, despite all its limits, Marxism is the revolutionary current which up to now made the greatest contribution to the search for a positive solution to the oppression of the stateless nations, the nations suffering under the colonial or semi-colonial yoke, and the oppressed nations in the so-called socialist countries. In other words, everything which has to do with the national question in the period of late capitalism, as well as in post-capitalist societies, whether bureaucratized or not.

The problem is therefore to find a positive starting point which, while recognizing the limits, the mistakes, the good and the less good, allows us to continue with this development; and which sheds some light on what interests us particularly, as Marxists from oppressed nations or nationalities.

Marxism develops through a process of self-criticism and thus needs a continuous effort of revision — of what it means and what we should do — we do in the light of the results. I agree with Michael Löwy when he says:

Marxism is forged through testing the validity of ideas in practice.... Marxism is quite the opposite of Coca-Cola, that is a product which is conditioned and adapted to any country, which always has the same colour, the same taste and the same advertisements. On the contrary, Marxism is much more like the dish of rice which, while composed of certain basic elements, is prepared according to the taste and the style of each nation.¹

But, it should be said in passing, we find certain flavourings produced by the internationalization of the economy in this national development of Marxism. We no longer even know which country many of its products come from; nor which company is making the profits.

So we also have to speak of strong national specificities as well as of the necessary interaction between national and international elements. This is one of the keys to use in analysing of the national question in the current historical period.

Bikila

1. Michael Löwy, lecture at the I.I.R.E. Amsterdam, April 1983.

Class and nation: an approach to the question of complementarity

N°16

Hardly any other sociological problem is quite so tricky as the national question, rooted as it is so deeply in the sphere of emotions.

Roman Rosdolsky²

It is obvious that nation and class are categories which, while closely interconnected, express socially, culturally and politically distinct realities. A social class is something which can easily be defined by whether or not it owns the means of production, by its income level, the quantity and nature of personal goods, etc. It is something relatively clear, particularly as far as the fundamental social classes are concerned, such as the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, even if there will always be intermediate classes, or indeed sectors of a particular class which are on the periphery or the borderline. It is obviously not accidental that today there is a flourishing of so many discussions on the extension of the working class to sectors which were previously petty-bourgeois; or on the place occupied — that is to say their objective membership of one or the other social class — by new professional sectors who bridge the dividing line between two classes.

However, the nation is something which is much more difficult to define.³ Stalin tried to define the nation as "a historically constituted, stable, community of

2. Roman Rosdolsky, "Engels and the 'Nonhistoric Peoples': The National Question in the Revolution of 1848", *Critique 18-19*, Critique Books, Glasgow, 1986, p.124.

3. The classical Marxist point of view clearly rejects any attempt to define the existence of a social class or the membership of one on the basis of ideological or subjective considerations. One belongs to a social class for reasons of material existence and not because one is conscious of belonging to it. Marx is very clear that the social class of an individual is only determined by objective factors; their culture, their consciousness, and their political choice do not enter into the definition of their class. There are some positions, however, which should warn us against any reductionist or mechanistic analytical conception. They put the emphasis on the role which is played by political projects and their organizational aspects in the structuring and thus in the existence of a class. This has provoked discussion on the relationship between the concept of "a class in itself" and a "class for itself" which obviously cannot be dealt with in the present study.

Nevertheless, as far as the national question is concerned, the process of formation of a nation and the involvement of individuals or social classes in this process, we can say that there is a broad agreement on inverting the terms of this discussion, highlighting the decisive role of the project and of political decision over other factors. Thus, while material or quantifiable factors, like the economy, the language, the territory, etc. have their importance (but different in each national

people" on the basis of four conditions — and if one of them was lacking then one could not talk about a complete nation. These were "a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up".⁴ This definition turned out to be completely scholastic and the source of many mistakes. In fact many different elements have to be taken into account.

The nation is a conglomerate of social classes in the present phase of capitalism and also, to a certain extent, in the societies in transition to socialism (further than that, who can say what will be the nation in the real meaning of the term and if it will exist in the stage of the classless society?). A nation possesses very different specific characteristics depending on whether it is an advanced nation, a dependent nation and so on. This makes a single definition of the nation almost impossible.

In addition, the same elements which, according to Stalin, define the nation — the four "common features" he mentioned — are not consubstantial in all nations: there is no single model of a nation, nor of national characteristics which hold good for all. If we had to explain the formation of the North-American nation, or the Nicaraguan nation or the Catalan nation with such a single model, we would have to introduce too many exceptions for this schema to function. There are different nations which nevertheless have a common language — Castilian or English —; nations with different languages — Switzerland —; and nations in formation from multi-national states which are falling apart.

What is clear from all these elements is that in each national process there is a combination of similarities and specificities which are difficult to measure. When we want to know if a process of national formation is underway, or if a nation already exists, the decisive elements remains the desire of the inhabitants of this nation, whether or not it enjoys political sovereignty, to create their own political institutions.

case) and can even be the starting point for consciousness of national existence; it is on the political terrain, in the project of formation of the nation that national existence attains its last and determining shape. It can be said that there is no complete nation numerous as the elements of national definition can be, separate from the national consciousness and the desire to form a nation. Each national question is, because of this, a condensation of similarities and differences.

4. Joseph Stalin, *The Essential Stalin, Major Theoretical Writings 1905-52*, ed. Bruce Franklin, Croom Helm, London 1973, p. 60.

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However, for certain currents of Marxism or Marxists, the biggest difficulty has not been, in general, the being clear on the components which constitute a nation (does it include all the attributes mentioned, or only certain, and how do they affect the formation of the nation).⁵ The difficulty has rather been the disparity of existing criteria when there has to be "a class approach to the national question". How to combine these two elements — or indeed should they be combined — to give a positive answer to the process of national liberation, which generates the tasks of building a nation? And, above all, how should we place ourselves in relation to already formed nations with bourgeois institutions involved in the institutional body of the nation, or, if we prefer, both fused in one reality.

Can we or should we have different positions for example on the "Spanish nation" (here I will not go into the discussion on whether Spain is a nation, I simply note the fact that for many people it is one) and on the Basque and Catalan nations? I think that the answer is yes. And this despite the enormous dust cloud created by the famous phrase in the Communist Manifesto "The workers have no country".⁶

Countries and motherlands. When is it worth being "countryless" and when a "patriot"?

Workers really do not have a country? After the Cuban, Nicaraguan, Vietnamese and other experiences, it is more than obvious that two things have to be separated out which cannot be counterposed to each other. On the one hand, there is the eternal value of this phrase as

5. This does not mean that this difficulty does not exist, both in different nationalist currents and in the options of the revolutionary left. For example, in the Basque case, there is a confrontation between different conceptions of national identity, the role played in nation formation by different factors such as language, definition of the Basque identity, the best adapted social project, etc. The work of Arano, which has the merit of having given the first political formulation of the Basque nation, did so through identifying of being Basque with racial, religious and traditional factors (God and the Ancient Law or *foras*), and with an exclusive basis (defence against contamination from the exterior). In the camp of the revolutionary left, it was clearly established that we were against national oppression. But we did not see so clearly if we should but forward a project for nation formation, whether in the end a nation should be built.

Currently there are formulations like this:

Communists understand building the Basque nation as a future perspective, which includes winning sovereign institutions of socialist and not patriarchal origin (opposed therefore point by point to the bourgeois conception of the nation), a normalized language, the conception that a Basque is some one who lives and works (or wants to work) in Euskadi, recognition of plurality and democracy within the Basque people.

6. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Pathfinder Press, New York 1970, p.32. The original 1888 translation gives "working men" but we have preferred to use the less sexist term generally used today.

a cry of revolt of the proletariat that are used as cannon fodder in the name of a country which does not belong to them and, on the other hand, the content of the slogan "my country or death", a rallying call to the fight for national independence and social emancipation, against imperialism.⁷

In my opinion, nihilism or national indifference are harmful in revolutionary processes which include tasks of national liberation. But even then, patriotism which does not have a clear revolutionary content can be manipulated by the bourgeoisie and used in its interests.

On the other hand, for citizens of nations with a long imperialist history, where patriotism has often been used by the bourgeoisie to support its aggression towards other peoples, it is healthy and necessary to inject a strong dose of a nihilism associated with internationalism, in renouncing that particular "country". Because of this, Marx's message is appropriate in the second case — and in reality it is with this goal that it was conceived — but not in the first case which the founders of communism did not take into account, or did not or could not appreciate.

To develop this point of view. The most consistent, the most revolutionary point of view, in the case of imperialist countries, is to be resolutely "countryless", whatever the internal regime (democratic or dictatorial), or their traditional nationalism (aggressive or moderate), whether or not they get involved in wars of different levels of intensity and durations. The most consistent, revolutionary, point of view is to refuse to adopt the slogan of "national defence" because it is manipulated to its own ends by imperialism. These are countries which oppress other people, where even the working class benefits from important gains in relation to the place of its capitalism in the world scene. Thus the appeal by Lenin and the Internationalists during the First World War to fight first of all against one's own bourgeoisie has a fundamental symbolic and strategic value. The capitulation of the Second International and, later, of the Stalinists to the idea of the "home country" and bourgeois society bring out the importance of this question.

7. Lenin made a clear distinction between these two questions in his July 1916 polemic against those who stated in a too general fashion that:

'in the era of imperialism' defence of the fatherland amounts to the defence of the right of one's own bourgeoisie to oppress foreign peoples.

Lenin made it clear that:

This, however, is true only in respect of an imperialist war (...). We renounce 'defence of the fatherland' in an imperialist war (...). The authors of the Polish theses seem to renounce defence of the fatherland in general, i.e. for a national war as well, believing perhaps that in the 'era of imperialism' national wars are impossible.

"The discussion on self-determination summed-up", *Collected Works* Volume 22, pp. 331-332.

Obviously, this starting point does not resolve everything and does allow for some partial exceptions where very complicated situations are created, such as that of France during the German occupation. The Resistance flavoured its anti-Nazism with a good dose of French patriotism, in order to bring broad layers of the population under its leadership. Taking a distance from the patriotic sentiments provoked by the Occupation in the name of internationalism as an abstract concept, or because of France's imperialist role, would have been a mistake. There is obviously the remaining question of how to identify with this patriotism, how to link it to internationalism and class politics. From this point of view it was perfectly correct for the Resistance to call on German soldiers, reminding them of their situation as exploited workers, and to point out that the Nazis had started by exterminating a section of the German people.

Finally, in such cases we have to be clear what sort of nationalism we demand. Nationalism limited to the fight against the Occupation and the defence of a free France is not the same nationalism as that which defends "great France", which exalts chauvinism, which denies rights to the colonies on the pretext of maintaining the unified high command necessary for the fight against Nazism (it was this latter argument that the French Communist Party used against Algerian patriots).⁸

"The workers have no country" has also been an agitational formula used to affirm the position of the working class to bourgeois society in general, an expression of its class independence. This was very clear in periods of great poverty, but was later obscured by the reformist leaderships of the workers' movement that based themselves on the advantages gained under capitalism to transform themselves into defenders of a policy of class collaboration, and identified with the point of view of the bourgeois state.

Today, in the midst of the crisis, with structural employment which condemns millions of workers to gradual impoverishment, is this position of class independence still valid? Why should the proletariat defend "their country" when they do not own the means of production of the nation when they do not have political power (unless it is as an oppositional force), when other than in their position of passive consumers, they are separated from the fundamental sources of wealth and

8. We have recently had the case of German reunification after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. German nationalism has undoubtedly been deeply aggressive and expansionist during this century. The doubts which appeared during the process of reunification are more than justified and have a logical foundation, particularly in relation to possible territorial demands, as well as other considerations, particularly on the future role of this world power. But this cannot lead us to reject the majority desire of the German people who wanted the disappearance this wall between two states, which was the product of the international division of spheres of influence after the Second World War.

culture? Why should they allow themselves to be convinced and become cannon fodder? It goes without saying that in the developed capitalist countries the workers have more to lose than their "chains". But why should this obvious fact lead them to consider the coun-



tries where they work as their country? Where they suffer and live badly rather than live.

We therefore find, in this Marxist tradition, fundamental ideas which have been the source of a correct class point of view and a correct internationalism. These have made it possible to defend a class position against class-collaboration and bourgeois nationalism, in what ever form they are expressed — military, political, economic or cultural. They have also made it possible to assert the principle of class solidarity between workers of different nationalities, in both the dominant nationality and the oppressed nationalities (where there are common tactical interests between the bourgeois nationalists and the workers)

"What have you got to gain if they exploit you in Russian or in Ukrainian, in one language or another?" was a question Lenin liked to emphasize. Let us leave aside the simplification of this formula concerning the language (because often, as well as surplus value, they succeed in stealing your language from you), and keep what remains valid: a starting point for confronting an exploitation that has no borders, for the need for material and spiritual union of the workers against the common class enemy, at national and international level.

In cases where there is colonial oppression, or brutal national oppression, revolutionaries should, in my opinion, have a favourable attitude to the "patriotism of the oppressed nation" (whether this is in terms of anti-imperialism or national liberation). We cannot forget the over-riding importance that the national fact has taken on in the imperialist epoch. We should say in Marx's defence that it was difficult for him to foresee the importance that would be acquired by national liberation movements in the revolution, both objectively and subjectively, in the fight to reappropriate the "usurped country", whether the usurper was their bourgeoisie or imperialism. The national question has led to confrontations with imperialism (in the case of dependent countries) or to a challenge to the legitimacy of the bourgeois nation-state (in the case of marginalized or oppressed nationalities). In the economic field this has encouraged conceptions favourable to a greater decentralization of zones which are daily more and more in the stranglehold of the state and inter-state macro-organisms (giant conglomerations which are impossible to control and incapable of adapting to popular needs).

We saw the Nicaraguans assert their desire to build their Sandinist country. Many national liberation movements have consolidated their workers-peasants-people alliance by asserting their "revolutionary nationalism", by giving a national form and content to their own social revolt (as Trotsky already emphasized a long time ago).

Obviously, here again, exceptions or precisions should be introduced. There can sometimes be a convergence between nationalism or national demands and reactionary causes. This was the case for example for the Flemish, Breton or Ukrainian nationalist factions which collaborated with Nazism, either because of their anti-communism or because they hoped that Hitler would recognize their national rights. In any case these attitudes should not be confused with national demands that could be momentarily integrated into such political strategies. Let us add that, very often, the association of reactionary ideas and alliances with national problems takes place because initially they were only taken into account by certain specific social sectors. The indifference of the left forces in the oppressed nation and the attitude of the left forces in the dominant state leave the field open, in this domain, to the right. The attitude of the Spanish Republic, during the civil war of 1936-39, allowed Francoism not only to consolidate its rearguard but also to bring along the colonized peoples in its adventure.

There is also the case of revolutionary movements which, at the head of the process of national liberation against colonialism or imperialism, commit abuses against ethnic minorities or quite simply do not take them into account (Nicaragua at the beginning with the Miskitos). And the case of Quebec where, in the name of defence of the French language (a correct demand faced with English-speaking Canada), many injustices

have been committed against Indian minorities (Mohawks, Kris, Hurons, etc.). There are also political processes in which the national identity is not clearly decided from the outset, and where one of the components will be excluded by methods which are not at all democratic (in the Algerian revolution the conflicts between Arab and Berber identity created many problems which were obviously not resolved very well given that they have reappeared with great force).⁹

We should also point out that the class point of view, which is so indispensable faced with the national question, is in its own way contained in the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels, when it states:

Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.¹⁰

In other words, when the working class is confronted with the possibility of taking power (whether in an imperialist or dependent country), or with the possibility of taking the leadership of a process of national emancipation against imperialism, it must develop its own form of structuring the nation. One thing is to take a position on the bourgeois notion of "our country" faced with the use and abuse of this concept by the bourgeoisie, and another is to forge a country for the working class itself (which with the popular sectors forms the progressive bloc for national liberation) whose international character does not eliminate its national existence, and thus its national tasks and interests.

I think that what has just been said makes it possible to better understand Trotsky's statement:

The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena.¹¹

9. There are also situations, such as at the moment in the Baltic countries where national minorities, particularly of Russian origin, put forward democratic and class rights (coloured with internationalism) to oppose correct measures of linguistic normalization and national sovereignty in the nations where they live. Certainly these minorities also have rights that should be respected (in particular the right to keep their native language). But they cannot supersede and cannot be counterposed to the previous, and in some ways superior, right of the nationality where they reside (for as long, in any case, that this nationality remains oppressed by an unwanted or forcible union). Because of this we almost always see this type of demand, and particularly the legitimacy they can have, used as a "fifth column" by the supporters of the status quo. Only the combined defence of these rights and the political rights of the oppressed nation (Estonia, Lithuania) can create the basis for a later, lasting solution, of all the national questions, ensuring the respect due to any minority.

10. Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 32.

11. Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York 1969, p. 279, (Thesis 10).

I think this can be interpreted as: While it is true that the socialist revolution cannot be confined to a purely national framework, it has to start by being victorious at the national level. At what historical pace is another question. And we should remember that the national terrain implies specific conditions, traditions and realities which are noticeably different, as long as we have a clear vision of the effects of the international on the national and vice versa.

Reductionism of the "workerist" and "economist" type

It seems to me personally that, to quite a large extent, the thought and action of Marxists have been impregnated by a "cosmopolitan" culture of doubtful objectivity and legitimacy. This has engendered distrust and rejection of national identification, interpreted as a deviation or contamination of class consciousness, considered by definition and by essence as nothing less than "without national identity".¹²

Such positions demonstrate flagrant incomprehension of the national problem and, sometimes, an adaptation to the nation state as it is. They often derive from historical or economic conceptions for which bigger is better for bourgeois "national" states, their size in fact expressing great progress from the point of view of the development of productive forces and cohesion of the working class. Faced with these supposed advantages, the aspirations of the nations which live on these territories appear as an upsurge of petty-bourgeois fever, opposed to the onward march of history. From this point of view, the demand for independence should not be supported or, in the best of cases, should be moderated by the concession of a status of autonomy, or channelled into watered-down formulations of the right to self-determination.

We also find in these positions a workerist reductionism, linked to a certain conception of the automatic resolution of different forms of oppression in the course of the socialist revolution. These positions thus prove themselves to be incapable of understanding the way in which the national liberation movements today express the general crisis of capitalism, and thus the role that they play in the present period.

To sum up, in most cases there is a gross deforma-

12. I refer to the persistent conception in some sections of the left which confuses the "nation" and bourgeois interests and thus counterposes the concept of "class", or counterposes national consciousness and class consciousness, etc. This counterposition, which is justified in the case of the big nation states, where the interest of the nation is synonymous with the interests of big capitalism which uses this identification to carry out its imperialist and militarist policy, becomes dangerously wrong when it is applied to national or anti-colonial processes in a whole series of underdeveloped countries or in the case of a national emancipation movement, like that in the Basque country, within a developed society.

tion of the Marxist point of view. This has fed on a not insignificant number of deficiencies in the original, as we will see when we analyse the formation of the nation, its place in history, etc.

Rightwing and/or conservative deviations

Rightwing deviations and class collaboration in national questions are, in my opinion, the other side of the coin, a symmetrically mistaken approach to the problem. At the end of the last century and at the beginning of this one, during the process of degeneration of social-democracy, Bernstein and the leaders of the Second International ended up by identifying — in their own interests — the workers' gains in electoral and trade-union matters, with what Marx called "constituting themselves as a national class"

Beyond a certain level of development of the working class this becomes a complex question. Given its ability to wrest some conquests and rights from the bourgeois state, the working class no longer has only its chains to lose. It has "things to defend". However, in a revolutionary strategic perspective, the workers' defence of their gains should above all not be confused with defence of the bourgeois state within which they were won. This distinction, which should leap out at us, makes the difference between a perfectly revolutionary point of view (defence of gains) and reformist opportunism (shameful defence of the capitalist bourgeois order).

The reformist answer to this question has been very different and nuanced according to the country, but the general trend has been gradual identification with the bourgeois nation state, and, in the final analysis, with capitalism as a system, claiming at most to limit the most threatening and aggressive aspects. This last claim of reformism has itself been abandoned when the bourgeoisie demands, in the name of "national solidarity" a categorical engagement faced with a war, a violent crisis, etc. The PSOE, the Spanish social-democratic party, is a particularly good illustration of this, given the way it considers the working class and the nationalities, and its identification with capital, the army and the "Spanish nation".

Stalinism of the first period and Eurocommunism share with social democracy this bourgeois conception of the nation and the choice of a policy of alliance with the bourgeoisie (or with the conception of the country expressed by the Soviet bureaucracy), which explains their different adaptations.

Different national problems

As a general rule, I think that a revolutionary class position on the national question should be defined ac-

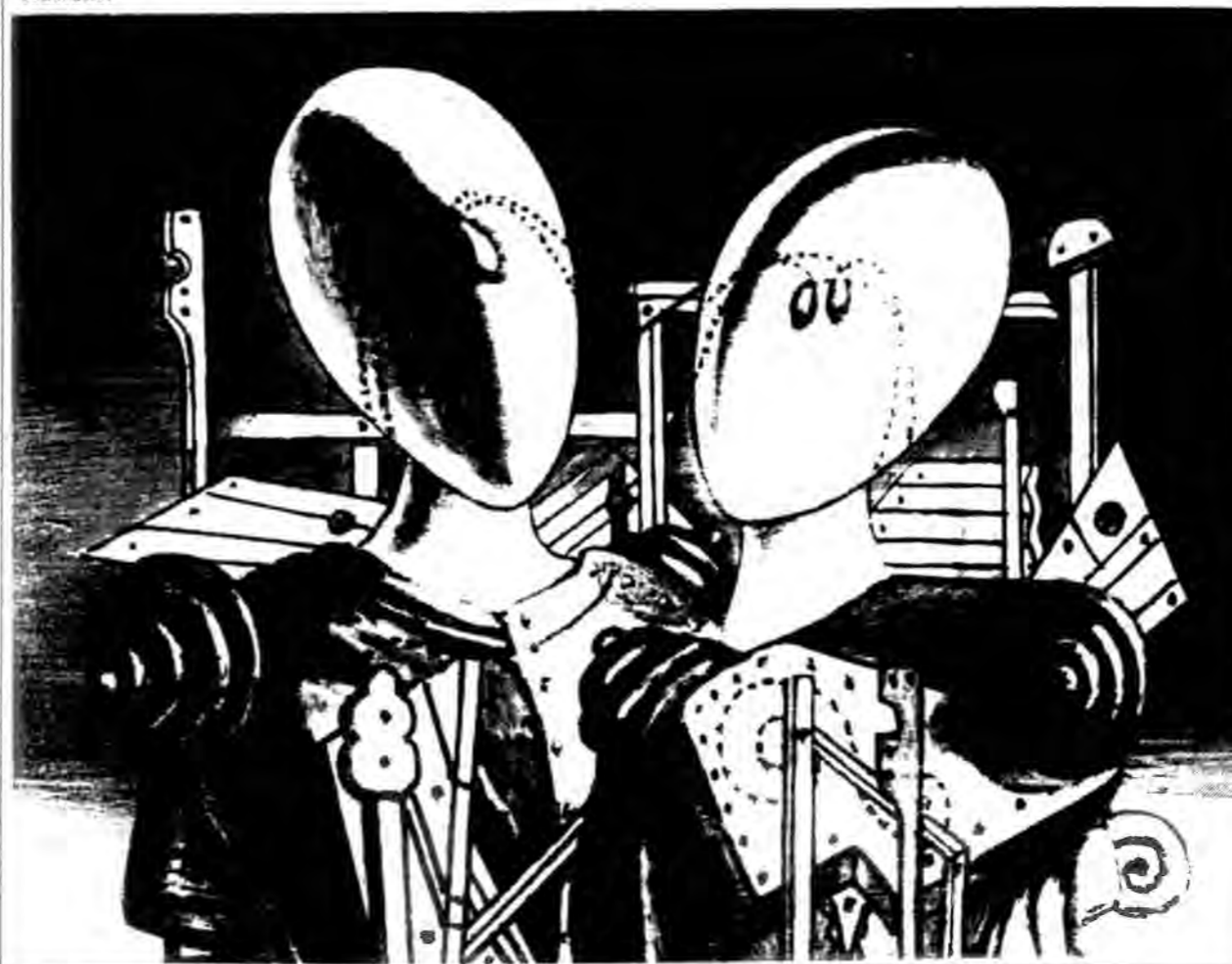
ording to the concrete nature of the latter. This obviously means a variety of points of view (there are many different cases of national oppression). In this vision, very different from any form of opportunism on the national question, the nation, in order not to be an abstraction, will be explained in different ways when questions and content have to be clarified.

Revolutionaries often have to oppose patriotism, but sometimes they have to take it over for themselves when it responds to a project of national and social liberation. Thus they sometimes have to oppose the "official nation" and at other times become the spokespersons of the oppressed or minority nation. In this field there is no always-applicable recipe which makes it possible to avoid a concrete analysis of the concrete reality.

In addition, we can be confronted with complex situations where the progressive camp and the reactionary camp in relation to the national struggle are not clearly defined. There are also situations where that is not the problem, but it is rather a question of emphasis: what importance should be given at a particular moment to the national dimension or the class dimension? On what should the strategy, alliances and so on be based? This type of question has led to more than one disagreement between revolutionaries in our different nations. The national and class questions are two sides of the same coin, but from this fact we can draw out different conclusions.

The class and national aspects, while being related to each other, often have different origins and respective weights. They can give rise to dynamics which do not necessarily converge, even in a project of national liberation. In other words, depending on the country, the national and class questions do not always have the same place in relation to the roots of oppression, poverty and domination.

To simplify things we could say for example that what is happening today in Peru is explained to a large extent by the weight of imperialist domination and, particularly, by the role of the foreign debt. In Euskadi, however, the economic crisis does not have a fundamentally national origin, that is to say it is not linked to dependence on an external imperialist agent (as far as self-government allows measures that palliate the effects unemployment and the crisis); it arises from the type of industrial development and the place that Basque capitalism has within the capitalism of the Spanish state and internationally. Such differences cannot be ignored when we define a class framework for the analysis of the national oppression suffered by the two nations, one which is formally independent but subject to the firm rule of imperialism, the other without any national sovereignty but involved in the productive structure of a developed capitalist country. Such varied situations should logically give rise to different approaches in defining a socialist strategy of national liberation.



The nation in the history of capitalism and socialism

N°16

*State boundaries are in themselves trivial issues for Marxists. But 20th century experience teaches us that national identities are anything but trivial matters.*¹³

Oliver MacDonald

It is not possible here to deal with all the discussions that this question has provoked. I will limit myself to mentioning certain questions which help to understand the complexity. We start, as is the tradition for Marxists, from the fact that the nation is a "historical category", which has not always existed and which, independently from what people want, is not condemned to exist indefinitely. Nations result from a long process of community formation (which has sometimes lasted for thousands of years). Existing in reality today, they are shaped by the way concrete social, political, economical and political factors are combined in the capitalist system (and what is carried on into transitional or post-capitalist societies). The formation of the nation state is the result of a singular phenomenon, in a period when capitalist and bourgeois society constituted the dominant system. It is thus marked by this system.

This historical conception has come into conflict with essentialist and idealistic viewpoints which see the nation as something exclusive and closed, and which attribute the causes of existing problems to deviations, products of a change in the original foundations of the nation. Their most grotesque forms have led to the development of racism (basing the nation on the race) and exclusivism (in pontificating on the national essence which excludes different types of citizens for reasons of religion, ideology, origin or behavioural stereotypes).

It has also come into conflict with ahistorical conceptions which see the nation as an "invariable", something whose origins can go back to prehistory and whose essential foundations have remained unchanged until today. These conceptions confuse the nation itself — or the already formed nation — and human communities which, with a greater or lesser degree of continuity, have continued through history, to the point of having played the role of a driving force in the formation of nations (it was in this way that the myth of "eternal France" was created). There also exist cases where the

13. Oliver MacDonald, "Stalinism, the national question and separatism in the USSR", *International Marxist Review*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Autumn 1989, p. 80.

nation is born from a recent amalgam of populations (the best-known being the United States). But even elsewhere, where the continuity between the original community and the nation is obvious, we cannot confuse the two if we take into account the qualitative leap that takes place when this community is transformed into a nation, usually organized in the form of a nation state.

Light and shadow in this analysis

The materialist point of view makes it possible to analyse the temporal dimension of the national phenomenon. But it is far from being an infallible antidote guarding us against unilateral analyses, excesses and errors of different magnitude. In the name of historical materialism and under the pretext of fighting against national-idealist points of view, incontrovertible facts have been denied, which referred to the specificities of each national formation: really specific phenomena in cultural and economic questions, the social structure etc. These are all features which are product of a past, and which have been shaped and modified during the course of history. Real monstrosities have thus been committed in relation to national processes which did not fit in with pre-conceived schemas.

Some people have analysed the relationship of the nation with the bourgeois nation-state in much too mechanical a fashion (some quite confused concepts in

14. As a simplification we can take the example of the tadpole and the frog. The frog would not exist without its previous form in the evolution process, but once the transformation has taken place, there is a qualitative leap, not only in appearance but also in the forms of behaviour and in organic functioning in general. Modern nations are in many ways hardly recognizable in comparison with previous societies.

15. According to Michael Löwy:

The necessity of some form of structured (or 'institutional') organization is a universal need of all civilized human societies. This organization can as well take national forms, as infra-national (the clan, the tribe) and supra-national (the religious civilizations). Medieval Europe is a characteristic example of a social and political organization combining local structures which are 'pre-nation' (the fiefs, principalities, etc) and universalistic structures which are 'beyond the nation' (the Holy Roman Empire, the Church). The modern nation-state emerged around the 14-15th centuries, — with the rise of capitalism and the formation of the national market — precisely through the destruction/decomposition of these two non-national structures.

"Fatherland or Mother Earth? Nationalism and Internationalism from a Socialist Perspective", *Socialist Register 1989*, Merlin Press, London, p. 221.

N°16

Marx and Kautsky, and in Lenin's first writings on the subject undoubtedly contributed to this). In the present-day world, we can very easily see that these are two very different things, even if they have been unified by the march of history. This point is particularly important because, in a non-capitalist society, a specific community could survive and develop as it likes without the framework of the nation state. This is why the demand for an independent state could, in the future, be posed in a new form that cannot be seen in advance, while today it is a necessity faced with the bourgeois imperialist state (or so-called "actually existing socialism").

Economist conceptions have also developed which overestimate the economic factor (the importance which nobody can deny) in the formation of nations, to the detriment of other elements or phenomena of great importance, which have their own autonomy and without which we cannot understand the strength of national feelings: the language, the psychological factors flowing from a partly-shared history, a series of common elements which have a strong impact on consciousness. In addition, these elements can play a key role in extreme situations of geo-political crisis, of social and national identity, etc. The ruling classes know this and manipulate them in order to capitalize on feelings of solidarity to their advantage.

Moreover, and whatever their importance, national existence cannot be reduced to simply economic or cultural elements. The extent to which the political factor — that is the actual class struggle — also counts in the development of national consciousness and the raising of the demand for national sovereignty should be emphasized. All this has its own autonomy, even if, obviously, the political has a relationship with the material base on which it resides, or the cultural elements which feed it.

Scotland is a significant illustration of this point. This country has, in its totality and in its different components, all the typical ingredients which accompany the formation of a nation, including the memory of a recently-disappeared state and the continuation of a strong anti-English feeling, that is to say against the nation most privileged by the union. However, until recently different factors prevented the development of a national or nationalist type demand, postulating the existence of a different nation on the territory of the state. There has therefore been a long historical parenthesis between a strongly marked pre-national existence (Scotland, while getting something out of the union which it found beneficial, always considered itself different from the other parts of the union, particularly the English) and the desire to form itself politically as a nation.

These problems have given rise to a certain type of Marxism, convinced that the historically dated character of national existence would give way to a universalization of humanity (whose first steps were made under capitalism and would culminate with socialism), or, if

you like, to a big single world nation (product of gradual assimilation, from which coercion and oppression would be excluded). This current in Marxism had a relativist version of national existence, which was certainly considered to exist, but which played a secondary role in relation to the "class struggle, driving force of history".

This gave rise to a range of positions in the workers' movement and among left forces, which goes from "soft" assimilationist points of view, in favour of the disappearance of nations, to a certain embellishment of bourgeois "evolutionism" and the role of capitalism, all in the name of this so-called "universalization of humanity". The big states are considered as progressive phenomena in themselves, completely ignoring many problems, or at most limiting themselves to criticizing the form and not considering the fundamental essence of these projects.

This is what has happened to a certain extent in analysing a supposedly progressive role for the economically and culturally centralizing and unifying effect of the capitalist market (with particular effects on the advance or regression of certain languages), and then — by extension — for the political models of the bourgeois nation state. It would have been difficult for the capitalist market alone to overcome the institutional and economic barriers of the previous regime (which were very often intertwined with national specificities or realities — strongly rooted in the population and thus difficult to eliminate).

In fact, the strength of the state, including its military power, had to be used to impose unification — at the cost of unjustifiable oppression (no economic law justifies forced assimilation of regions or nations). This gave rise to complex situations where, on the one hand the nation state was identified with democracy and progress compared to the *Ancien Regime*, and where, on the other hand, it appeared as an aggressive force, destroying communities that were often pre-national, whose existence was wrongly identified with reaction. The complex character of the Carlist wars is precisely linked to this mixture between their reactionary basis, personified by the absolute monarchy, and the elements of legitimate defence of the "foro" system, which in one way or another defended the identity and freedoms considered as specific to it.¹⁶

We therefore disagree profoundly with the neo-evolutionist analysis which has a vision and justifica-

16. Carlism was the traditional movement which supported the claim to the throne of the descendants of Charles V. The three Carlist wars marked the nineteenth century and the fall of the Ancien Regime. The first Carlist War lasted from 1833 to 1840, the second from 1855 to 1856 and the third from 1872 to 1876. The "foros" were a system of communal rights and autonomy in the Basque country to which the population was very attached.

tion of the "historically progressive role" of capitalism, particularly in relation to the national question, the universality, the "inexorable logic" of centralization/concentration of capital and its state or supra-state political instruments. This is also a type of analysis in which imperialist positions can too often emerge.

Moreover, the need to unify the capitalist market, which lies behind the policy of each capitalist state, did not give birth to a single structure of institutions and composition of these bourgeois states. The centralist or Jacobin model of the French revolution has itself several versions; other models — federal or confederal for example — are also useful to capitalism and are found in different national situations.

The general tendency has been to attribute sovereignty to the institutions of the nation going so far as to identify one with the other ("The nation is the National Assembly," in Robespierre's words). The centre of power is thus shifted towards different bodies, towards almost-uncontrollable and narrowly-based executive bodies. This can be seen in today's bourgeois society by the role played by the representative institutions of the nation in assuring the mechanisms for managing capitalism.

We should also note the importance of certain ideological evolutions. From Jacobin thought, which sought with greater or lesser success to link the role of guide assigned to the French nation with the universal ideals of democracy, we moved on to very different types of fascism and nationalism. The notion of the nation itself has been conceived in very different ways: in terms of citizenship (acquiring a national dimension in institutions) or as belonging to a race, to a linguistic community, to a common fate, etc. In short, the idea that there is only one form of national development which goes along with the evolution of capitalism cannot be sustained in any way.

The nation is a relatively stable fact as a historical entity. But as has already been noted, it is no less, by definition, a world of diversity (each nation is in fact, in relation to its neighbour, a sum of resemblance and of differences produced by comings together and separations). What is more, the content of the nation can be transformed according to which class finds itself in the leadership of the process of building the nation and shapes its relations with others.

Here we are confronted with a whole world of conflicts which can only be understood in broader notions of what is the nation and its place in human history, and of the class struggle. If we insist on this last point, it is because the class struggle is far from being the sole driving force of historical transformations, or at least is far from being something which is chemically pure. It is sometimes only in the last instance that it is the determining factor, given the autonomy and the weight which nations, sexes, etc have in the evolution of hu-

man history.

Discussions on the nation and the national future under socialism

History has now given its answer to the idea that the socialist revolution will make it possible to advance very rapidly beyond existence as a nation. The balance sheet of the experience of transition (in the Marxist sense of societies which are no longer capitalist but not yet socialist) has turned out to be as complex as that of building the capitalist societies themselves. At first, the Russian Revolution gave rise to many positive experiences in the exercise of the right to self-determination (this is particularly true in a field which has been little discussed up to now, that of the national minorities whose process of constitution started with the revolution). What is also put into question is the conviction that the revolution would naturally take on the task, uncompleted under capitalism, of overcoming the existence of separate nations (seen as a residual hindrance to the universalization of humanity and thus to full realization of socialism). Later, with the bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution and the complex situation which resulted (repression, mass deportation of entire ethnic groupings, but also the return and promotion of certain languages), it is obvious that the national question remains a phenomenon just as important in the transitional phase as under capitalism.

On all these questions, Otto Bauer developed an original interpretation which is worthy of consideration, whatever the errors that exist in his overall theory of nations and nationalism. Let us see what it is.

Bauer's theses are different from the pseudo-progressive type of historicism which accorded certain nations civilizing virtues (present in the famous theory of the "nonhistoric peoples" of Engels). This last conception has nourished a certain social-democratic tradition which considered colonialism as a lesser evil and which has (mentally) thrown other nations considered as non-civilized into the dustbin of history. Let us compare to this tradition an analysis which can be summarized as follows:

a) There is no nation which exists separately from the social classes which compose it. We cannot measure the value of a nation on the basis of the qualities and failing of the classes which lead it at any given moment (whether that is by denying them any national value because they are agrarian or backward, or by considering them imperialist as a whole without taking into account the development of the class struggle within them);

b) Nations advance and retreat in direct relationship to the evolution of their economic, social and political capacities, some within the framework of capitalism itself, others by undertaking the socialist revolu-



This analytical perspective corresponds quite well to what has happened in two circumstances: when the developing bourgeoisie of certain countries considered as "nonhistoric" has fought to establish its own nation state; or when national liberation movements, led by revolutionaries, have been formed and then associated national liberation and socialist construction of the nation.

Despite the use of the slippery concept of "national character" (seen as the result or the crystallization of a material process), Bauer tries, in a merit-worthy fashion, to make precise the definition of a nation:

The materialist conception of history can understand the nation as the never-finished product of a process that is always under-way, whose last driving force is constituted by the conditions of man's struggle with nature, the transformation of human productive forces and the changes in the human conditions of work. According to this conception, the nation is what is historic in us.¹⁷

The particular vision of the nation that Bauer develops is interesting because, over and above the simple effort to understand, it offers us the possibility of integrating the national struggle and the class struggle into a total perspective of emancipation. Socialism is thus seen as the framework best adapted to the development of the nation. In this sense, for the first time a really national class, the working class, would fully develop its potentialities without entering into conflict with other nations, seeking harmony with other cultures and encouraging national efforts towards a common humanity.¹⁸

All these conceptions of the nation, its place in history and its internal dynamics of development, led Bauer to two conclusions. The first was that in the future socialism would offer a framework of "harmony between nations" and not of brutal or gradual assimilation of the one by the other. The second was that it is possible to struggle together for the liberation from internal barriers which make it impossible to benefit from all national advantages, and for universal enrichment, product of a total of contributions and not a simple process of assimilation. He was convinced that only the

17. Otto Bauer "Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie", *Werkansätze*, Vol. I, Europaverlag, Wien 1975.

18. Michael Löwy analyses the polemic among Marxists on this question in the following way:

One can find basically two tendencies: 1) Those who favoured (or considered inevitable) the future assimilation of all nations in a universal common socialist culture: Kautsky, Lenin, Stalin, Pannekoek, Strasser. Kautsky's theory of the single international language is the coherent expression of this position. 2) Those who believed in the free development of all national cultures in an integrated universal community: Otto Bauer, Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg... A third position "national neutrality" is implicitly sketched by Vladimir Medem, the leader of the Jewish Bund... Marxists should neither prevent nor stimulate this process of assimilation but remain neutral. ("Fatherland or Mother Earth", op cit, p. 222).

tion or by falling into greater dependence on imperialism.

Bauer was able to see that the rise of capitalism was far from attenuating the aspirations of the so-called "nations without vitality", within the region of capitalist expansion. In fact, these aspirations have been reinforced by the desire of each bourgeoisie to form its own market, and to form a state which assures free development. As its level of education rises, the working class brings in turn its own contributions to the national cultural identity.

working class could be a really national class in this fully democratic and universalist sense.

Elements of a conclusion

To conclude, the nation is formed in a different fashion depending on which class exercises hegemony. The recognition of this fundamental fact does not however rescue those who share this viewpoint with us from running into certain problems in the definition of a programme (whether it is related to the preliminary phase of liberation or the later phase of construction). There is more than one obstacle to seeing clearly. There are sometimes questions as to the national content that the working class should demand or reject. The same goes for the real nature of this or that oppression. Is it really national oppression or another type of oppression? There are sometimes cultural, political or economic measures necessary not only for nations in the full sense of the term but also for regions and other types of communities.

What approach should be adopted, when we run into this type of problem? We have already indicated what seems to us the fundamental method to be used: to start from the recognition of the national entity in its political manifestation, that is to say its desire to form a nation, and to place at a different level the way in which other elements (economic, etc) are integrated and combined in this. This is not a question of under-estimating these "other factors" in the formation of this desire to form a nation. In fact, this desire is not born in a vacuum, many material elements have a role to play in the way in which national consciousness is formed, gains in cohesion and is condensed and given vigour. In addition, depending on which social class leads the national process, and the project that it puts forward, these material elements which underly a nation can be given value in a specific fashion. History, geography, language, the productive forces, the forms of ownership, all have their importance in the formation of the national identity and its most political manifestations.

Certain theorists find it necessary to make a distinction between the "conditions of existence of a nation" and the already formed nation (whether or not it has its own state). They therefore make a difference between the "existence of conditions" which make the formation of a nation possible, and a "national reality" on the other hand. In the first case, the process of formation of a nation can still not come to its final conclusion. In the second case, its formation is demonstrated by the presence of a political project (called national or nationalist) which goes in a national direction. In other words, these theoreticians base themselves on the existence of a strong nationalist or national movement to decide whether we are faced with a national entity, or simply the potential of one.

We should not fall into the doctrinaire attitude of

those who deny situations of national oppression, in the name of a pre-determined schema which they use to shape reality (this is what made it possible for Stalinists to deny the right to self-determination for many nations). Nor should we give way to simple imitation and transfer mechanically the goals of the struggle of one oppressed nation to other territories. There can for example be a strong oppression of a specific type, which cannot be considered as national, without this implying denial of the right of the populations concerned to wide-ranging measures of autonomy and self-government. The existence of a national entity, over and above these possibilities, includes above all the right to separation, that is to say to constitute a separate nation.

To conclude this chapter an obvious fact should be emphasized: we cannot forecast the future of nations, nor what will be the universal society foreseen by the founders of Marxism. From our present vantage point we can simply reject two presumptions. The first is that of the pseudo-cosmopolitans who announce a nationally uniform humanity, or an amalgam of heterogeneous cultures and existence (normally the product of a process of assimilation by the strongest). The second is that of those who postulate a national essentialism, who see nations as something unchanging, that have always existed and will always exist in an unaltered form, whatever type of society is held for us by the future.

What counts today is the desire to finish with all types of oppression or forced independence; to develop nations in line with the desires of their inhabitants, and ensure that this development is democratic, internationalist and based on solidarity. The future will tell us how to build world socialism, whether it will be built on a levelling down of national particularities, on the full flowering of their variety (as we would like) or in yet another variation that is impossible to foresee.



Chapter 3 Nationalism and internationalism, the domain of ideology

Political activity can lead to intellectual opportunism; scientific activity can lead to abstract rigidity.

Göran Therborn

What is internationalism? We can say, at the risk of being rather facile, that the Marxist tradition was born under the "sign" of internationalism, and it lives under this sign as easily as a fish swims in water. We are a certain number to have lived and worked for internationalism, which we understand as a force uniting the immediate and future material interests of the working class world-wide, and requiring, over and above solidarity in struggles, a strategy of internationalist breadth and content. Obviously this is not the only definition of internationalism, just as there are different ways of being internationalist from ours, even in the framework of Marxism. There are other conceptions and other practices, linked particularly to contemporary revolutions or to certain regions of the world. There is this regional diversity as well as the "campist" perversion which sees the world as divided into two "blocs" — that is to say which transforms internationalism into a simple transmission belt at the service of the political and diplomatic goals of the so-called socialist camp, particularly the USSR.

What is nationalism? There are also several definitions in this field (including those which refer to reactionary nationalism of essentialist, racist or imperialist versions which we do not intend to deal with here). But there is not the same clarity, from a Marxist point of view, as there is when we define internationalism.

I would add that it is sometimes difficult to find a common reference when we discuss nationalism and the range of Marxist positions. This difficulty is caused on the one hand by the "logical gaps" which can arise when there are different starting points (the nation or the social class). But this difficulty is also the result of suspicions which are not always justified, which are the product of much too abstract or stereotyped definitions of the nationalist phenomenon.

Here we use a definition which does not give rise to too many problems, that used by Recalde in his book on the formation of nations:

Nationalism is a practice whose objectives are political and whose ideological content aims to establish forms of autonomy for the members of a collectivity which is called a nation. Nationalism therefore supposes a subjective moment [which leads to] the selection of a community which reaches a national form of organization and the proposal for this community of a goal: a nation.¹⁹

It is true that we find mixed in this definition, as if it was an indissoluble whole, the national emancipation movement and the ideology of one of its components, whether it is hegemonic or a minority. Nevertheless, in the same way as the workers' movement is not synonymous with socialism or communism but with class action, different ideologies, and of course different forms of nationalism, exist in national emancipation movements.

Nevertheless, this definition of nationalism should not be rejected (even on the level of ideology itself, of symbols of identity, of abstraction) from the point of view of a strategy which claims to make the working class the "leader of the nation" (as the South Americans like to say), of a strategy which wants to build the nation which is denied to it by imperialism and its incompetent and treacherous bourgeoisies. Thus we should talk of "revolutionary nationalism" or "internationalist, class nationalism" as do the Sandinistas in Nicaragua or the class-conscious currents of Basque or Catalan nationalism.

There are cases where an ideological synthesis has been successfully developed, crowning a movement towards unity between nationalists and revolutionary socialists, or making it possible for them to coexist in order to respond to the double oppression. We have seen how the anti-imperialism of Sandino and Marxist socialism as interpreted by Carlos Fonseca produced a Sandinist ideology combining both. We can also find other formulas of synthesis such as "two oppressions, two sides of the same coin" or "strategy for national and social liberation" (used by the ETA in the Basque country or the IRA in Ireland).

This question should not, for all that, be approached in a doctrinaire fashion, and given fixed answers, a yes

19. Recalde, *La construcción de las naciones, Siglo XXI de España*, Madrid 1982.

or no. In certain conditions, as far as the ideologies of liberation movements are concerned, it is possible to make such a synthesis between currents which are different in origin and goals, as is the case of the nationalists and internationalists at the base of the revolutionary classes. However, this quite often turns out to be impossible because there are very real obstacles.

The classical definition by Lenin, that "nationalism and internationalism are incompatible" should today be re-evaluated in the light of the evolution of concepts, of ideas and above all of real movements which identify with the different ideological positions. Nevertheless, it reflects the real difficulty in reaching common positions.

Given what I know of the different revolutionary currents active in the Spanish state, I think that such a synthesis — at the level of ideology and political identity — is today very difficult, but not impossible. Revolutionary communists and the class-conscious radical left currents in the oppressed nationalities face a challenge: how to participate actively in the actually existing national liberation movements, while transforming their understanding of revolutionary nationalist currents and maintaining their strategic independence (although this does not simply depend on wanting to but above all on the ability to create and maintain their own space in this aspect of the struggle).

The counterpart is that revolutionary nationalists should change their hegemonist and sometimes exclusivist vision in relation to other components of the national and social struggle. They also have to change the way in which they view themselves and in which they judge revolutionary currents which do not call themselves nationalist (currents which are too often refused national legitimacy, with the accusation of being "pro-Spanish" or "pro-state" when in fact they are stubborn enemies of Spanish nationalism and the Spanish state). It is only then that a higher synthesis could occur (going beyond the purely nationalist or socialist origins of two ideologies which ignore each other) which could give rise to a national liberation movement of socialist content and an internationalist dimension.

As long as this does not happen, we will have to "march together but separately". Here I am continually referring the ideological questions, to what we call the "guiding ideas" and not the organizational projects of a front or coalition type. In this latter field, coexistence is possible in the same movement between revolutionary Marxists and radical nationalists around common political goals on the terrain of the national and social struggle, while respecting different positions and opinions. We can thus achieve deep and close unity in action while maintaining the full ideological and strategic in-

dependence of each force. This means that we are confronted from the outset with a clear difference between what we call the national policy of the revolutionary left (that every communist should take as the basis of their internationalism) and nationalism as an ideological-symbolic movement. Unity in political action is a practical necessity in the struggle against the common enemy, but ideological unity remains more difficult and not necessarily possible. Achieving it would depend above all on a desire for regroupment and ideological-theoretical developments in this direction.

We are convinced that symbols of identity are not unchangeable. The substance of concepts changes because even the meaning of words changes with time and place. In fact, it is not uncommon to see Latin American Marxists call themselves nationalists because for them this has the predominant meaning of national and social liberation. Here, in the Basque country, something similar has already happened with the world "abertzale", essentially associated with the struggle for national sovereignty. In our case there are opportunities for dialogue, and we think that the future remains open.

History has shown that class nationalism and revolutionary socialism are not closed, mutually exclusive systems which do not allow any contributions "from outside". Many things have, in practice, changed between us, from the point where, on all sides, we have accepted postulates that are foreign to our movement. By taking up elements of these demands as our own, possibly by reworking them, we have undergone and are undergoing "doctrinal" mutations. It is not by chance that — by taking new points of view in fields such as the formation of nations which are so complex and unfinished in Marxist theory — we have reached the point of taking on national identities without considering that we are in contradiction with our internationalism.²⁰

It is very important to recognize the existence of these mutations in this process of coming together between revolutionary Marxism and national liberation movements in advanced capitalist countries. It is in fact

20. The situation today is different from that which prevailed at the birth of the workers' movement and communist movement. Many "signs of identity" and elements of the communist programme now seem to have been taken up by emancipationist movements of a revolutionary outlook, whose roots and nature are not strictly communist or working class. We can thus easily verify that many of these formulations are present in the references of revolutionary nationalism (in the same way that formulations coming from nationalism can be present or assumed by revolutionary communism). The problem consists in cataloguing the differences which separate our two currents and then what we have in common.

very often the precondition for a real implantation in national reality, in its social and political dimension.

Different starting points

What are the fundamental problems which are at the root of the current separation between communists and revolutionary nationalists? We will try to look at several possibilities.

For revolutionary Marxists, the starting point remains the class point of view, including on the national question. The national policy is considered as a class response to a phenomenon of community of as much importance as the internal and external relations of the nation. This means that to a great extent the confrontations inside and outside the nation are seen from a class standpoint. Revolutionary nationalists in our region continue to take national oppression as the starting point for developing definitions and strategies. This way of looking at things is often expressed in a rather pretentious fashion in formulations like "the class struggle takes the form of the national struggle" or "the national struggle is the fundamental contradiction in the current phase". Their policy and their alliances, in this national framework, are analysed above all through an essentially nationalist prism, to the detriment of a social point of view or the direct class point of view; or, if we prefer, are subordinate to the requirements of the national struggle, which is considered as the main contradiction.

There are also different ideas on a whole set of questions such as: the vision of the nation to be built; the role which the different cultural components will play in building it; the role of the working class in the composition and formation of the national liberation movement; the priorities to be set in forming alliances; the development of different demands, and their relationship when forming the national liberation movement itself and linking it to socialist aspirations.

To appreciate the importance of these elements we have to take into account the geopolitical factor, the social field where ideology is reproduced and the sources from which it comes.

Nationalism in capitalist Europe, including that of oppressed nations, has a different content and objective significance from that in dependent countries. It is not by chance that nationalism and the nation state were born in Europe. Nor is it by chance that in this part of the world we have seen all the possible faces of nationalism, from the most horrifying, like fascism, to currents of a revolutionary nature. There is in general an original cultural influence we can see in many fields

(like history, the nation), which was very much present among the first nationalists. Its effects are palpable in revolutionary nationalism as well. This makes it possible to understand that, from Sabino Arana to the first theorizations of ETA and then to the most recent, we see a process marked by ideological breaks and original survivals, that are difficult to measure.

This appears in the way in which the movements concerned understand their own historical roots and elaborate their strategies; the way in which they conceive the nation and the society in which it is formed. We have an example, in Euskadi, of a perception tracing the continuity of the national liberation struggle, from Carlism until today. That is one hundred and fifty years of national struggle!

However, the demands of indigenous peoples, their role in the affirmation of anti-imperialist movements or the place of figures like Sandino as emblematic components of the movement for national liberation, are one thing. Another thing is to identify with all the events and situations that Euskadi has experienced over the last 150 years, without having any substantial differences with what was done and the way of doing them, when we are dealing with phenomena as complex as that of the Carlism of the last century or the experience of the PNV in 1936 or when we are confronted with personalities like Zumalharregi, Sabino Arana, etc.²¹

In sum, we cannot have a simplistic vision of the different phases of a movement when it has not reached the stage of "liberation". That is, we cannot accept the so-called "continuist" vision of "150 years of patriotic war" or the "gudaris — Basque soldiers — of yesterday and today". It is, from this point of view, symptomatic that a movement which claims today to unify social and national liberation, identifies only with the *gudaris*, and ignores the militias, the component with the most marked class character; or that in any case we do not try to develop a version which brings these two traditions of the military struggle closer together.

Of course, we should not fall into the opposite excess, and simply present the liberals of the nineteenth century as the progressives and the Carlists as the reactionaries while ignoring the significance of the "foros" for the Basque people. Or to limit ourselves to a simple denunciation of the reactionary features of the first his-

21. On Carlism see Note 16. Zumalharregi was the Basque military leader of the Carlist wars in the mid-16th century. The PNV (Partido Nacionalista Vasco) is the original party of Basque nationalism. Sabino Arana was the founder of this party. His ideology has a racist and religious element even if it has the merit of being the first stimulus towards Basque national demands.



torical nationalism, without taking into account its historic contribution to the formulation of Basque national demands. This fallacious simplism, the reverse of the first, often hides a very manipulative version of history that is rather more favourable to Spanish nationalism.

History has also shown us that nationalist ideas that were correct at the start have evolved towards imperialist ideas of different sorts.²² In addition, cowardly nationalist bourgeoisies, submissive to Spanish centralism for their own interests, in a situation where they would have in the future to lead a process of building the nation, will not hesitate to impose a policy of national predominance, to the detriment of certain of the peoples they could exploit. We should not underestimate the danger hidden behind positions like those of Prat de la Riba, theorist of Catalan bourgeois nationalism. He adapts very well to the idea that every bourgeoisie has

its national destiny. He thus defined the phases which nationalism must necessarily go through:

The phase of demanding a difference of social structure which culminates in provincialism. The phase of restoration of the language and conservation of wealth, which is identified with regionalism. The national phase, or the possession of all the elements of national existence, including the state itself, in order to ensure leadership. Then the later, imperialist phase, of external influence.²³

It should be highlighted to what point antagonistic forces, like the bourgeois nationalist forces of the oppressor nation and the oppressed nation, can use common ideas. Thus areas of obvious conceptual ambiguity are created which, depending on who uses them and at what point, serve to feed both the healthy aspiration to national freedom and the narrowest and most reductive nationalism.

To sum up what I am saying: the revolutionary nationalism we know is in general formed during the second stage of the national struggle, a product of the convergences between the national and socialist struggle. It develops a progressive vision, marked by a desire to be internationalist. It also often suffers from the pressure exercised by different nationalisms in the region where it develops. In any European nationalism there are sleeping tigers which should be expurgated — and this can only be done with a firmly revolutionary orientation. And when such an orientation is fully assumed this brings about a change of "ideological wavelength" and probably changes in the vision of the world and in the

22. When a nation has become independent, freed from even the chains of indirect domination, the exaltation of national values, the development of nationalist ideology [...] always runs the risk of being used to promote and justify a continuation of [...] domination, oppression and exploitation of others.

M. Rodinson, "Le marxisme et la nation", *L'homme et la société*, No 7, January-March 1968, pp 148-9. See also his discussion with Ernest Mandel:

I am also in total agreement on the distinction between the nationalism of an oppressed people and the nationalism of the oppressor people. What I want to insist on, more for the future than for the present, in relation to my friends in the third world and in particular the Arab world, is that to be oppressed — and we see this in the case of Jews for example — does not guarantee that in the following phase we shall not be oppressors.

Maxime Rodinson "Nationalism and class struggle", *Partisans*, No. 59-60, May-August 1971, Paris.

23. Prat de la Riba dominated Catalan nationalist thinking during the first half of the 20th century.

form of organization of the currents concerned, as is shown by our own history.²⁴

Internationalism, particularly in the imperialist regions, has its own "sleeping tigers", its own deviations: some in the service of nationalism of the state, camouflaged as internationalism and feeding conflicts like that between Vietnam and China. Such deviations can be expressed in forms of the most pure sophistry, Eurocentrist versions in particular disguising themselves as universalism. We will not here mention the "universalism" of the multinationals of culture which aim to make behaviour and tastes the same throughout the world, for the sake of their own commercial interests. We already dealt with the essential points on this in our first chapter.

Let us come back to the question of nationalist ideologies. All nationalism brings about a double movement: differentiation in relation to the exterior and unification in the interior. If these two elements are not accompanied by a really internationalist position, they lead to national exclusivism towards the exterior and interclassism within the nation, when there is not an identification with the interests of the nation with those of its ruling class (the bourgeoisie or the bureaucracy in the transitional societies in the East). These latter are in fact always ready to play the national card when it is a question of resolving its internal and external conflicts.

Some bourgeois nationalists define the nation as:

the fundamental fact and the supreme reason to which all interests of group or class should be subordinated or sacrificed.

It is clear that no left or revolutionary nationalism can accept such a thesis. But it is often the case that, in the name of supposed priority of the national aspect, they define phases and impose priorities whose effect is to attack the specific dynamic of social movements, movements which however exist within the process of national liberation.

Unfortunately, there exist many examples of appeals to the "nationalist family", including even bourgeois nationalism, which are made to the detriment or avoid taking into account the more class-conscious, revolutionary or internationalist sectors. We find here a problem we have already mentioned: the accusation of being "pro-Spanish" or pro-state which is made against that

section of the revolutionary left which does not consider itself nationalist in essence, not against those who really are. These accusations are also used to block the dynamics of the struggle which go beyond the simple national framework and demand the formation of organizational links at the level of the whole state.²⁵

The nature of the links which should be made at the level of the state points to other discussions. There have often been mistakes in this field, the "opposite" of the "nationalist retreat" of central leaderships tending to ignore the national characteristics of Basque, Catalan, Galician organizations. This was to forget that the national organisms should be sovereign and on the basis of this sovereignty establish the model and the intensity of the relationships in question.

There are different forms of nationalism, different forms of communism and socialism

Once the questions which create the most frictions and divergences between nationalism and internationalism have been clarified, we must state clearly what unites and what separates the revolutionary communists of an oppressed nation and their revolutionary nationalist colleagues.

Again, it should be emphasized from the start that nationalists cannot be treated as a bloc, nor can nationalism be given an abstract definition.

There is nationalism and nationalism, because it is a



25. We should remember that the notion "national" refers to a geographic unit (Euskadi) that is smaller than that of "the state" (that is the Spanish state, the whole of the territory usually called Spain). This is an inverse relationship between the terms "nation" and "state" from that which we find in countries like Mexico, Brazil or the United States (where the "national" territory is larger than the "states" which form the federation) which could therefore confuse other readers.

long time since this term ceased to have one single meaning. This is also true of the terms communist and socialist, and it is particularly true because factors which go far beyond ideology intervene on the social and political terrain. Trotsky was right when he refused to fall into the trap, by making it clear that:

Nationalism has not always been a reactionary ideology, not by far, and it is not always one today either.

Quite to the contrary, it has often been:

a revolutionary element as opposed to the abstract and false cosmopolitanism [...].²⁶

Not taking this question fully into account not only prevents us from seeing clearly the difference between different forms of nationalism. When we have made this mistake, this has also prevented us from correctly appreciating the significance of revolutionary nationalism in relation to the Spanish state and bourgeois society. We have, in particular, under-estimated its objective role of opposition to the system and its capacity to bring into movement social forces susceptible of becoming involved in the revolution (even if, conversely, we should not ignore how it can hide a really internationalist vision).

All this has implications for making alliances, the forms of convergence in the struggle against capitalism and the capitalist state. It is obvious today that we have more points of convergence with the revolutionary nationalists than with certain currents called of the work-

26. Leon Trotsky "On the Declaration by the Indochinese Oppositionists" (18 September 1930), *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1930-31]*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, pp. 30-31:

At the present time the nationalism of the most backward Indochinese peasant, directed against French imperialism, is a revolutionary element as opposed to the abstract and false cosmopolitanism of the Freemasons and other democratic bourgeois types, or the 'internationalism' of the social democrats, who rob or help to rob the Indochinese peasant.

Michael Löwy makes a similar distinction as far as liberation theology is concerned. In our ranks, some consider that there is a historic battle between idealism and materialism. The school of Politzer in particular has codified this message in its own particular way. Politically, and I would say even ideologically, this is not always true. It is sufficient to compare for example the activating forces of liberation theology and Stalinism in Latin America.

Among the first there is religious mysticism and thus mystification of human conditions. But because of their service to the poor and underprivileged, and with their consciousness of the causes of poverty and oppression, they breathe the idea of revolution into millions of people.

Among the second there are definitely materialists who certainly criticize idealism and religious metaphysics but whose point of view leads to the most crude "stagism", to the development of strategies on a so-called objective basis, which are in fact simply class collaboration, which will lead to unequalled defeats and frustration.

ers (socialists and Eurocommunists) not to give them any other description.

If we talk about different forms of nationalism, what should be said of the different forms of socialism or communism which sometimes have nothing in common, even ideologically (if we do not allow ourselves to be misled by ritual references which, almost always are purely formal)? Thus there are common points between left nationalists and revolutionary communists which try in their different ways to develop strategies and ideologies for social and national liberation.

At certain times, we have defended formalist interpretations of the idea of the workers' united front in conditions of national oppression. We answered the question "which are the class organizations in the Spanish state" by saying: the revolutionary communists and the reformists (the PCE and the PSOE) and so it is with them that we should form the "workers' united front" (only the moment and the form remained to be clarified).

It was only later that we understood that, in the current phase, this was not the natural framework for the struggle against the state and the bourgeoisie. We have seen revolutionary communist formations of different nationalities, including Castilian, support a formation like Herri Batasuna in elections, considering that on this terrain and in many circumstances this was the formation that essentially galvanized the resistance against the system (even although this could change in the future, this is a good example of the point we are making).²⁷ This is the case because the national and class dimensions are not separate, and particularly when government policy is vehicled by a very concrete form of nationalism, provoking the most resistance in a case like Euskadi where there is a coming together around another very different type of nationalism, opposed to the nationalism of the state.



27. Herri Batasuna is a radical left nationalist organization, ideologically close to ETA.

Workers' movement and national liberation movement

The proletariat of every land must first acquire through arduous effort the internationalist attitude that its general, historical interests demand from it.

R. Rosdolsky²⁸

We should now discuss the place occupied by the workers' movement in relation to the national liberation movement. Do the two movements develop in the same way? Or should the workers' movement have a more active perspective and aspire to play the role of a driving force, to lead and make more dynamic the alliance, the emancipatory bloc? Should it feel itself an integral part of building the oppressed nation fighting for its national and social liberation?

If the answer to these last two questions is affirmative, and for me it is, the workers' movement in the current situation has to go through a complicated apprenticeship in internationalism, whether from the point of view of the oppressed nation or from that of the oppressor nation. In a multi-national state like the Spanish state, the workers as such should support the demands for national liberation without reservations, working for an alliance which includes the revolutionary and democratic bloc against the bourgeois state. This should be the case everywhere, independently of whether or not they belong to one of the oppressed nations. Within the oppressed nation, the workers should fully identify with the national demand, in order to be in a position to give a socialist and internationalist point of view. Because of this, we have a multiple point of view, which is in part different and in part interdependent, in line with the different national existences within one single state.

The working class, to the contrary of what Engels once said, is not free from "national prejudices". As Rosdolsky says "the necessarily internationalist tendency of the proletarian movement" cannot be understood "as a ready-made, predetermined fact" but, on the contrary, on both the national and international terrain, must be developed "through a hard spiritual struggle".

The internationalism of the working class has an objective foundation, given its particular place within an increasingly internationalized economy. Reaching beyond borders, its essential historic interests coincide. But the internationalization of the emancipation project and practice are nevertheless not automatic, they demand commitment and struggle, sometimes against all forms of national oppression and sometimes against national privileges (whether these have a social, cultural

or economic content). Difficulties also appear in other situations, such as for example in the arms industry or on ecological questions: the defence of jobs is then often confused with defence of the industry in question, despite its bellicose or polluting character.²⁹

History shows that very often, for different reasons, forces within or outside the workers' movement block the expression of a really internationalist project. It is understandable in these conditions that internationalism must in fact be won by vigorous struggle, through a fight, that this requires difficult propaganda work and consistent practice. In addition, we are often confronted with a conception that is rather "stagist" on this question (even in Lenin, at first), which links the national question to the democratic phase of struggles in a too reductionist way. The national question is defined as simply a democratic question, cut off or separate from the socialist revolution. This can encourage a division of the workers' and nationalist movements into two camps which are practically unrelated to each other. Thus the formulation "together but not intermixed" leaves the working class in an external position fighting against national oppression but refusing to be part of a movement which identifies with the nation.

We find this problem in the schema which is derived from the "Soviet model": the main protagonist of the insurrection is a very organized and concentrated working class, particularly in the Russian nationality, where the power centres are also found. It can, later, extend its "liberating programme" to the peripheral nationalities. This conception was illustrated for example by the concession made to Finland with the recognition of its independence. The dominant idea thus became that of a class which allies from the outside with national movements against the common enemy. Strategy was thus thought out in a perspective in conformity with this schema.

But this model was non-functional in Ireland, as it also is in the Spanish state where the working class is dispersed in different geographical centres, some of which are in the territory of the the oppressed nationalities. In such cases, the working class obviously cannot approach the question of "alliance" with the national movement in a cavalier way but must fight to be an integral part of it, and even to become a hegemonic force within it.

28. The quotations from Rosdolsky in this chapter are from *op cit.*, p.182-3.

An Irish revolutionary Marxist, James Connolly, worked on developing a different point of view. He wanted the working class to lead the struggle of the Irish nation and opt for independence, although a section of this working class was "unionist", that is to say in favour of the union with England (we should note that at the time the question was posed differently from today). This implied that the workers' vanguard should encourage convergence in action with the left wing of revolutionary nationalism, without dismissing the possibility of a deeper alliance.

Trotsky understood this problem when he described in these terms the possible evolution of the consciousness of the Irish working class, after the Easter Rising:

The young working class of Ireland, formed as it was in an atmosphere saturated with heroic memories of national rebellion, and coming into conflict with the egoistically narrow and imperially arrogant trade-unionism of Britain, has naturally wavered between nationalism and syndicalism, and is always ready to link these two conceptions together in its revolutionary consciousness.³⁰

This type of question is posed in the specific cases of oppressed nations within which there is an already politically defined, independent, proletariat, which therefore has to define its own specific strategy. It is also the case of the situation where there are communist and left nationalists involved in strategic alliances to overthrow the common enemy.

The outcome of the 1916 Rising was not positive for Irish Marxism, because the defeat of the Easter Rising meant the annihilation of the workers' vanguard, thus introducing a break in continuity, whereas left nationalism grew from this moment, in reaction to the events. We should however make it clear that, thanks to this experience, Irish nationalism experienced a deepgoing mutation with the birth of the IRA (the Irish Republican Army). This movement later divided into two totally opposed wings, one linked to imperialism, the other fighting for national independence and socialism.

It is, in addition, correct to state that although this Rising ended badly, this was not so much because of a mistaken analysis as because of the situation of the

29. To play an emancipating role, the workers' movement must resolve many internal contradictions. In the first place, it must start to change on the national question. It should rid itself of the currently hegemonic influence of forces which prevent it from playing, as a class, its role in the social and political struggle: bourgeois nationalism and different forms of workers' reformism.

The struggle for the hegemony of the working class in the national movement requires the formation of a new vanguard, which can offer a synthesis, both in practice and in perspectives, of the purest class struggle and the struggle for national liberation.

30. Leon Trotsky, "Lessons of the events in Dublin" (4 July, 1916), *New International*, New York, Vol 1 No. 1, Fall 1983 (from then forthcoming volume *The War Correspondence of Leon Trotsky: World War I (1914-1917)*, Monad Press, New York).

working class at the time. Lenin, making a balance sheet of the Irish revolution, put the emphasis on the desynchronization of the pace of radicalization of the working class and the national movement, as well as an unfavourable international situation:

It is the misfortune of the Irish that they rose prematurely, before the European revolt of the proletariat had had time to mature [but] it is only in premature, individual, sporadic and therefore unsuccessful, revolutionary movements that the masses gain experience (...).³¹

In reality, Connolly did not have any electoral alternative available! When the moment came he had to choose the insurrection, knowing that it would have terrible consequences for them. This is an experience to take into account.³²

It seems interesting to now look at the thinking of Otto Bauer on the combination of the national and international dimensions in the workers' movement. For him:

International socialism must on the contrary see these national differences in methods of struggle and in ideology within it as the result of its external and internal growth. It should learn to start from this national plurality, which develops within the International, to teach its nationally different combat troops, despite the national specificities of their methods of practice and of the intellectual development of their theory, to coordinate their efforts to reach common goals, to unify their forces in a common struggle. The duty of the International must be, not to level down the national specificities but the promote, within national diversity, international unity.³³

To sum up, it appears that the strategy for building really internationalist revolutionary workers' parties cannot ignore the challenge posed by the national question. We have to forge a dual identity, or a combined identity, integrating the national and internationalist dimensions, in such a way as to develop an orientation adapted to the tasks of national liberation and of social revolution against the bourgeois state.

31. Lenin, "The discussion on self-determination summed up" *CW* Volume 22, p. 358, Lawrence and Wishart, London 1977

32. The Easter Rising against English rule started on Easter Monday, April 24, 1916. It was finally defeated by the British forces on April 29. Many died in the fighting, and still more in the repression which followed. Sixteen leaders of the Rising, including James Connolly, were shot between 3rd and 12th May.

33. Otto Bauer op cit.

34. Any revolutionary strategy, in the existing conditions in Euskadi, must have a character of national liberation, that is that the goals of national liberation are an integral part of this strategy.

Such a strategy is extremely complex. Developing it requires an accumulation of experiences at a much higher level than exists today. But this also means an effort to integrate thinking and contributions from the most advanced sections of the national and social struggles, coming from different social movements. Then a communist current could be formed which has its own features and deep national roots.

Questions of strategy, the right to self-determination and proletarian internationalism

The political fate of the national being, if we mean by that the consciousness of the group itself, depends on how strongly it is affirmed.

Pierre Vilar³⁵

In the first chapter we noted the difficulties which the workers' movement encounters in its attitude to the national question. The problems are no less when it is a question of defining strategy, of articulating the national and international dimensions, of liberating nations and at the same time reinforcing internationalism.

The corner stone of internationalism was summed up in the formula: "Workers of the world, unite!" In developing it, Marx put forward three ideas: a) the unity of all workers is possible because their interests coincide on the main points: abolition of capitalist society and establishment of a society based on the free association of producers; b) socialism, the first phase of communism, is an international system which, in order to exist, requires the development of productive forces on a world scale; c) the ultimate finality of the struggle of the proletariat is humanity as a whole.

This is the same conviction which guided Trotsky in his struggle against "the theory of socialism in one country", defended by Stalin to justify the bureaucratic deformation of Soviet society, and the transformation of communist organizations throughout the world into faithful servants of the leading party of the USSR.

It is also this conviction that we find in Lenin, when he said that Russian society was the weakest link in the imperialist world chain.

For classical Marxists, the general analytical framework has however not always prevented distrust or disinterest in relation to national struggles or processes of nation-building which were in conflict with the big states which were supposed to represent the attributes of progress, of culture and have the capacity to create powerful industrial working-class concentrations. The current heirs of this latter point of view today consider necessary and positive the continuation of the Spanish and British states; their continuation as they are, at the cost of some reforms and adjustments which do not change anything essential. They assert that they offer a suitable framework for building socialism. And that

they should be defended from the fragmenting effects of peripheral nationalism, considered as a historical anomaly, an involution or turning backwards of the wheels of history.

In my opinion, the existence of such "peripheral" movements is a good thing. They challenge empires, or what remains of them, whose only virtue is to maintain centralizing bodies already rendered out of date by history, at the cost of much misery. Only a rupture in these bodies, or a drastic change in their political, ideological and economic basis, can make possible unions adapted to the constructive and liberating effort which socialism requires.

We should however note that, for the founders of Marxism, this type of viewpoint was changed by experience. This is the case in the analysis of the Irish phenomenon (while Poland was considered a nation with revolutionary virtues because of its opposition to Russian Tsarism, the "gendarme of Europe" at the time). At first, Marx and Engels thought that Ireland should "liberate itself in the heat of the English revolution". They came round to stating that the liberation of Ireland would be the condition for the English revolution, a real inversion of positions. Why this change? Because Marx came to understand the nature of the colonial oppression exercised in Ireland, which gave sustenance to the most reactionary section of the British ruling class. And above all because he then understood that such oppression politically and ideologically chained the British working class to "its" ruling class, while dividing the workers (the reciprocal hate between English and Irish workers). Thus the historic significance, of a universal character, of the conclusion Marx made from the Irish example "A people which oppresses another can never itself be free".³⁶

Lenin used this formulation many times when he incorporated the struggle for the right to self-determination of the peoples into internationalist strategy. In his 1914 polemic with Rosa Luxemburg he looked back explicitly at the evolution of Marx's position on Ireland.³⁷

All Lenin's argumentation tend to show that nothing holds back the unity of the class so much as injustice in the national terrain and that:

36. See the texts of Marx and Engels in *Ireland and the Irish Question*, Lawrence and Wishart, London 1971.

35. Pierre Vilar, *Historia de España*.

The interests of the *unity of the proletarians*, the interests of their class solidarity call for recognition of the right of *nations to secede*.³⁷

To fight against national injustice is also an indispensable condition for making it possible for the working class to take the lead of all the oppressed sectors of the nation.³⁹

Finally, the recognition of this right is indispensable in being able to take a distance from, and fight for international hegemony against, the national bourgeoisie which, alongside its anti-imperialist rhetoric, tries to divide and to bring along in its wake the workers of "its" nation.

Although for revolutionaries the fight against the imperialist bourgeoisie has to be a frontal battle, the attitude to the national bourgeoisie is more complex. An alliance can, in certain circumstances, turn out to be necessary. But then it is an alliance in terms of "opposition", that is opposition to national oppression. The workers' movement must, in this framework, continue to refuse to collaborate in the positive aspects of the programme of nation-building, a domain in which the proletariat must defend its own independent programme, with its internationalist dimension.

The concrete form which the struggle against oppression and for national emancipation will take will be the defence of self-determination for the nation in question. The choice is for this nation and for it alone: to opt for separation, or for union on an equal footing. This means that neither independence nor free union are seen as questions of principle, or pre-determined, aside from all other considerations. It is nationalists who make independence a fetish, a magic wand, following the exam-

37. For example, he quotes this letter of Marx of 20 December 1869 which explains clearly his change of analysis on the Irish question:

For a long time I believed that it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working-class ascendancy [...]. Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will never accomplish anything until it has got rid of Ireland.

Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination", *CW* Volume 20, p. 438. Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1972.

38. Lenin, "The Right of Nations", *CW* Volume 20, p. 443.

39. To quote Michael Löwy once again:

The national question is in fact one of the fields in which Lenin advanced Marxist thinking in developing (on the basis of Marx's writings but going much further), a coherent revolutionary strategy for the workers' movement, based on the central slogan of self-determination for nations.

Lenin in fact "had better understood than his comrades the dialectical relationship between international and the right to national self-determination" rather than seeing them as two counterposed terms.

in Haupt, Weill, Löwy, *Les marxistes et la question nationale*, op cit, pp. 386, 388

ple of the dogmatic supporters of a big state ("a big horse, whether its goes or not") when they defend the territorial units created by capitalism. We think that the only principle should be the defence of self-determination, and not the concrete formula for the exercise of this right, a choice which falls to each people and should be made on the basis of different factors. And these factors are taken into account by revolutionaries in the concrete formula they put forward for the application of the right to self-determination.

What is the basis for the defence of the right to self-determination, that is to say to full sovereignty, to it being exercised in one way or another: independence or free union? For Lenin, politics predominates in this domain over other considerations concerning national existence, such as economy, culture, language, etc.

The right to self-determination is the right to have sovereign institutions and not to accept that certain people enjoy all these rights, and that others are deprived of them. This point of view has certain limitations, which can feed restrictive conceptions of the nation. But it also presents big advantages for the revolutionary struggle. It centres the struggle precisely where class confrontations are centred: the overcoming or continuation of all forms of oppression. This is what made it possible after the Russian Revolution to develop revolutionary strategies in most of the countries subject to national oppression. It was also this which made it possible to go beyond deviations of different types which are found in culturalist or economic currents. On this question it is useful to come back to certain elements of Lenin's polemic against Otto Bauer and Rosa Luxemburg.

Bauer, as a theorist on the national question, compared to other Marxists who at their time were interested in the question, has the advantage of having a more complete vision of the national phenomenon and the place that it occupies in the development of humanity (this was mentioned in Chapter 2). But his analysis contains the risk of over-estimating of the cultural aspect; his proposal for national cultural autonomy (national extra-territorial citizenship) is quite original in its defence of the right of national minorities produced by emigration (for example the right of Andalusian immigrants to maintain their cultural characteristics in Catalonia). But it also obscures the problem when the question posed is that of belonging to a particular state; that is when it concerns the demand for self-determination.

It is perhaps for this reason that Bauer made a vain attempt to maintain the unity of the Austro-Hungarian empire while Lenin's goal from the beginning was to destroy the Russian empire. His organizational theory was perfectly acceptable to the Jewish workers' organizations who wanted to organize separately, but regardless of the territorial factor. Lenin on the contrary always associated the right to national separation with the

Note on the history of Poland

During the tenth century Poland became a single kingdom under the Piastre dynasty — covering more or less the present territory — and was Christianized in 966. This kingdom lasted until the beginning of the 12th century when the increased power of the nobles brought about a decentralized feudal state. At the beginning of the 14th century it was once again unified under a single king. The Polish state grew significantly during the 14th and 15th centuries through the union with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania — which stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea — as well as parts of Hungary and other territories. This led to the formation of a veritable empire (the Polish "Golden Age") during the 15th and 16th centuries.

Generally weakened during the following period by outside attacks of the Ottoman empire and of Russia, Sweden and the Prussian state and the internal peasant revolts against the nobility, Poland underwent a process of disintegration which in 1772 led to its first division between Russia, Austria and Prussia. It was shared out one last time between these three powers in 1795. After the upheavals brought about by the French Revolution and Napoleon's conquests in central and eastern Europe, this partition was confirmed by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. In this way Poland almost disappeared from the map of Europe. The Tsarist empire transformed the former Grand Duchy of Warsaw into a province of the empire, also known as "Congress Poland"; Austria took over Galicia (Lvov/Lemberg) and Germany the western regions (Poznan along with Silesia and Pomerania).

Under the Tsarist empire, Poland became quite heavily industrialized and a number of insurrectional movements led by the nobility took place (1830-31, 1846, 1863). The mass base of the nobility began to shrink after the abolition of serfdom in 1864, as well as the rise of the national bourgeois as the dominant class. Poland became independent again after the First World War, in 1918.

This short historical note explains the interconnection of the revolutionary movements in Poland and in Russia. In "Congress Poland", socialism was divided between a nationalist current — the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) one of whose leaders was the future bonaparte Jozef Pilsudski — and a current opposed to national independence, considered as a utopian and bourgeois slogan (the Social-Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, SDKPiL, led by Rosa Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches).

unity of workers' organizations regardless of their nationality, and made strategic unity of these two elements his internationalist policy. This fundamental idea seems very correct: free association within the same party of the working people and the oppressed of different nationalities who live in the same national territory. It would be a disaster if in Euskadi, Galicia or Catalonia the workers' movements were organized according to nationality. This would weaken them and, above all, it would prevent them from being in the leadership in the process of liberation within each of these oppressed nations.

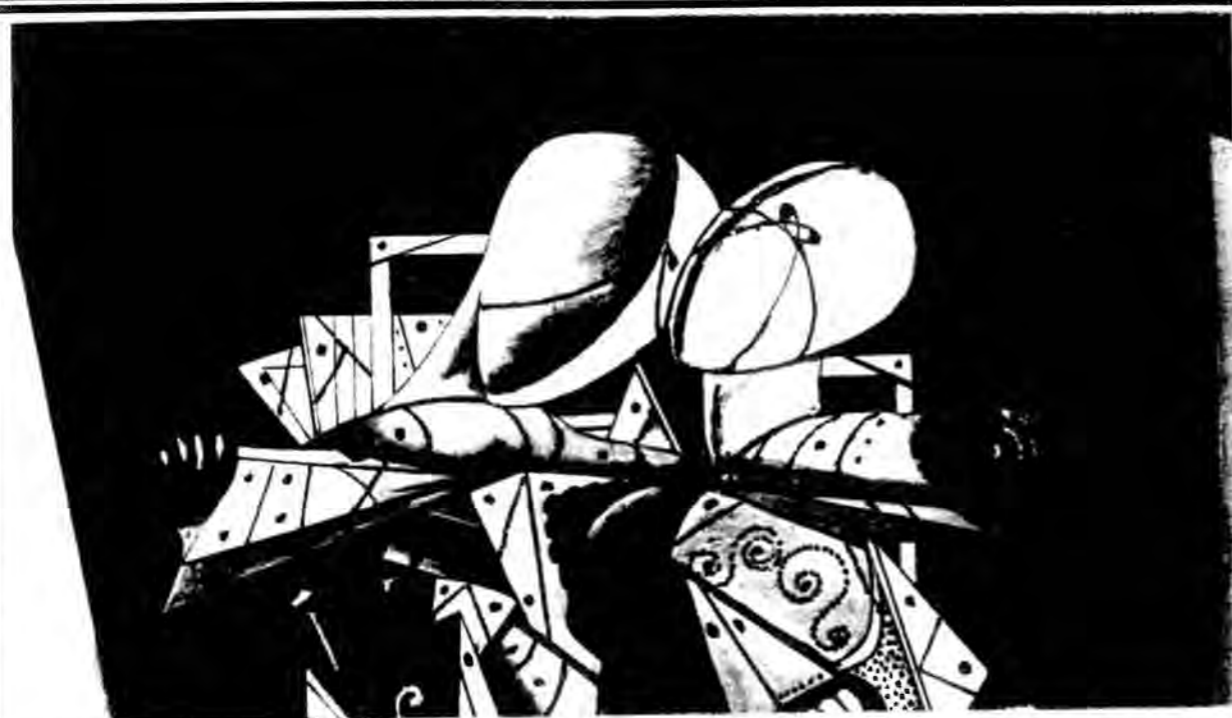
This is a very important question, even if the problem of forms of organization of the party is more complex and there is not always a single answer in the case of multi-national states. Sometimes corrections have to be introduced; or better, a concrete analysis of national reality and demands should predominate.

For Poland, Rosa Luxemburg defended fundamentally economic and hyper-workerist ideas. She was convinced on the one hand that the involvement of Poland in the Russian economy and the impossibility of winning self-determination under capitalism made independence obsolete, and that on the other hand this demand would put the workers' movement under the leadership of the nationalist bourgeoisie.⁴⁰

Lenin developed another point of view. He refuted the argument that self-determination was impossible under capitalism (Norway had just separated from Sweden). For him, it was the same for any basic democratic demand under capitalism. In the best of cases it could be obtained in a restricted and distorted form, in the worst it was an impossible goal. But in any event, in these two cases, the consistent defence of democracy, and thus the right of self-determination, involved the masses concerned in fields of struggle favourable to the socialist revolution. If, under the pretext that they could not be won in the imperialist epoch, these demands were eliminated, this would make a convergence between the workers' movement and the national movement impossible, and thus also make it impossible for the workers to become the spokespersons of the oppressed and, in the first place, the champions of democratic rights.

In Lenin's eyes, only socialism made possible the definitive solution to national problems, but did not offer an automatic guarantee. Thus clauses which effectively guarantee this right to self-determination before, during and after the revolution, and the possibility for the people to redefine as much as they wish their relations with their neighbours, must be included in the pro-

40. To understand the nature of relations between Russian and Polish revolutionaries, at the beginning of the 20th century, and the situation in Poland in relation to the Russian empire, see box.



gramme.

The way in which Lenin approached the national question contradicts the opinion which is wrongly attributed to him, that the defence of big states is a sacred law of socialism, over and above all other considerations. Socialism is a lot more than the simple socialization of the means of production and the growth of the productive forces. Building socialism requires the support of the population. It gives rise to many discussions on forms of development and on the definition of the priority needs for popular consumption. Faced with productivist theories, there are others concerning the defence of the environment. "Expansionist" conceptions collide with the brutal fact that the existing peoples and nations identify with the territorial framework to which they belong. And identification means many things, among others feeling at home in the national terrain. This is how Trotsky defended the independence of the Ukraine from the USSR in 1939, developing a clear line of argument.⁴¹

Trotsky made a parallel between the national question and the agrarian question. He recognized that collectivism is economically more rational than division of the land into individual plots. But if the peasants do not accept it, the proletarian revolution should take up the slogan "the land to those that work it", a slogan that was initially directed against big feudal or capitalist properties, but which can also be imposed as a corrective measure faced with bureaucratic abuses. It is the same for the national question; at the start, self-

41. See the articles "Independence of the Ukraine and Sectarian Middleheads" and "Democratic Feudalists and the Independence of the Ukraine" in *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1939-40]*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973.

determination was defended within the framework of bourgeois states, against any solution imposed by force. But it can also turn out necessary to use this slogan again when the socialist state, built on the principle of free union (thus excluding the imposition of forced union), no longer guarantees the continuation of a constant balance between these two elements, unity and freedom.⁴²

I will conclude this chapter by touching on the very conception of the revolution and the alliances to be made between the forces engaged in the struggle. Revolutionary processes are never pure. Lenin explained on the occasion of the Irish revolution of 1916 that "with all its prejudices", like other nationalist movements which developed during the inter-imperialist war, "objectively [it] will attack capital".⁴³ The value of leaders like James Conolly does not reside solely in the fact that they reached conclusions identical to those of Lenin. They had in fact much clearer ideas on the problems concerning the formation of the revolutionary vanguard within the dependent nations; and not only concerning the policy of the proletariat of the big nation in relation to them. That is to say on the formation of indigenous leaderships, capable of amalgamating national and social struggles in a revolutionary communist perspective of total liberation.

42. By choosing independence in the Basque situation, there are many of us to have also challenged an old argument which put the cart before the horses: putting first the question of the most appropriate economic basis for the socialist future rather than how to win nationally oppressed people to the struggle for socialism, which is the key problem for a socialist strategy.

43. Lenin, *CW Volume 22, The Discussion on Self-Determination*, pp.354-356.

The party, the national question and the socialist revolution

*The realm of abstract principle is always, my dear friend, the last refuge of those who have lost their way on this earth.*⁴⁴

Leon Trotsky

Trotsky in his "History of the Russian Revolution" and Ernest Mandel in his texts of the Leninist theory of the party, are the most ardent defenders of the conceptions developed by Lenin, those of a centralized party on the territory of a given state. They stand clearly for the defence of self-determination as the political solution to national oppression at a strategic level. They recognize the right to separation, to freedom of choice, whether this is a federal union or a single state. But, for them, all this does not apply to the organization model of communists, the party. This latter should be centralized because this is the only way to adequately confront the enemy, which is increasingly centralized.⁴⁵

To illustrate his argument, Trotsky used the example of a sculptor, pointing out that a difference should be made between the instrument that he uses and the material on which he works. He thus brings out the idea that the "instrument" (the party) should not be confused with the "model" (the society for which it is fighting). "For this task, this tool": the party should correspond to the task for which it is created, that is today to be an appropriate instrument for the plan and strategic project required for the destruction of the enemy power. This has given rise to an organizational culture where even a federal structure, guaranteeing the continuation of a common framework, has been seen as a threat to the unity of the party; and thus an obstacle to the effectiveness of the revolutionary instrument. From this starting point, the slogan has become "one state, one party", even if the idea of later breaking up this state, and thus the idea of a future independent party for the newly-separated nation, is put forward.

This model showed both its strengths and its weaknesses in the case of the Bolsheviks: to raise it to the

44. Leon Trotsky "On the National Question" (1923), *International Socialist Review*, New York, summer 1958. Reprinted in *International Marxist Review*, Volume 4, No. 2, Autumn 1989, Paris.

45. In one interpretation of Leninism, there is a central strategic plane, the "strategic" which deals with the state, and a "tactical" plane which is situated in the national sphere. I think, on the basis of our own experience, that this does not stand up in practice.

level of a principle is more than questionable and could lead to serious mistakes. Some of them were rapidly overtaken by history, like the colonial situations of the "overseas provinces" annexed by imperialist states (or the very particular case of Ireland). There, the communist parties were organized separately from those in the metropolis. Other aspects of the problem were better understood on the basis of the Bolsheviks' own experiences, where the multi-national party did not escape the assimilationist hegemony of the strongest national faction (which in addition corresponded to that which had embodied the national spirit of the overthrown Tsarist empire).

No serious and objective analysis can simply relate the mistakes made to the initial conceptions of the party, given precisely that there were major efforts to correct them — in the same way as it would be wrong to consider there is a continuity between Leninism and later bureaucratization. We cannot, in the case mentioned here, be content to identify Russifying degeneration with the idea of a single centralized party. But it is obvious that there are very delicate problems in this field. Problems which can lead us, given concrete reality, to seek different concrete solutions (federalism or even independence, while maintaining strong links).

This is not all. The distinction between "tools" and the "material" they work is not a simple thing when the material (that is to say all the subjective and objective conditions) requires very sophisticated tools to be effective. The national question requires very fine analysis which deals with the symbols of identity themselves, with programme and strategy, the language question, the press, public appearance, etc, factors which are sufficiently important to have a direct effect on the model of the party we are building.

But to what extent depends on concrete reality.



Capitalist development and national problems in Europe today

Rosa Luxemburg and Ernest Mandel have several times highlighted the unequal and geographically unbalanced character of European capitalism. This is an unevenness of development that we find at the continental level as well as within each state where the capitalist market is formed. This inequality, in relation with national or ethnic particularities, provides a material basis for the appearance of national demands of different degrees and intensity, whether in revolt against underdevelopment and economic suffocation which castrate the nation, or in order to achieve full capitalist development which is blocked by the dominant state.

Different types of nationalist or national emancipation movements have developed in this situation. Some have fought under the banner of equality, as they demanded for themselves what others already had within the existing state. Some declared themselves with great vigour to be separatist, affirming the existence of differences and competition. Others were hesitant or took intermediary roads. For example, in our case Catalan nationalism under bourgeois leadership has historically vacillated between two aspirations: playing a leading role in the Spanish concert as Catalans or consolidating the self-government and sovereignty of Catalonia (later acquiring independentist overtones in a petty-bourgeois form — the Republican Left). In contrast, nationalism in Euskadi, from its birth, has had a strong pro-independence component, with a marked aspect of national self-protection (which contrasted with the integrationist and Hispanophile attitude of the Basque big bourgeoisie).

In the period of late capitalism, since the Second World War, the problem has reappeared, and even arisen where it did not exist in the last century (Scotland, Corsica). It takes many forms: an internal challenge to a national legitimacy which appeared untouchable; deepening imbalances within the nation states (at a time when their anti-democratic aspects were being strengthened); the juxtaposition of the pressures of the European Common Market with its trend to uniformity in culture, consumption, etc. All these factors today create national problems with varied and complex components.

For the Scottish writer Tom Naim:

In western Europe there are two sorts of nationalist dissent: that of under-developed regions (usually agricultural) which have begun to react; and the highly developed industrial epicentres which consider they are castrated by the dominant "nation state".⁴⁶

This combination of simultaneous processes which are apparently contradictory, produced both a sharpening of the repressive features of the nation states and the internationalization of police, military and economic al-

liances (like, for example, the Trevi Group⁴⁷). We should however note that the tendency to internationalization does not bypass the existing nation states. It is juxtaposed with them, maintaining the essential of the "state barriers". Contemporary European evolution does not in the least dispense us from the task of destruction of the bourgeois state. On the contrary, it forces us to confront all these states which are now in alliance by presenting our alternative: a Europe of the peoples and workers, on a socialist basis and not based on the present states.⁴⁸ In this framework, stereotyped answers are of very little use when it is a question of dealing with a concrete national question. The famous "rule" established by Stalin, according to which some questions are national and others regional, does not help us at all. Nor does any reasoning by analogy or imitation, considering *a priori* as "national questions" those which are not or are still in a very embryonic state. In each case, only the concrete analysis of the concrete reality makes it possible for us to avoid the excesses which take us away from a correct standpoint, and the conservatism which prevents us from playing the role of a vanguard. The Spanish state is precisely a terrain where there is a range of examples, going from "historic" nations (Catalonia, Euskadi, Galicia) to nations and nationalities of more recent date (Andalusia) to peoples of a strong personality.

46. Tom Naim, *Los nuevos nacionalismos en Europa*, Editorial Peninsula, Barcelona 1979.

47. The Trevi Group is composed of the Interior and Justice ministers of the EEC. It is preparing the Community accords of the "security" of "Fortress Europe".

48. The current bourgeois states, conscious of their limits, are trying to adapt to the growing internationalist of the market and centralization of capital. They are increasing the number of supra-national pacts and organizations of all types. The bourgeoisie knows that it cannot do without the nation state because it lacks alternatives, whether in terms of legitimacy or mechanisms for control and repression of the population (can you imagine a "Community" police force crushing a workers' struggle?). Something similar is happening in the Spanish state "from below" with the famous "state of autonomous regions", given that these "autonomous regions" do not pretend to replace the state in its own sphere but to complete it, juxtaposing two realities. Others are developing a European discourse of different types, in order to avoid the problem of the nation state. Social-democracy for example always puts the emphasis on the "welfare state", in order to present the "European social space" as the panacea to all problems. At another level, the bourgeois nationalists, for example the Basque PNV, start to explain that the institutionalization will bring the existing states into harmony, and thus it is in Europe that the stateless nations will find their place. For this new theory, the costly and traumatic battles for constitutional reform not to mention destroying the centralist state should give way to the "Community process".

On the national question in the Spanish state

We will not delve into the origins of the Spanish state, nor into the controversy over the "Spanish national identity". We should remember that, at the end of the last century and the beginning of this one, Marx and Andreu Nin thought that the absolutist monarchy and its state had features which made it resemble Asiatic despotism more than modern European states. This is undoubtedly an exaggerated conclusion, to the extent that it ignores the role that this monarchy played in the spread of capitalism. But nevertheless it is a good reflection of the specificity of this state apparatus, its absolutist features and the excessive role played by certain sectors of the agricultural oligarchy to the detriment of the direct participation of the bourgeoisie.

Revolutionary communists called Spain the "prison of the peoples" (by analogy with what Lenin said about Tsarist Russia), because they noted that first the monarchy and later the Republic maintained a striking centralism and practiced a policy of forced assimilation of the nationalities.

Since then there have been some superficial changes. The fashionable new theme is "the state of autonomous regions".⁴⁹ But, up until now, we have to conclude that none of these changes have removed Spain's character as a "prison of the peoples" and that it is always in conflict with national projects which challenge its legitimacy or its present shape. There is in fact a tension — permanent in some zones, intermittent in others but always present — which nourishes the conviction for large sections of the historic nationalities that they are not Spanish.⁵⁰

49. Its goal is to maintain the centralized state while responding to the pressure of the nationalities by giving a more or less formal and more or less meaningful status of "autonomy".

50. A revolutionary left viewpoint should not include the "Spanish" identity. The future will tell whether this identity will lose its present negative connotation or whether it will be replaced by another, better adapted to the ideal of a national idea freed of oppression. This point seems important to me because I consider that Spain is not a nation, and that the Spanish state is not a nation state. The term Spain does not define a nation which includes all the peoples included within the borders historically imposed by the Spanish state. This state has not been able to prevent the birth of national movements which challenge the dominant nationalism and its centralist and oppressive character. The project of building a real nation failed when certain of the peoples affirmed a national identity and started to struggle for their rights. Since then, the Spanish state and Spain have been synonyms for the oppression of nations and of peoples.

In such conditions the defence of the Spanish nation has had a reactionary content, because it imposes a false national identity on peoples who

The period of transition which followed the death of Franco in fact was a real solace for certain bourgeoisie (s).⁵¹ They did not hold all the cards at the point that the dictatorship entered its death throes and thus they needed time to establish new mechanisms for their rule. On the other hand, this transition provoked a real feeling of frustration among the workers and popular layers of the nationalities, which expected a lot from the fall of Franco. This frustration did not produce a clear, and still less a uniform, political result.

In the case of the working class, confusion and apathy predominated (with the exception of certain sections which did go into struggle). On the other hand, as far as the national question is concerned, reactions were more complex. Some bourgeois nationalist layers demonstrated more or less total satisfaction (like in Catalonia). But significant sections of the Basque (and, to a lesser extent, Catalan) population took the path of resistance.

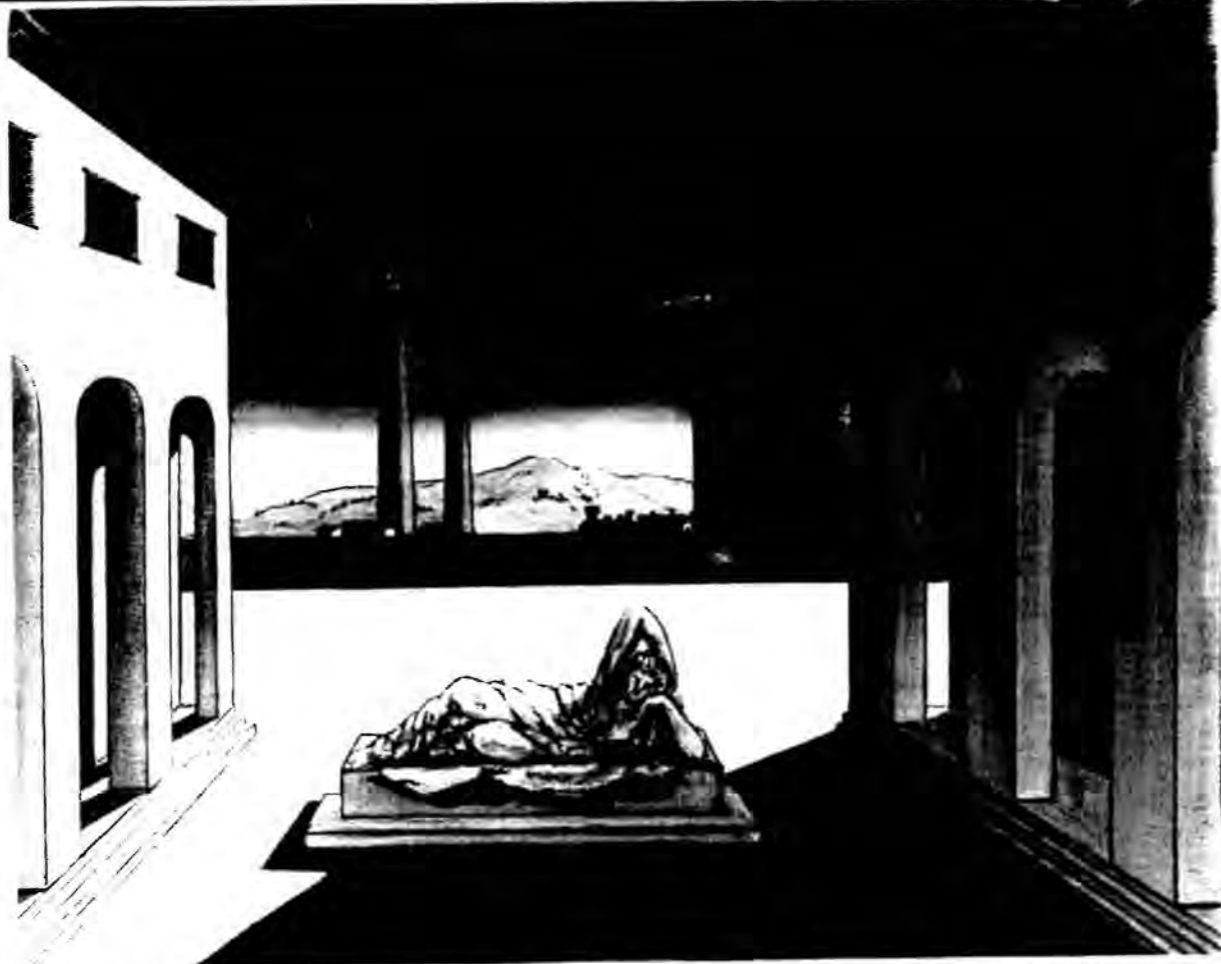
In any case, the importance of the national question is obvious today, and is shown in two ways: a) those of the popular layers who resist and fight against the state; b) the use of Spanish nationalism to wage a counter-offensive against these layers on a number of fronts. Thus, "Spanish interests" were used to justify industrial reconversion, entry into Nato, reforming the state apparatus, etc. Spanish nationalism was transformed into the

do not wish it, and thus justifies the continuation of their oppression, under the Spanish state.

Nor is Spain a nation of nations, a voluntary community of different nationalities and peoples; there is nothing which makes it possible to justify the necessity of a multi-national Spanish state and the refusal to see the nationalities form independent states. The existence of a multi-national type of community cannot be imposed against the freely-expressed desire of the different nations concerned, and such a state is only acceptable if it is the result of the exercise of the right to self-determination. But the Spanish state has never allowed one or the other. Because of this, the theme "nation of nations", or of a multi-national state, is a new way of justifying the oppression which is exercised in the form of the "state of autonomous regions".

The presentation of Spain as a nation of nations, as a national state or multi-national state, are manifestations of Hispanicism, a reactionary ideology whose function is to hide and justify the national oppression which exists within the Spanish state.

51. The dictatorial regime of General Franco was established following the defeat of the Republican forces in the Civil War of 1936-39. It continued until the death of the dictator in 1975. The dismantling of the former regime and the establishment of a new bourgeois democracy happened gradually, during what is called the "transition".



corner stone of an ideological mystification in which all the servants of the ruling classes participated, but the nationalism or nationalist desire of the popular layers produced an element of resistance on this same terrain.

We should remember on this subject that the "No to Nato", the refusal to enter this imperialist military alliance, was to a great extent the doing of these historic nationalities. As for the resistance to the industrial reconversion it had also and very often taken national forms (the workers of the shipyards are often Basque, Galician, etc.). Once again we find here two possible dynamics within these struggles: the standpoint of the struggle against the state which implies an approach of solidarity between the peoples of different nationalities or that of the nationalist petty bourgeoisie which can feed a confrontational approach between industrial sectors of different nationalities or regions. It was for the communists to separate the wheat from the chaff.

All this does not necessarily mean that the national question always has the same importance, that it takes an unchanging form in the political framework of the state and in that of each nationality. For example, in 1936, the Catalan national question was the sharpest

52. For a comparison of Basque and Catalan nationalisms in 1936-39, see Miguel Romero, "The Spanish Civil War in Euzkadi and Catalonia, contrasts and convergences", *Notebooks for Study and Research*, No. 13, 1991.

and its internal dynamic the most favourable while in the Basque country it was, according to Andreu Nin, an amalgam of nationalism and clerical conservatism.⁵²

Today it is Euskadi which is the centre of challenge to the state and the place where the national struggle seems, for a broad mass layers, linked to the socialist transformation of society. At the level of the state, the national question as a whole has not lost its importance. The nationalism of the state, despite the "autonomous regions", continues intact, while concern for the national question has extended to new peoples.

The impact of affirmation of national identities has led to an important delegitimization of the state among those who do not feel Spanish. The existence of the "autonomous" status even though it has limited the radicalism of certain nationalist layers has nevertheless not succeeded in forcing the acceptance of a real project of a Spanish national state (in Euskadi, they present "autonomy" as a "path" and not a "goal").

It is thus an important fact that the revolutionary left in the nationalities and in the whole of the Spanish state links the symbol of the "red" (roja) Spain to that of the "broken" (rota) Spain. Or, if you prefer, the destruction of the "bourgeois state" to the destruction of the "Spanish nation state", as a condition of the socialist revolution of the workers and the emancipation of the oppressed nations.

Some questions of strategy

As it is not possible to deal with all the programmatic, political and strategic questions, I will simply deal with those which — from my point of view — are decisive, starting with a discussion of the strategic relationship between the international, state and national levels.⁵³

The strategic questions: the impact of the international context; working at the state and national levels

The degree of inter-relation and autonomy of these different levels is the subject of permanent discussion (it has been in the past and will be in the future) giving rise to differences which have deeply marked the political profile and the identity of the movements concerned.

All the currents which identify with socialism and national freedom declare themselves "internationalists" and supporters of solidarity with revolutions underway (if they sufficiently far away and do not pose problems in international affairs; even reformists can show themselves ardent "Sandinistas"). They all say they are opposed to blocs and to the arms race (although things get more complicated on this question), opponents of international capitalism (although on this the differences with the reformists are very deep, to the extent that they develop a strategy of class collaboration and defend the "national" interests of the capitalist economy). Some of us highlight the correlation between internationalist practice and its more organic aspect (building the International as an organization), others see a purely national development or some conjunctural formulation of collaboration without thinking that they are abandoning the practical tasks of internationalism.

The international aspect therefore cannot be forgotten. The reason for this is obvious. The internationalization and interpenetration of economics, of politics and even of the dynamic of wars mean that international reality has to be taken into account in one way or another.

53. Remember what we have already noted: the term "state" in territorial terms for the Spanish state means the whole country, and not as it is used in the USA, Mexico or Brazil which are composed of a federation of states eg the state of Texas, the state of Morelos, the state of Rio de Janeiro, etc.

Other factors, particularly ideological ones, intervene in the definition of the different conceptions of being internationalist and internationalist practice. The radical left and the nationalist liberation movements are in general lacking in internationalism, which in my opinion is a serious symptom of weakness faced with the growing (ideological and organizational) internationalism of imperialism and the pro-capitalist right.

At the level of the state the implications are more direct, because of the higher level of inter-relationship of the economy, of political action, and above all because of the decisive role of the state. This latter, in fact, unlike the still young international capitalist institutions, benefits from an effectiveness and legitimacy which have been tested in the struggle against the elements which destabilize the system. The differences are therefore clearer between a revolutionary left point of view and those who defend the badly-named "national" Spanish state, which only allows for an "autonomist" or at worst federalist solution and which thus denies or makes inoperable the right to self-determination.

It is possible to agree with the radical nationalists on the importance of the national framework in defining a political orientation and challenging the state. But it is not possible to agree on the significance which they give to the theory of the "autonomous framework of the class struggle". This theory diminishes the need to destroy the bourgeois state because the strategic goal that it sets is to make the existence of this state unbearable for the nationality in question. We should note that this strategy fits well with the variation which proposes negotiations as the solution to a conflict supposedly impossible for the state to sustain.

Nor would I agree with the positions which, while defending the right to self-determination and the need to destroy the existing state, reduce the scope of the national struggle to a simple formal defence of democratic rights and which do not believe that the national question should have repercussions and concrete implications on questions of strategy and of organization.

It seems to me that it is more appropriate to combine the different terrains of action, to maintain the idea of destroying the state (coordinating and unifying as far as possible the political and social forces interested in this goal) while giving the appropriate place and importance to the national level (its particular dynamic, the specificity of its political dimension, etc) through specific strategies and specific national organizational projects.

To sum up, rather than a homogeneous and centralist vision of the revolutionary project, we have to develop an open and differentiated or, if we prefer, combined point of view. This should help us to coordinate and unify at a state-wide level what can and should exist, and to bring out what is autonomous and specific in each national reality. This is the only way for us to develop a strategy which simultaneously takes into account the development of the oppressed nation in a socialist perspective and the confrontation with the "national" state of the centralist bourgeoisie.

We defend this standpoint on the basis of a multilateral vision of our recent history (how struggles developed, the political process, etc) and a more developed idea of what is the Spanish state. Let us deal with these two aspects.

As far as the lessons of history are concerned, the Civil War and the last few years of Francoism confirm for us to what point the isolation of a nation strengthens the central state and weakens the resistance in this region (whether it is working class or national resistance or both at the same time).⁵⁴ In addition, each time that the working class has entered the fray, the framework of and links made in the mobilization have gone far beyond that of a purely national struggle, and sometimes have extended throughout the state (even if it was not possible to develop this to the point of the famous general strike which was to overthrow Francoism).⁵⁵

The recent period where centrifugal forces dominate has given another view of things. Euskadi is practically alone in its political struggle and there have been many obstacles to the generalization of workers' struggles (even though there have been two general strikes). Even the anti-Nato struggle, which did have a state-wide dimension, tended to strengthen national dynamics, because the strongest campaigning bodies called on national feelings as a part of the basis of opposition to Nato. However, if we stand back a little and make a more detailed analysis, this leads us to see that in the future several elements will be combined: an upturn in struggles will bring into action social forces which are still difficult to determine but which undoubtedly will be bigger and more marked by centralizing or common state-wide tendencies than today (even if this does not lead to eliminating or reducing the specific and autonomous character of the pace and particular characteristics

54. This is the Civil War of 1936-389. As we have already pointed out, Francoism was the name of the dictatorial regime led by General Franco after the defeat of the Republican forces, a regime which continued until the death of its leader in 1975.

55. The revolutionary forces hoped to overthrow the Francoist forces on the occasion of a general strike, thus giving a revolutionary impulse to the anti-dictatorial struggle. The death agony of Francoism was punctuated by very important national/regional mobilizations, but the revolutionary general strike never took place.

resulting from national experience).

Without falling into exaggerations or dogmatic hypotheses, we can and should orient ourselves towards a quite complex strategy which takes into account the different paths and rhythms which can intertwine. In this perspective, we are in favour of developing real links of solidarity and mutual support between the vanguard layers and the most conscious sectors of the oppressed peoples, while also remaining favourable to the defence of the specificities of each national process.

To conclude on this point, we do not share either the strategy of the autonomous national framework of the class struggle (in the sense that it is the only framework for resolving the problems of the revolution) nor that of the framework of the state alone (which denies or ignores everything about the specific tasks of the national struggle).

The first of these conceptions does not take into account key strategic elements: the need for a sharp crisis of decomposition of the state and its forms of coercion and the fact that the crisis of rule or of delegitimization of the state builds up to a level beyond the nationalities and when it has reached sufficient level affects the whole of the state.⁵⁶

To make Euskadi ungovernable should be the goal of the Basque revolutionary forces, but this is not enough. All the Spanish state apparatus must be discredited. Therefore very broad forces must be mobilized, whether in solidarity or in the struggle for common interests. This is the only way in which a relationship of forces strong enough to break up or paralyse the state could be created. The history of political negotiations confirms this hypothesis.⁵⁷ In fact, the isolation of ETA and the strength which the state demonstrates are not a result of the Basque situation alone (even if this is the most decisive element). They also express the general situation in the country as a whole:

56. The Lithuanian case illustrates the importance of the existence of a parliament or a self-organized people, which demands total sovereignty and not the type of autonomous parliaments that we know in the Spanish state. But it also illustrates to what extent the central state finds itself paralysed or semi-paralysed by contradictions of different types. In fact, in 1968, the Czech people chose a sovereign road towards socialism, but the Russian tanks did not allow it. Today, these tanks are without any drivers. These experiences oblige us to develop our thinking on the relationships between states and nations at the European level, in the framework of the institutionalization of Europe. Not to avoid the problem of the state but precisely the governments of the European Community will intervene in its favour and support it against popular struggles. This poses the question of the Europeanization of the "revolution" or of the national struggle in this European whole.

57. This concerns the negotiations between the armed pro-independence organization ETA and the Spanish government.

the support that Madrid enjoys, the real weakness of solidarity with Euskadi, etc.

The second of the two conceptions mentioned above undervalues or denies the real significance of a situation of national oppression: a situation often marked by the presence of a national liberation movement and in general a readiness of the majority of the population to build the nation (even if this readiness is expressed in contradictory strategies and projects). Oppression requires that revolutionary Marxists from a specific nation (Euskadi, Catalonia for example) respond with specific (national) strategies to the problems which arise from this concrete reality. What project for nation-building should be counterposed to that of the national bourgeoisie? What identity should be forged in the battle against national oppression? What policy on alliances? And so on. This touches on all the elements necessary to define a revolutionary class option within an oppressed nationality, on everything that would make it possible for the workers to become the backbone of the socialist building of their nation, while contributing with all the workers to destroying the common enemy. The development of such a policy is impossible from simply the state-wide point of view, ignoring the national dimension and working on a wavelength not in tune with national reality.

The solution to national oppression: different paths

It is therefore obvious that, in a left revolutionary optic, the national question has a central strategic importance both in the nationalities and at the level of the Spanish state. What I mean by this is that self-determination is not simply an elementary, basic, democratic right: the possibility for a people or a nation to decide freely on its fate. This right becomes a reality, passing beyond this simple status, because it touches on the very essence of the state and its geographical frontiers. Can we imagine the Spanish State for example, deprived of Catalonia or Euskadi, or deprived of the sovereignty on choices as central as that of belonging to Nato? Thus self-determination puts into question the present nature of the state as a "prison of peoples".

Under capitalism, certain demands can be satisfied, others could in theory but in practice meet an obstacle in the bourgeois state, and others touch on vital nerves of the bourgeoisie. For example, is it or not an elementary right that the majority can decide on something as essential as the production of subsistence goods? What should be produced, how much, and how? But this elementary right is incompatible with the market economy. It challenges the capitalist system and the basis of existence of the bourgeoisie as the dominant social class.

We think that exercising the right to self-determination is only possible in a revolutionary situa-

tion, or after the destruction of the state. We think that in the Spanish State, with its history, its army, its ruling classes, and the importance of Hispanicism as the dominant ideology, the national question is linked to the revolution and could not be won by a gradualist road and partial reforms.⁵⁸

We are interested in discussing with those who defend gradualist strategies. While recommending immediate, radical, democratic conquests they introduce a break between winning self-determination and the revolutionary transformations required for a radical transformation of society. There also has to be a discussion with those who focus particularly on the juridical aspect (for example the community laws on human rights which could require internal reforms in the Spanish State). In doing this they tend to diminish the relationship between the bourgeois state and the Spanish nation state.

The current meaning of the right to self-determination

We should remember that the modern Spanish State ("Spain" in official ideology) was formed as a so-called "national state" under the absolutist monarchy (product of an alliance between the reactionary classes and the developing bourgeoisie, with the particularity that the state apparatus was until very late on in the hands of the former). Its later development, as a more consistent capitalist apparatus, did not alter traditional schema of the so-called "Spanish nation". The famous "state of autonomous regions" did change the landscape a little. For the first time, the centralist forces agreed to give some areas of power to the nationalist bourgeoisies. But this did not change anything fundamental. This policy was the result of the express desire of the ruling classes and of the submission or support of the reformists and moderate nationalists. Above all, it resulted from the desire of the army whose shadow hovered above the constitutional commission like the sword of Damocles, as Solé Tura reminds us.

Thus there is no place for half-tones. To defend self-determination is to challenge the existing order and to recognize clearly that this means the right to independence (and sometimes independence itself). But it is also a unifying demand. A position which makes a bridge between those who defend it as a right to be achieved (even if themselves they are in favour of a project of union of an equal footing) and those who from the outset choose independence, as the goal of exercising the right to self-determination. It is decisive for

58. Recently, it has been fashionable to defend such theses, encouraging the search for juridical formulae making it possible for the state to accept certain forms of self-determination for Euskadi.

us to understand these two aspects: the strategic dimension of the slogan of self-determination faced with the state, and its capacity to give substance to the alliance between communists and revolutionary nationalists, whether or not they agree on the specific goal of independence.

Obviously, this implies that there is not a restrictive character to self-determination, that it is not an "anti-independentist antidote", nor that it is a right that is recognized but cannot be exercised. This is counterposed to practices like that of the PCE (Spanish Communist Party). The congress of the Comisiones Obreras [Workers' Commissions, trade unions influenced by the PCE] states that self-determination is not equivalent to the right to independence. It is also counterposed to the position of Euskadiko Euzkerra which identifies self-determination with popular consultation on limited choices such as the Statute of Guernica.⁶⁰ If one believed this party, this statute put self-determination into motion because it was accepted by the majority of the Basque people. This, unfortunately, obscures the fact that it was not the result of a free choice. It was put forward as "take it or leave it", given the limits imposed by the constitution — a constitution which the Basque people had previously rejected and which from the outset excluded any form of independence.

The current meaning of the right to independence

There are different practical and totally legitimate options in the framework of the defence of the right to self-determination, in the sense of winning adequate instruments to guarantee full national development. To choose between them we have to be able to weigh the pros and cons, particularly from the point of view of the internationalist relations between the working classes of different nationalities and the building of socialism in its dual dimension, both national and international. This is the context in which we should discuss federalism, confederalism and independence.

59. A short while ago, radical Basque nationalism considered that self-determination was synonymous with "camouflaged statism", that is a soft and inconsistent fashion of defending the oppressed nation. They also stated that the Basque people had already achieved self-determination. Today their whole policy turns around the defence of the right to self-determination. For some of us, while defending in a correct and clear fashion the real meaning of self-determination, we have often made the mistake of associating it from the start with the "federalist or unionist" formula, which put us on the road to convergence with those who have a totally formalist vision of self-determination, being decided beforehand in favour of federalism.

60. The PCE is the Spanish Communist Party. Euskadiko Ezkerra is a national organization of a social-democratic type.

Federal relations— voluntarily renouncing sovereign rights to a greater degree — or confederal — with the nation retaining a greater degree of sovereignty — have many undoubted advantages on different fronts: economic or cultural relations, free circulation, mutual defence, etc. to the extent that each nation is related to the others by mutual agreements and solidarity. But these options also have their inconveniences, particularly when they come after years of domination: reduction of sovereignty, centripetal tendencies or a tendency to assimilation by the most dynamic nation, etc.

Independence, on the other hand, does more to preserve national identity — something which is less than banal after years of assimilationist pressure —, and to guarantee sovereignty. In return it feeds isolationist tendencies, certain forms of chauvinism and sometimes hegemonist trends in the case of economically strong nations or it limits possibilities in the case of economically weak nations. If all this is taken into account, we understand better why self-determination is the centre of the strategy, the "symbol of identity", particularly from a communist point of view which weighs up and balances out the degrees of freedom and solidarity necessary. The rest, which has to do with the question of what is the most appropriate solution, implies concrete choices which should be made on the basis of the actual situation. This does not at all mean being "tacticians" or opportunists, but seeking to develop a socialist strategy in line with the real conditions of a specific country.

From this point of view, I find ridiculous the accusations of "Spanishism" made at one time against those who based a vision of "free union" of the nationalities of the Spanish State on the previous exercise of the right to self-determination. The reason for this is clear. The right of a people to enter into a union is as substantial and inalienable as the right to separation. The two things cannot be dissociated. Moreover, there could be differences in the forms of coexistence. For the same reasons, it is just as unjustified to make the accusation of "petty-bourgeois nationalist" against those who have today changed their position and decided on independence as the goal of their demand for self-determination.⁶¹

Today, as in the past, the main option remains that of national liberation and solidarity among nations, from a socialist point of view. What changes in the concrete recipe for reaching this. But it is true that a change of "recipe" is not at all unimportant and that it must be argued through. This is a significant aspect of our own history. We can try to evaluate the positive and negative aspects which led us at a given moment to defend the initial position, that of a free union. We can do the

61. The revolutionary communist parties are currently in favour of independence of Catalonia and Euskadi.

ply defending self-determination without putting forward any more concrete demand. And then we can look at defending independence, for example in the case of Euskadi, and think about different aspects of the problem.

The choice of independence implies a radical challenge to the value of elements (wrongly) said to be "unifying" factors in capitalist society, and particularly in the concrete case of the "national" state which concerns us here (the Spanish State). The question posed is clear: what interest is there in maintaining the current state of affairs from a radical left point of view? Almost none. The theme "España 'roja'/España 'rota'" ("red" Spain, "broken" Spain) associates the revolution with the destruction of the state in all its aspects (class, nation, etc.). Finally, the possibility of building unity in the "negative" is obvious: "all against this state". "Positive" unity then remains to be defined later: after the destruction of this state we have to see what unites us and what separates us.

For the moment, the defence of independence is above all associated with a radical standpoint on national sovereignty faced with an actually existing state, in such a way that broad layers of the population come to accept the idea that it has to be destroyed in order for them to be free as a people.

We have reached the conclusion that, although the class point of view is in the last analysis the same for all (socialism), the starting point is conditioned by national existence.

For the workers of the non-oppressed nations, the starting point must be the defence of self-determination, the defence of sovereignty to be recognized for those who have been refused it. I agree with Andreu Nin when he states that in their relations with oppressed nations the workers should sometimes make the defence of freedom predominate over the defence of unity because, if not, we will not succeed in overcoming the mistrust which precisely makes it impossible to reach this unity. For the workers of the oppressed nation on the other hand, the question is above all to orient the national struggle towards the revolution, by elaborating the most appropriate strategy towards this end.

Here I am once again challenging an old argument which tried to justify unity by putting the emphasis on the future, and a pre-determined vision of the role of the big states in building socialism. I propose on the contrary to start from the current situation, from what is decisive today: that is how, first of all, to win over the oppressed to the desire to finish with the oppressors. In other words, what is the priority after years of national oppression and distrust for different reasons? It is to present a project for total emancipation, such as socialism, which does not leave room for any ambiguity as far as national freedom is concerned. This is where the

fundamental problem is located now: the truth "not content with existing, must appear".

There are a whole series of problems which also arise from the ten years of democracy and five years of left government which succeeded the dictatorship (thus following a long bitter historical experience, which was only lessened in the last years of Franco by the solidarity given to the Basque people). These last fifteen years, for from seeing an end to national oppression, have seen its institutionalization in "democratic" forms. Once again the root of the problem has been denied, state sovereignty has been codified, the majority of the Spanish workers have been incited to oppose national demands, particularly those of the Basques (because, for these workers, they were incomprehensible once the statute of autonomy was granted).

Finally we also have to clarify what is independence. The precise formulation and the concretization of independence do not always have to take place in a separatist perspective or with a separate national state (while emphasizing that this option should be really taken into account). This will in fact depend to a large extent on the process of institutionalization of Europe: is it going to take into account the existence of nations which cannot be reduced to the states which currently exist or is it going to take shape basing itself on these latter?

Formulas about sovereignty used in the past, if pushed to the extreme, came back in fact to independence, although this was not explicitly demanded. In an interview in the journal *Egin*, Ernest Mandel stated that "self-determination is sovereignty without any interference". For example, a formula like that of a constituent assembly without state interference, was this not an act of independence, which lasted as long as it lasted? Concerning the Ukraine, Trotsky came to the same conclusion:

But in order freely to determine her relations with other Soviet republics, in order to possess the right of saying yes or no, the Ukraine must return to herself complete freedom of action, at least for the duration of this constituent period.⁶²

And a constituent period can be decisive, by inaugurating new relations and seeing how different peoples respond to them, whether they choose independence or another type of relationship.⁶³

62. Leon Trotsky, "The Independence of the Ukraine and the Sectarian Muddle-heads", *Writings [1939-40]* p. 52.

63. What is happening in the USSR is producing an impressive variety of experiences in demands for sovereignty (independence, different forms of association, etc.).



The Trophy

Guide to people and organizations

Arana, Sabino: Founder of the PNV. Ideologue of Basque nationalism at the end of the 19th and beginning of 20th century. There was a religious and racist component in his thought, even though he had the merit of giving the first impulse to Basque national demands.

Austro-Marxism: Austrian Marxist current whose representatives include Max Adler, Rudolf Hilferding, Karl Renner and Otto Bauer. Marked by acute nature of the national question in the Austro-Hungarian empire, developed some original, controversial theses on this question. Particularly vigorous movement before the First World War.

Austro-Hungarian empire: Formed in 1867 on the basis of a "compromise" between Austrian and Hungarian states. Ruled by the Hapsburg German-Austrian monarchy. Multi-national linguistic and religious conglomeration. Included parts of northern Italy, the Balkans, Poland, etc. Fell apart in 1918 as a result of the defeat in the First World War and the rise of the nationalist movements.

Bauer, Otto (1881-1938): A representative of Austro-Marxism. Leader of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party. Important German-language Marxist theorist (particularly on the national question and workers' councils). Well-known figure in the Socialist International. Took refuge abroad after the 1934 putsch. Died in Paris.

Bernstein, Edward (1850-1932): Leader of German social-democracy. Executor of Engel's will. Provoked a big controversy on "revisionism" (that is his "revision" in a reformist direction of Marxist thought) with his 1899 book *Evolutionary Socialism* (Schocken, New York, 1961).

Bund: Jewish General Workers' League of Poland, Lithuania and Russia. Founded in 1897. Jewish, Marxist and anti-Zionist organization. A component of the RSDLP, it demanded a federalist organizational structure and wanted to be the representative of the Jewish proletariat, independent of any territorial considerations.

Carlism: Traditionalist monarchist movement in Spain which supported the claimant to the throne descended from Charles V. The three Carlist wars marked the 19th century and the fall of the Ancien Regime. One of the main nationalist and anti-Republican forces during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

Connolly, James (1868-1916): Irish socialist and patriot. Wrote original work on the relationship between socialism and nationalism in a British colony in Europe. Military leader of 1916 Easter Rising. Shot by the English.

Easter Rising: Rising in Ireland against English colonial rule, 24-29 April 1916.

Engels, Friedrich (1820-1895): Main collaborator of Karl Marx. Made his own contribution to Marxist theory.

ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatuta): "Euskadi and Freedom", Basque

armed organization, underground independentist organization.

Euskadi: Basque country, in the south in the Spanish state, in the north in the French state.

EE (Euskadiko Ezkerra): Basque Left. National political organization of social-democratic type.

EMK (Euskadiko Mogimendu Komunista): Communist Movement of Euskadi. Result of a split in ETA (ETA-Berril) in 1967. Sister organization in Euskadi of the MC in the Spanish state. Fused with the LKI in 1991. The new organization is now known as Zutik [Arise].

Euskera: Basque language.

Euskaldun: Some one who speaks Euskera.

Franco y Bahamonde, Francisco (1890-1975): Main leader of the Spanish colonial army, ally of German Nazism and Italian fascism, took power after the defeat of Republican forces during the Civil War (1936-1939). Established a dictatorial regime which lasted until his death.

French Revolution: unless otherwise stated this is the "great" bourgeois revolution of 1789.

Foro: System of communal rights in the Basque country which still existed at the beginning of the 19th century, ensuring elements of autonomy and local democracy to which the population remains attached.

Fourth International: Revolutionary communist anti-reformist and anti-Stalinist organization. Founded in 1938 with the participation of Leon Trotsky.

Gudari: Basque soldier.

HB (Herri Batasuna): "Popular unity". Basque organization, radical nationalist left, ideologically close to ETA.

IA (Izquierda Alternativa): Left Alternative. Revolutionary organization in the Spanish state created from the 1991 fusion between the LCR and MC.

Jacobin: The strongest of the radical currents in French Revolution which brought down the Ancien Regime in 1789. The term "Jacobin" is often used to designate an orientation which aims to build a centralized nation state or "centralist" political tendencies.

Kautsky, Karl (1854-1938): Collaborator of Engels. Main theorist of German social-democracy and the Second International before the First World War. Became a reformist.

LCR (Liga comunista revolucionaria): Revolutionary Communist League. Former section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state. Founded in 1971, under the Franco dictatorship. In 1973 it fused with a wing of the

- Basque organization ETA (from which the LKI originates). Fused in 1991 with the MC and gave rise to a new organization: Izquierda Alternativa (Left Alternative).
- LKI (Liga Komunista Iraultzailea):** Revolutionary Communist League. Former section of the Fourth International in Euskadi. Formed in 1970, from a current in ETA (called ETA-VI, because it had the majority in the Sixth Assembly of ETA). Sister organization in the Basque country of the LCR of the Spanish state. Fused in 1990 with the EMK.
- Lenin, Vladimir (1870-1924):** One of the main representatives of the second generation of Russian Marxists. Representative of "Bolshevism", which became "Leninism", within the RSDLP. The best-known of the leaders of the 1917 Russian Revolution and the CP.
- Luxemburg, Rosa (1870-1919):** Polish revolutionary and Marxist theorist. Played an important role in the struggle within German social-democracy. Known for her studies of imperialism. Critical of Lenin on the national question and on the party. Internationalist during the First World War. Assassinated after the "Spartakus" rising.
- Marx, Karl (1818-1883):** Main founder of... Marxism. We all owe him a lot.
- Medem, Vladimir:** Born in 1879. Leader of the Jewish Marxist Bund in the Russian empire.
- MC (Movimiento Comunista):** Communist Movement. Revolutionary organization in the Spanish state. Of Maoist origin, has evolved a lot ideologically. Founded in 1972, during the Franco dictatorship. Fused with the LCR in 1991, creating Izquierda Alternativa.
- Nin Perez, Andreu (1892-1937):** Catalan. Active in different currents of the workers' movement. Having lived in the USSR, he broke with Stalinism, joined the Left Opposition, then returned to Spain. Became one of the main figures of the POUM (Workers' party for Marxist Unity), during the Spanish Civil War. Assassinated by the Stalinists.
- Pannekoek, Anton (1873-1960):** Dutch Marxist activist and theorist. Critical of Kautsky on the question of the state. Founder of the Dutch CP. Played a big role in the German communist left.
- PCE (Partido comunista de España):** Spanish Communist Party, founded in 1921. Became Stalinist and then, in the 1970s, "Eurocommunist".
- PNV (Partido Nacionalista Vasco):** Basque Nationalist Party, the founding party of Basque nationalism.
- Poland:** For the history of Poland see the box on page 27.
- PSOE (Partido socialista obrero español):** Spanish Workers' Socialist Party. Founded in 1879. Currently in government. Social-democratic reformist.
- Renner, Karl (1870-1950):** A representative of Austro-Marxism. Austrian social-democratic leader. Lawyer, wrote on the national question. Became a "social-patriot"

- in 1914. Was then twice Chancellor of the country.
- Riba, Prat de la:** Theorist of Catalan bourgeois nationalism during the first half of the 20th century.
- Robespierre:** One of the main representatives of the Jacobin current during the French Revolution.
- Rosdolsky, Roman (1898-1967):** Joined the revolutionary movement in 1915. Leader of the CP in western Ukraine. Linked to the Polish section of the Fourth International. Has produced important historical studies; as well as on the national question and on Marx's *Capital*.
- RSDLP: Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.** Founded in 1898. Included the main Marxist currents in Russia. Was politically and organizationally divided for a long time. The two main wings of the RSDLP were known as "Bolshevik" (majority, included Lenin) and Menshevik (minority). The Communist Party was formed in its ranks in 1917.
- Russian empire:** Extended from eastern Europe to the border of Turkey and China and to the far eastern limits of Siberia. Russia ruled over very different ethnic groups and nationalities, including Muslims in the south and, in the west, the peoples of eastern Europe whose industrial development was sometimes quite advanced (Poland for example).
- Social-democracy:** Today this term means the current to which the reformist Socialist Parties belong. But before the First World War (1914-1918), it meant the whole Marxist current including the most revolutionary (i.e. Lenin was then a Russian social-democrat).
- Stalin, Joseph (1879-1953):** Georgian, revolutionary cadre belonging to the Leninist wing of the RSDLP. After Lenin's death took the leadership of the party and the state which he kept until his death. Purged all his opponents and personifies the bureaucratic counter-revolution.
- Strosser, Joseph (1870-1935):** Far left social-democratic activist in Austria. Critical of Otto Bauer on the national question. Internationalist in 1914. Joined the Austrian CP in 1919. Worked in Moscow from 1923 to 1928. Expelled from the CP after his return to Austria, accused of "Trotskyism".
- Trevi Group:** "Trevi" is formed from the words "terrorism, radicalism, extremism, violence, international". Formed by the Interior and Justice ministers of the EEC countries. Exists since 1975. For collaboration between the different police and intelligence/information services to harmonize the visa systems and criteria for access to political asylum.
- Trotsky, Leon (1879-1940):** Independent personality within the RSDLP. Joined Lenin's current in 1917. Became one of the main leaders of the Russian Revolution. Opposed Stalin after Lenin's death. Led the Left Opposition. Deported, exiled. Founded the Fourth International in 1938. Assassinated by Stalinist agents.
- Zumalakarregui:** Basque military leader in the Carlist wars of the mid-19th century.

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Marxism has contributed a lot to the understanding of the national question: its class dynamics, its relationship to internationalism, its political importance and the importance of the slogan of self-determination. Lenin's role in this was particularly significant. But, the authors think, we should also take into account other theorists like the Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer, or the Irish socialist and patriot, James Connolly. Above all, it is important to relook at a number of questions in the light of contemporary experience: In what circumstances can there be a fusion of Marxist and nationalist traditions? What is the particularity of an oppressed nation in imperialist Europe? Should the borders of a revolutionary party necessarily be the same as those of the existing states? What are the main features of a socialist vision of the national question and what does this bring out of the concrete analysis of concrete situations? What is the present significance of independence?

José Iriarte "Bikila" was born in 1945. His thinking on the national question has drawn on his personal involvement and intimate knowledge of the struggle of the Basque people. The interconnection between the fight for socialism and national liberation has shaped his whole history of political activism. In 1964 he joined the ranks of the independentist organization ETA. In 1973 he participated in the fusion between the current ETA VI and the Revolutionary Communist League, section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state. In 1991 he participated in the fusion between the LKI (sister organization of the LCR in Euskadi) and the EMK (Communist Movement), founding an independent revolutionary organization in the Basque country.

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