

underline the role of communism itself (and more particularly the revolutionary zeal of the Soviet Union in the wake of the 1917 revolution) in the shaping of the modern world. Miliband and Liebman concentrate on the dangerous impact of the antibody rather than on the original disease.

As a result of the insidious propaganda that has washed ceaselessly over the world since 1917 communism always gets described by its opponents as an illness. General Pinochet, on seizing power, referred to the need 'to extirpate the Marxist cancer'. And he is not alone. Communism is often portrayed as a virus or a plague that, once it gains a hold, can rarely be eradicated. The victim must be prised free by force, the wound must be cauterised. The images are from the Middle Ages, the language that of the Inquisition. Anti-communists believe unquestioningly, as Miliband and Liebman point out, that communism is 'a supreme and unqualified evil'.

But what of anti-communism? The implicit argument in the *Socialist Register* is that anti-communism has its own dynamic and is more influential in world affairs than communism itself. The work! is threatened, not by communism (however defined), but by the fever of crusading anti-communism.

At one level this is self-evident. If the struggle between communism and anti-communism can be crudely equated with the competition between the Soviet Union and the United States, then there is no contest.

Not only is the Soviet Union not quite the 'superpower' it is often cracked up to be (by friends as well as opponents), it is, by the standards of most large states, a conservative 'satisfied' power. Far from seeking a global role, it is continually embarrassed by events in Africa and Latin America. It certainly takes a close interest in the Middle East, but chiefly for reasons of geographic propinquity (as well as because it has a large Moslem and Jewish population of its own). At home, the Soviet Union has become a worried experimenter, unhappy about progress, increasingly aware that its problems defy easy definition. The certainty of former years has given way to a sense of groping in the dark.

The United States, on the other hand, is the most powerful country in the world, imbued with a deep religious zeal and an impassioned belief that its own way of life is not only superior but can be effortlessly

duplicated all over the globe. Like the Victorian English before them, Americans today have an unshakeable faith in the perfectability of man and society through the application of science and technology. But they see this dream constantly threatened by 'communism', and in quixotic ventures ever since 1945 they have sought to slay the dragon. Some of them - Greece, Korea, Guatemala, Vietnam - are chronicled in this book.

In consequence the United States has actually become what it sees (wrongly) the Soviet Union to be: a crusading power motivated by, and exporting, a crude and dangerous ideology - in the American case, anti-communism.

As might be expected, anti-communism - and anti-Sovietism - has never been popular. One article in the *Socialist Register* makes reference to the extraordinary campaign that had to be launched both in Europe and the United States in the aftermath of the Second World War to undermine the popular notion that the Soviet Union was an ally. The amount of government money, overt and covert, that had to be poured into this campaign - to persuade the American people to reject isolationism, and the British to accept the new hostility to their old ally - is still a state secret. But the outline of the story is clear. And once again it emerges that anti-communism has almost always been used to curb social revolt at home (particularly in Europe) and to justify imperial expansion abroad (in the case of the United States).

The danger of anti-communism is that dreamy fantasies take the place of analysis based on reality, as can be seen clearly in the case of Latin America. Latin American intellectuals have always been powerfully influenced by Marxism. Yet in spite of the outspokenness of the Marxist discourse in political circles, the reality has usually been reformist rather than revolutionary. But the United States is only capable of listening to the fierce verbiage. It rarely bothers to stop to examine the historical context or to explore the reality underneath. That would not be the way of the anti-communist. For them Marxist language clearly implies subordination to the Soviet Union.

There is an additional confusion in the United States about the relations of the Latin American Left with the Soviet Union. Latin Americans throughout history have always looked for external allies against the prevailing external influence. When Spain ruled the continent, they

## **The Menace of Anti-communism**

**Socialist Register 1984 The uses of anti-communism**

Ralph Miliband, John Savile and Marcel Liebman,  
*Merlin* £5.50

SOCIALIST

1984

RALPH MILIBAND  
JOHN SAVILLE  
MARCEL LIEBMAN

Anti-communism has long been an important force in the West, but just how significant is it? What kind of weight should be given to it when assessing the politics of the capitalist world? In their introduction to the latest edition of the *Socialist Register* (devoted to the subject of anti-communism), Ralph Miliband and Marcel Liebman write of an 'anti-communist enterprise which decisively shapes the present epoch.' Anti-communism, they suggest, is 'a crucial aspect of the politics of the twentieth century' - one that is often neglected on the Left. Their emphasis is a useful corrective to the more common view which is to

# REVIEWS

looked to Britain. When Britain became too powerful, they looked to the United States or to Europe. When the United States took its turn as the imperial overlord, they looked to Europe again - to Nazi Germany at one stage, to the Soviet Union at another. But this search for external allies did not turn the Latin Americans either into Nazis or into Communists. The Soviet Union gets support, not for its

intrinsic merits, but because it is an enemy of the United States. But here again the anti-communist eyeglass through which Americans view the world causes them to confuse the Latin Americans' natural sympathy for the Soviet Union with ideological solidarity.

The essays in the *Socialist Register* provide a stimulating introduction to the subject that deserves more study and de-

bate. The editors give some space to the question of 'anti-communism of the Left' but it is clear that the right wing variety is the one that causes them the greatest concern. Yet it would be difficult to write the history of the last twenty years without taking a closer look at anti-communism of the Left, coupled with the names of Trotsky and Mao. Another volume perhaps.

**Richard Gott**



## BOOKSHOPS

- Collets London Bookshop, 64/66 Charing Cross Road, WC2H 0BD. *The Left Bookshop*. Books, journals and pamphlets on all aspects of the Labour Movement, Trade Unionism, Marxism and Left Wing Politics, History and Philosophy, Economics, Social Sciences, Race Relations, Third World, Gay and Feminist Politics. Radical Book Bargains. (Mail orders welcome) Tel: 01-836 6306.
- Collets Penguin Bookshop, 52 Charing Cross Road, WC2H 0BB. Large stocks of Penguins, Pelicans and Puffins; New and Secondhand. Tel: 01-836 2315.
- Collets International Bookshop, 129/131 Charing Cross Road, WC2H 0EQ. General books, especially paperbacks. Russian and Slavonic books and journals (in Russian and English from the USSR). Also specialising in Peace, Feminism, Art, Film and Media. EFL.OU and BBC publications. Travel and Guidebooks. Music. Classical and Folk records (including Melodiya). Posters and Badges. Tel: 01-734 0782/3.
- Collets Chinese Bookshop, 40 Great Russell Street, WC1B 3PJ. Books in Chinese and English from and on China. Prints, Cards, Porcelain, Jewellery and Traditional Handicrafts from China. Tel: 01-580 7538.
- the Independent Bookshop Ltd., 341 Glossop Rd, Sheffield S10. Tel: 0742-737722. For a good socialist read. Open Monday-Saturday, 10-6.

- Central Books, 37 Grays Inn Road, WC1. Large selection of books on Marxism, Feminism, Third World, Industrial Relations, Politics, Fiction. Also a selection of second-hand books, posters, cards, badges and a mail-order service. Tel: 01-242 6166.
- Bookmarks 265 Seven Sisters Rd N4. North London's leading socialist bookshop. Two floors of good books and pamphlets.
- Grass Roots Books 1 Newton St, Manchester 1 (Off Piccadilly). Feminism, third world and socialist books (061-236 3112)
- Hammersmith Books Over 100,000 out-of-print titles. A world-wide mail order service since 1948. We buy books, too. Barnes High St, SW13. tel 01-876 7254.
- First of May Bookshop 43 Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh (Tel.031 2252612). Books on feminism, socialism, media, Scotland, 3rd world, etc. Send sae for booklists.

- For a list of radical bookshops in Britain send a s.a.e. to: Federation of Radical Booksellers, c/o Single Step, 78A Penney St. Lancaster LA1 1XN.

## MEETINGS

- The Future of the Left - *Marxism Today* discussion group with Tricia Davis, James Hinton and Richard Chessum. 7.30pm, 15 February. Raneleigh Tavern, Leamington Spa. Organised by Leamington SpaCP.

## JOBSVACANT

### NICARAGUA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN REQUIRES A PART-TIME FUNDRAISER

Salary £3500 p.a. 20 hours p.w. Start March 1985. Applications by 28 February.

For details contact: The Fundraising Convenor, N.S.C., 20-21 Compton Terrace, London N1. N.S.C. is an equal opportunities employer.

## EVENTS

### CRIME, THRILLERS AND DETECTIVES

Second Poplit Conference at Ruskin College, Oxford, February 23rd 1985. Registration £4 (unwaged £2). Please register early.

Papers include: Cora Kaplan - *Queens of Crime*; Barry Taylor - *Gorky Park, Detente and the End of Detection*; Jerry Palmer - *Hard Boiled Fiction*; Geoff Hemsted - *Commodities and Crime*; Rosemary Jackson - *P.D. James*; George Wotton - *Teaching Raymond Chandler*.

## FOR SALE

Illustrated catalogue of original political and social caricatures 1750-1850. All proceeds to miners' hardship funds. Details from G. Saville, 16 Foster Clough, Heights Rd, Hebden Bridge, West Yorks.

## ACCOMMODATION VACANT

- Holiday cottage, modest but all mod cons, in unique Yorkshire

fishing village on Cleveland Way. Sleeps 4 (plus 2 small children). £32-£48 p.w. Tel: 0287-41578.

## PUBLICATIONS

### THE ABORTION LAW REFORM ASSOCIATION

has recently published an education pack for teachers and youth workers, 'Why Discuss Abortion? A Workpack For Use With Young People'. It seeks to promote, through discussion, a greater understanding about abortion amongst young people and contains information, exercises, case studies and a resource list. It is for use with young people aged 15 years and over.

Price £2 inside the GLC area and £3 outside, including p&p. Copies available from ALRA, 88A Islington High St, London N1 8EG or phone 01-359 5200.

### CLASSIFIED RATES

- Lineage: 30ppperword
- Semi-display: £4.50 per column centimetre

### SECTIONS AVAILABLE

- |                |                        |
|----------------|------------------------|
| • Bookshops    | • Accommodation vacant |
| • Publications | • Accommodation wanted |
| • Meetings     | • For sale             |
| • Events       | • Wanted               |
| • Courses      | • General services     |
| • Films/video  | • Personal             |
| • Jobs vacant  | • Miscellaneous        |
| • Jobswanted   |                        |

Deadline for copy: 5th of the month preceding publication

Further Enquiries: ring Dave Kitson, 01-608 0265.

Send copy, with payment and stating section, to: MTCClassifieds, 16 St John St, London EC1M4AY