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Marxism and the Transition to Socialism in Latin America

by
*Richard L. Harris**

This essay examines the extent to which Marxist thought on the transition to socialism is relevant to the contemporary reality of Latin America.[1] It provides a general overview of the more important issues dealt with in the expanding Marxist literature on this subject, and it relates these issues to contemporary cases of socialist transition in Latin America and the Caribbean.

At the beginning of this century, most Marxists assumed that the transition from capitalism to socialism would initially take place in the advanced capitalist societies of western Europe and North America and not in the underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. However, it is precisely in these underdeveloped areas that socialist revolutions have occurred throughout this century. This has forced contemporary Marxists to reevaluate the original body of thought on the transition to socialism and to develop a new theory and practice that takes into account the problems of constructing socialism in underdeveloped capitalist societies.

THE RELEVANCE OF EARLY MARXIST THOUGHT

Marx and Engels theorized in general terms about the transition between capitalism and communism (Marx and Engels, 1972: 331). They reasoned that between capitalist and communist society, there would be "the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into

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the other" (1972: 331). They also contended that the social order during this period would be "a communist society, not as it has *developed* on its own foundations, but on the contrary, as it has *emerged* from capitalist society" (1972: 323). They referred to this transitional social order between capitalism and communism as the "inferior stage of communism" and frequently as "socialism."

It was in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* that Marx and Engels first set forth their general ideas on how capitalism would come to an end and how communism would come into being. As the following quote indicates, they believed the first step would involve the seizure of state power by the proletariat, which would thus become the new ruling class.

> *The first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy. The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible [Marx and Engels, 1972: 52].*

This basic conception of the first steps involved in the establishment of socialism has influenced revolutionary thought and practice ever since it was first introduced in 1848.

Believing that the victorious proletariat would most likely take similar measures in different countries to initiate the process of socialist construction, Marx and Engels reasoned that the following list of measures would probably be "generally applicable."

> *(1) Abolition of property in land. . . . (2) A heavy progressive or graduated tax. (3) Abolition of all rights of inheritance. (4) Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels. (5) Centralization of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank. . . . (6) Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State. (7) Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State. . . . (8) Equal liability of all to labor. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture. (9) Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country by a more equitable distribution of the population over the country. (10) Free education for all children in public schools [Marx and Engels, 1972: 52-53].*

This list of measures gives a fairly clear idea of what Marx and Engels thought would be the initial program of a proletarian regime that had seized power in an advanced capitalist society.

Most of these measures were adopted by the new Soviet state in the first years of the Russian Revolution and, to a greater or lesser extent, by most revolutionary regimes committed to the construction of socialism in underdeveloped Third World societies since then. For example, during the first five years of the revolutionary regime in Cuba, substantial progress was made in each of the areas listed above (see Boorstein, 1968; Pierre-Charles, 1976; Rodríguez, 1978).

Lenin was the first Marxist theorist and political leader to confront the problem of applying Marxist thought to the construction of socialism in concrete historical conditions. Moreover, he had to do this in an underdeveloped capitalist society (Russia). In essence, he took Marx and Engels's basic concepts and incorporated them into a new conceptualization of the transition to socialism that could be applied to a "backward country" (Harnecker, 1986: 128-129). Lenin based this conceptualization on the premise that the immediate and direct construction of socialism was *not* possible in a backward society such as Russia. The underdeveloped nature of the economy and the low cultural development of the masses, he contended, made it necessary to depend initially upon a combination of capitalist relations of production and centralized state control of the economy in order to develop the country's forces of production rapidly. He referred to this combination of capitalism and statization as "state-monopoly capitalism," and argued that this was necessary in order to achieve "a complete material preparation for socialism" in Russia (Lenin, 1976: 445).

This idea of a "preliminary transition" or initial stage of preparation before beginning the actual construction of socialism has been adopted by most contemporary revolutionary regimes in underdeveloped societies. However, there appears to be considerable variation between regimes in terms of the time allotted for this period of preparation. In the case of Cuba, this period appears to have taken place during the first four years of the revolutionary regime. Thus Cuba's President Oswaldo Dorticos stated in January 1963 that "these first four years constitute the stage during which the conditions for the construction of socialism have been created in our country" (quoted in Pierre-Charles, 1976: 173).

In the case of revolutionary Nicaragua, the Sandinistas believe that the conditions prevailing in their country preclude an immediate transition to socialism and necessitate a prolonged period of prepa-

ration. This is revealed in the following statement made in 1983 by Comandante Jaime Wheelock, Nicaragua's Minister of Agricultural Development and Agrarian Reform:

> *Now, for a series of reasons, many of them political, and others having to do with hunger and desperation, certain peoples have made a revolution in the worst conditions of social development. . . . This is our case. Even though we have socialist principles, we cannot effect the transformation of our society by socializing all the means of production. This would not lead to socialism, rather the contrary, it could lead to the destruction and disarticulation of our society. What we seek is the articulation of a project in which the most strategic and most developed sectors of the economy constitute a spearhead, and the organization of a social project in which associational forms of labor will predominate, although in a rudimentary form [Wheelock, 1983: 101-102].*

According to the Sandinistas, it is not feasible to undertake a sweeping socialization of their underdeveloped economy. Therefore, they are committed for the foreseeable future to developing a "mixed economy" based on both private and state capitalism. How and when this will evolve into a socialist economy is an open question (Harris and Vilas, 1985: 227-230; Vilas, 1986: 263-269).

Lenin believed strongly that dictatorship and coercion were necessary during the transition from capitalism to socialism because of both the continuing resistance of the bourgeoisie and the external/internal wars that socialist revolutions generate (Lenin, 1976: 421). Recent history has shown, in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, that the resistance of the bourgeoisie and counterrevolutionary wars are, indeed, conditions that must be confronted by revolutionary regimes in this part of the world. However, it is a matter of continuing debate as to whether or not a dictatorship must be established in order to deal with these conditions. We shall return to this debate later in this essay.

It is important to note here that Lenin's ideas on the transition to socialism were challenged at the time they were first formulated by Marxists in the Soviet Union and in western Europe, notably by Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg (e.g., see Luxemburg, 1971, 1972; Stephens, 1986: 53-69). They differed with Lenin over such important issues as the pace of the transition process, the use of coercion in the process, the nature of the class struggle during this period, whether a dictatorial form of government was necessary, the importance of establishing political democracy in the transition, and the role of the revolutionary party during the transition period.

For example, Kautsky argued that the transition from capitalism to socialism in the more advanced capitalist countries could and should take place in a democratic manner following the electoral victory of a mass-based socialist party. He thought that this parliamentary road to socialism would quickly lead to a revolutionary break with capitalism and the rapid construction of socialism within one or two decades (Stephens, 1986: 57). Kautsky contended that this could take place with a minimum of coercion and under the direction of a democratic regime committed to a socialist program of reforms.

This idea of a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism became the perspective of social democratic parties throughout western Europe and elsewhere following the Second International. In the recent history of Latin America, this was, of course, an important aspect of the strategy of the Popular Unity (UP) government of Salvador Allende, whose attempt at a peaceful, democratic transition to socialism in Chile was brought to a tragic end by the military coup in 1973.

Lenin totally disagreed with the idea of a parliamentary road to socialism espoused by Kautsky and the other theoreticians of the Second International. He criticized them for abandoning Marx's fundamental notion that the proletariat could not seize power by simply assuming control of the old state apparatus, and he reminded them that Marx had argued that the proletariat would have to smash this apparatus and replace it with a new one (Lenin, 1976: 345). This debate between Lenin and Kautsky over the parliamentary road to socialism continues to have great relevance for the Left in Latin America and the Caribbean. The demise of the Popular Unity regime in Chile appears to provide evidence in support of Lenin's position in the debate with Kautsky. Further support could be derived from the overthrow of Cheddi Jagan's government in Guyana and the failure of Manley's government in Jamaica (see Manley, 1982; Mars, 1984: 83-110). However, in the case of the Allende Regime in Chile, there are those who argue convincingly that it was not the choice of a democratic road to socialism, but the way this strategy was carried out in Chile, that was at fault (see Bitar, 1979).

Rosa Luxemburg, like Lenin, rejected Kautsky's and the Second International's conception of the parliamentary road to socialism, but she disagreed with Lenin on the need for a dictatorship during the transition to socialism. Luxemburg's basic position was that the working class needed a mass-based, democratic party that would overthrow the existing capitalist order through mobilizing the masses in a revolutionary general strike.

Luxemburg argued that, following the overthrow of the capitalist state, civil liberties and popular democratic forms of organization would have to be instituted in order to ensure that the working class remained in control of the process of constructing socialism.

> *Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of the press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution . . . only the bureaucracy remains as the active element . . . socialist democracy is not something that begins only in the promised land after the foundations of socialist economy are created . . . it begins at the very moment of the seizure of power by the socialist party. It is the same thing as the dictatorship of the proletariat. . . . But this dictatorship must be the work of the* class, *and not a little leading minority in the name of the class—that is, it must proceed step by step out of the active participation of the masses; it must be under their direct influence; subjected to the control of complete public activity [Luxemburg, 1972; 247-249].*

As this quote reveals, Luxemburg's conception of the transition to socialism rested upon the fundamental notion that the construction of socialism must be a mass-based, democratic process of revolutionary social transformation.

It is important to recognize that the differences between Lenin, Luxemburg, and Kautsky appear to have been, to a considerable degree, the product of the different social contexts in which they operated (Stephens, 1986: 62). Lenin's perspective was obviously influenced by the objective realities of carrying out a revolution in a worn-torn, largely agrarian and autocratic society, whereas Kautsky was influenced by the fact that Germany, at the time of his writings, had become a major industrial power with the largest legal working-class party in Europe. Luxemburg, on the other hand, was an activist in the revolutionary movements of Germany, Poland, and Russia. As a result, she was exposed to the varying conditions and various currents of leftist thought and practice in these three societies. This clearly had an important influence on her thinking and helps to explain her distinctive perspective.

NO GENERAL THEORY OF THE TRANSITION TO SOCIALISM

In the last three to four decades, many Marxists seem to have concluded that a general theory of the transition to socialism—that is, a

theory that applies to all societies that undertake such a course of development—is not possible. For example, Marta Harnecker, a Chilean Marxist scholar who now lives in Cuba, has written the following: "because the historical transition depends upon the concrete form of the class struggle in each country, no general theory of transition can exist" (1986: 128). She further contends that "each transition is materially different, therefore, conceptually different." As a result, Harnecker claims that it is up to the revolutionary vanguard in each country to elaborate a *particular* strategy for the transition in their country that depends upon the characteristics of that country's class struggle.

The problems involved in applying Marxist thought on this subject to the conditions prevailing in revolutionary societies today have been addressed at length by the French Marxist scholar Charles Bettelheim, particularly in his book *The Transition to Socialist Economy* (1978). In this important study, he argues that the application of Marxism to concrete situations should not be confused with the practice of applying abstract models to a specific social reality, so common in the bourgeois social sciences, since this approach always fails to account for important "accidental conditions" or "external factors" that fall outside the model. Instead, Bettelheim argues that Marxism involves considering "every reality as a structured whole which has to be analyzed as such" (1978: 148). This means that the analysis of a particular transitional society must take into account the totality of concrete, historical conditions that exist in that society.

Bettelheim uses Marxist theory and analysis to demonstrate that there are different forms of societal transition in existence today in the Third World, and that one should not be confused by the use of the label "socialist" in cases that do not involve a genuine transition to socialism. According to Bettelheim, only societies undergoing a "radical form of transition" from the capitalist mode of production to the "socialist mode of production" are engaged in a genuine transition to socialism. He contends that this kind of transition requires "the passing of *state power* to the working class, or a coalition of formerly exploited classes within which the working class plays a dominant role" (1978: 21). Without this preliminary condition, the transition to socialism is not possible.

According to Bettelheim, a genuine transition to socialism also requires certain political and ideological conditions and a conjuncture of internal and international contradictions that enable a society to do without the further development of capitalism and "pass directly to the

building of socialism" (1978: 21). As examples of genuine socialist transitions, he cites China, Cuba, and Vietnam. If we use Bettelheim's conception, then neither Chile during the UP government nor Jamaica under Manley qualifies as a case of socialist transition. In both cases, state power did *not* pass into the hands of the working class or a coalition of exploited classes, and there was an absence of a conjuncture of internal and international contradictions that would have enabled these societies to do without further capitalist development and to pass directly to the construction of socialism.

Bettelheim (1978: 12-13) warns against confusing societies that are engaged in a genuine socialist transition with Third World countries that are involved in what he refers to as a more limited "postcolonial transition." In the latter case, the previous structures of domination are not abolished but merely modified, or there is an unstable situation of "momentary equilibrium between the social classes confronting each other" (1978: 22). Quite often, the postcolonial regimes in these countries use terms such as "Islamic Socialism," "Buddhist Socialism," or "African Socialism" to describe themselves (e.g., see Babu, 1981). These labels, as the Yugoslav Marxist scholar Branko Horvat has noted, are frequently little more than "a proxy" for ideological notions based upon nationalism and a commitment to rapid economic growth (Horvat, 1982: 963).

Samir Amin holds a somewhat similar perspective on this question (see Amin, 1980, 1981, 1985). He argues that national liberation struggles in the Third World can serve as the "primary force" for a socialist transition, but, more often than not, he contends that they produce a postcolonial regime based upon either some form of neocolonial capitalism or a psuedosocialist "state mode of production" (Amin, 1980: 189-202). According to Amin (1980: 252), the struggle for national liberation gives rise to a socialist transition only if it involves "an uninterrupted revolution by stages," if it is led by the peasant and worker masses and results in a classless socialist society.

Counterposed to this perspective is the contemporary Soviet conception of "the noncapitalist way," which is based upon the fundamental assumption that a direct transition to socialism is not possible in most contemporary underdeveloped societies. Therefore, it is assumed that these societies must go through a stage of "noncapitalist development" before they begin the transition to socialism (Brutents, 1983). According to the Soviet perspective, this path of development involves the nationalization of the holdings of the large bourgeoisie and feudal landlords, restriction of the activity of foreign capital, state control of

the commanding heights of the economy, the development of state planning, the strengthening of the government apparatus with cadres loyal to the people, the pursuit of an anti-imperialist foreign policy, and so forth (Brezhnev, 1981: 7).

The Soviets assign the designation "socialist orientation" to Third World states that are involved in a "noncapitalist" path of development. Some states that fall into this category are Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Burma, Ethiopia, Mozambique, South Yemen, and Syria. Grenada was also assigned this designation during the period of the People's Revolutionary Government (Pryor, 1986: 238-239).

However, with regard to Nicaragua, the Soviets appear to have been reluctant to use this designation, preferring instead to characterize the country as being "on the road of democracy and social progress" (Edelman, 1987: 39). This reluctance seems to be due to the heterodox nature of the Sandinista revolution, the country's geopolitical position, and Soviet concern about the possibility that Nicaragua's revolutionary process could be rolled back by the United States (1987: 40-41). Nevertheless, Soviet military and economic assistance has been crucial to the survival of Nicaragua's revolutionary regime.

Having reviewed these different conceptions of the transition to socialism, it is clear that there is no commonly agreed upon theory of the transition to socialism. Moreover, the arguments of contemporary Marxists such as Harnecker and Bettelheim are quite convincing that a universal or general theory of the transition to socialism is not possible. Nevertheless, it does seem possible and useful to make some generalizations about this important subject. Figure 1 provides a list of generalizations about the transition to socialism that are based upon what Harnecker calls the "general principles" of socialism that can be derived from Marxist thought and practice (Harnecker, 1986: 120-121).

These principles represent a set of basic generalizations about the nature of the transition to socialism that can be applied to contemporary conditions in Latin America and elsewhere. They offer a basic framework that can be used in developing a specific strategy of socialist transition in any country, and for assessing the progress of societies that are already involved in a process of socialist transformation.

DICTATORSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

In his *Critique of the Gotha Program,* Marx asserted that "the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat" would be the form taken

1. The precondition for initiating the construction of socialism is a revolution at the political level, involving:

   a. the seizure of political power by a revolutionary bloc of popular forces in which the proletariat is a central element;

   b. the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus;

   c. the establishment of a revolutionary regime that functions as a democracy for the popular masses and as a dictatorship for those that resist the measures taken by the regime;

   d. an alliance between the proletariat and the entire working population;

   e. the support of the socialist countries;

   f. solidarity with the revolutionary processes of other countries.

2. There must be a revolution in the relations of production, involving:

   a. the elimination of private property in large industry and agriculture;

   b. work for everyone;

   c. economic planning that ensures a harmonious and intensive development of the forces of production and the satisfaction of the population's basic needs;

   d. pay according to the type of work performed and the elimination of any other sources of income;

   e. worker participation in the control of production at the level of both the unit of production and at the societal level.

3. There must be an ideological/cultural revolution, involving:

   a. a struggle against the remnants of bourgeois ideology;

   b. popular education and technological training for the working population;

   c. the combining of study with productive work.

Figure 1: General Framework for the Transition to Socialism

by the state during the transition between capitalism and communism (Marx and Engels, 1972: 331). He was reluctant to give a blueprint for the exact form of this state, but in his 1871 address to the First International on the "Civil War in France" (1972: 274-313), Marx praised the Paris Commune as the harbinger of the form of "working-class government" that would likely be created by the proletariat once they had seized power and smashed the bourgeois state.

The main characteristics of the Paris Commune that Marx praised were (1) the abolition of the standing army and its replacement by the armed populace, organized into militia, (2) the disestablishment and disendowment of all churches as proprietary bodies, (3) direct election of all public servants, including administrative personnel, magistrates, and judges, (4) universal suffrage, (5) the combination of legislative and executive functions in the hands of the communal council, the members of which were elected on a ward basis for short and revocable terms of office, (6) the immediate recall of elected delegates to the communal council by the citizenry when dissatisfied with their actions, (7) local self-government within a federation of urban and rural communes, (8) worker's wages for all public servants, and (9) free education, divorced of religious teachings, for all.

Until the Russian Revolution, most Marxists agreed that what Marx and Engels had in mind when they spoke of the dictatorship of the proletariat was a regime that would be dictatorial toward the old ruling class and its allies, but genuinely democratic in terms of the formerly exploited classes (Sweezy, 1980: 116). This perspective was also shared by Lenin, as evidenced in his work *The State and Revolution.*

> *Democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, that is, exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and oppressors of the people—this is the change democracy undergoes during the* transition *from capitalism to communism [Lenin, 1976: 327].*

This perspective is still shared by many Marxists today. Thus Orlando Núñez Soto, one of revolutionary Nicaragua's most outstanding social scientists, has recently written that the revolutionary state in a transitional society must be "a combined form of dictatorship and democracy: intransigent towards those who oppose or endanger the proletarian project, but democratic in implementing that project" (Núñez, 1986: 247).

However, the early Marxist conception of the transitional state was not realized in the Russian Revolution. The new Soviet state that

emerged was far more authoritarian and centralized than that imagined by the early Marxists. Objective conditions, such as the backwardness of the economy, the civil war, foreign intervention, the unfamiliarity of the masses with democracy, and the general state of economic chaos in Russia, forced the new regime to take exceptional measures (Harnecker, 1986: 116). According to Trotsky and his followers, these objective conditions, particularly the underdeveloped nature of the forces of production, made it impossible to establish a genuine workers democracy in Russia and gave rise to a deformed bureaucratic regime (Mandel, 1978; Trotsky, 1972).

Many contemporary Marxists reject the Trotskyist thesis that the Soviet Union has been stalled in the transition process by the bureaucratic deformation of the Soviet state. Instead, they argue that a new type of statist society has developed in the Soviet Union, unlike anything foreseen by Marx, Engels, and Lenin (see Amin, 1980: 207-210; Bartra, 1982: 140-142; Sweezy, 1980: 137-138; Horvat, 1982: 43-56).

Branko Horvat, for example, claims that the Soviet Union and other statist societies are not involved in a transition to socialism; rather, they are a new kind of society that is characterized by a self-reproducing centralized, authoritarian state, which "has swallowed the entire society" (1982: 48). He contends that this type of state is incompatible with socialism, because "political domination must be eliminated just as any other form of domination" in the transition to socialism (1982: 56).

Roger Bartra, a prominent Mexican Marxist, believes that one of the main causes of the contemporary crisis of Marxism is the failure of Marxists to explain the existence of the kind of authoritarian statist society that has developed in the Soviet Union (Bartra, 1982: 124). Like Horvat, he concludes that a genuine transition to socialism cannot be effected in the USSR or anywhere else unless there is a thoroughgoing democratization of both political and social life.

In a similar vein, the Brazilian leftist scholar Theotonio dos Santos has recently written that the necessity of building socialism in accordance with democratic socialist ideals is widely accepted among the Left in Latin America (dos Santos, 1985: 181). Dos Santos is optimistic that the experience accumulated through the various efforts to construct socialism around the world has contributed to the possibility that future socialist revolutions will be increasingly democratic (1985: 189).

In terms of the Caribbean Left, Gordon K. Lewis (1987: 175) has recently written that the most urgent lesson to be learned from the destruction of the Grenada Revolution is that "socialism must go hand-in-hand with democracy."

> *Grenada has shown us that there are certain principles involving "democracy" that are, as it were, immutable.... These principles apply as much to nongovernmental bodies as they do to governmental institutions. No progressive party, in particular, should follow the road of the New Jewel movement, which ultimately led to secrecy, intrigue, and murder [Lewis, 1987: 175].*

Lewis argues that the tragedy of the short-lived revolution in Grenada has shown that if democracy is worthy of the name, it must be based on public policy decisions that are made by bodies accountable to public opinion, on decisions that are arrived at by discussion rather than coercion, on a government that can be changed peaceably through popular elections, and on an informed electorate that has free access to information and different viewpoints so that its members are able to make free choices on public policy issues (1987: 175-176).

In his examination of the democratizing experiences of existing revolutionary regimes, Michael Lowy (1986: 267) concludes that effective democratic participation has been limited, primarily to the local level, in all the "postrevolutionary states" of the Third World. Moreover, he argues that the absence of effective democratic participation, within the revolutionary party as well as in the political process, leads to the bureaucratization of the revolutionary state. In its worst form (e.g., the Soviet Union), this tends to create "a social layer of bureaucrats" with interests different from those of the proletariat and the rest of the masses.

THE PROBLEM OF BUREAUCRATISM

Bureaucratization is a feature of all contemporary social formations, capitalist as well as socialist (e.g., see Horvat, 1982: 174-190; Michels, 1962). Concern about the problems of bureaucratization in the transition to socialism has existed among Marxists for some time. Lenin was concerned about the problem of bureaucracy even before the Bolshevik Revolution, as evidenced in his treatise on *The State and Revolution.*

> *Abolishing the bureaucracy at once, everywhere and completely, is out of the question. It is utopia. But to* smash *the old bureaucratic machine and replace it with a new one that will make possible the gradual abolition of all bureaucracy—this is not a utopia, it is the experience of the Commune, the direct and immediate task of the revolutionary proletariat.... This is*

> our *proletarian task, this is what we can and must* start *with in accomplishing the proletarian revolution. Such a beginning . . . will of itself lead to the gradual "withering away" of all bureaucracy [Lenin, 1976: 298].*

During the period he served as the main leader and theoretician of the Soviet regime, Lenin became alarmed about the increasingly more bureaucratized Soviet state apparatus, which he described as "deplorable" and "wretched" in his essay "Better Fewer, But Better," written shortly before his death in 1923 (Lenin, 1976: 700).

Explanations of the bureaucratic nature of the Soviet system have been the subject of an ongoing debate among Marxists since the 1920s. For example, Nikolai Bukharin, (1971, 1982) one of the leading Bolshevik theorists, was less concerned about the bureaucratization of the state appartus than he was about the development of a new bureaucratic class of "technological mental laborers" in charge of the state and economy. He suggested that during the transition period, there would 'inevitably develop a tendency to degeneration via the excretion of a leading stratum in the form of a class-germ" (cited in Bellis, 1979: 72-73).

Among the many factors that contemporary Marxist critics consider responsible for the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet system, the following appear to be most important (Bellis, 1979: 77-95): the ban on factions within the party initiated at the Tenth Party Congress in 1921, the adoption in practice of a single-party regime in the same year, the elimination of trade-union autonomy, the decimation of the proletariat in the Civil War, the reliance upon capitalist technology and organizational forms in the mistaken belief that they were "neutral," the introduction of a centralized "one-man management" system in the factories, the suppression of the soviets as effective organs of local self-government, the introduction of the doctrine of *partiinost* or "party-mindedness" involving unconditional submission to the ideas of the party leadership, the establishment of the top-down *nomenklatura* system of party control over all appointments, the merging of the party with the state administration, the depoliticization of the working class, the forced collectivization of the peasantry, the establishment of a formalized system of privileges for top party and administrative officials, and the physical elimination of most of the original Bolshevik leadership during the Stalinist period.

Regardless of the causes, the bureaucratization of Soviet society appears to have produced considerable differentiation among the Soviet

population in terms of income, privileges, and status (Horvat, 1982: 70-83). This has given rise to a new structure of social inequality and an elaborate array of privileges and special services enjoyed by those at the top of the bureaucratic pyramid (Horvat, 1982: 70-74). These privileges and the social stratification that now characterize Soviet society are in sharp contradiction to the classless and egalitarian nature of socialism envisaged by the founders of Marxism and by the early Bolsheviks themselves.

Remedies for combating the bureaucratization of the state and the emergence of a bureaucratic elite in the transition to socialism have been proposed and, in some cases, tried by a long line of Marxists. Lenin himself advocated a number of measures based upon the experiences of the Paris Commune.

> *The workers, after winning state power, will smash the old bureaucratic apparatus... they will replace it by a new one, consisting of the very same workers and other employees,* against *whose transformation into bureaucrats the measures will at once be taken which were specified in detail by Marx and Engels: (1) not only election, but also recall at any time; (2) pay not to exceed that of a workman; (3) immediate introduction of control and supervision by* all, *so that* all *may become "bureaucrats" for a time and that, therefore,* nobody *may be able to become a "bureaucrat" [cited in Bellis, 1979: 35].*

What Lenin envisaged was the conversion of the state bureaucracy into a simplified system of administration and accounting in which the general citizenry would take turns performing the necessary tasks. During the first years of the Soviet regime, the Bolsheviks considered the local soviets to be the appropriate revolutionary democratic structure for involving the general citizenry in the direct administration of public affairs. However, in practice, the soviets proved to be ineffective and they were replaced by a centralized system of party control and state administration that was developed during the 1920s and consolidated during the Stalinist period (see Narkiewicz, 1970).

Contemporary Marxists such as Branko Horvat argue that the bureaucratic degeneration of transitional regimes can be prevented only through the effective deconcentration and decentralization of state power within a federative socialist democracy (Horvat, 1982: 283-237). According to Horvat, this requires the separation of state power between different functional branches of government, free elections, civil liberties, a free press, the protection of citizens from administrative abuses through ombudsmen-like arrangements, and the establishment

of self-management in work organizations and self-government at the community level. Decentralization involves decisions being taken in a democratic manner at the lowest level possible and a federative structure for deciding issues and coordinating matters that affect wider numbers of people than those within a specific locale or workplace.

China offers an extreme example of efforts to deal with the problems stemming from the bureaucratization of the revolutionary state during the transition to socialism. During the Great Cultural Revolution, Mao and the Red Guards attacked the party and state bureaucrats as enemies of the socialist revolution, and sought to eliminate "bureaucratism" (i.e., the defects and ills associated with bureaucracy) from all aspects of Chinese society. As a result of this antibureaucratic campaign, many party and state bureaucrats were removed from their positions and sent to work in the countryside as simple farmworkers (Friedland, 1982: 199-200). However, this campaign appears to have succeeded primarily in disrupting the functioning of the state and the economy rather than stamping out bureaucratism.

The struggle against bureaucratism has been a continuing theme in revolutionary Cuba. The Cubans have attempted to combat this problem by increasing popular participation in the formulation and implementation of policy. The creation during the 1970s of elected organs of People's Power at the local level was aimed at curbing bureaucratism and democratizing the state apparatus (see Harnecker, 1979: 159-193). Although it is not a full-fledged decentralized system of government, the basic outlines of Cuba's structure of People's Power resemble those of the Paris Commune.

Cuba's system of People's Power has provided for a limited degree of decentralization and self-government at the local level. It does not extend to national and foreign policy issues, and national officials are not directly elected by the people. There is also an absence of opposing political parties and political tendencies or the advocacy of alternative policy proposals. This leads even sympathetic Marxist observers such as Michael Lowy to conclude that "the masses do not yet have the power of *decision* between alternative economic or political policies" at the national level in Cuba (Lowy, 1986: 270). According to Lowy, further democratization and debureaucratization of the Cuban state are limited by "the one-party system and the party's monolithic internal structure."

THE ROLE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY VANGUARD

This raises the important question of the nature of the revolutionary vanguard and its relationship to the popular masses in the construction of socialism. Over the years, this has been the subject of intense debate among Marxists. There is not sufficient space in this essay to do justice to this theme (e.g., see Rossanda et al., 1976), so we will only highlight the main issues in this debate as they relate to the transition to socialism in Latin America and the Caribbean.

First, it is important to recall what Marx and Engels wrote about the political organization of the proletariat. Their conception of this question serves as a frame of reference for understanding subsequent developments in Marxist thought on this question. Basic to their conception was the idea that the political organization of the working class would largely arise out of the struggles between the members of this class and the bourgeoisie.

In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party,* Marx and Engels provide a clear statement of what they thought the relationship of the party should be to the working class.

> *The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties.... They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement. . . . The Communists... are, on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement [Marx and Engels, 1972: 46].*

From this quote, it is clear that Marx and Engels conceived their party to be an integral part of the larger working-class movement, distinguished by its nonsectarianism, internationalism, and superior theoretical overview of the movement.

Based upon these ideas of Marx and Engels regarding the nature of the communist party and its relationship to the working class, early Marxist parties in western Europe sought to work within the larger working-class movement and provide it with a revolutionary vision. After the demise of the First International organized by Marx and Engels, these parties developed organically into *mass parties* at the

national level, open to the entire working class and often surrounded by an interlocking network of associated unions, cooperatives, and voluntary associations (Friedland, 1982: 64). For the most part, these were the forerunners of the contemporary social democratic parties of western Europe.

In the context of the repressive political climate created by the Tzarist police-state in prerevolutionary Russia, Lenin and the Bolsheviks developed a different type of political organization called a *vanguard party*. This type of party is characterized by strict internal centralization, secrecy, and a restricted, highly disciplined membership of professional revolutionaries (Connor, 1968: 62; Friedland, 1982: 64; Lenin, 1976: 535). Until recently, this model of a vanguard party was adopted by the official Communist parties in Latin America. However, the Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Grenadan revolutions are evidence that, at least during the insurrectionary stage, this type of party is not a necessary condition for a successful revolutionary strategy. Moreover, the ongoing popular revolutionary movement in El Salvador does not conform to the traditional Leninist model of a vanguard revolutionary party.

In Latin America today, it appears that most official Communist parties, as well as most leftist organizations, realize that they cannot be the exclusive vanguard of the popular forces in their countries (Bollinger, 1985: 62-63). The Nicaraguan and Salvadoran revolutionary movements offer important examples of unity between different vanguard elements representing different political tendencies. They also reveal the viability of combining armed vanguard organizations with mass-based popular organizations.

As a result of the recent experience of the Central American revolutions, current conceptions among the Left of the relationship between the vanguard and the masses appear to have departed significantly from the traditional Leninist formula. Current strategy involves the formation of a multiclass political movement that encompasses a series of mass organizations that represent the proletariat, peasantry, semiproletarianized masses, and important sectors of the petty bourgeoisie. These unarmed popular organizations are supported by armed guerrilla forces. The revolutionary vanguard consists of political activists who provide the leadership for the entire movement by unifying the various popular forces in a common revolutionary project. They guide the struggle against the existing order to a successful conclusion and afterwards direct the construction of the new society in accordance with the revolutionary project (Núñez, 1986: 246-247). They

are responsible for mediating between revolutionary theory and practice and for shaping the ideological orientation of the revolutionary process. In this conception there is no dichotomy between vanguard and mass organizations. Both mass organizations and an organized revolutionary vanguard are essential components of the larger popular movement that carries out the revolutionary project.

THE STAGES OF TRANSITION

In *What Is To Be Done?* (Connor, 1968: 31-78) and *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (1968: 79-109), Lenin developed a revolutionary strategy applicable to underdeveloped societies. In these pamphlets, Lenin set forth his thesis that the more immature or backward the society in terms of its readiness for a socialist revolution, the more necessary it was for the revolutionary vanguard to play a directive role in raising the political consciousness of the masses and mobilizing them to take revolutionary action.

Lenin called for a two-stage revolutionary strategy and the formation, under the aegis of the revolutionary vanguard, of an alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry. This alliance was needed in order to force to a completion the bourgeois revolution that the backward and weak capitalist class was incapable of completing on its own. Once this bourgeois democratic revolution was completed, Lenin argued that the worker-peasant alliance would fall apart as significant sections of the peasantry defected to the bourgeoisie. At this point, the proletariat would have to ally with the poorer, semiproletarianized strata of the peasantry in order to press ahead and make a socialist revolution. These ideas, along with those put forth in his pamphlet, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,* provided a revolutionary doctrine for the underdeveloped countries of the world.

The Cuban experience conforms in general to Lenin's idea of a two-stage revolution, that is, a national (bourgeois) democratic stage followed by a socialist revolutionary stage. In fact, the Cubans use these concepts to describe the history of the revolutionary struggle in their country (see Rodríguez, 1978: 112-136).

However, it is important to note that during the insurrectionary period and for two years after the seizure of power, the Cuban Revolution was led by a rural-based, armed guerrilla movement—the July 26th Movement—and not by a revolutionary political party with a

proletarian ideology. It was not until two years after the formation of the revolutionary regime that the Popular Socialist Party, Cuba's official Marxist-Leninist party, joined with the July 26th Movement to form, under the leadership of Fidel Castro, what is today known as the Communist Party of Cuba (Harnecker, 1979: xviii).

In Chile, the Communists in the UP coalition held the Leninist view that the Chilean revolution would have to go through first a "national democratic" and then a "socialist" stage of development (Griffith-Jones, 1981: 125-126). The victory of the UP in the presidential elections of 1970 constituted for them the beginning of the national democratic revolution. However, other elements within the UP coalition considered this two-stage strategy unrealistic. They argued that the revolutionary process would rapidly evolve into a struggle for power with the bourgeois opposition, and that the outcome of this struggle could only be socialism or counterrevolution. Thus a portion of the membership of the Socialist Party, the Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitaria (MAPU), and various minor groups within the UP coalition advocated that the Allende government follow a strategy of rapid institutional change and proposed a plebiscite to dissolve the congress and elect a new People's Assembly (Bitar, 1979; Mistral, 1974: 67-69).

President Allende and most of the leadership of the Socialist Party, the Communists, and the Radical Party held fast to the view that the popular forces were not prepared for a major confrontation with the bourgeoisie and the armed forces. As a result, they chose to follow a gradualist strategy that sought to postpone a major confrontation with the bourgeoisie until the UP government had consolidated its gains (Griffith-Jones, 1981: 126; Bitar, 1979: 319-321).

The Nicaraguan experience is unique in several respects. First, Nicaragua's official Marxist-Leninist party—the Nicaraguan Socialist Party—has played an insignificant role in the revolutionary process, and today is part of the leftist opposition to the ruling Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista Front for National Liberation, or FSLN) (Ruchwarger, 1987: 43-44). Second, the revolutionary regime does not describe itself as socialist or Marxist-Leninist, but rather as anti-imperialist, popular, and democratic (see Harris and Vilas, 1985: 1-4, 227-230; Vilas, 1986: 264-269). The revolutionary vanguard in Nicaragua is the FSLN, which has evolved from a guerrilla movement into a political party that combines Leninist, electoral, and mass party characteristics. It adheres to its own homegrown ideology of *Sandinismo,* an eclectic mixture of revolutionary nationalism, Marxism,

liberation theology, and classical liberalism (Ruchwarger, 1987: 74).

In El Salvador, the revolutionary movement is engaged in a national democratic revolutionary struggle that is based upon an alliance of the popular classes. The leadership of this movement sees the revolutionary project in their country as involving both a democratic, anti-imperialist revolution, and a socialist revolution. In the words of Salvadoran Communist Party leader Shafik Handal:

> *It is not possible to move to socialism except through democratic, anti-imperialist revolution, but it is equally not possible to consummate the democratic, anti-imperialist revolution without going towards socialism. Between the two there is an essential and insoluble nexus; they are facets of one single revolution and not two revolutions [cited in Vilas, 1986: 37].*

This implies a two-stage or phased revolutionary process, involving first the mobilization of the masses in a national democratic and anti-imperialist struggle, followed by a period of struggle in which the people learn that the democratic and anti-imperialist objectives of their revolution can be secured only through the construction of socialism (Bollinger, 1985: 61).

THE EXPROPRIATION OF CAPITAL

In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party,* Marx and Engels predicted that once the proletariat gained political power, they would use it "to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State," and to "increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible" (Marx and Engels, 1972: 52). It is clear from their writings and statements that they did *not* foresee the immediate abolition of *all* forms of capitalist property. Moreover, they thought that socialist relations of production and the disappearance of class distinctions would take place over time, "in the course of development" was the phrase that they used in the manifesto (1972: 53).

In order to avoid serious economic dislocations in Russia following the Bolshevik seizure of power, Lenin initially proposed the coexistence, over an indefinite period, of certain forms of large capitalist property with incipient forms of socialist property (Lange, 1971: 41; Rodríguez, 1978: 113). However, for various reasons, the bourgeoisie proved

uncooperative, and the new Soviet regime was forced to seize their property within a short period of time. This caused serious dislocations, since the regime lacked sufficient cadres with organizational expertise to administer the large number of expropriated enterprises.

A similar situation occurred in the case of the Cuban Revolution. The extent of U.S. ownership in the Cuban economy was so great that the new revolutionary regime was unable to initiate any meaningful reforms without coming into conflict with the interests of U.S. capital and the U.S. government (Boorstein, 1968: 32-34). Thus the revolutionary regime had to nationalize important sectors of the economy to break the American stranglehold over Cuban economic life. The U.S. reaction to the revolutionary regime's initial reforms was so great that the regime was forced to take even more radical measures to offset the efforts of the U.S. government and the bourgeoisie to destabilize the regime. As a result, within two years, most of the industrial sector had been nationalized by the new state, the best agricultural lands (about 40 percent of the arable land) were also nationalized, as well as the banks, railroads, telecommunications system, utilities, airlines, ports, major retail outlets, big hotels, and export/import firms (Rodríguez, 1978: 123).

In the late 1930s, Oskar Lange wrote an important essay, "On the Economic Theory of Socialism," in which he argued that the very existence of a government bent on introducing socialism is a constant threat to private enterprise and that no amount of government supervision or measures could cope effectively with "the passive resistance and sabotage of the owners and managers" of private enterprises who see themselves threatened with expropriation (Lange, 1971: 39-40). Therefore, he contended that a government "really intent upon socialism has to decide to carry out its socialization program at one stroke, or to give it up altogether." Any attempt to do otherwise, he predicted, would paralyze business, provoke a financial panic, and lead to an economic collapse.

Like Lange, Ernest Mandel has argued against gradual socialization and "mixed economy" strategies of transition. He rejects the claims of those (e.g., see Nove, 1983: 193-195) who argue that the nationalization of a few key sectors can be combined with the retention of private property in the rest of the economy in order to minimize the disruption of production and reduce the costs of planning, administration, and economic management (Mandel, 1968: 649). According to Mandel, where such strategies have been attempted, either the extent of

nationalization has been so slight that the economy is not really "mixed," or the nationalization is significant and it provokes the flight of capital out of the remaining sectors.

The experience of the UP government in Chile bears directly on this question. The UP program called for an accelerated and simultaneous expropriation of the country's large agricultural estates, banking system, mining industry, telecommunications system, and the larger enterprises in its relatively important manufacturing sector (Bitar, 1979: 18).

Sergio Bitar, a former minister in Allende's cabinet, has argued that the expropriation process in Chile was carried out too slowly and in an ambiguous manner. He claims that these defects gave the owners of enterprises threatened with expropriation time to reduce their investments, run down their equipment, and sell off their assets (1979: 272). Moreover, due to uncertainty about the exact scope of the expropriations, in part caused by the government's failure to define the scope of its policy clearly (Griffith-Jones, 1981: 125), many of the medium and smaller producers engaged in the same type of disruptive economic behavior as the larger capitalists.

The most recent example of this problem is revolutionary Nicaragua. The immediate confiscation of the holdings of Somoza and his closest followers gave the state control over approximately 40 percent of the economy, and left the remaining 60 percent in the hands of private producers (Harris and Vilas, 1985: 41-57). As mentioned previously, however, the Sandinista leadership does not believe that an across-the-board expropriation of the private sector is feasible under prevailing conditions in Nicaragua. As a result, the extent of nationalization that has taken place has not been sufficient to eliminate the bourgeoisie's ability to maneuver (Vilas, 1986: 162).

Despite guarantees and favorable inducements from the government, most of the large private producers and many of the medium producers not only have failed to cooperate with the regime's economic policies, they have engaged in many of the same kind of disruptive tactics used by the private sector in Chile. In addition, Washington has greatly aggravated the situation by preventing the revolutionary government from obtaining essential loans and credits from international lending sources, by imposing a U.S. trade embargo on Nicaragua, and by subjecting the country to a brutal war of attrition carried out by proxy counterrevolutionary forces armed and directed by the U.S. government (Matthews, 1986).

The Chilean and Nicaraguan cases provided strong support for the proposition that in Latin America and the Caribbean a gradual and/or limited expropriation of large capital leads to an inevitable economic crisis produced by capital flight, disinvestment, a decline in productive output, inflationary demand, and economic sabotage. In the Nicaraguan case, it appears that the revolutionary regime has had little choice but to follow a mixed economy strategy, despite the consequences. As noted above, a more radical approach to expropriation would most likely have plunged the country into economic chaos and given Washington grounds to justify its claims that Nicaragua is "another Cuba." In addition, a more radical approach probably would have cost the revolutionary regime valuable international support from Latin American and European social democratic governments that have refused to go along with Washington's efforts to isolate and overthrow the Sandinistas (Harris and Vilas, 1985: 228-229).

The Cuban, Chilean, Grenadan, and Nicaraguan cases also reveal that the U.S. government can be expected to contribute to the economic crisis caused by efforts to expropriate domestic capital. The U.S. government in the past has utilized a variety of overt and covert measures to do this, including (1) curtailment of credits from both public and private U.S. sources, (2) veto of loans and credits from international financial institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Inter-American Development Bank, (3) the imposition of a trade blockade, (4) a disinformation campaign, (5) covert financial and political support of dissident producer associations, unions, and so forth, and (6) economic sabotage and support of military attacks on important economic targets by mercenary and/or counterrevolutionary forces (e.g., see Conroy, 1985; Mars, 1984; Matthews, 1986; U.S. Senate, 1976). Support from the socialist states and other Third World countries is critical to the survival of a transitional regime subjected to these measures (Thomas, 1974: 247).

THE SOCIALIZATION OF AGRICULTURE

As already indicated, in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx and Engels included a list of measures that they thought would be taken by the victorious proletariat once they had seized power. The first measure on this list was "the abolition of property in land" (Marx and

Engels, 1972: 52). Also included in this list of measures were the establishment of industrial armies in agriculture, the combination of agriculture with manufacturing, and the gradual abolition of the distinctions between town and country through a more equitable distribution of the population. Thus it is clear that the founders of Marxism believed that the transition to socialism would involve a radical transformation of agriculture (see Harris, 1978).

Engels clearly stated this perspective in his well-known essay on "The Peasant Question in France and Germany" (Marx and Engels, 1972: 633-650). In this essay, he argued that the lands of the large landowners would have to be expropriated once the proletariat had seized power. Yet, he also made it clear that the proletariat could not hope to undertake a revolutionary transformation of rural society against the will of the peasantry. Consequently, their small holdings could not be expropriated by the revolutionary state. Instead, he contended that they would have to be persuaded over time that it was in their interests to join cooperatives in order to enjoy the advantages of large-scale farming.

> *When we are in possession of state power we shall not even think of forcibly expropriating the small peasants. . . . Our task relative to the small peasant consists . . . in effecting a transition of his private enterprise and private possession to cooperative ones, not forcibly but by dint of example and the proffer of social assistance for this purpose [Marx and Engels, 1972: 644-645].*

He also suggested that the peasantry could be encouraged to form cooperatives and engage in large-scale production if the revolutionary state assumed their entire indebtedness and provided them with machinery and fertilizers (Marx and Engels, 1972: 645).

Confronted with the immense task of socializing Russia's predominately peasant society, Lenin tried to follow Marx and Engels's ideas by placing great importance upon the gradual cooperativization of the peasantry. This is revealed in his essay "On Co-operation," written one year before his death and at the time of the Soviet regime's New Economic Policy (NEP). It is important to note that Lenin thought that the process of cooperativization among the peasantry would "take a whole historical epoch" of at least one or two decades, and that it could not be achieved "without universal literacy, without a proper degree of efficiency, without training the population sufficiently to acquire the habit of book-reading" (Lenin, 1976: 692).

However, the Soviet regime apparently had neither the political support nor the organizational capacity to succeed in the voluntary cooperativization of the peasantry under the NEP (MacEwan, 1981: 41-42; Mandel, 1968: 549-560). As a result, during the period 1930-1937, the regime resorted to the forced collectivization (i.e., statization) of the country's peasant-based agricultural sector. This involved forcing the peasants to join large-scale, state-managed cooperatives (Deere, 1986: 105-106; Mandel, 1968: 553-555).

The Soviet experience can be contrasted with that of the socialization of agriculture in revolutionary China. Due to the fact that the Chinese Communist Party came to power after a long revolutionary struggle based in the countryside, it was able to rely upon its political support among the peasantry and its administrative experience gained in the liberated areas it had governed prior to the seizure of power at the national level. Thus it succeeded in mobilizing the country's immense peasant population into agricultural cooperatives and then later into more collectivized, multifaceted communes (Amin, 1981: 64-71, 102; MacEwan, 1981: 42). However, it should be noted that the communes have recently been dissolved and Chinese agriculture has been decollectivized to a certain degree as part of the current economic reforms in China.

The Cuban case can be contrasted with that of both China and the Soviet Union. In Cuba, because the agricultural sector contained mostly large sugar plantations and cattle ranches—many of which were owned by U.S. capital—and because a very sizable proportion of the rural population constituted a wage-earning agricultural proletariat, the revolutionary government was able to carry out in a few years time a radical agrarian reform program that ended up placing most of Cuban agriculture under the control of large-scale state farms. Today, approximately 80 percent of the arable land in Cuba is owned by state farms, 11 percent by peasant production cooperatives, and 9 percent by individual peasant families (Deere, 1986: 110). As a result, Cuba has the highest percentage of agricultural land under direct state administration of any country in the Third World (1986: 136).

Revolutionary Nicaragua's experience in the transformation of agriculture has been quite different from that of Cuba, the Soviet Union, and China. The new revolutionary regime's immediate confiscation of the land owned by the Somoza family and their associates placed about 20 percent of the country's arable land under the control of the revolutionary state (see Collins, 1986: 31). For the most part, these

confiscated properties were turned into large state farms, while a small portion of the confiscated properties were distributed to rural workers or poor peasants so that they could be farmed collectively in state-organized cooperatives.

In essence, this first stage of the revolutionary regime's agrarian reform established the state as a major agricultural producer and terminated the predominance of large capital in the Nicaraguan countryside. However, it did not eliminate the large capitalist producers. In fact, they retained control over the majority of the country's most important agroexport farms and agroindustries (Collins, 1986: 39-50; Harris and Vilas, 1985: 41-46).

Most of the large producers chose not to cooperate with the revolutionary state and to sabotage the regime's economic policies (Collins, 1986: 44-45; Harris and Vilas, 1985: 51-53). Originally, the government's agrarian reform program emphasized reactivating agro-export production on the large, privately owned estates, concentrating government investments in the state sector and encouraging the small and medium producers to form cooperatives (Collins, 1986: 155-156). But as U.S. backed counterrevolutionary attacks and propaganda efforts increased in areas of the country dominated by small and medium producers, the agrarian reform was reoriented toward increased distribution of land to individual peasant producers, without any conditions that they join cooperatives. In this way, the regime has been able to assure many peasants in the war zones that their lands will not, as the counterrevolutionary forces have alleged, be taken from them, neither will they be forced to form cooperatives or work for state farms (Collins, 1986: 157).

It is important to note that one of the reasons the revolutionary regime in Nicaragua was originally reluctant to distribute land to a significant number of individual peasant producers was the government's fears that this would aggravate the already existing labor shortage in the agroexport sector (Collins, 1986: 153-154). In other words, it was feared that this would divert a large proportion of the rural labor force into individual, small-scale farming and make it even more difficult for the large agricultural units to obtain sufficient laborers to harvest the country's agroexports. Serious labor shortages for the agroexport harvests have been a continuing problem in Nicaragua, and in an effort to deal with this problem, the government has raised the wages for many agricultural workers so that they are comparable with that of the country's small number of skilled industrial workers (1986:

254). This is also aimed at narrowing the gap between rural and urban wages and reducing the differences between those who live in the towns and those in the countryside.

The problem of labor shortages in agriculture and the contradictions between town and countryside have appeared in other cases of transition. For example, in Cuba, labor shortages in agriculture have been a chronic problem. This problem stems from the gap between urban and rural conditions in Cuba, although the government has pursued policies aimed at balancing the development of these two sectors (MacEwan, 1981: 214). Mechanization of the harvesting of agroexports as well as the mobilization of voluntary work brigades for the harvests have been the main responses to the labor shortages in Cuban agriculture. These measures have been replicated in revolutionary Nicaragua. Achieving some sort of balance between the two sectors in terms of labor incentives and policy priorities appears to be the key to resolving this problem (see MacEwan, 1981: 220-221; FitzGerald, 1985).

DEVELOPMENT OF THE FORCES OF PRODUCTION

The prevailing Marxist perspective is that unless underdeveloped societies undergoing the transition to socialism rapidly develop their forces of production (i.e., both human and material resources), they can only aspire to a "socialism of poverty" (Mandel, 1968: 610; White et al., 1983). This perspective is based upon the premise that the forces of production in these societies are so inadequate that they can neither provide the abundance of goods needed to satisfy the basic needs of the population nor make possible the development of the human potentialities of the individual members of the population (Mandel, 1968: 610-611). It is argued, therefore, that the transition to socialism must involve what has been called "socialist accumulation" (Mandel, 1968: 611; Castaños, 1977: 67-76). Generally speaking, this involves setting aside a substantial proportion of the national income for investment in the expansion and development of the forces of production.

In the Soviet case, accumulation for the purposes of developing the productive forces resulted in what E. A. Preobrazhensky described as "primitive socialist accumulation" (see Bellis, 1979: 167). In essence, this entailed the revolutionary state's extraction of a portion of the surplus

product produced in the agricultural sector and its use in the expansion of the industrial sector. This was accomplished through a variety of means, including requisitioning food supplies from the peasantry, unequal terms of trade in which manufactured goods were exchanged for agricultural products at terms unfavorable to the rural population, and the imposition by the state of a tax-in-kind on the agricultural surplus produced by the peasantry (see Mandel, 1968: 548-560). In the long run, accumulation under the Soviet regime took place through the forced collectivization of the peasantry and the imposition of a turnover tax that was added to the prices of both agricultural and manufactured goods consumed by the general population.

Contemporary Marxists such as Ernest Mandel have severely criticized the measures used by the Soviet regime to promote accumulation and develop the country's forces of production. However, Mandel does admit that without substantial aid from one or more industrially advanced societies, the difficulties associated with socialist accumulation in an underdeveloped society can lead contemporary revolutionary regimes to resort to the same kind of measures that were used in the Soviet Union (Mandel, 1968: 618).

In this regard, it is interesting to note that the problems of accumulation appear to have been significantly reduced in the Cuban case due to the extensive amount of economic assistance that the Soviet Union has provided revolutionary Cuba (Castaños, 1977: 75; MacEwan, 1981: 221). This factor, added to the fact that Cuba began its transition to socialism with an economic infrastructure superior to that of most Third World societies, has made it possible for the revolutionary regime to develop the country's forces of production without resorting to the kind of "primitive socialist accumulation" strategy followed in the Soviet Union (Amin, 1981: 36-37; FitzGerald, 1986: 47).

Related to the strategy of accumulation followed by the Soviets is what certain Marxist economists have called "the law of priority in the development of the capital goods sector." According to this "law," the amount invested in the production of the capital goods sector must increase more rapidly than the amount in the consumer goods sector in order to ensure a high rate of economic growth during the transition to socialism (Mandel, 1968: 627-630). However, many contemporary Marxist economists hold an opposing position that is based on the thesis that a balanced increase in both of these sectors yields better all-around results. This strategy increases productivity by providing the producers with positive incentives in the form of more consumer goods to increase

their output (see Amin, 1981: 36-37; FitzGerald, 1986: 49-50; Mandel, 1968: 627; Nove, 1983: 159-160).

It is also argued that in small, underdeveloped societies engaged in the construction of socialism, the agroexport sector must be substituted as the priority sector of accumulation in place of the weak or almost nonexistent capital goods sector (see FitzGerald, 1985, 1986). Since these societies have inherited neocolonial economies that are structurally dependent upon foreign trade, this perspective sees the expansion of the net earnings from their agroexport production as the only realistic means to increase the growth of these economies. Through increased earnings from their agroexport sector, it is reasoned that they can obtain the foreign exchange to purchase both the capital goods and other inputs needed for their development.

This thesis has influenced the economic development strategies of both Cuba and Nicaragua, and it also appears to have influenced the economic strategy of the UP government in Chile. One of the problems, however, with this type of strategy is that it is susceptible to the same kind of "accumulation bias" evident in the heavy industry or capital goods approach to socialist development (Nuti, 1979: 248). That is to say, the state planners and administrators tend to overemphasize the production of agroexports at the expense of the production of basic consumer goods.

Moreover, this strategy has more fundamental problems. First, an economic strategy based primarily on the expansion of agroexport production is extremely vulnerable to external economic aggression (Stallings, 1986: 75). This is evidenced by the U.S. trade and financial blockades of Cuba, Chile, and, more recently, Nicaragua. In addition, Clive Thomas, a prominent Guyanese Marxist with considerable experience in Africa as well as the Caribbean, contends that the experience of most small, underdeveloped societies clearly indicates that agroexport production in this historical era does not contain enough dynamic potential to transform their economies (Thomas, 1974: 167). This is because the international market for most agroexport products is characterized by instability and declining prices. He also contends that a strategy of development based upon overspecialization in agroexports tends to have harmful effects on rural incomes and reinforces the diversion of key resources away from the production of basic foods.

Support for Thomas's argument can be found in both the Cuban and Nicaraguan cases. In Cuba, the reliance upon the production of sugar for export (and agriculture in general) as the center of the country's

economic strategy has made the development of the country dependent upon what MacEwan has termed "the vicissitudes of the weather and of international commodity prices" (1981: 217). To some degree, Cuba's long-term sales agreements with the Soviet Union and other socialist states have helped to insulate the country's economy from price fluctuations in the international market, but they have not kept the economic development of the economy from being dependent upon what appears to be a weak basis for accumulation, that is, agroexports (MacEwan, 1981: 217-220).

Revolutionary Nicaragua's experience appears to provide even greater confirmation of Thomas's argument. The revolutionary regime's economic strategy has emphasized agroexport production as the primary source of accumulation, but the annual earnings from its agroexports have never been sufficient to cover its essential imports or service its foreign debt, let alone finance developments in other sectors of the economy (Harris and Vilas, 1985: 56, 75-76). As a result, in recent years the revolutionary regime has been forced to reorient the economy increasingly toward the production of basic foods for popular consumption (Collins, 1986: 250-259).

THE IMPORTANCE OF FINANCES AND PRICES

The lack of coordination between structural transformations and financial policy appears to have been a major shortcoming of the UP government in Chile (Bitar, 1979: 248). In fact, it seems that the UP policymakers did not perceive the acute importance of financial policy in the transition to socialism. This appears to have been due to "the implicit belief that structural changes (in particular, changes in property relations) would mechanically ease economic problems in the short-term" (Griffith-Jones, 1981: 170). However, in the initial stages of the transition to socialism, the historical evidence indicates that serious financial problems tend to be generated by the economic transformations undertaken by revolutionary regimes. These include accelerating inflation, capital flight, dwindling foreign exchange reserves, difficulties in financing essential imports, currency speculation and devaluation, the emergence of a black market, and so forth.

It is important to note that financial and pricing policies affect not only the functioning of the economy but also the level of political

support for the revolutionary regime (see Bettelheim, 1978: 223-234; Bitar, 1979: 248-302; Griffith-Jones, 1981: 185-193; Nove, 1983: 160-195). High levels of inflation during the initial stages of the transition to socialism disrupt the operation of the market at a time when it cannot be replaced by effective planning mechanisms, and this tends to undermine the political support of the small producers (e.g., the peasantry) and the so-called middle class of salaried white collar employees and self-employed professionals, all of whom are closely linked to the market. Thus, in Chile, the hyperinflationary effects of the UP government's expansion of the money supply, its inability to control wage increases, its ineffective use of price controls, and its continuing budget deficits contributed to the government's loss of support among Chile's middle sectors (Bitar, 1979: 278-302; Griffith-Jones, 1981: 162-165).

PLAN AND MARKET IN THE TRANSITION

According to the classical Marxist perspective, socialism requires a planned economy in order to do away with the anarchy associated with capitalist commodity production and with the class conflict and social equality inherent in capitalist societies. It is clear from the writings of Marx and Engels that they expected prices, money, wages, the exchange of commodities, and so forth, to be dispensed with in the initial stages of the construction of socialist society (Marx and Engels, 1972: 429, 432).

However, the experience of the existing socialist societies and those in transition to socialism does not conform to this original Marxist perspective. Instead of the social regulation of production based upon a comprehensive plan and the sharing-out of products, most products are exchanged as commodities, and commodity categories such as prices, money, payments, credit, profits, and differential wages exist alongside a certain degree of economic planning and the centralized allocation of major resources (Bettelheim, 1978: 31-33).

Because of the existence of various forms of property, the uneven development of the productive forces, and the lack of integration between the different branches of production, it is not feasible for the state or any central entity to exercise effective control over all the diverse economic subjects or make all the millions of economic decisions that have to be made. In fact, as Bettelheim notes: "even within a single state sector, efficient and therefore socially useful intervention in all decisions

by a single social-economic center is still inconceivable" (1978: 71). This situation was first recognized by Lenin and later explained in some detail by Stalin in his treatise on the *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR* (cited in Bettelheim, 1978: 107-109 passim).

In the existing socialist societies, the distribution of labor and material resources between the different spheres of production takes place through market-like arrangements that are similar to those in capitalist societies, with the important exception that they are subject to various degrees of state planning and control (Bettelheim, 1978: 173). In other words, the regulation of the economy through state planning and controls is *partial.* For example, in Cuba "the general spread of commodity-money relations, which also include relations between state enterprises, requires . . . categories such as budget, credit, price, cost, profit, and also demands that in activities financed by the state budget purchase-and-sale relations be established with the suppliers" (Center for Cuban Studies, 1976: 17). This approach has replaced the earlier system of quantitative targets that were set by the central planning authorities for the country's numerous local units of production. Under the previous system, there was no incentive for the units of production to minimize their costs. However, prices are now used to induce action in accordance with planned goals and serve as indicators of efficient performance.

In Cuba, as in other centrally planned economies such as the Soviet Union and China, major investment decisions are determined by centralized planning. They are not based upon prices and profit considerations, as in the case of capitalist enterprises (Mandel, 1968: 635; MacEwan, 1981: 184). In the most general sense, these investment decisions are aimed at "increasing the socialized productive forces so as to ensure an increasing abundance of goods and services for the citizens . . . and to bring about, as a long-term prospect, the withering away of the market economy, classes, social inequality, the state, and the division of labor" (Mandel, 1968: 637). But in a more immediate sense, and in the case of each country, major investment decisions, as well as other planning decisions, are made in relation to the social, economic, and political priorities set down by the central authorities.

Apart from Cuba, there has been little success with comprehensive economic planning in Latin America. During the four and a half years of the People's Revolutionary Government in Grenada, the government apparently was unable to implement an operational plan for the economy (Pryor, 1986: 189-190). The UP government in Chile was not

even able to plan successfully the nationalized sector or *area social* of the economy, much less engage in effective comprehensive planning (Bitar, 1979: 15, 82; Nove, 1983: 183-184). In the case of revolutionary Nicaragua, a somewhat similar situation to that which prevailed in Chile under the Allende regime now exists. It is almost impossible for the regime to engage in effective planning, due to the opposition of the large private producers to the regime's economic policies, U.S. efforts to destabilize the economy, the effects of the war on the economy, and the unfavorable international market for its agroexports. (Coraggio, 1986: 151-155; Harris and Vilas, 1985: 68-69).

In general, most existing socialist societies have found it difficult to achieve an adequate balance between central direction of the economy and local initiative at the level of the individual units of production (Boorstein, 1968: 259). The pattern that developed in the Soviet Union involved strong centralized control over the local units of production. However, in the 1950s, Yugoslavia initiated a more decentralized pattern of center-enterprise relations that is today characterized by considerable, some Marxists argue too much, autonomy at the enterprise level (see Bettelheim, 1978: 54; Horvat, 1982: 164-165, 302-306). Since the 1960s, there has been a tendency on the part of the central authorities in China, the Soviet Union, and the eastern European countries to devolve more decisions and initiative to the enterprise level (see Boorstein, 1968: 262; Brus, 1975: 148-171; Vajda, 1981; White, 1983). In fact, this has even resulted, in the case of China, in the dissolution of the communes and the partial decollectivization of agriculture.

The experience of the existing socialist societies has demonstrated that when a centralized planning body attempts to impose detailed production targets on individual enterprises, it tends to present them with tasks that they cannot fulfill and takes away from them the flexibility they need in order to function effectively. Moreover, it is not enough to grant the enterprise relative autonomy vis-à-vis the central planning and administrative apparatus. It is also necessary for the production relations *within* the enterprise to be transformed in a democratic fashion. Otherwise, the former private employer is merely replaced by the state as the new employer, embodied in the form of the enterprise management. The solution in Marxist theory to this problem is the development, over time, of workers' self-management. This begins with worker supervision of management and is followed by increasing degrees of worker participation in the direct management of the

enterprise (Horvat, 1982: 487; Mandel, 1968: 644).

Short-lived, partial and/or isolated instances of workers self-management (*autogestión*) have developed in several Latin American countries, for example, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, and Peru (see Iturraspe, 1986). But the experience in these countries has not been part of an ongoing process of revolutionary transformation.

In revolutionary Cuba and Nicaragua, one finds limited but developing forms of workers participation in the management of state enterprises and cooperatives. The direct management of enterprises by their workers does not seem likely in the near future. In Nicaragua, the work force's general lack of organizational skills and low level of education place a definite limit on worker participation in planning and decision making at the enterprise level (Harris and Vilas, 1985: 68-69). In addition, there is resistance to workers' participation from administrators and *tecnicos* who do not know how to function in a participatory organizational process. Moreover, it is clear from the accumulated experience at the international level that workers' self-management cannot be developed overnight (Horvat, 1982: 261-262). It requires extensive preparation and a lengthy learning process in which workers, managers, and state officials develop the organizational skills and attitudes appropriate to this highly advanced form of democratic social relations.

IDEOLOGY AND CULTURE IN THE TRANSITION

In the transition to socialism, one of the main instruments of social transformation is socialist ideology (Horvat, 1982: 485). This ideology consists of certain fundamental human values and a body of social theory (i.e., Marxist thought on the construction of socialism) concerning how to realize these values in social life. Armed with this ideology, the revolutionary movement has the intellectual means to transform both the material and the subjective or ideological domain of social life. This domain consists of the values, ideals, norms, beliefs, criteria, attitudes, expectations, customs, tastes, symbols, myths, and knowledge possessed by the members of society. In fact, one of the most important aspects of the transition to socialism involves the revolutionary transformation of this subjective domain of ideas, culture, and social consciousness (Saul, 1986).

Lenin was one of the first Marxists to stress the need for a cultural revolution during the transition to socialism (Lenin, 1976: 695). He argued that once political power was consolidated in the Soviet Union, the emphasis had to be placed on "cultural work" and education. Moreover, he stressed that the cultural revolution would involve immense difficulties because of Russia's largely illiterate population. It was for this reason that he considered one of the most important tasks of the cultural revolution to be that of achieving universal literacy (1976: 685-686).

The Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions have confronted similar conditions. Because of widespread illiteracy, one of the first tasks involved in the cultural transformation of these societies has been the extension of literacy and the benefits of universal elementary education to the population as a whole. This is considered a fundamental prerequisite for overcoming the cultural and social underdevelopment of these societies.

Nicaragua's revolutionary leaders are acutely aware of the immense difficulties that must be overcome in order to transform the ideological dimension of their social reality (Harris, 1987). The Sandinistas have been forced to confront the fact that the revolutionary transformation of an underdeveloped society such as Nicaragua involves a difficult ideological struggle over issues of religion, ethnicity, race, language, and territorial identity. These have been some of the main issues seized upon by the enemies of the revolution as part of their efforts to undermine the legitimacy of the revolutionary regime and turn sectors of the population against it.

Every case of revolutionary transition reveals that the ideological struggle to replace bourgeois capitalist with proletarian socialist ideas is a crucial aspect of the transition to socialism. Marx was aware of this when he warned that "the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (Marx and Engels, 1972: 106). Thus it is not enough to transform the material conditions of underdevelopment; the subjective conditions must also be transformed and in their place must be developed a new revolutionary culture.

THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

In *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific,* Engels credited Charles Fourier, the great French utopian socialist, with being the "first to

declare that in any given society the degree of woman's emancipation is the natural measure of the general emancipation" (Marx and Engels, 1972: 406). This statement, as well as others in the writings of Marx and Engels, is evidence that they regarded the emancipation of women as a fundamental goal of socialism and a criterion by which social progress could be measured.

In *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels set forth what later became the basic premises of the orthodox Marxist-Leninist view of women's emancipation. In essence, he argued that the liberation of women from their subordination and oppression in capitalist society depends upon (1) women taking part in socially productive work, rather than being confined to housework, (2) the family being abolished as an economic unit, and (3) the socialization of domestic work through the establishment of public day care facilities, laundries, kitchens, and so forth (Marx and Engels, 1972: 510-516).

> *At all events, the position of the men thus undergoes considerable change. But that of the women, of* all *women, also undergoes important alteration. With the passage of the means of production into common property, the individual family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children become a public matter (1972: 511). . . Here we see that the emancipation of women and their equality with men are impossible and must remain so as long as women are excluded from socially productive work and restricted to housework, which is private. The emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large, social scale, and when domestic duties require their attention only to a minor degree [1972: 579].*

This conception of women's liberation was adopted by Lenin and the Bolshevik regime in Russia. Indeed, during the early years of the new Soviet state, many of the Bolsheviks held views on sexual liberation, marriage, and the nuclear family that were similar to those of radical feminists today (Molyneux, 1982: 71).

The orthodox Marxist-Leninist approach to women's emancipation that has been adopted by most socialist regimes was agreed upon at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920. Basically, this approach consists of (1) integrating women into production outside the home, (2) ending the subordination of women in peasant households, (3) developing social services to take over the bulk of child care and domestic work, (4) ensuring women equal access to employment and

education, (5) recruiting women into political and administrative positions, and (6) providing working conditions that satisfy the particular needs of women (Molyneux, 1982: 68).

This approach as well as the subsequent practices in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries have been criticized by contemporary radical feminists (see Molyneux, 1982, 1986). They fault this approach to women's liberation for overemphasizing the importance of integrating women into public employment and for failing to focus attention on the need to equalize *all* the relations between men and women. Feminist critics of the existing socialist societies argue that their governments have failed to carry out the kind of ideological struggle and consciousness-raising that is needed to revolutionize gender relations. They attribute this failure to the official view in these societies that women's oppression will eventually disappear as a result of economic transformations and to the conventional ideas of motherhood and family stability that are promoted by these regimes.

Moreover, radical feminists are quick to point out that the majority of women who are employed in the socialist countries are, like women in capitalist societies, concentrated in gender-specific occupations that tend to be paid less and have less status (Molyneux, 1982: 88-89). And they note that the underrepresentation of women in key decision-making positions is also similar to that in capitalist societies. They acknowledge that there has been an effort to reduce gender-typing in employment and to increase the opportunities for women in areas were they are underrepresented, but they argue that the sexual division of labor has not been radically transformed and that there has been no significant equalization of labor in the home. Finally, they contend that women's interests can only be advanced in these countries if they are represented by independent women's organizations, whereas orthodox Marxist-Leninists insist that these organizations should be subordinate to the party.

In Cuba, when the revolutionary regime was established in 1959, only some 15 percent of Cuban women were involved in work outside the home (MacEwan, 1981: 80-81). During the 1960s, the revolutionary government sought to integrate women into the work force and the Federation of Cuban Women made an effort to encourage women to participate in the labor force as well as in public affairs. However, the results were poor. By 1973, only 24 percent of Cuban women were involved in the labor force, and in the rural areas the situation was worse. Progress in integrating women into the work force has been

hindered by traditional attitudes of *machismo,* the "double shift" that most working women must endure (i.e., a full workday plus housework and child care), men's resistance to what they regard as "domestication" and unfavorable economic conditions that have obstructed the movement of women into the work force.

In recent years, the regime has focused more attention on the equalization of the relations between men and women in domestic affairs, has increased the number of women in higher education to over 40 percent of the total, and has guaranteed women full membership rights in the new agricultural cooperatives (Deere, 1986: 135-136; MacEwan, 1981: 81; Molyneux, 1982: 82). Nevertheless, the prevalence of *machismo* and patriarchal patterns in Cuban society continue to be an important obstacle to gender equality.

The Nicaraguan and Salvadoran revolutions have occurred during the period of the "new feminism" and women have played an important role in these revolutions. In Nicaragua, some 30 percent of the combatants in the armed FSLN units were women, and women constituted a large proportion of the membership of the popular organizations that emerged to oppose the Somoza dictatorship (Molyneux, 1986: 287; Wells, 1983: 109). In El Salvador, there appears to be an even larger percentage of women combatants involved in the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) forces. This is a significant phenomenon in countries that continue to be characterized by overtly sexist traditions.

The Sandinistas have a somewhat different approach to the emancipation of women than that of previous revolutionary movements with orthodox Marxist-Leninist views on this subject. For example, the Sandinistas do not consider feminism to be a "diversion" that undermines the unity of the revoluntionary forces, that is, the position of orthodox Marxist-Leninist parties in the past (Molyneux, 1986: 287). And the independent but pro-Sandinista women's organization Asociación de Mujeres Nicaragüenses "Luisa Amanda Espinoza" (AMNLAE) does not subscribe to the orthodox Marxist-Leninist approach that holds that women's emancipation is achieved primarily through integration into the work force (Ruchwarger, 1987: 188-189). AMNLAE also emphasizes the need to develop new relations between men and women and to combat the patriarchal patterns of behavior that characterize Nicaraguan society. One of its slogans is "no revolution without women's emancipation; no emancipation without revolution" (Molyneux, 1986: 288).

On the other hand, the Sandinistas have been limited in what they can do by the conservative influence that the Catholic Church exercises over the population and by the small base of popular support that exists for feminism within the country (Molyneux, 1986: 294). In fact, there is considerable hostility among the population to the ideas of women's emancipation, and *machista* sexist attitudes are prevalent among women as well as men. This helps to explain why the pro-Sandinista unions have been reluctant to take up women's demands (Ruchwarger, 1987: 216).

Important steps have been taken by the revolutionary regime to improve the position of women in Nicaraguan society. New antisexist laws have been introduced that end the discrimination against women in questions of marriage, divorce, parental support, child custody, adoption, family relations, and prostitution. In addition, child-care facilities have been established all over the country to assist working women, and the government's literacy and health campaigns have benefited women in general. Women have been incorporated in significant numbers into the mass organizations, the militia (where they represent 50 percent of the members), and the FSLN itself (in which women represent 22 percent of the membership and one-third of the leadership) (Molyneux, 1986: 297; Ruchwarger, 1987: 189-217).

Economic scarcity, the U.S. backed counterrevolutionary war, and the national mobilization for defense appear to have taken their toll on the revolutionary regime's commitment to women's emancipation, which, like many other ideals of the Sandinista revolution, have been subordinated to the struggle for survival (Molyneux, 1986: 299-300). As a result, Nicaragua offers another example of the tendency in contemporary revolutions to subordinate, rather than articulate, women's issues to other revolutionary goals. This leads to the conclusion that women's interests must be effectively represented in the key decision-making centers of the revolutionary regime by their own independent organizations in order to ensure that the elimination of gender inequality is articulated with other revolutionary policies.

CONCLUSION

The preceding presentation has been concerned with demonstrating the extent to which Marxist thought on the transition to socialism has been and continues to be relevant to the reality of countries involved in the construction of socialism within the Latin American and Caribbean

region. The generalizations that can be drawn from this tentative effort are at best knowledgeable reflections and informed comments, rather than defensible affirmations and firm conclusions. With this qualification clearly in mind, we offer the following final considerations.

First, although classical Marxist theory does not specifically address the problems of constructing socialism in contemporary Latin America and the Caribbean, it does appear to be invaluable as a fundamental conceptual framework for understanding the basic nature of the transition to socialism in this part of the world. This is due in part to the fact that the revolutionaries who have undertaken socialist transformations in Latin America and the Caribbean have been greatly influenced by Marxist thought. But it is also because the basic concepts developed by Marx and Engels on this question can be applied to a much wider range of social contexts than they themselves imagined.

This does not mean that classical Marxist theory can be applied in a inflexible and dogmatic fashion to the reality of the contemporary societies of Latin America and the Caribbean. Lenin clearly rejected the mechanistic and dogmatic application of Marxist thought. In fact, his success in applying Marxism to the Russian Revolution seems to have stemmed from the "elastic relationship" that he established between his use of Marxist theory and his revolutionary practice (Cerroni, 1973: 110). The leaders of the Chinese, Cuban, Vietnamese, Nicaraguan, and Salvadoran revolutions appear to have used Marxist thought in the same manner. Thus it is clear that the construction of socialism in Latin America and the Caribbean requires the flexible adaptation of Marxist thought to the particular social conditions of the region.

Second, most of the main questions and points discussed in previous Marxist debates clearly seem to be relevant to understanding the problems and conditions of contemporary societies involved in the transition to socialism in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially on issues such as the nature of the revolutionary state, dictatorship versus democracy, bureaucratism, the pace of the transition process, the relationship of the vanguard to the masses, class alliances, the expropriation of large capital, the socialization of agriculture, the continuance of commodity relations during the transition, central planning versus local initiative, workers control, the role of ideology and popular education in the development of a new revolutionary culture, the emancipation of women, and so forth. The earlier debates on these questions provide a valuable frame of reference for understanding and dealing with contemporary conditions.

Third, when Marxist thought is combined with an adequate understanding of the experiences of countries that have undertaken the construction of socialism, it is an invaluable weapon in the arsenal of revolutionaries seeking to construct a socialist order in their particular historical context. However, this body of thought needs to be constantly developed and updated so that it does not lag behind contemporary efforts to build socialism. There is a rich literature on the revolutionary experiences of the many societies that have undertaken the construction of socialism in recent decades, but there does not appear to be enough effort devoted to synthesizing these experiences and updating Marxist thought on the transition to socialism. Dogmatic and empiricist tendencies in contemporary Marxist circles may be partially responsible for this lack of effort. But I suspect it stems mostly from the shortage of Marxist intellectuals interested and involved in the type of synthesizing and updating work that is needed.

The experience accumulated in the construction of socialism within Latin America and the Caribbean offers valuable contributions to the development of Marxist thought on the following issues: (1) the role of multiclass alliances, mass-based movements and armed vanguards in the revolutionary seizure of political power and the construction of socialism, (2) the necessity of destroying the bourgeois state apparatus (particularly the armed forces) before undertaking the construction of socialism, (3) the difficulties encountered in consolidating a socialist or national democratic revolution in the face of counterrevolutionary resistance and imperialist aggression, (4) the pace at which the major means of production should be socialized in underdeveloped and export dependent economies, (5) the problems associated with incorporating small peasant producers into the revolutionary process through land distribution and cooperativization, (6) the need for democratization at all levels of society in order to combat bureaucratism and statist tendencies, (7) the importance of ideological struggle and cultural transformation in the process of revolutionary transformation (especially with regard to issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and religion), and (8) the role that assistance from existing socialist, Third World, and European social democratic governments can play in the revolutionary consolidation and the economic transformation of transitional underdeveloped societies.

Finally, the Latin American and Caribbean experience clearly seems to confirm the proposition that there are no universal models for Marxist revolutionaries to follow in constructing socialism. The

founders of Marxism introduced a conceptual framework for interpreting the complex, changing reality of *each* capitalist society. They had no intention of producing a static, theoretical model that could be applied to all societies under all historical circumstances. Armed with this understanding of Marxist analysis and an appreciation of the "lessons" of other revolutionary experiences, revolutionaries in Latin American and the Caribbean can successfully devise an appropriate strategy for the socialist transformation of their particular social realities. Carlos Rafael Rodríguez is correct in stating that the "variety of contemporary roads to socialism . . . reflects the enormous influence of socialism on the social life of our times" (Rodríguez, 1978: 14). However, if this rich variety of experiences ("roads" to socialism) is reduced to a model or models that others are supposed to follow, we run the risk of closing off new roads to socialism in the future.

NOTE

1. For an excellent discussion of the historical development of Marxist thought in Latin America, see the work of Sheldon B. Liss (1984).

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