

THIRTY YEARS OF THE SOCIALIST REGISTER

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Early in 1963, *New Left Review* was reorganised, minus most of its editorial board. **NLR** had been the product of a merger in 1959 between *Universities and Left Review* and *The New Reasoner*, a move to which I, as a member of the editorial board of the latter publication, was strongly opposed, on the ground that the two journals represented two very different currents of thought and experience, whose amalgamation would not produce happy results. *New Left Review*, under the editorship of Stuart Hall, led a rather chequered existence from 1959 to 1963, when it was taken over by Perry Anderson. The political path which **NLR** would follow under its new editors was not clear; and John Saville and I decided that a different publication was needed, which would embody the spirit which had informed *The New Reasoner*. Neither of us had the resources or the time to edit a quarterly or bi-monthly periodical; but we thought we might be able to manage an annual publication.

In a memorandum dated 7th April 1963, I proposed that Edward Thompson, John Saville and myself should publish a socialist annual between 300 and 400 pages in length, which would include articles on socialist theory and practice, labour history and contemporary events; book reviews and reviews of socialist classics; a calendar of events of interest to socialists; and a review of the year in relation to labour and socialist movements around the world; plus a review of important events of the year, analysed, like all else, in a socialist perspective.

Edward Thompson expressed strong support for the idea of an annual publication, but declined to be a co-editor, and he warned that to publish an annual that would serve as a record would be a formidable editorial task. He was obviously right, and we very soon scaled down our ambitions to the publication of an annual volume of essays that would constitute 'a survey of movements and ideas', which was the sub-title we gave to what became *The Socialist Register*. We owed the title itself to Martin Eve, who ran *Merlin Press*, and who agreed to publish the annual, which he has done from 1964 to the present. It is unlikely that it would have seen the light of

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day without his support, or that it would have gone on for all these years without his unfailing help. We were also fortunate in having *Monthly Review Press* of New York as our American publisher for the first two issues, and again, after an interval of some years, for all subsequent issues.

Both John Saville and I had no doubt that a socialist annual that was not an annual of record was a rather unusual type of publication on the Left, and that it would not make possible the kind of prompt response to events which could more easily be managed in a monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly journal. On the other hand, we hoped that an annual would allow a more reflective and measured type of **essay**. Also, an annual would provide the space for articles of a length that journals could not normally accept.

In retrospect, it is perhaps remarkable that at no time did John Saville and I devote any time to the discussion of the ideological and political orientation of the prospective publication. This was, I suppose, due to the fact that he and I had been discussing questions of socialist theory and practice for some years previously and had found ourselves in rough (sometimes very rough) agreement; and there was also a largely unspoken agreement between us that we would mainly publish work that would fall within the broad Marxist tradition to which, with rather different political histories, we both belonged – he had for many years until 1956 been a member of the Communist Party, I had always viewed myself as an independent socialist, who had joined the Labour Party in the early fifties as a way of working with Labour Left people whose leader (in so far as he was willing to lead at all) was then Aneurin **Bevan**; and I had left the Labour Party around 1960, when this no longer seemed worth doing.

Before discussing the *Register* further, something should be said about its editorship. From 1964 to 1983, it was edited by John Saville and myself, with the exception of the 1982 volume, when we took a 'sabbatical' and the *Register* was edited by Martin Eve and David **Musson**, who worked with him at Merlin Press – an unusual case of a publisher turning editor. In 1984, Marcel Liebman became a third co-editor; and with the double volume of 1985/6, Leo **Panitch** became a fourth one. To our deep sorrow, Marcel Liebman died soon after the publication of that volume. In 1990, John Saville decided that the time had come for him to cease being a co-editor (a move which I had resisted for a good many years), and the editorship has since then remained with Leo and me. With the 1984 volume, we decided that each volume should henceforth be devoted to one broad theme, and so it has been until now.

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I do not propose to present here a comprehensive catalogue of the articles which the *Register* has published over the years, an enterprise that would be as tiresome for the reader as for the writer; but it may nevertheless be

useful to go into some detail about the contents of the first two issues, 1964 and 1965, since what appeared then reflects accurately the themes which constantly recurred in subsequent issues.

The 1964 volume opened with an essay on Maoism by Isaac Deutscher, who had strongly encouraged us to proceed with an annual, and who was then at the height of his renown as an analyst of Communist affairs and as the biographer of Stalin and Trotsky. That volume also included articles by Ernest Mandel on neo-capitalism, **André** Gorz (writing under the pseudonym Michel Bosquet) on Italian Communism, Anouar Abdel Malek on Nasserism, an essay by Jean-Marie Vincent on West Germany, and one by **Hamza** Alavi on 'Imperialism Old and New'. John Saville contributed an acerbic essay on Encounter, then a major influence in the dissemination of Cold War liberalism. An essay by Marcel Liebman discussed the significance of 1914 for labour and socialist movements; and another by Royden Harrison discussed the relationship of the British labour movement to the First International; and there were also articles by the co-editors on 'Labour Policy and the Labour Left'; by Victor Kiernan on imperialism; by **Vic** Allen and Jim Mortimer on trade unionism; by Michael Barratt Brown on 'Nationalization in Britain'; and so on.

The 1965 volume was equally remarkable for the exceptional quality of the material it presented. Under the rubric of Contemporary Politics, the volume included another essay by Isaac Deutscher, this time on 'The Failure of **Khrushchevism**' (Khrushchev had been deposed in 1963); an essay by K.S. Karol on 'The People's Democracies'; and another essay by Jean-Marie Vincent on East Germany. The same section also had essays by Francis Jeanson and Richard Fletcher on Algeria, and an essay by D.A. Nicholas Jones on 'Arabia - the British Sphere'.

A second section, on Britain, had a prescient essay by Dorothy **Wedderburn** on 'Facts and Theories of the Welfare State' which concluded that 'welfare state legislation in capitalist society is a battleground not only for the short-term solution of immediate social problems but also for the longer-term battle of ideas'; 'the former, she noted, 'has received much attention from the Left; the latter all too little'; an article by John Saville on 'Labour and Income Redistribution' assailed the 'utter wrongheadedness of the Labour intellectuals after 1950' who proclaimed how great had been the redistribution of income in the previous years; and two articles, by **Tony Topham** and Ken Coates, on income policy, then a very live issue in the labour movement.

The third section, on Theory and History, included an essay by **Georg Lukács** on 'Solzhenitsyn and the New Realism', an essay by **Hamza** Alavi on Peasants and Revolution, an essay by me on '**Marx** and the State', a subject which, remarkably enough, had attracted little attention on the Left after Lenin's *The State and Revolution* of 1917; and last, but very much not least, Edward Thompson's 'The Peculiarities of the English', a stringently critical discussion of the work which Perry Anderson and Tom

Nairn had published in *New Left Review* on English history, notably Perry Anderson's 'The Origins of the Present Crisis'.

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As noted, it was these and related topics which were explored in subsequent years. Again and again, the Register came back to the changes that were occurring in contemporary capitalism; to the critique of Western, notably American, imperialism, and this was linked to reports on independence struggles in the 'third world', particularly in Africa; to the analysis and critique of social democratic and Communist parties in various countries, notably Western Europe; to the analysis and critique of Communist regimes, particularly the Soviet Union; and successive issues also discussed various questions of Marxist theory, questions of socialist strategy, and aspects of labour and socialist history.

Perhaps the most notable feature of the Register's output is how consistent was its perspective over the years. Consistency is not necessarily the most admirable of virtues, since it may well indicate a stubborn blindness to changes that are occurring in the world. On the other hand, it may also indicate a refusal to indulge in passing fads and fashions. We avoided this; and while the Register, for instance, took account of such episodes as the 1968 'May events' in France, and similar eruptions elsewhere, the article by Lucio Magri in the 1969 issue, 'The May Events and Revolution in the West', was a careful appreciation of the fact that for revolutionary change to occur, 'there must be forces which are capable and determined enough to make good use of the chances offered by history', and that 'from this point of view, the May experience tells us that this is no simple matter'. The same volume also included some sober reflections by Victor Kiernan on the role of the intelligentsia and by John Cowley on the likely impact of student protest on the university. In a different context but in the same vein, and in a period when guerilla struggles in Latin America, with peasants as the main actors in these struggles, were widely thought on the revolutionary Left to be the key to revolutionary advance, the 1970 issue of the Register included an article by Victor Kiernan which warned of the limitations of 'voluntarism', and argued that 'further expansion of socialism in either the advanced or the undeveloped regions seems to depend on the emergence of a combination of forces. . . . It does not seem likely to be brought about by the peasantry alone, any more than by the working class alone, to say nothing of the lesser forces that have been hopefully thought of, like the intelligentsia or the student movement'. For his part, Eric Hobsbawm, in an essay on 'Guerillas in Latin America' in the same issue, presented a remarkable survey of guerilla struggles in a number of countries, and concluded that 'revolution in Latin America . . . is likely to combine social forces - peasants, workers, the marginal urban poor,

students, sectors of the middle strata . . .'; also that 'when a prolonged struggle is envisaged (as in the classical theory of revolutionary guerillas) organisation is more crucial than ever and political analysis is indispensable'. Even these cautious and thoughtful remarks reflect a degree of optimism about the possibilities of revolutionary change which is now out of fashion – for how long it is impossible to say. At least, what we published was free from a naive belief that revolution was five, or at the most ten minutes, away. In 1978, we published an essay by Tariq Ali, 'Revolutionary Politics: Ten Years after 1968', which suggested that 'the central political lessons of the last ten years can be summed up in a sentence: a socialist revolution in the West will either be made with the consent of the working masses or it will not be made at all'.

The character which the *Register* assumed was obviously due in large part to our choice of contributors: from the start, it was understood between the co-editors that we would mostly call on people who occupied a place on the political spectrum well on the left of social democracy, but who were not the prisoners of sectarianism and dogma. The key term (one greatly favoured by Marx) was 'critique'. The weakness of that approach was that it did not dispose us to explore in depth the tremendous problems which the construction of the new social order in which we and our contributors believed was bound to present. This is a weakness which was shared by the socialist Left as a whole. Whereas social democrats have tended to be obsessed by the problems, and paralysed by their acuity, socialists to the left of them have tended to ignore the problems, or to belittle them, or to rely on sloganeering as a substitute for serious engagement with them. This is the weakness which Leszek Kolakowski, in his rejoinder in the 1974 *Register*, to Edward Thompson's splendid 'Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski' in the 1973 *Register*, accurately and bitterly pinpointed. Thompson's essay was, as well as much else, an eloquent and moving defence of an open, critical Marxism – critical not least of the Marxist canon itself. The essay exemplified the kind of theoretical work which is an essential preface to programmatic work, but which is no more than a preface to that work.

To say that the *Register* ignored the problems of socialist construction is perhaps a little unfair. The 1964 volume did have an article by John Saville and myself on the Labour Left and what it ought to press for. Also in 1964, Michael Barratt Brown was suggesting how nationalisation might be improved. In 1968, we published a major essay by **André Gorz** on 'Reform and Revolution', in which he formulated his influential thesis of socialist advance by way of structural reforms; and the 1969 volume, as noted, also had an essay by Lucio **Magri** which explored the same question. The 1973 volume had an essay by me on what lessons socialists should draw from the overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile about the difficulties of socialist advance. The 1974 volume included a critical review by Richard Hyman of

the publications issued by the Institute of Workers' Control; and the 1975 volume had a reply to that essay by Michael Barratt Brown, Ken Coates and Tony **Topham**. In 1981, we published a searching essay by Raymond Williams on 'An Alternative Politics'; and subsequent volumes also did address various questions relevant to socialist construction.

Even when all this is taken into account, however, the point seems to me to remain valid that we did not address the question of socialist construction with anything like the rigorous and detailed concern which it requires. To people who might, honestly and not rhetorically, have asked, 'what would you do?', the *Register* did not return a sufficiently plausible answer. There are people on the Left who would say that the answer should be 'nothing much can be done until the revolution, save preparing for it'; but even if this were to be taken as realistic, 'preparing for it' would still involve a series of struggles over specific issues, with a clear indication of what was being struggled for, and without resort to incantation. We were far from the worst culprits in not being more specific about what socialist construction entailed; but we should have tried harder to present material on the subject.



The *Register* began in its early days to carry articles on a subject which was to grow in importance as the years went on, namely the **internationalisation** of capital and what this meant for the Left. In 1966, we published an article by Michael Barratt Brown on 'European Capitalism and World Trade', and in 1967 one by Ernest Mandel on 'International Capitalism and "Supra-Nationality"'; and the 1974 issue had a remarkably prescient article by Walter Goldstein with the significant title 'The Multinational Corporation: A Challenge to Contemporary Socialism'. I thought then that he was exaggerating the constraints which multinational corporations imposed on national states, and I indicated my disagreement with him in the Preface I wrote for the volume; he obviously had a far better grasp of what the prospects were in this respect than I had. Somewhat distant from 'globalisation', yet related to it, an essay by Peter Worsley in the 1980 *Register* was critical of Immanuel Wallerstein's world system theory; and in 1981, an essay by William **Graf** was sharply critical of the Brandt Report on the North-South divide.

It was only in 1990 that we again picked up the transnational theme with an essay by Stephen Gill on 'Intellectuals and Transnational Capital'; and the 1992 volume, whose title was '**The New World Order?**' included, apart from an introduction from the editors on 'The New World Order and the Socialist Agenda', a number of major essays by Robert Cox, Harry **Magdoff**, Andrew Glyn and Bob Sutcliffe, Immanuel Wallerstein, John

Palmer and Stephen Gill, which dealt in one way or another with the internationalisation of capital and its significance for the **Left**.

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Given our critique of social democracy, one issue which did keep popping up in the Register was that of agencies. On this, in relation to Britain, there were three distinct positions. On the one hand, there were those who believed that socialists had no alternative but to work inside the Labour Party, and to try and push it in more radical directions. On the other hand, there were those who thought that what was needed was a new socialist party, which would not supplant the Labour Party, but which would establish a socialist presence which neither that party, nor any other – certainly not the Communist Party – was able to achieve; and there were also those who, in the later years, thought that new social movements and grassroots organisations were far more important than parties.

The first position was very cogently represented in the 1973 volume by Ken Coates with an essay on 'Socialists and the Labour Party'. This essay, I should add, was in reply to a Postscript of 1969 to a second edition of my *Parliamentary Socialism*, in which I had suggested that the notion of turning the Labour Party into a socialist party was illusory. In the 1976 issue, I argued for 'the formation of a socialist party free from the manifold shortcomings of existing organisations' so as 'to provide a credible and effective rallying point to help in the struggle against the marked and accelerating drift to the right in Britain'. This produced not a ripple – not that I had really expected that it would. The argument continued in the 1977 Register with an article by Duncan **Hallas** which said that 'moving on' (the title of my article) was 'only possible on a revolutionary basis' and that the Socialist Workers Party had 'made some modest progress on that basis'. For his part, Leo **Panitch**, in an essay in the 1979 volume entitled 'Socialists and the Labour Party: A Reappraisal', concluded, after a closely-argued analysis of recent experience, that, while the Labour Party would not 'conveniently fall apart', it was 'by no means inappropriate to ask' whether socialists should not come together to begin building a party 'that would be free from all the burdens that come with the Labour Party tradition'.

Ken Coates came back to the issue after the Labour Party's defeat in the general election of 1983, with an essay on 'The Labour Party and the Future of the Left' in the volume of that year. He noted the dramatic extent of Labour's loss of support and was scathing about the Labour leaders' attempts 'to pull the Party's political commitments back to levels acceptable to the editor of *The Sun* and to their own well-established identification with the logic of private capital accumulation and US imperialism' – strictures which have remained remarkably apposite ever since. The

question, he concluded, was whether 'the Labour Party can be persuaded quickly to make a sharp break with its own past', or whether, 'as seems more likely, the politics of fudge predominate again', in which case 'socialists will have to leave the Party and take on the undeniably more difficult task of consolidating a new Left that has no official Labour Party presence within it at all'. In the 1988 volume, devoted to the theme 'Problems of Socialist Renewal: East and West', Leo **Panitch**, in an essay on 'Socialist Renewal and the Labour Party', noted that while socialists had recently been concerned 'with associating the struggle for socialism with the struggles of new social movements', what had been missing from even the most creative currents was 'a much more serious analysis of what kind of political organisation could embody a renewed socialist project'. Most of the essay was concerned with both the strengths and the limitations of the upsurge of the Labour Left in the early eighties, and with its defeat at the hands of the Labour leadership, and concluded that socialist renewal 'will have to concentrate less on reforming the Labour Party and more on building a long-term independent campaign for a democratic socialism that transcends the limits of parliamentary paternalism'. This represented an acknowledgement of the importance of grassroots movements, and the Register did carry in the eighties material on the green and feminist movements, but we did not explore in any systematic way the relationship which these movements might have to the political parties which we believed socialist advance required.

The 1985 Register had as its theme 'Social Democracy and After', and continued the earlier critique of social democracy but greatly widened the scope of the analysis. A number of authors discussed what George Ross and Jane Jenson called 'the crisis of left politics' and Leo **Panitch** called 'the impasse of social democratic politics'. These and other articles in the volume discussed in depth the economic, social, political and cultural factors which had led to the crisis of left politics in France, Germany, Australia, Greece, and an essay by Frank Webster dealt with 'The Politics of the New Technology'. A number of other essays also offered more general reflections on the same theme; and most of them called for a new left politics that would not be mired either in the politics of accommodation of social democracy, or in the self-ghettoisation of the sectarian left. There were in the volume useful hints as to what such a new left politics would require; but these were no more than hints. The same volume also carried essays by John Saville and Richard Hyman on the miners' strike of 1984-85, essays by Andrew Gamble on the Austrian critique of socialism, by Mario **Nuti** on economic planning in market economies, a review by Roland Lew of **Alec Nove's** *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*, an essay by Ernest Mandel on 'Marx, the Present Crisis and the Future of Labour', and one by Mateo **Alaluf** on 'Work and the Working Class'.

The crisis of left politics of course also encompassed Communist parties, and the Register devoted a good deal of attention to their evolution. Rather

belatedly, it had an article in 1969 by Rex Mortimer on the obliteration of the Indonesian Communist Party in 1965 and the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Communists and alleged Communists. In 1971, an article by Daniel Singer on 'The French Left since 1968' included some critical reflections on the PCF and the Communist-led CGT. The volume for 1976 had a section marking the twentieth anniversary of Khrushchev's 'secret' speech at the 20th Congress of the CPSU and the Soviet invasion of Hungary. Articles by John Saville, Malcolm **MacEwen**, and Margot Heinemann discussed the impact of Khrushchev's speech on the British Communist Party, and articles by Jean Pronteau, Maurice **Kriegel-Valrimont** and Rossana Rossanda dealt with its impact on the French and Italian parties. For their part, **Mervyn Jones** and **Bill Lomax** wrote about Hungary and Soviet intervention. In 1977, the *Register* included an essay by George Ross on 'The New Popular Front in France', which was mainly devoted to the PCF; and another essay in 1978 by him discussed 'The Crisis in Eurocommunism: the French Case'. A third essay by him and Jane Jenson on 'Conflicting Currents in the PCF' in the 1981 volume brought the analysis forward to the eve of the Left's presidential and legislative victories of that year. The 1988 volume, entitled 'Problems of Socialist Renewal' included another essay by George Ross on 'Organization and Strategy in the Decline of French Communism', and an essay by Stephen **Hellman** on 'The Crisis of Italian Communism'. The titles indicate the point of view which inspired these pieces.

The *Register* also paid some attention to the question of agencies as it related to the United States. In 1967, we published an essay by Ronald Aronson and John **Cowley** on 'The New Left in the United States', and in 1968 an essay by Franklin Adler on 'Black Power', which analysed the development of black consciousness in the sixties. In 1979, Jerome **Ka-rabel** took up the age-old question 'Why is There No Socialism in the United States?'; and in 1980, Stanley **Aronowitz** discussed 'The Labour Movement and the Left in the United States'. In the 1985/16 volume, Vincente Navarro analysed 'The 1980 and 1984 US Elections and the New Deal', and showed how brittle and limited in terms of electoral support had been Reagan's electoral victories in the presidential elections of those years—very much like Thatcher's electoral victories. In 1987, Kim Moody had an essay on 'Reagan, the Business Agenda and the Collapse of Labour'; and a number of essays on the United States appeared in that 1987 volume and will be noted presently in a different context. In 1988, Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers discussed "'Reaganism" After Reagan'; and Vincente Navarro analysed 'Social Movements and Class Politics in the United States'. In 1992, Joel Kovel wrote on post-Communist anti-communism, and Scott Forsyth gave us an article on Hollywood, 'Hollywood's War on the World: The New World Order as Movie'.

As I noted at the beginning, a notable feature of the *Register* was the amount of space it devoted to Western imperialism and liberation struggles in the 'third world'. We were extremely fortunate in being able to enlist the help of Basil Davidson, with his deep insights into the African experience, and were happy to publish a number of articles by him. Another of our most valuable contributors on African struggles was John Saul. He first appeared in the *Register* in 1969 with an essay (jointly with Giovanni Arrighi) on 'Nationalism and Revolution in Sub-Saharan Africa'; in 1973 with an essay on 'Neo-Colonialism versus Liberation Struggle'; in 1974 with an essay on 'The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Tanzania'; in 1980 on Zimbabwe; in 1989 on 'The Southern African Revolution'; and in 1993 with an essay on 'Rethinking the Frelimo State'. We also published essays on Africa by a good many other people – Jules **G rard-Libois** in 1966 on 'The New Class and Rebellion in the Congo' and Jitendra Mohan on 'Varieties of African Socialism', **Conor Cruise O'Brien** on Arthur Lewis's Politics in *West* Africa, Robin Cohen on class in Africa, Ben Turok on South Africa, Jo Slovo in 1973 on 'Problems of Armed Struggle', Colin Leys on Kenya, Suzanne Muller on Tanzania. There is in this instance, for most of Africa, a sad trajectory, from the high hopes of the sixties to the disappointments of later years, encapsulated in the title of Basil Davidson's essay of 1992, 'Africa: The Politics of Failure'.

A fair amount of work published in the *Register* also dealt with other parts of the 'third world'. In 1966, we published a wide-ranging essay by Malcolm Caldwell, whose murder in Cambodia was a grievous loss to the Left. In the same issue, we also published some reflections by Victor Kiernan on 'India and Pakistan: Twenty Years Later'. By 1967, the war in Vietnam was raging with ever more ferocious intensity, and the *Register* published an article by me noting the fact 'brought home every day by the constant stream of news and images from Vietnam, that the United States has over what is now a period of years been engaged there in the wholesale slaughter of men, women and children, the maiming of many more, the obliteration of numberless villages and the forcible transplantation of whole populations into virtual concentration camps, the use of gas and chemical warfare, the devastation of large areas of cultivation, and much else which forms part of a catalogue of horrors which has by now been abundantly, sickeningly documented'. However, the article, entitled 'Vietnam and the Western Left', was not only concerned to condemn the war which the United States was waging in Vietnam; its main purpose was to suggest how grave and bitter had been the default of the Left in Britain in failing to mount far greater opposition to the Wilson Government's 'consistent defence of American actions in Vietnam', which I described as 'the most shameful chapter in the history' of the Labour Party.

Articles already mentioned dealt with different facets of imperialism, and in 1971 and in 1974, we also published essays by Victor **Kiernan**, 'Imperialism, American and European' and 'American Hegemony under Revision', which placed imperialism in an historical perspective. In 1983, we published an essay by Paul Josephon 'Nuclear Strategies and American Foreign Policy'; and most of the articles we published in 1984 in a volume on 'The Uses of Anti-Communism' also dealt with general reflections on imperialism and with its manifestations in **different** countries – Philip Brenner on U.S. policy in Central America, James **Petras** and Morris Morley on 'Anti-Communism in Guatemala: Washington's Alliance with Generals and Death Squads', and Alan Wolfe on 'Ideology and Interest in Postwar American Foreign Policy'. The 1987 volume also had an article by Larry **Pratt** on 'The Reagan Doctrine and the Third World', and another article by Scott Forsyth on Hollywood's contribution to the ideology of American **interventionism**.

In 1988 and 1989, the Register carried articles by Carlos Vilas, the one on 'War and Revolution in Nicaragua', and the other on 'Revolution and Democracy in Latin America'; and in 1991, Carlos Vilas helped us again with an essay on the shortcomings of the Sandinista regime. The same volume also had articles by Val Mogadham on Iran and by Saul Landau on Cuba, which allied warm support for the revolution with sharp criticism of the regime's failings.

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There were not many years after the first two issues in which the Register did not include articles on the Soviet Union or other Communist regimes. In 1968 and 1969, we published two posthumous essays by Isaac Deutscher (he had died in 1967 at the tragically early age of 60), one of them entitled 'Ideological Trends in the USSR', the other 'Roots of Bureaucracy'. The 1968 volume also included an essay by Michael **Ellman** on 'Soviet Economic Reforms' and one by K.S. Karol on 'Two Years of the Cultural Revolution'. In 1973, an article of mine, 'Stalin and After', reviewed two books by the Soviet historian Roy Medvedev, one on Stalinism, Let History Judge, the other on socialist democracy. In the 1974 issue, Rossana Rossanda discussed 'Revolutionary Intellectuals and the Soviet Union', and Jean-Marie Chauvier analysed the work of Solzhenitsyn. In 1977, **Włodzimierz Brus** recalled 'The Polish October – Twenty Years Later'. In 1978, we carried a self-interview by Rudolph **Bahro**, and an essay by Tamara Deutscher on 'Voices of Dissent' in the USSR. The 1981 issue had an essay by Mario **Nuti** on 'The Polish Crisis: Economic Factors and Constraints', and also included an essay by Isaac Deutscher which had first appeared in Les Temps Modernes on 'The Tragedy of the Polish Communist Party'. The same issue reprinted Christa Wolf's speech on receiving the

Buchner Prize in October 1980; and it also had an essay by Ernest Mandel on the Chinese economy. In 1983, we had an essay by Roy Medvedev on 'The Soviet Union at the Beginning of a New Era'. This referred to the demise of Leonid Brezhnev and the hope which it engendered that 'in the next few years there will be a serious renewal in all the leading departments of government, and that younger, more intelligent, more highly qualified and bolder persons will be promoted to the leading posts'. This anticipated by three years the coming to power of **Mikhail** Gorbachev. What no one anticipated was the catastrophic results which the incoherent nature of the reforms which Gorbachev set in train would ultimately produce. In 1988, the Register published articles by K.S. Karol, R.W. Davis, Patrick **Flaherty** and David Mandel on different aspects of the Gorbachev revolution, and on China by Roland **Lew**, but it was only in 1991, when the Register was devoted to the theme of 'Communist Regimes: the Aftermath', that a series of articles did analyse in depth the failings of perestroika, again with the help of David Mandel and Patrick **Flaherty**, and also Justin Schwarz, Robert Cox, Ernest Mandel, Daniel Singer and **two** Soviet authors, Alexander Buzgalin and Andrei Kalganov, who boldly entitled their essay 'For a Socialist Rebirth: A Soviet View'. The same issue also carried an essay by Peter **Bihari** on post-Communist Hungary, and one by Susan **Woodward** on Yugoslavia. Taken as a whole, it seems fair to say that the material we published on the Soviet Union and the Communist regimes over the years was balanced and well-reasoned, terms which hardly apply to so much else that was written on the Soviet Union. On the other hand, it may be said in retrospect that the essays which were published in the Register on Maoism, though critical of some of its aspects, did not sufficiently emphasise how disastrously destructive was much of its practice. But I do not recollect the editors themselves making that point at the time.

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As I look back on the volumes of the Register, one of its strongest features seems to me to be the work we published on Marxist theory, and socialist theory in general. Here too, it would be tedious to catalogue **all** that we published, but some of the items which appeared over the years should be noted. An article by Peter Sedgwick in the 1966 volume reflected well the critical spirit in which we wanted articles on these topics to be written. Sedgwick's article was a scholarly and sharply critical review of Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*, which was then much acclaimed, and which Sedgwick contrasted very unfavourably with earlier work of **Marcuse**, notably his *Reason and Revolution*: 'the work of critical philosophy, rooted in **Hegel** and Marx, that **Marcuse** pioneered in *Reason and Revolution*', Sedgwick wrote, 'now has been almost entirely abandoned in favour

of a grandiose journalism of doom', and he gave ample evidence for this negative verdict. In 1967, the Register carried a notable essay by Maurice Godelier on 'System, Structure and Contradiction in *Capital*'. Victor Kiernan gave us an essay on 'Marx and India', and in 1968 another essay entitled 'Notes on Marxism in 1968' (the 150th anniversary of **Marx's** birth), which suggested that 'the time has come, or rather has long since been coming, when Marxism needs a thorough spring-cleaning, or a throwing overboard of mouldy stores'. Also in 1968, we published an essay by John Merrington on 'Theory and Practice in Gramsci's Marxism', an essay which still had then something of a pioneer quality. The 1970 Register carried a number of articles on Marxism and questions of socialism – Rossana Rossanda on 'Class and Party', Jean-Paul Sartre on 'Masses, Spontaneity, Party', Harold Wolpe on 'Some Problems Concerning Revolutionary Consciousness', Hal Draper on 'The Death of the State in Marx and Engels', and myself on 'Lenin's The State and Revolution'. The 1971 issue had a similarly generous spread of articles on these themes. Apart from Rossana Rossanda's essay on Mao's Marxism, it carried an essay by Hal Draper on 'The Principle of Self-Emancipation in Marx and Engels', and a thorough demolition of Althusser's scientific pretensions by Leszek Kolakowski, this at a time when Althusser was being hailed by many Marxists as the thinker who had at long last established Marxism on a solid scientific foundation. The same issue of the Register also had an essay by **István Mészáros** on 'Alienation and Social Control', and one by Jeff Coulter on 'Marx and the **Engels** Paradox'. In 1972, we published another essay on Gramsci and Marxism, this time by Victor Kiernan, and two other theoretical essays, one by **István Mészáros** on 'Ideology and Social Science', the other by Anthony Arblaster on 'Liberal Values and Socialist Values'. Still in the same issue, Peter Worsley had an essay which discussed in depth the work of Frantz Fanon.

I have already noted the appearance in the 1973 Register of Edward Thompson's 'Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski', which was a hundred pages long: whatever the shortcomings of an annual, we felt that it at least made it possible to carry an essay of that length. As also noted earlier, the 1974 volume had a reply by Kolakowski, 'My Correct Views on Everything'; and it was also in that issue that Hal Draper published another essay on **Marx**, this time on 'Marx on Democratic Forms of Government'; and this essay was accompanied by an essay written by Alastair Davidson on 'Gramsci and Lenin; 1917–1922'. Still in that issue, George Ross had a highly critical review of Daniel Bell's *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*. In 1976, we published an essay by Ben Fine and Laurence Harris on 'Controversial Issues in Marxist Economic Theory'; and feminism at last made its appearance in that year's Register in the form of an essay by Hal Draper and Anne **Lipow**, 'Marxist Women versus Bourgeois Feminism', in which the authors sought 'to revive acquaintance with a revolutionary women's movement which was undoubtedly the most important

one of the kind that has yet been seen', namely the women's movement in pre-1914 Germany, deeply inspired by Marxism. In that article, Draper and **Lipow** presented work by August Bebel, Clara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg, Louise Kautsky and Eleanor **Marx**, which showed how seriously the 'women's question' had been taken by men and women steeped in classical Marxism. A year later, a section of the Register, was devoted to Marxist economic theory, with an essay by Geoff Hodgson, 'Papering Over the Cracks', which consisted of strongly critical comments on the essay by Fine and Harris in the previous year's volume, and a response to Hodgson from them. That issue also had an essay by Marion Sawyer on 'The Genesis of State and Revolution', and a searching essay by Edward Thompson on Christopher Caudwell, who was killed in Spain in 1937 at the age of 29, and whose books, such as *Illusion and Reality*, *Studies in a Dying Culture*, and *Further Studies*, all published posthumously, played, in Thompson's words, 'a significant part in the intellectual biography of my own generation'.

In 1978, we published a strong critique of the work of Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst, then leading exponents of Althusserian thinking; and the same volume included a critical essay by Ellen Meiksins Wood on 'C.B. Macpherson: Liberalism and the Task of Socialist Theory'. This provoked a response from Leo **Panitch** in 1981, 'Liberal Democracy and Socialist Democracy: The Antinomies of C.B. Macpherson', in which **Panitch** took a rather more positive view than Wood had done of Macpherson's relation to Marxism; and she in turn responded to **Panitch** in the same issue with an article on 'Liberal Democracy and Capitalist Hegemony'. Still in the same issue, David **Beetham**, in an article entitled 'Beyond Liberal Democracy', sought to deal 'with objections raised by liberal democrats to the possibility of a socialist democracy'. In 1982, Stuart Hall wrote on 'The Battle for Socialist Ideas in the 1980s', and Peter Sedgwick gave another review to the Register, this time on Alasdair **MacIntyre's** *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, which had appeared in 1981. The review was an elegant, informed and critical appraisal not only of the book, but of **MacIntyre's** 'journey through polemic'. Sedgwick's death not long after deprived the Left of one of its most incisive writers.

The concern with Marxist and socialist theory inspired many of the other articles which we published in the late seventies and beyond, and a lot more room was now given to various aspects of feminism. Also, the Register devoted a good deal of attention in those years to the ideological shifts that were occurring on the Right, and to the deepening intellectual and political crisis that was gripping the Left. In 1979, the year in which Mrs Thatcher, as she was then, first came to power, we had published an essay by Andrew Gamble, 'The Free Economy and the Strong State', in which he noted, all too accurately, that 'the slow-down in the pace of accumulation has provided the opportunity for a widespread rejection of

Keynesian political economy and an onslaught on the policies, values and organizations of social democracy'. The same issue also had an essay by Mario Nuti on 'The Contradictions of Socialist Economies', and another one by Elmar Altvater and Otto Kallscheuer on 'Socialist Politics and the "Crisis of Marxism"'. In 1980, we published an essay by Laurence Harris on 'The State and the Economy', which sought to provide an explanation in Marxist terms of the developing attack on the welfare state; that issue also has an essay by Jane Jenson on 'The French Communist Party and Feminism'. In 1982, an article by David Ruben discussed 'Marxism and the Jewish Question'; and John Saville had an essay on recent Labour historiography. Two articles in the 1983 *Register* dealt with feminist themes, the one by Dorothy Smith on 'Women, Class and Family', the other by Varda Burstyn on 'Masculine Dominance and the State'. Also in 1983, the *Register* had an article by Ellen Meiksins Wood, 'Marxism Without Class Struggle', in which she argued against 'a substantial transformation of Marxist theory', which, she said, had displaced 'class struggle and the self-emancipation of the working class. . . from the centre of Marxism'. Still in the same volume, Richard Hyman presented a critique of André Gorz's *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*, which had been published in 1982; and Monty Johnstone reviewed the attitude of Marx and Engels to majority rule in 'Marx, Blanqui and Majority Rule'. The theme of the 1987 volume was 'Conservatism in Britain and America', and included a range of essays on Reaganism and Thatcherism, with such essays as Reg Whitaker's 'Neo-Conservatism and the State', Bill Schwarz's 'The Thatcher Years', Joel Krieger's 'Social Policy in the Age of Reagan and Thatcher', Elizabeth Wilson's 'Thatcherism and Women', and Zillah Eisenstein 'Liberalism, Feminism and the Reagan State'. It was also in that volume that we published essays by James Cronin and Terry Radtke on 'The Old and the New Politics of Taxation', Ian Taylor's 'Law and Order, Moral Order: The Changing Rhetorics of the Thatcher Government', Harvey Kaye's 'The New Right and the Crisis of History', Laurence Harris and Ben Fine on 'Ideology and Markets: Economic Theory and the New Right', Simon Clarke on 'Capitalist Crisis and the Rise of Monetarism', and Leo Panitch and myself on 'Socialists and the "New Conservatism"'. For good measure, we also had an essay by Joel Kovel on 'The Theocracy of John Paul II', an essay by John Saville on American bases in Britain, and one by Larry Pratt on 'The Reagan Doctrine and the Third World'.

The 1984 volume had included articles tracing the ways in which conservative forces had exploited the 'Soviet threat' and anti-communism in general as a bludgeon against the Left. The volume had an introductory essay by Marcel Liebman and myself, an essay by Reg Whitaker on 'Fighting the Cold War on the Home Front: America, Britain, Australia and Canada', an essay by John Saville which threw much-needed light on

'Ernest Bevin and the Cold War', one by William Graf on anti-communism in the Federal Republic of Germany, an essay by Martin Eve on 'Anti-Communism and American Intervention in Greece', and further essays on various aspects of anti-communism, including one by François Houtart on anti-communism and the Catholic Church. As noted earlier, a number of essays in that volume also dealt with American foreign policy and intervention in Central America.

The 1989 *Register* celebrated the bi-centenary of the French Revolution by devoting the volume to the theme 'Revolution Today. Aspirations and Reality'. The first article, by Leo Panitch, sought to answer the question: 'What meaning can we give to the notion of socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries today?'; and a number of essays in the volume, which will be noted later, asked the same question in different contexts. That issue of the *Register* also carried an essay by Tony Benn, drawing on his experience as a Cabinet minister for eleven years, on 'Obstacles to Reform in Britain'; Victor Kiernan's 'Reflections on Revolution in an Age of Reaction'; an essay by Ernest Mandel on 'The Marxist Case for Revolution Today', and a rigorously argued essay by Norman Geras on the crucial topic of 'Our Morals: The Ethics of Revolution'. Other essays in the volume highlighted other aspects of the topic of revolution – Michael Löwy on nationalism and internationalism, Frieder Otto Wolf on the need to rethink the idea of revolution, Joanna Brenner on 'Feminism's Revolutionary Promise', Lawrence Letwin on religion and revolution, and Saul Landau on the Cuban revolution.

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In the volumes that we published from 1984 onwards, the word 'crisis' insistently recurs; and these volumes do indeed chart the defeats and disappointments which the Left sustained in those years, and the hegemony, in thought and deed, which the Right had established in the eighties. On the other hand, the *Register* never shared the pessimism which was so prevalent on the Left. We acknowledged the crisis, and sought to analyse its deeper roots. But we were also very critical of the ideological and political retreat which the pessimism both nurtured and reinforced; and the 1990 volume, entitled 'The Retreat of the Intellectuals', was largely concerned with various aspects of the retreat and also with the affirmation of socialist perspectives. It is in this vein that Norman Geras discussed 'Seven Types of Obloquy. Travesties of Marxism', and John Saville dissected the positions of a main organ of retreat, *Marxism Today*. Ellen Meiksins Wood had an essay on the uses and abuses of the notion of civil society, and noted 'two contradictory impulses' in the use of the term: 'the new concept of civil society', she noted, 'signals that the left has learnt the lessons of liberalism about the dangers of state oppression', but, she

also noted, 'we seem to be forgetting the lessons we once learned from the socialist tradition about the oppressions of civil society'. For his part, Terry **Eagleton** directed a sharp satire at Richard **Rorty's anti-universalism**; **Fredric Jameson** had an essay on **Postmodernism and the Market**; and Bryan Palmer gave us a well-documented essay on the retreat from Marxism in the writing on social history in the eighties. Paul Cammack wrote on 'Statism, New Institutionalism, and Marxism'; and Linda Gordon had an essay on 'The Welfare State: Towards a **Socialist-Feminist Perspective**' in which she analysed the weaknesses in the Left's necessary defence of the welfare state. There were also essays by George Ross on 'Intellectuals against the Left' in France, a critical essay on Jacques Derrida by Eleanor **MacDonald**, and an essay on **Marx and Rights** by Amy Bartholomew. John Bellamy Foster, in an essay on 'Liberal Practicality and the U.S. Left', analysed 'the contradictions of the dominant liberal democratic ideology'. Stephen Gill had an essay on 'Intellectuals and Transnational Capital'; Arthur **MacEwan** explained 'Why We Are Still Socialists and Marxists After All This'; and Richard **Levins** offered reflections on the future of socialism. Finally, I argued for the importance of 'counter-hegemonic struggles' against the corrosive notion that there was no plausible alternative to the prevailing social order,

Many of the articles in the 1993 Register, entitled 'Real Problems, False Solutions', pursued the theme of intellectual retreat in the eighties. David Harvey discussed the different – and often misguided – approaches to the 'environmental issue', and sought to 'establish a theoretical position from which to try and make sense' of that issue; and Christopher Norris gave us a caustic critique of commentators who 'queued up to renounce any lingering attachment to such old-hat notions as truth, reason, critique, ideology, or false consciousness', and linked this 'realignment of theoretical positions on the left' with 'a widespread tactical retreat from socialist principles among Labour Party politicians, policy-makers, and (more or less) well-disposed media and academic pundits'. Marsha **Hewitt** wrote on 'the regressive implications of post-modernism'; Lynne Segal discussed 'anti-pornography feminism', and John **Griffith** argued, in an essay entitled 'The Rights Stuff, that 'proposed changes to the constitution [by such organisations as Charter 88] and the incorporation of a Bill of Rights, will enable private interests, of individuals and of corporations, to override measures designed to promote the general welfare'.

In the Preface to the volume, we said that we conceived the volume 'as addressing a broad range of "dead-end" or "morbid symptom" responses to various aspects of the current global disorder, offering analyses why they arise as well as a critique and corrective to them'. This could well be taken to describe the spirit of much that appeared in the Register.

There are some important topics which did not get the attention they deserved. One of them was Northern Ireland. We published an article by Anders Boserup in 1972 on 'Contradictions and Struggles in Northern Ireland'; and the 1977 Register had a section on the topic, with articles by Anthony Arblaster, Michael **Farrell** and Peter Gibbons. But we should no doubt have done more. The same applies to Israel and Palestine. On this topic, we published two essays with very different perspectives in the 1970 Register, one of them by **Mervyn** Jones on 'Israel, Palestine and Socialism', the other by Marcel Liebman on 'Israel, Palestine and Zionism'; and it was only in 1992 that another essay, by **Avishai** Ehrlich, on 'The Gulf War and the New World Order', made reference to the place of Israel in the Middle East.

Nor did we do any better with matters related to science, a field which the post-1945 **Left**, unlike the Left of the inter-war years, has tended to neglect. We published an essay by Steven and Hilary Rose in 1972 on 'The Radicalisation of Science', which discussed what they saw as 'a clear shift in consciousness of many scientists – especially science students – of the role of science and technology in contemporary capitalism'. Another essay in 1973, by Steven Rose, John Hambley and Jeff **Haywood**, on 'Science, Racism and Ideology', dealt with the re-emergence of what they called 'scientific racism', that is to say the argument that 'certain groups, notably Blacks and working class, are less intelligent than others, notably White middle class, and that this difference is genetic'; but neither this, nor any other topic related to science was pursued further in subsequent issues of the Register.

We did a little better with the ever-expanding field of mass communications. In 1973, we published an essay by Graham Murdoch and Peter Golding, 'For a Political Economy of Mass Communications'. This was followed in 1979 with an essay by Kevin Robins and Frank Webster on 'Mass Communications and Information Technology'; and they gave us another essay in 1981 on 'Information Technology: Futurism, Corporations and the State'.

However, the most notable gap in the Register's output lay in a different area altogether, namely in the paucity of articles devoted to the discussion of literature and the arts in general. It is not that we were unaware of their importance, but rather that the more directly 'political' subjects tended to crowd out all else, which is no great excuse.

To say that we should have done more on various topics is in some ways a bit hard on ourselves, given the circumstances in which we were producing the volumes. For one thing, as I noted at the beginning, there was for many years only John Saville and I to edit the Register, and both of us were very busy full-time teachers. We could no doubt have brought together an editorial board, but we had decided at the start, rightly or wrongly, that

this would present problems of organisation and require too great an expenditure of time and energy. Later, there was also, for all too short a time, Marcel Liebman; and, from 1985/6 onwards, there has been Leo **Panitch**, whose co-editorship has been truly invaluable. But there was never enough time; and this was particularly true in one critical respect, namely finding authors whose work would reflect the independent socialist and critical spirit which we wanted to inform all that we published. The point is not that such people were particularly rare, but that finding them, and getting them to agree to write for us (of course free of charge) and getting them to deliver their essays on time, or at all, was often a very demanding business. All the more am I deeply grateful to all the people who, over the years, have made the *Register* possible; and I present my apologies to those contributors whose essays I have not mentioned. Thanks are also due to Brian Pearce, Mike Gonzalez and David **Macey** for the excellent translations they have done for us.

I have always thought that the *Register* was doing useful socialist work, and its survival for thirty years, in a period which has not been good for the Left, may be reckoned to be a matter of some satisfaction, not least because the *Register* has consistently been ignored by the journals in which it might have been reviewed. Save for the occasional review here and there, we have had to do without any such attention, even though the **single-theme** volumes we published from 1984 onwards easily lent themselves to review. Yet we know that the *Register*, without the benefit of much reviewing, has had a keen readership, not only in Britain and North America, but in many other parts of the world as well; and many articles which appeared in the *Register* have been reprinted elsewhere, in English and in other languages. All in all, I think the publication deserves the mention 'has done well, could do better'; and over the next thirty years, it will.