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RECENT ACTIVITIES AT THE CLARK LOCAL OF THE USG

Chrys Rodrigue

The Union of Socialist Geographers has, since its inception, had members in the Graduate School of Geography at Clark University. Another focus of radical activity here, though not affiliated with the USG, has been Antipode, which has been published at Clark for eleven years. In the last two years, however, there has been an upsurge in interest in socialism, accompanied by various activities. As a result, the USG has experienced a tremendous growth here, until we now number some 25, with several others interested. The purpose of this article is to review the recent history of this local.

During 1976 and 1977, the few radical socialists here were engaged mostly in formal and informal education. In early 1978, a small extra-curricular study and discussion group developed out of a course taught in the economics department by a Marxist political economist. This study group grew in September, 1978, until it now has about a dozen participants. This larger group is divided into three small subgroups, each of which focuses on one of three particular topics: (1) labor organization as a revolutionary strategy; (2) the mass/party relationship; and (3) oppressed groups as a focus of revolutionary organization. Each subgroup designs a reading list and questions to guide the other participants through its topic. These seminars also serve as a forum for guest speakers representing struggles in the central Massachusetts area.

Many of the people in the study group have been also involved in a study of regional decline in advanced capitalist countries. Decline in such mature industrial areas as New England we relate to global capital flows. This work has resulted in a grant proposal, which will hopefully provide one source of funding for Clark's Regional Development Unit. The RDU is described elsewhere in this issue by Julie Graham.

The study group and the regional decline project, though they involve the greatest number of USG members here, by no means exhaust the activities of radical socialists. A number of us are involved in a struggle on campus to save the jobs of people fired or denied tenure, evidently for no reason other than their commitment to scientific socialism. We would gratefully receive any advice from others involved in similar struggles elsewhere.

One of our members has been deeply involved in community organizing among the Worcester Puerto Ricans for the past two years. This involvement has engaged various other people in the Geography School, Sociology Department, and Environmental Affairs Program at Clark and has also brought this USG local members from the Hispanic Community and Worcester State College.

EDITORIAL NOTES

This issue of the USG Newsletter was compiled, edited, and in some places typed by Chrys Rodrigue of Clark University, who accepted the task on behalf of the New England local. This local had volunteered to arrange the compilation of this issue at the New Orleans AGM as its commitment to the circulating editorship instituted two years ago by the USG. The Vancouver local did the final formatting, publication, and distribution, as usual, a job for which the rest of the USG is, again, most grateful.

Part of the usefulness to the USG of the circulating editorship is the opportunity it offers for acquaintance with the work and concerns of particular locals. With this in mind, I included reports on various aspects of the Clark local's activities. My introductory report summarizes the recent history of the USG here, while Julie Graham's details this local's involvement with the Clark Regional Development Unit.

This issue also contains reports from two recent USG regional meetings. The Eastern Regional Conference was held in Montreal in October, 1978, and is represented in this issue by a report on guidelines adopted then for organizers of future regional and local conferences, together with several abstracts of presentations. The AGM of the USG British Isles Section was held at the IRG Conference in Manchester in January, 1979. In this issue are published its minutes and a summary of the Socialist Geographic Approaches Session of the IRG.

Le Gredin, a group of radical students and faculty at l'Université Laval in Québec describes itself and its work for USG members in French, English, and Spanish. This notice should serve to bring the two groups closer, as did le Gredin's participation in the Montréal conference.

Most of the rest of this issue is taken up with commentaries and articles. News and announcements follow, and the description of the USG ends this issue.

I wish to thank the many contributors to this issue. I also wish to express my appreciation for the help and criticism I received from Phil O'Keefe, Ann Dennis, and Paul Susman.

Note from the Simon Fraser Local. There are two obvious changes in the printing of this issue of the NEWSLETTER: (1) the print is considerably smaller and (2) the length of the issue is considerably shorter than usual. Rising costs are responsible. We used to pay \$2 per page for xeroxing. This price has risen to 1 1/4 per page. That is, 1 1/4 per page would have been the price, if we had had the Newsletter printed at Simon Fraser University. Unfortunately, the Social Credit government of British Columbia decided to make the office and clerical workers pay for rising profits by pushing their real wages down. The workers have refused to be fiscally responsible. In solidarity with their 'irresponsibility', we have printed the NEWSLETTER off campus. This solidarity costs 2 1/4 per page plus collating.

In our opinion, conventional explanations of regional development and decline, which focus on the characteristics of the region itself or on the region's economic role in a particular nation, are inadequate to an understanding of New England's economic predicament. We are hypothesizing that financial and production capital is increasingly seeking destinations outside the boundaries of the United States. US foreign direct investment is increasing, and commodity imports, such as textiles, apparel, footwear, and electrical equipment. By inference, then, capital which was traditionally allocated to New England is now seeking higher rates of return on foreign shores.

Up to now, no one has traced flows of capital on a regional basis. Clearly, then, we have a major data collection task ahead of us. In addition, we are constructing a structural model of regional decline which incorporates: (1) the increased mobility of capital on an international scale, (2) factors governing the direction of capital flow, and (3) the regional impacts of net capital outflow, such as increased unemployment, deterioration of infrastructure, and growth in the size of the secondary labor force. Using computer simulations of the model, we will analyze contemporary economic processes and provide forecasts for the next thirty years. We will also formulate policy recommendations for labor groups and local and state administrators who are attempting to reverse the process of decline or mitigate its impacts.

Not surprisingly, this major project has produced a number of "spin-off" efforts conducted by faculty and graduate students working together. Recent work and work in progress includes research on labor markets and the labor process in a declining region, the operation of transnational corporations in allocating capital among regions, and the options available to local labor groups and planners operating in a global system.

#### A REPORT FROM THE USG REGIONAL MEETING/CONFERENCE HELD IN MONTREAL IN OCTOBER 1978.

The Montréal regional conference took place at McGill University on the weekend of October 28-29th 1978. A total of 80 people registered from Québec, Worcester, Toronto, Kingston, New York and Montréal. A business meeting took place on Friday night; the main conference papers were presented on Saturday and Sunday; on Sunday a bus tour was organized around the city of Montréal. (See elsewhere in this Newsletter for conference paper summaries and abstracts).

Following the Montréal conference the local organizing group put together some suggestions for organizers of future USG regional and local meetings. The organizers of USG meetings should decide by consensus, and before they announce the

The research interests of individual USG people extend still further than those implied in the activities discussed above. They include regional and international development, specifically capital flight, unemployment, labor market segmentation, fiscal crisis of the State, proletarianization of Third World peasants and the breakdown or articulation of pre-capitalist modes of production in capitalist social formations; the role of women in development; hazards, articulation of American Midwestern family grain farming in the reproduction of capitalist social relations; energy crises, urban devalorization, re-investment, and the role of the State; ideology in terminal capitalism; the relationships between the development of ideology and that of the forces of production in the Near Eastern Neolithic; the development of abstract empiricism in geography, and anarchist landscape organization. Most of our work seeks to go beyond discussion of capital's adaptation to its own contradictions to an identification of capitalism's specific points of greatest weakness in the present time.

#### THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNIT AT CLARK

Julie Graham

In the spring of 1978, an interdisciplinary group of faculty and graduate students, including economists, sociologists, and geographers, established the Regional Development Unit (RDU) at Clark. The RDU will function primarily as a research organization focusing on problems of regional development, but will also serve several additional purposes. This year, for instance, the Unit established a Regional Development Seminar at Clark, which provides a forum for discussion of faculty and graduate student work in progress, as well as a context for invited speakers from other institutions. The seminar has been well attended, and regional development seems to be an area of growing interest among both Marxist and non-Marxist faculty and students.

Since its establishment, the RDU has produced a series of Working Papers, many of which focus on the topic of economic decline in mature capitalist regions. That topic is also the subject of our major product to date, a grant proposal entitled "The Global Context of Regional Decline: A Study of New England." We are proposing to examine the process of global resource allocation which eventuates in the decline of the older centers of industrial development, such as New England, North-east England, Wallonia in Belgium, and even the Ruhr region of West Germany. Using the theoretical framework provided by "development of underdevelopment" theorists, we are positing that development and decline are reciprocal components of a single process of global resource allocation. Thus, for instance, capital which is allocated to one area of the world is by inference withdrawn or withheld from another. A region, such as New England, which is characterized by net outflow of capital, will experience repercussions in the form of lowered real wages, high tax burdens, decline in the provision of public services, and other symptoms of economic decline.

Where a regional, local or national meeting is to take place a general business meeting should be included in the programme. Such discussions are an essential part of USG activities.

(d) USG members can also attend Geographical Association and Society meetings such as the IBG, CAG, AAG, AGS etc. A number of different formats exist at these conferences - regular paper sessions, special interest sessions or special interest workshops. Many USG regional or local groups attend these meetings; USG meetings are often held before or in conjunction with these society meetings.

Summary of papers delivered at Montreal USG, Oct. 1978

#### PEASANTS AND CAPITALISTS IN MEXICAN AGRICULTURE Kirsten Johnson

Over the past ten years, class conflict between workers and bosses as well as between peasants and landholders has become a chronic and widespread phenomenon in rural Mexico. Peasants seize lands; workers strike; ejidatarios withhold produce from state agencies; people demanding services occupy city halls in rural towns; guerrillas kill soldiers in southern Mexico. Landholders and bosses, often with the help of state troops, retaliate by evicting peasants and breaking strikes.

This sort of violent class conflict is nothing new in Mexico. However, since the early 1970's these struggles have taken a new character. Local, isolated conflicts have multiplied and acquired certain features of a nation-wide movement which cannot be contained regionally or channelled through the usual institutions devised to blunt opposition. Workers, peasants, and students form coalitions to coordinate opposition to local bosses and their hired gunmen, and thereby also broaden the scope of this action by seeking alliances beyond their immediate field of conflict. These alliances promise to set the bases of a sustained and cumulative process of class struggle.

The paper aims to explain the current status of the class conflict in the Mexican countryside. It does so by

intention to hold a conference, what type of meeting best fits the needs and interests of the members. A regional or local group has a number of options:

(a) Small workshops: which can focus on a general field of interest for a half or one day session. These types of workshops should be limited to a small number of people involved in closely related research or writing. There should be an emphasis placed on discussions, and on work-in-progress; or a sharing of closely related research topics.

(b) Local or Regional Conference: These occasions may include informal and formal paper sessions followed by discussion groups or informal workshops. In order for productive discussion to ensue it is advisable to focus on one or two major themes, and to circulate these along with the paper abstracts prior to the meeting. This involves a little more work for the organizers, but it is time well spent. The object of such meetings is to generate discussions among USG members on current theoretical issues and debates, and to present work-in-progress in the form of an informal paper session.

(c) Regional Conferences of National Conferences: These are larger conferences drawing upon a wider membership, at which members present papers, involve themselves in workshops and discussions. These conferences should be structured to allow an opportunity for discussion generated by the papers. This can be done by having discussion periods after each paper or at the end of a session. The topics on which the conference is based should be circulated an appropriate period before the meeting; papers should be accepted and should be limited in number (appropriate for the topics proposed and the amount of time available for the conference). The conference can also include a general forum session at which the major topics of the day are summarized, discussed or expanded upon. The purpose of this third type of conference (c) is to include visitors and to expand and strengthen the local interest base of a group of USG members. Interested people should therefore be invited to attend and participate. The topics should be chosen so as to offer as wide a range of discussion as possible; topics can also be focused on a critique of current geographic practice and theory, and the presentation of alternatives. More generally topics could embrace a critical assessment of the capitalist system, and alternative worlds. Additional materials which may have a more pedagogical orientation could be presented in workshops; this would be useful for members who are teaching and who wish to incorporate new ideas and approaches.

FAMILIES AND THE CHANGING MODE OF PRODUCTION IN MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY MONTREAL. Bettina Bradbury, Concordia University.

Montréal changed in the second half of the nineteenth century from a mercantile to an industrial city. The economy of the city's emerging working class families both influenced the nature of that change and had to adjust to it. The demography of Québec, and the continuance of the family economy, combined to make large numbers of women and children available to Montréal's early industrialists. Conversely, the work of women and children was part of the process of depressing wages and deskilling work. Families not only sent particular members into the workforce, replenishing them as best they could on meagre wages, but also provided a medium for socialization to new and strange work habits. By the employment of whole families, the putting out system, and the continuance of outmoded apprenticeship laws, capital took advantage of familial relationships for its own profit. By methods of fining and disciplining children, parents were involved in the supervision of their children's work habits.

Within each family, the nature of work available to the father appears to have largely conditioned the number of other family members who would have to work. For all working class families, the work of more than one family member was necessary. Those who did not have children of working age had to find alternative methods of survival. Most took in boarders, relatives or shared with other families. Reformers saw child labour as criminal. For many families, however, it was the only way they could control their standard of living. It represented a continuance of the family economy of petty commodity production within a forming proletariat faced with the contradictions of early industrial capitalism.

OPEN LETTER TO THE F.B.I. W. Bunge, Arthabasca, Quebec.

Discussion centered on two themes. First, I recounted my more than fifteen years of harassment by such agencies as the F.B.I., C.I.A., and the U.S. State Department. In doing so, I reviewed the material released to me under the Freedom of Information Act and also material I know exists in various files on me, but which were not made available to me.

I then pointed out that I am certainly not the only person in the U.S.G. who is the subject of spy work and other such harassment. This caveat introduced my second topic and the purpose of my presentation.

undertaking three tasks: first, a review of the classic theories (Marx, Lenin, Kautsky) dealing with the 'peasant question,' in the light of the Mexican case; second, an analysis of the material basis of the current crisis in Mexican agriculture; and third, an assessment of the revolutionary potential of the current upheavals.

THE CENTRE/PERIPHERY MODEL. Warwick Armstrong, McGill.

Present-day analysis of unequal development in the capitalist international system owes a great debt to the work of post-war underdevelopment theory. And for this very reason, it is important to examine the contribution of the E.C.L.A. structuralists, the dependency school, and the post-dependency underdevelopment theorists.

The major theme running through their analysis has been that of international conflict, which, in the case of some writers has come to replace the classic emphasis in Marxist writings, on class contradictions. The implications of the arguments which derive from this bipolarization into centre and periphery are many, but the most significant relates to the workers in the international centre whose role has been reduced to that of secondary importance. The locus of the main struggle against capitalism, argues Samir Amin, is now at the periphery.

While the reaction against Euro-centric approaches is understandable, it is necessary to emphasize that the impact of the capitalist mode of production is universal, and not just selectively exploitative. The primary divisions of inequality run within societies and not between them. Capitalism is nowhere creative of equality in the world system; and the terms centre-periphery tend to blur this reality.

Moreover, such a bifurcation fails to take into account the enormous diversity of the different social formations within the capitalist system, and throws a number of strange bedfellows together - Argentina/Afghanistan, New Zealand/the United States of America.

Nor does it take account of the groups of social formations which are clearly neither centre nor periphery - such as the Dominion Capitalist Societies of Canada, Australia, Argentina, New Zealand, Uruguay, whose history, economics, class formation, and external relations are distinct from both the international centre and peripheries. The whole concept of a bipolarized international system must be reconsidered. The best way is for more detailed research on individual social formations within the framework of the capitalist world system.

I suggested that instead of always being under pressure from these various organizations that we actually are in a position in geography to put pressure back. For this purpose, I suggested that we insist on having honored Professor Owen Lattimore, a liberal whom even the Senator from Wisconsin, William Proxmire, and occupant of former Senator Joseph McCarthy's very seat, has rehabilitated with profuse apologies. How can geography alone, when all other professional and even governmental agencies have apologized, continue to insult Lattimore? It is a singular shame that geography carries itself in this manner and therefore a vulnerable shame. I call for action on this matter now and am awaiting response.

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SEGREGATION BY CLASS AND HOUSING TENURE.

Richard Harris, Queen's University, Ontario.

In my presentation, I set out to provide a theoretical framework within which the necessary existence of class segregation within capitalism could be established. The framework took as point of departure the assumption that segregation has to be understood in terms of the reproduction of labour (power) under capitalism. This is an argument which has been developed by other writers, especially D. Rose (1978).

However, I also argued that, in order to establish the nature of the necessity for class segregation, a clear distinction must be made between levels of analytical abstraction, the most critical distinction being that between abstract/formal modes of analysis (i.e., of the Capitalist Mode of Production, or Socio-economic System), and historical analyses of a particular formation or a particular conjuncture (cf. Carchedi, 1977).

If the necessity of social segregation is to be established, it must be at the formal level. By failing to distinguish between these levels, previous writers (eg., Harvey, 1975; Rose, 1978), despite their insights, have failed to identify the critical theoretical issues.

In my presentation, I emphasized that I was not putting forward a paper; rather, I was offering some points for discussion. From discussions and reflections subsequent to the Montréal meetings, I have come to doubt whether class segregation can be established as a structural necessity of the CMP. This implies two things: first, that the origins and forms of class segregation can only be determined historically in particular formations, and, secondly, that segregation, unlike, for example, the separation of home and work, may be transcended without the transcendence of the CMP.

Beyond Geography's Ideological Domain. David Slater, CEDLA, Amsterdam.

These provisional notes, which form the basis of a paper in progress, summarize the main characteristics of the varying responses within geography to the incursion of marxian ideas.

The first response, which we call the "conservative/establishment" reaction, has two variants: a) a tendency to ignore and evade any discussion of radical or marxist research as it directly impinges on the orthodox perception of geography's accepted academic terrain, and b) a tendency to confront materialistic work and stereotype it as "polemic", "unscientific" etc., but, as in variant a), intellectual combat is eschewed.

The second response, which we call the "eclectic/liberalist" tendency, attempts to incorporate abstracted materialist concepts into a reconstituted bourgeois problematic. These concepts are torn out of the theoretical system that can only give them their meaning and they are then attached and combined in disunity with contradictory concepts from an opposing theoretical system. We call this the dominant tendency at this historical moment.

The third response we denote as "radical geography" or perhaps more specifically "marxist geography". While developing in a much more progressive way than the former tendency, writers under this branch still cling on to uncritical conceptions of the usefulness of "geography" as a supposedly scientific domain. There is an ideological proclivity to defend obsolete categories from their total replacement by determining theoretical concepts from historical and dialectical materialism.

The final response consists of the on-going project aimed at the re-creation of "urban" and "regional" research within a defining theoretical problematic under the command of historical materialism. Within this field certain spatial categories can be useful as descriptive, illuminating aids to the deployment of the theoretical concepts of marxist political economy; but, in every case, the spatial category is dependent and determined by the materialist framework of first order concepts. This point cannot be over-emphasized since we have to avoid falling into the pit of the fetishization of "space". "Space" is not, nor can it ever be, a scientific concept.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL APPROACH TO AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT. Bruce Smith, University of Warwick, England.

The paper examines the reasons underlying the failure of the Green Revolution in India to achieve its potential. This failure is seen as the result of adopting a "technological" strategy which assumes that the problem of low agricultural output is due to the lack of suitable technology. It is argued that this view of agricultural development is unsuitable for a country in which peasant agriculture predominates, and that this strategy is appropriate only once the peasant producer has been commercialized.

The history of the technological approach is examined in India, starting with the policies of British Imperialism in India and ending with the American-sponsored Green Revolution. The two cases are seen as connected by their failures, which arose due to the underlying assumptions of a commercial producer and a developed market system.

The situation is examined in India to determine if the Green Revolution will commercialize the peasant producer. The analysis takes place on two levels. Firstly, the peasant mode of production is examined; secondly, the growth of the non-agricultural sector in India is examined since the introduction of the Green Revolution. It is argued that the Green Revolution has resulted in a large net transfer of resources to agriculture from industry, and the resulting slowdown in non-agricultural activity has slowed down the demands on agriculture which would commercialize the peasant producer. Within the peasant sector, the logic of peasant production prevents adequate levels of purchased inputs, which keeps the potential of the Green Revolution from being realized.

GENTRIFICATION AND CAPITAL: THEORY, PRACTICE AND IDEOLOGY IN SOCIETY HILL. Neil Smith, Johns Hopkins University.

The investment of capital in the built environment according to profit criteria creates distinctive urban patterns. Previous studies emphasize finance capital's creation of urban patterns through patterns of mortgage lending, but this explains only reproduction of the built environment by finance capital, not its production.

To understand how the built environment is produced, it is necessary to examine how capital is productively, rather than individually, consumed. This process is particularly clear in gentrification, where a change in lending policy is a prime catalyst for change. In Society Hill, an oft eulogized upper middle class residential enclave in central Philadelphia, this policy change was made possible by state intervention.

The state bought old slum property at its assessed price and resold it to developers at the substantially lower "fair market value", thus absorbing the costs of devaluing the original capital, and allowing redevelopment to become profitable. This process is documented in Society Hill using data on construction loans. Where state mediation is unnecessary, the developer has been able to absorb these devaluation costs and still profit.

Society Hill was only successful insofar as it was profitable. It did not bring back suburbanites, and it did not significantly increase the city's property revenues. A white enclave, it benefited developers, banks, planners, politicians and new residents, not the 6,000 poor and working class residents who were ejected.

DEPENDENCE AND UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN CANADA: A

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION. Frank Tough, McGill University.

A theoretical basis for an analysis of uneven development in northern Canada can be established by broadening staple theory to include radical dependency theory, as used by Frank and Amin. Orthodox notions explain northern Canadian social and economic problems with the same inaccuracy as orthodox theory demonstrates in the "Third World". Thus the connection between northern development and radical dependency theory has already been established. In both northern Canada and the Third World, economic and social problems are presented by orthodox theorists as situations of too many people, traditional economy, archaic cultures, and even adverse climates and natural hazards.

With the use of dependency paradigms, an examination of northern Canada reveals exploitative class relations, resource depletion, unequal exchange, polarized incomes and surplus extractions, which have been the essential characteristics of the economic structure of this region from the fur trade period to the present era of petroleum development. A shift from merchant capital to industrial capital represents an intensification of this process.



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE UNION OF  
SOCIALIST GEOGRAPHERS (BRITISH ISLES SECTION)  
held at the I.B.G. Conference, University of Manchester  
3 January, 1979

(Agenda published in U.S.G. Newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 2, p.3)

Attendance: approximately forty members

Chairperson: Damaris Rose

1. RELATIONSHIP OF THE U.S.G. (B.I.) TO THE U.S.G. INTERNATIONAL

- a. There was considerable discussion of whether a relationship could be defined before the proposed activities of the B.I. section had been spelt out in more detail.
- b. It was suggested that the British situation was very different to that obtaining in North America, as in Britain there was the very successful Conference of Socialist Economists "Regionalism" group and the I.B.G. Social Geography Study Group.
- c. Eventually, it was agreed that the B.I. section should be essentially a communication network. In order to avoid duplication with C.S.E. and I.B.G., no centrally-planned meetings would be held. However, spontaneous local groups should be encouraged, eg., in London, Sussex, the North West, etc., where a concentration of members existed.

d. A motion was put and carried describing the relationship with the International as follows:

- i. B.I. section to collect funds in the British Isles
- ii. the Committee to send appropriate amounts to the International to cover Newsletter expenses
- iii. the Committee be authorized to send up to £20 to the International for contingencies
- iv. the Committee to have discretionary powers to spend money if and when necessary
- v. under this item, there was a brief discussion of how to define "socialist" for U.S.G. purposes -- it was agreed that members could not be prescriptive and that prospective members might have a variety of definitions.

2. FINANCIAL REPORT

- a. Unfortunately, the Treasurer had been delayed by bad weather in Scotland, but it was reported that approximately £80 was in the Liverpool Co-op Bank, although expenses were still outstanding in connection with the Newsletter. A full financial statement will be prepared and published in the U.S.G. Newsletter as soon as possible.

- b. A motion was put and carried that annual subscription rates should be raised to Staff: £3.50, Students/Low Income: £2.

3. NEWSLETTER REPORT

- a. Damaris Rose described the heavy workload involved in producing a Newsletter. Newsletter 4,2 (the first B.I. issue) had been almost entirely put together by Damaris and Suzanne McKenzie at Sussex. Final collation was done by the Vancouver local, who also arranged the printing. Contributors were thanked.
- b. It was agreed that ideally another B.I. Newsletter should be produced in 1979, if labour were forthcoming.  
(\*Note: after the meeting, a group of six members from L.S.B. volunteered to produce such a Newsletter.)

4. PROGRAMME FOR 1979

- a. The main discussion centred on the possibility of meetings and conferences. In view of previous decisions, it was decided that no centrally-organised meetings would be held.
- b. Links with other bodies and other activities would be delegated to the Committee.

5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- a. It was proposed and carried that the present ad hoc Committee be re-elected.
- b. Martin Brennan had to resign, as he would be out of Britain for six months in 1979.
- c. The Committee was given the power to co-opt another member.  
(\*Note: this was done after the meeting when Jo Foord was co-opted.)
- d. The new Committee is therefore:  
Damaris Rose (International Relations), Ian Cook (Treasurer), Jo Foord (Correspondence Secretary), Colm Regan, Tommy McLaughlin.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- a. Antipode -- Phil O'Keefe outlined the various changes that were taking place at Antipode -- charitable status, introduction of book reviews, feature issues, etc. The most important change as far as B.I. members were concerned was subscription arrangements. All subscriptions and distribution in Britain will now be handled directly by Martin Brennan. Subscribers henceforth should pay directly to Martin in pounds sterling according to the following

Ian Cook gave an overview of the socialist critique of bourgeois development theory, followed by a summary of the debates in progress amongst socialists. This focussed on the usefulness of dependency theory and the problem of "spatial fetishism". In the discussion which followed, David Slater pointed out the need for a combination of two levels of analysis, for ideas of dependency and theories of imperialism to be fused. It was also important to keep the political question at the forefront.

Phil O'Keefe suggested that more energy could be brought to bear upon a socialist analysis of the environment. It was important to highlight the dialectical relationship between humanity and nature and move on from the concerns expressed by the ecology movement. A case study approach was recommended, in which an analysis of financial expenditure on medical facilities and disaster prevention could be included. One of the most significant concepts was "vulnerability" to so-called natural disasters and the link with social class. Reference was also made to the importance of "ethno-science" and the peasant's knowledge of his or her environment via a vis the "expertise" of the Western consultant.

#### Assessment

This was the first time that a socialist geographic approaches session had been held at the IEG. Feedback revealed that the attempt was judged to be worthwhile, although two central (and linked) problems emerged: (a) the lack of dialogue and communication between bourgeois and socialist geographers and (b) speakers had been asked to pitch their remarks at an introductory level. This was felt to be unsatisfactory at a forum such as the IEG, where it was the responsibility of all academics as scientists to be thoroughly familiar with the works of Marx as one of the founding fathers of social science.

QU'EST-CE QUE LE GREDIN ? Rodolphe De Koninck, Département de géographie, université Laval, Québec.

En gestation au cours de l'année 1975, le petit Groupe de Recherches sur l'Espace, la Dépendance et les Inégalités, le G.R.E.D.I.N., a été baptisé tel au début de 1976 et rassemble depuis des étudiants et professeurs du département de géographie de l'université Laval. Comme pour d'autres groupes de géographes "radicaux", son travail implique une lutte collective qui d'une part respecte l'autonomie du cheminement des individus et qui d'autre part procède en fonction des problèmes, préoccupations et besoins spécifiques tant de ces individus que de la collectivité qui les entoure, le choix des lieux et échelles d'analyse relevant des individus.

Pour ce qui est du groupe en tant que tel, ce choix, ce choix devrait-on dire, ont concerné d'abord la nature de l'apprentissage, ie, les cours et séminaires et ensuite les sujets de recherche. L'apprentissage impliquait une étude des concepts d'analyse marxistes et une tentative d'intégration de ces concepts à la discipline géographique. Il

- rates (for three issues):  
Students/Low Income: £3.50; Staff: £5.00;  
Libraries: £7.50.
- b. Phil O'Keefe reported recent developments at Clark regarding staffing policy which would be favourable to women and U.S.G. members.

Martin Brennan

#### CONFERENCE REPORT

IEG ANNUAL CONFERENCE, MANCHESTER, 4 JANUARY, 1979  
SOCIALIST GEOGRAPHIC APPROACHES SESSION

Martin Brennan

This session was split into four parts: Socialist Geographic approaches to: (a) Urban Geography (Damaris Rose, Suzanne McKenzie, and Ian Shelton); (b) Historical Geography (Derek Gregory); (c) Imperialism and Underdevelopment (Ian Cook and Martin Brennan); and (d) Environment (Phil O'Keefe).

In the first paper, Damaris Rose outlined the political background to a growing dissatisfaction with bourgeois urban analysis, stemming from the inner city crises of North America and Britain in the 1960's and 1970's. The inability of liberal social science to provide adequate explanation had forced people to look elsewhere and particularly to approaches based upon historical materialism. A review of these approaches was given, followed by a call for a more holistic viewpoint, in which studies of residential differentiation, for instance, could be pursued within the framework of a social totality. In the discussion which followed, Michael Chisholm said that in Belgrade all university professors were housed in one block of flats. Other speakers were concerned about the communication gap which seemed to exist between bourgeois and socialist geographers.

Derek Gregory began by questioning the existence of a separate historical geography. Most of the interesting debates were going on outside geography, eg., work on the transition from feudalism to capitalism. E.P. Thompson was singled out for criticism and a call was made for history to be "humanised" and for the changeless "men" who strut through the pages of history to be identified and differentiated. It was also important to focus upon regional variations in the Industrial Revolution and to recognise the conception of class in what was probably the fastest growing area of the discipline -- urban historical geography.

est important de souligner ici combien la version québécoise de cette discipline est marquée par le double poids de la géographie classique dans sa version française, et de la nouvelle géographie anglo-saxonne. Ceci implique, pour celui qui veut y voir clair, qu'il doit percer le nuage des artistes peintres du paysage harmonieux et, surtout, démontrer l'échafaudage des ingénieurs plombiers du système. En conséquence, notre cheminement, même s'il peut s'inspirer de celui de collègues étrangers, doit avoir une certaine autonomie. Cette autonomie est d'autant plus nécessaire que la société où elle s'élabore possède des caractéristiques propres, donc appelle une critique et des solutions spécifiques (qui ne nient en rien, est-il nécessaire de l'ajouter, l'importance des points communs avec d'autres sociétés). Qu'il suffise de rappeler la soudaine ampleur de ce projet technologique qui, au Québec, remplace avec efficacité l'ancien projet théocratique des élites féodales et l'on comprendra combien la tâche est grande: à chaque projet d'aménagement de l'espace pour le capital, ie, d'"organisation" des hommes pour le capital, devrait pouvoir être opposé un projet de révolution de l'espace, ie, de libération des hommes.

Pour y parvenir, donc, non seulement faut-il apprendre comment saisir les vrais fondements de la géographie du capital, il faut savoir saisir ceux-ci sur place, en action, pourrait-on ajouter. En conséquence, les recherches actuelles des membres du GREDIN sont, en majeure partie, centrées sur l'analyse critique des exigences spatiales du mode de production capitaliste à Québec et dans la région administrative de Québec. D'où, d'une part un important travail théorique, et d'autre part la vérification d'hypothèses à diverses échelles d'analyse urbaine et régionale. A ces fins, nous poursuivons un séminaire collectif, sur une base hebdomadaire, séminaire qui sert quelque peu à encadrer les recherches individuelles. Ces deux types d'activités ont permis aux individus de rédiger, éventuellement à des fins de discussion, deux recueils de textes qui ont été publiés dans deux numéros récents des Notes et Documents de Recherche du département de géographie de l'université Laval. Le premier recueil est paru dans le numéro 9, sous le titre de "Contributions à une géographie critique"; le second, dans le numéro 10 sous le titre de "Au sujet des exigences spatiales du mode de production capitaliste".

WHAT IS THE GREDIN ? Rodolphe De Koninck, Département de géographie, université Laval, Québec.

After a gestation period in 1975, the small Groupe de Recherches sur l'Espace, la Dépendance et les Inégalités (le GREDIN)\* was christened early in 1976. It consists of students and faculty from the department of geography at the université Laval. As for other groups of radical geographers, its work implies a collective struggle which respects the autonomy of individual pursuits and which proceeds as a function of the problems, preoccupations and needs of the individuals as much as those of the group, with the choice of areas and scales of analysis arising from these individuals as well.

\* The French word "gredin" is best translated by "scoundrel".

For the group as a whole this choice, or rather these choices, concern firstly the nature of apprenticeship, i.e., the courses and seminars and then the subjects of research. The apprenticeship entails a study of marxist analytic concepts and an attempt to integrate these concepts into the geographic discipline. It is important to emphasize here how much the Québec version of this discipline is marked by the dual influence of classical French geography and the new Anglo-Saxon geography. Those who wish to see through these traditions more clearly must penetrate the haze created by painters of harmonious landscapes and, especially, dismantle the structure created by the system's mechanics. Consequently, our progress, although it can draw inspiration from that of foreign colleagues, must have a certain autonomy. This autonomy is all the more necessary because the society in which it is elaborated possesses certain unique characteristics, thus calling for a specific critique and specific solutions (which is not to deny at all, need we add, the importance of problems common with other societies). It is enough to recall the sudden spread of technocracy which, in Québec, is quickly and effectively replacing the old theocracy of the feudal elites, and one will realize how great the task is: for each scheme of spatial planning put forward by capital, i.e., of "organisation" of people for capital, there must be presented an opposing scheme for the revolution of space, i.e., for the liberation of people.

In order to succeed in this, therefore, not only is it necessary to grasp the fundamentals of the geography of capital, but also to know how to grasp these in their specific context, in action so to speak. Thus, the actual research of GREDIN members is primarily centred on critical analyses of the spatial characteristics of the capitalist mode of production in Québec and in the administrative region of Québec. From this there emerges on the one hand an important theoretical task, and on the other hand the verification of hypotheses at different scales of urban and regional analysis. To these ends, we are pursuing a collective seminar, on a weekly basis, a seminar which serves somewhat to frame the work carried on by individuals. These two types of activities have enabled people to draft, after the various discussions, two collections of essays which were published in two recent numbers of the Notes et Documents de Recherche of the department of geography of the université Laval. The first collection appeared as number 9, entitled "Contributions à une géographie critique"; the second as number 10, entitled "Au sujet des exigences spatiales du mode de production capitaliste".

Laurence Wolf, editor of TRANSITION has written to ask USG members to submit articles. He feels that many of TRANSITION's readers who are concerned with environmental issues might be interested in Socialist Geography. He believes that "major articles belong in ARIPODE and 'in house' material belongs in the USG NEWSLETTER. In between there is room for short articles (3000 words) written in a manner that presents a socialist view to non-socialists and socialists alike." Please send articles to Dr. Wolf, Dept of Geography, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio 45221.

The following article is part of a debate between Dick Peet and Michael Eliot Hurst on the role of criticism within the development of socialist theory. Because of the strike of office and clerical workers at Simon Fraser University, the costs of printing this issue have increased substantially. Therefore, we will print Dr. Hurst's response in Volume IV 4. That article is entitled "On Criticism, Counter Criticism, and Counter-Productive Criticism".

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#### ON COMRADELY CRITICISM AND MARXIST GEOGRAPHY

Richard Peet

#### ON CRITICISM

Criticism is of vital importance to our task of developing a structure of ideas which will eventually achieve a strength and coherence such as to overwhelm the theories of bourgeois geography. The function of (external) critiques of bourgeois geography is to expose "theory" as ideology. The functions of (internal) critiques within radical geography are to expose weaknesses in our own arguments and to suggest alternative, stronger formulations. These functions are of such great significance that criticism should be treated as a vital resource, and poor criticism criticized out of existence.

Internal criticism should at best be constructive and at a minimum should be accurate (in that it should begin by accurately representing the position a comrade has taken). Anyone can pluck a sentence out of someone's writing, present it as all they have to say, and then "criticize" it. Let me exemplify by referring to two recent, apparently internal, criticisms of my own work (Leach, 1978; Hurst, 1978).

In 1975 I published a paper analyzing the generation of poverty and inequality by the capitalist mode of production; this was coupled with a description of inequality allocation mechanisms, drawing mainly on the "liberal" geographic literature (Peet, 1975). This attempt at a "synthesis" was summarized, then criticized, by Buch-Hanson and Nielson (1977, p. 2) who stressed "the impossible task of combining a Marxist theory, which deals with individuals as members of classes whose condition must be seen in relation to the class struggle, with a bourgeois geographical 'theory' which stresses those factors shaping the course of a person's life in relation to 'environ-

ments of opportunity". This is an excellent criticism of my first published attempt at a Marxist analysis. I do not agree that all bourgeois geography is useless — it is possible for portions to be plucked from their epistemological context (the effects of which are usually obvious) and used in radical analyses (see e.g. Castells, 1977) — but I do agree on the need for a more careful integration into a radical framework than I accomplished in that paper.

The conclusion of my 1975 paper proclaims the need for the production of alternative models for the control and design of environments which would be both egalitarian and liberating. While the production of such models is an almost overwhelming task, I said, the geography of future equality demands our attention (Peet, 1975, 570-571). Bridget Leach (1978, p. 35) extracts a couple of sentences from this brief, and detached, conclusion of a paper on a different topic, and uses them to criticize me. She argues that I urge the development of alternative models to achieve the geography of future equality; she then takes a bit on "advocacy" from an earlier, obviously pre-Marxist paper (Peet, 1972); claims I can offer no way of bringing such things about; that I find changing the operation of the system an almost overwhelming task; and concludes that all I can do is inscribe my banner with slogans such as "Abolition of the wages system".

How can she possibly deduce all this when the paper she criticizes does not deal with the revolutionary process, or the post-revolutionary society? Is this comradely criticism? Clearly it is not. But then someone who ends up saying (pp. 36-37) that "anarchist ideas are a capitulation to bourgeois ideology and the fight against them, against the ideas of the freedom of the individual, against terrorism, against refusal to recognise the need for the disciplined party to lead the working class, has been a consistent one throughout the history of the Marxist movement" — that is, someone who regards anarchism as just as much the enemy as capitalism — hardly considers herself to be a comrade of an anarcho-Marxist such as me.

So far the radical movement in geography has managed to avoid the taking of "lines", the idea of the "correct line", and the regarding of people adhering to different lines as enemies. Rather than being constructive criticism, this leads to the destruction of the left as a coherent force for revolutionary change. It we want to self-destruct this is the "line" we should take. If we want to develop our ideas through criticism we should at least begin by criticizing the main content of a comrade's published work.

Then there is Michael E. Eliot Hurst (1978) who criticizes people like Peet, Santos, Buch-Hanson and Nielson, and Soja for trying to "create a convergence of Geography with a radical approach", whose interventions are "futile and unscientific", especially the attempts of Peet and Soja who have utilized "space" as a barrier rather than a catalyst to further theoretical development. Calling on confusing concepts like spatial dialectics and socio-spatial dialectics, we have bestowed on "space" an ontological autonomy it does not warrant, for space is simply one aspect of a single relationship. The very idea of the existence of a "Marxist geography" is enough to cause Marx to turn in his grave. "It is not far from that confusion to define, as Peet does, this new discourse as 'that part of a whole science dealing with the interrelationship between social processes on the one hand and natural environment on the other hand'. As Neil Smith has pointed out that definition is virtually identical to any other to be found through mainstream geography".

But Michael (and Neill?) let's begin our discourse by asking did I define Marxist geography this way? What I did say was that Marxist science rests on the foundation of its assumptions (about the importance of material production in the social formation) which provide a common structure to all aspects of marxist science while, in addition, the political objectives of marxism provide common scientific purpose. As a holistic revolutionary science marxism provides a firm theoretical base for the radical movement in geography. Only then did I "define" Marxist geography as follows:

Marxist geography is that part of a whole science dealing with the interrelationship between social processes on the one hand and the natural environment and spatial relations on the other hand. Marxist geography accepts the tenet that social processes deal essentially with the production and reproduction of the material basis of life. These processes occur in certain environments composed of elements of the natural world and various types of relationships across space... Marxist geography thus looks at one area of the set of interactions surrounding social processes. It is so immersed in process that it merges with the other [marxist] sciences also dealing with social process and is distinguishable from them only by its degree of specialization in their environmental and spatial aspects. Like the other marxist sciences, it is aimed at changing the fundamental operation of social processes by changing the social relations of production. Social revolutionary changes, we argue, are necessary to solve endemic spatial problems. (Peet, 1977, p. 254).

Does the brief (and inaccurate) quote "that part of a whole science dealing with the interrelationship between social processes on the one hand and natural environment on the other hand" represent my position? Hardly! In addition, perhaps Michael (or Neill) would give me a mainstream definition of geography which makes social revolution the basis of the solution to endemic spatial problems, or that attempts to integrate geography into a holistic, materialist analysis of society? They cannot! Again the criticism is on an inaccurate basis and therefore useless in the constructive development of a body of radical ideas in geography.

#### ON MARXIST GEOGRAPHY AND SPATIAL DIALECTICS

There are two real issues beneath this sloppy exterior: (1) is the concept "Marxist geography" a "contradiction in terms" as one recent statement has it; (2) is the spatial dimension pure fetishism, or are we making a fetish out of constantly arguing against spatial fetishism? The former question I will discuss here. The latter question arises particularly from Soja's (1978) paper and is best addressed by him. However, I will enter the latter debate peripherally by using as the focus of my discussion the following:

'Spatial dialectics' is a misnomer unless we are also to grant 'temporal dialectics', 'social dialectics', 'economic dialectics', etc., as equal objects of study. The dialectic is simply how we characterise human relations with nature and one another, in all their spatial, temporal, social etc., aspects. The fetishisms of space implied by 'spatial dialectics' reflects a deeper contradic-

tion camouflaged by the notion, 'Marxist Geography'. On the one hand we try to be marxists; on the other geographers; but we cannot transcend disciplinary boundaries and remain within them. (Smith, 1978, 21-22).

The concept "Marxist Geography" has utility on two grounds, one pragmatic, the other theoretical. In terms of our practice, most of us work in the disciplines of Geography, which already exists, has a number of functional relationships with capitalism, and is therefore a source of livelihood for its practitioners. This existing discipline is the source of our material survival. Yet, because capitalism is in contradiction, because the interaction of contradictions constantly throws up new crises, the system needs somewhat flexible centers of new technical ideas and camouflaging ideologies. This means that the universities (where most of us work) cannot be totally controlled, except under a static, fascistic form of capitalism. This necessary modicum of freedom can be extended to Marxism by careful, diligent and intelligent work on our part. We must be geographers in order to survive at one of the centers of power (where we can do effective work), and we are enabled to be Marxist geographers by taking advantage of capitalism's need for "free" thinking. To recast Neill's words: we must intellectually transcend disciplinary boundaries while necessarily remaining materially within them.

But are we constructing notions like "spatial dialectics" and "Marxist Geography" for practical reasons alone or do these ideas have validity in Marxist philosophy? The structure of Marxist science replicates the structure of its object — human society. Just as the social formation is a totality of dialectically interrelated instances, so Marxism is a holistic science of dialectically interrelated parts. This is, the parts of science study the various instances, or the relations between instances, of the societal whole. Just as each instance has a relative autonomy from the whole, so each part of science has a certain autonomy, while remaining within (and only making sense in) a whole science. Marxist science includes within it specializations on the various instances and relations of the social formation.

Marxist Geography specializes on two of the relations which affect, and are affected by, the whole social formation, which affect and are affected by all the instances of the whole formation: the dialectical relation between the social formations and the natural world; and the spatial dialectic between components of the formation embedded into geographical locations, or between social formations in different regions. Together these form the environmental relations of the social formations which make up world society. As a study of one aspect of the relations of the social whole, and the interrelations of its instances, geography necessarily is intricately integrated both into the whole Marxist science and each of its specializing parts. Relations do not make sense without the things being related. Things do not make sense except in their total web of relations.

A social formation moving through time is composed of many specific social processes, yet it is also a process as a whole. When the whole capitalist social process is broken down for the purpose of detailed analysis, environmental relations are found to have interrelated with capitalism's inherent tendency towards uneven development to produce geographical specificities, localized versions of a given social formation which are the product

of, and context for, particular social processes. Thus, for example, there are various centers specializing in particular processes within the center of the world capitalist social formation: New York as the geographical center of its economic instance, Washington as control point of its political instance, Los Angeles as the main center for the ideological manipulation of "culture". At the broader scale, the capitalist world may be divided into the central social formations (First World), and the peripheral social formations (Third World). Capitalist social processes operate differently in the different social formations, and somewhat differently in the regions and urban centers of any one social formation.

Social processes at one place interact across space with social processes at other places: this interaction is so complex that it can only be understood as a dialectic in itself, a spatial dialectic which is one component of the dialectic of the whole ensemble of social formations. Any one social process embedded into space develops under the impetus of its own internal contradictions, thus proceeding from quantitative to qualitative (revolutionary) change; it also develops under the impact of spatial relations radiating from social processes embedded into other spaces. These relations may radiate from processes undergoing quantitative change, or they may radiate from, and express, qualitative change (figure 1). Qualitative spatial relations may be of sufficient strength as to initiate, or exaggerate, the build-up (of contradictions) to qualitative change in the affected social processes (either immediately, or later as incorporations into affected processes). Hence social processes in different places have their own rhythms in time: they vibrate to the beat of the capitalist center, but their version of the dance is also their own.

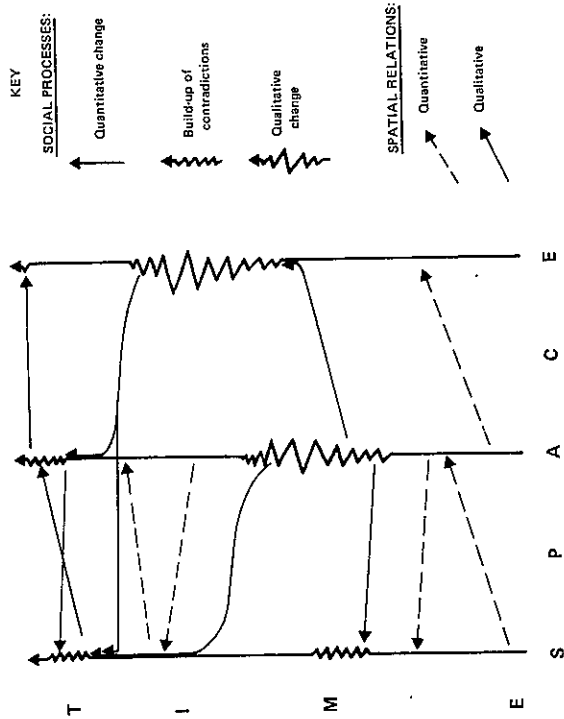


FIGURE 1: SOCIAL PROCESSES AND SPATIAL RELATIONS

I shall conclude with a brief example of the theory I have outlined above: the example is of the internationalization of capital (Hymer, 1975; Palloix, 1975; Palloix, 1977). Palloix divides the internationalization of capital into phases which correspond to the internationalization of commodity, money, and productive capital. These phases may be seen as spatial-relational responses to particular contradictions in the development of the central (and dominant) capitalist formations. The last phase, the internationalization of productive capital (or the internationalization of production), dominates the present geographical dynamic of world capitalism. Essentially the multinational corporations are withdrawing capital from the old centers of capitalist industry and investing it in selected areas of the peripheries (first the peripheries of the center, then the inner Third World periphery, then even certain parts of the peripheries of the Third World periphery). The result, in terms of regional depression at the center, is all too obvious in Northern England, New England, etc.. Why is this transfer taking place?

To say that capital moves in search of long-term maximum profit is only to give the final, surface mechanism regulating its spatial transfer. In more general, and revealing, terms the transfer of productive capital is the spatial-relational response to the build-up of contradiction in centers long occupied by capitalist production. Two kinds of contradiction are immediately apparent: (1), contradiction between the forces and the social relations of production; (2), contradiction in the environmental relations of capitalist production. In terms of the first, class struggle of an economic type has led to the diversion of a part of surplus value to higher wages for the organized working class (especially in the United States, West Germany, Britain); on the other hand, contradiction has also led to social problems, and the diversion of surplus value to the state which has the function of controlling these problems. Hence lower rates of profit. In terms of the second, the build-up of capitalism's inherently contradictory relations with the environment has now reached a state of crisis in the central formations: this crisis is revealed in shortages and high prices for raw materials (especially energy), high costs from pollution, congestion etc. Hence lower rates of profit. Capital's response is to abandon those places where this general process of the intense development of contradiction has gone furthest, in search of virgin environments, ideologically virgin populations, and higher profits.

The internationalization of productive capital is thus a spatial-relational response to the build-up of the social-relational and environmental contradictions at the center. It is one of the current tendencies which are "attempts" at counteracting the transformation from quantitative to qualitative change in the center (yet, in terms of the regional alienation produced in abandoned areas, are also further causes of this build up). It is a new relationship between a class of people in one set of regions (the world center) and a class of people in another set of regions (the peripheries). This new relationship cannot be understood without an analysis of the geography of contradiction and of relationships across space between geographically specific varieties of the world capitalist system: a Marxist Geography and a theory of spatial dialectics.

TOWARD A SERIOUS THEORY OF UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

What I have attempted to do is to outline my conception of Marxist Geography and spatial dialectics. My intention has been to provide a clear, simple exposition of a position which is still being developed and needs criticism. But this time, Bridget, Neil, Michael and all comrades who disagree with me, please criticize what you have just read and not what I did not say.

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For marxists trained within academia as geographers, uneven development has become a popular focus for research. On the one hand, "uneven development" is a concept firmly rooted in the marxist tradition; on the other, it provides academic marxists with a few rudimentary tools for academic survival, since a focus on uneven development allows us to cover some of the same ground covered by geographers under the bourgeois division of academic labour. Such a perspective is especially necessary since marxists have not yet developed any thoroughly materialist and historical understanding of space. The only alternative for those of us trained in geography has been to retain that discipline's metaphysical view of space or else to remain silent, admitting a gap in our knowledge. Neither alternative is acceptable, and a marxist understanding of space remains to be developed. One thing is clear, however: when such a theory is developed, it will not be a theory about space as such, space in the abstract, but will attempt to see space as produced according to the specific relationships between concrete bits of matter. Matter does not exist "in space and time"; space and time are a product of the concrete relations between bits of matter.

In this context, the notion of "Marxist Geography" is unacceptable also. While talking marxism in words, and claiming a unity of knowledge within marxism, it is in practice doing little more than hinging the metaphysical notions of space with the prefix, "Marxist." Asserting the marxist character of theory by use of this prefix does not make a theory marxist, and is no substitute for designing and working one's concepts to achieve practically the desired political intent, an intent which will not be realised by concepts alone. A contradiction in practice as well as in terms, "Marxist Geography" is an unsuitable problematic within which to seek an understanding of space.

A theory of uneven development can only be built on the basis of concrete marxist analyses, rooted initially at least in the specific history of capitalism. And here we must be prepared to turn our criticism from the bourgeois to the marxist tradition. It has become common within marxist circles to see uneven development as a "universal law of human history." Although even the most respected theorists have subscribed to this notion, it is difficult to see how such a broad interpretation could be justified except as metaphysics and speculation. Most of these more cosmic references to uneven development appear as part of attempts to fashion a "dialectical materialism" or "Marxist Philosophy." We can give a sketchy critique of this misuse of "uneven development" by looking at the latest and most

explicit attempt at a "Marxist Philosophy": Louis Althusser.

According to Althusser, the "law of uneven development" is "the essential feature" of "Marxist practice." This law "does not concern Imperialism alone, but absolutely 'everything in the world.'" <sup>1</sup> Cosmic indeed. That would certainly be a beautiful law which pretended to explain everything. Perhaps Althusser would reply that this law was not meant to explain everything, only to 'concern' it. As he explains further on: "The great law of uneven development suffers no exceptions .... (It) is a primitive law." By this he means that "every social formation is affected by the law."<sup>2</sup> But anything can be made to 'concern' anything else and Althusser's use of "uneven development" remains highly speculative. Typical of his entire philosophy, Althusser has asked the right question (what do we mean by and how can we best use the concept of uneven development?) but given completely the wrong kind of answer. Nor is he alone in this. To name but one other, Mandel, in his earlier work, also attempted to elevate "uneven development" to the status of a "universal law of human history."<sup>3</sup> In attempting to explain everything, Althusser and Mandel explain nothing. There is not the concept of uneven development we are concerned with.

Yet this universal and therefore trivial understanding of uneven development has found its way into concrete analyses, watering down the potential political and theoretical importance of such work. In the recent collection of essays by URPE members -- Marxism and the Metropolis -- "uneven development" was a catch-phrase which, far from explaining spatial differences, was inserted wherever necessary to cover a variety of differences that couldn't be explained. Although written by "radical political economists," there was no attempt to supply the economic theory of uneven development, yet without such an underpinning, the term will remain a meaningless catch-all. More specifically, "uneven development" can be theoretically grounded by demonstrating the logic that leads from Marx's theory of capital accumulation to uneven development. It is this link that is crucial, and it demands both a return to Marx and a critical extension his work.

We could examine the uneven development of culture, say, relative to the economy in capitalism, but the former is already premised on uneven development at the economic level. At bottom, then, uneven development is a function of capital's attempt to expand its own value through the production of surplus value, and its ability to move through space in doing so. The expansion of value takes the surface form of the search for profit, and explaining the specific historical conditions under which this search takes place will go a long way toward explaining uneven development. Recent work has emphasized the advantages of moving

to the suburbs, the underdeveloped South, or the Third World, but this is only half the story. Before we can adequately understand locational change, we have to understand the "status" of the capital invested in the old location. What are the specific conditions that make Islington but not the Stockbroker belt, Society Hill but not Philadelphia's Main Line amenable to gentrification? The answer is not simply that Islington and Society Hill represent much older capital; Philadelphia is presently considering the rehabilitation of structurally sound but socially deteriorated public housing projects (built in the 50s) into private condominiums. It is not the age of capital per se, but its specific devaluation process that is important here.

Once invested in the built environment, capital is immobile for a certain length of time, and only after this period has passed can the investment be written off and the profit earned used to initiate the next cycle of investment. But between the beginning of the first cycle and the second, a plethora of economic forces and decisions dictate the rate and form of devaluation that capital experiences, and it is this pattern of devaluation in the first investment period as well as patterns of development and underdevelopment elsewhere, which create the conditions for reinvestment in the second. This is true no matter what spatial scale we consider; hence the need for concrete historical studies. But hence also the need for a better developed theory of capital devaluation (based on a critical understanding of fixed capital in Marx), and the way in which accumulation and devaluation are related as the two contradictory forces behind uneven development.

Nor is this just abstract technical theorizing of little political importance. To take one recent example, the steel mill in Youngstown, Ohio closed suddenly in 1978, making the majority of the city's productive workers redundant and literally dissolving the city's economy. In some cases, the workers were given only 15 minutes notice, and the union initially accepted the company's explanation that it could no longer compete with Japanese steel. Eventually, however, the union was convinced that the closure had nothing to do with recent Japanese imports, but that instead the company had been actively disinvesting in Youngstown while investing elsewhere for more than 10 years. The workers' initial capitulation before the inevitable has changed into a fully fledged movement for workers' control of the mill.

#### Notes

Neil Smith  
Johns Hopkins

1. For Marx, NLE, 1977, pp.200-201.
2. *ibid.*, p.212.
3. Mandel, Marxist Economic Theory, Merlin, 1962, p.92.
4. Tabb & Sawers, (eds.), Marxism and the Metropolis, Oxford U. P., 1978.



TOWARD A RE-EVALUATION OF THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HOME-OWNERSHIP IN BRITAIN

Paper to be presented at the CSE Political Economy of Housing Workshop, Manchester, Feb. 3rd 1979.

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At the December 2nd 1978 meeting of the Political Economy of Housing Workshop, a number of important issues and questions were raised concerning strategies and modes of organisation around 'housing issues.' One recurrent theme was the necessity for the development of political strategies which transcended the political fragmentation associated with housing tenure divisions by organising around demands which entailed the convergence and collective mobilisation of working-class owner-occupiers and tenants.

This paper will argue that this issue, and others related to it, can be approached in a coherent and non-reformist manner only if informed by a systematic and, historically-specific understanding of the material bases of, and the processes creating tenure-group fragmentation, and of the political significance of such fragmentation. Despite recent 'radical' work on the emergence of tenure categories and their significance at the so-called 'economic', 'political' and 'ideological' levels of the social formation, our understanding is still underdeveloped - as this paper will demonstrate by means of a critical assessment of the assumptions which the 'radical' literature has made about class and social reproduction, and of the methodology which flows from these assumptions.

The paper then attempts to build on this critique to indicate, in a tentative way, how we may construct systematic theoretical guidelines for the concrete historical analysis of the political significance of working-class homeownership in the British social formation. It is argued that this phenomenon must be situated within the development of the 'social-democratic compromise,' and that there are complex and dialectical inter-relationships between the processes creating fragmentation within the workforce and the tendency for organised labour to focus on 'corporate interests' rather than 'fundamental' class struggles, and the processes creating fragmentation in everyday life outside of the workplace. Historically, working-class homeownership (as ideal and reality) may have played an important role in this dialectic, tending to reinforce a divergence between 'objective' class place and 'immediate' or conjunctural political position.

However, the process of reproduction of capitalist social relations contains immanent contradictions, and thus the phenomenon of home-ownership may contribute also to the articulation of such contradictions in specific crises. As socialist intellectuals we have a responsibility for transcending the 'dismal science' of 'mechanical materialism' by identifying these contradictions and the political possibilities they create; and as socialist activists in our communities we must use these analyses to work out strategies which intersect the contradictions in the direction of transcending the existing fragmentation of everyday life and organising politically on the basis of fundamental class relations.

Copies of the full paper will be available at the workshop meeting or from me at the above address. This is very much work-in-progress and so I would be more than happy to hear from anyone dealing with similar issues either theoretically or empirically (or both!).

D.R. January 18th 1979.

RISK: PRAGMATIC EMPIRICISM OR DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM?

Professor Comar's editorial\* addresses an issue of growing concern, namely the methodological innovations required to ease social anxiety about technology-associated risk. His purpose in suggesting "a pragmatic de minimis approach" is commendable insofar as it can focus attention on actions that can affectively improve health and welfare and at the same time avoid squandering resources". But the approach itself contains implications that range from the technically amusing to the politically disturbing.

Let us assume, with Professor Comar, a pragmatic de minimis approach, utilising probabilities of age specific mortality rates. This approach could provide an algorithm for equalising societal vulnerability to an identified technological risk. This assumption is deliberately democratic in that it presumes risk, as well as benefit, is available to all. Lowest mortality rates are exhibited by the 5-14 age group; to equalise vulnerability, all technology-associated risks, e.g. asbestos factories should therefore be located near grade schools and playgrounds. Three important age groups, (15-24, 35-54 and over 65) are omitted from Professor Comar's "well-being" calculations. The equitable solution outlined above recognises the irrelevance of youth, the immortality of middle age and the continued euthanasia of those approaching retirement. Or permutate any explanation for any age group?

A Specious scenario? Perhaps, but no more fanciful an interpretation than that which is currently utilised when pricing human life in social benefit-cost analysis. For example in both benefit-risk assessment and social benefit-cost analysis retirees are excluded from value calculations because they do not contribute to productive activity. Does this, then, imply that your grandmother should face greater risks or have her life priced at a lower figure?

Scientific inquiry occurs in a social setting, expressing social ideas and conveying social meaning. Although Professor Comar does not directly address these issues, and thus implicitly accepts an idealist interpretation of scientific inquiry, he does suggest guidelines that are inoperable precisely because they contain no social understanding of risk. Technological innovation is necessary for continued capital accumulation; an appreciation of the structure of capital accumulation provides a social understanding of risk. The process of capital accumulation produces, and reproduced by, a division of labour and it is this division of labour that should be the focus of risk assessment.

Simple historical reflection will reveal the class nature of risk. The industrial revolution produced hazardous conditions of production and reproduction, of occupational (site) and

\*This letter is a reply to Comar, C.L., "Risk: A Pragmatic De Minimis Approach." Science VI. 203. No. 4378 p.319

living (situation) environments respectively, while raising the overall level of material production. The working class, not the middle class, was exposed to these environmental risks. How many mine owners died of silicosis? How many middle-class residential zones were located downwind or downstream of industrial pollutants? The continuing contradictions of this mode of production have, however, led to the universalisation of the environmental burdens of the industrial revolution; technology-associated risk is now global. For example, carcinogenic food additives affect all consumers.

The universalisation of exposure does not imply a uniformity of exposure, for the working class still shoulders a disproportionate risk load. By focusing upon a taxonomy of vulnerability, derived from class analysis, it is, however, possible to produce guidelines to reduce risk. Chinese earthquake mitigation policy is one example, a successful example, of a strategy to reduce risk from "Natural Disasters".

Yet a taxonomy of vulnerability is not sufficient. Such a taxonomy would avoid the pitfalls of current benefit-risk assessment, which focus upon capital risk rather than human risk. But what then? Appeals to capital are unheeded. Appeals to the state are questionable. At best, these appeals achieve reformism and technocratic rationality. A growing body of "hazard managers" who will address the technical rather than the social relations of risk, who will place band-aids on current relations of production, does not hold much prospect for the reduction of risk. At worst, these appeals will merely reveal the inherent contradiction in state functions, namely the legitimisation of private accumulation in opposition to the welfare of the whole population. These contradictions are currently resolved in favour of private capital accumulation. EPA's recent ruling on ozone levels, a decision based upon economic criteria, reflects the current direction of problem resolution. Indeed when legislative action against technology-associated risk is effectively implemented, this restriction on private capital accumulation at home often leads to the transfer of production beyond national boundaries -- that is, to the export of technology associated risk. The consequent international division of labour, already observable in some areas, will mirror the unevenly distributed risk-load observable in the First World.

It is easy to understand why the majority of the population largely members of the working class, should demonstrate "anxiety, apathy and derision" towards technology-associated risk. The history of scientific research, and of private and public action, surely demonstrates a certain "benign neglect" of the risks associated with membership in the working class. Risk is inherent in the use of any technology. Risk assessment must be understood and practiced as a political act. Professor Comar offers a methodological framework that assumes "logical and traditional approach is first to estimate risk, a scientific task"; this implies some value-free approach in

"the world of facts". It is precisely this form of logical empiricism, ideologically dangerous because it makes normative statements about its own neutrality, that clouds scientific analysis. Professor Comar would not analyse disastrous events as "Acts of God", although this valid feudal interpretation of catastrophe has a relic form in insurance claim classification. Why then attempt a logical empiricist interpretation of risk that serves the practical wisdom of late capitalism? As corporate strategies of accumulation shift from profit maximisation to cost minimisation, does "scientific analysis" follow this shift by moving from benefit-cost analysis to benefit-risk assessments? Perhaps the difference between Professor Comar and myself simply reflects the different constituencies that use our analyses.

By all means, develop a programme for estimating technological risk; but let that programme be subsumed within a scientific framework that utilises class analysis to understand human vulnerability to disaster. A dialectical de-materials maximis approach.

#### Footnote

1. Of course, the focus upon a taxonomy of vulnerability would destroy the current classification of disaster, fundamentally divided between "natural" and "technological" hazard. I would suggest that this is progress. cf. O'Keefe et al. "Taking the Naturalness out of the Natural Disaster" Nature Vol. 260, 1976

Ed Vanderveelde has written to inform us that there is a great deal of interest in the Union of Socialist Geographers in India. He argues that if we are serious about attempting to get members in the 'Third World', that we should consider charging a reduced membership rate. Several complementary copies are currently being sent to people in Africa and Latin America and Asia. Obviously this occurs only on a token level, but the question Ed raises should be considered by USG members - especially if we hope to become a truly INTERNATIONAL organization.

VANDEVELDE, ED  
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SOCIALISM, COMMUNISM, AND ANARCHISM

Francis Walsh  
Simon Fraser University and Maynooth College

Ian Cook's valuable introduction to anarchist thought (USG Newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 2) suffers, I believe, from a lack of clarity concerning how anarchism relates to the mainstream of socialist thought. It is clear that the vision of anarchist society as outlined in his article is quite at odds with the kind of highly centralised societies which have emerged in modern so-called "socialist" countries, and this, I suspect, is the crux of his problem. Given the fundamental differences between these two conceptions of social organisation, one is obviously faced with a choice of accepting that anarchism and socialism are incompatible, or alternatively that these societies which regard themselves as such, are not in fact socialist.

Of course, there has been a major debate going on for some time among left wing circles concerning whether or not the Soviet Union is a socialist society. Opposed to those who maintain that it is are those who either regard it as capitalistic or who believe that it represents a new formation not allowed for in the classic marxian schema. It may be useful to discuss this debate in the context of the recent publication of an English translation of Umberto Melotti's Marx and the Third World (Macmillan, London, 1977; original published in Milan by Il Saggiatore, 1972), which deals specifically with this question.

The title of this work is, in fact, somewhat misleading, since the term "Third World" is normally applied to the underdeveloped periphery of the capitalist system, whereas the bulk of the book under review is concerned with the so-called "Asiatic mode of production" in the period prior to capitalist penetration, and even then, emphasises those countries, especially China and Russia, which were possibly least affected by such penetration. Melotti's main concern is to challenge the unilinear model of historical development which is frequently attributed to Marx and which holds that all societies must pass through the same sequence of stages of development, namely: primitive communalism, classical (slave-based) society, feudalism, capitalism, and socialism.

To counter this argument, Melotti focuses attention on the "Asiatic" mode of production, to which Marx himself devoted much interest. The thrust of the argument is that "Asiatic Society" does indeed constitute a distinct mode of production which does not fit into the unilinear model. Melotti undertakes a detailed analysis of the structure of Asiatic society which should be of particular interest to geographers, as he emphasises the environmental basis of its characteristic system of production (hydraulic agriculture), and how spatial variations in these environmental conditions produce variants on the basic model. Old Russia is characterised as 'semi-Asiatic'; its high degree of centralisation was due not to the needs of hydraulic agriculture but to the needs of defence against invasions from Asia. This point is essential to the main thrust of the book, which is that today's leading "Socialist" states (Soviet Union, China) are purely outgrowths of Asiatic society which did not pass through

a capitalist phase and have adopted a distinctive social form - "bureaucratic collectivism" - which parallels capitalism and precedes socialism: "bureaucratic collectivism is the typical form of development of countries based on the Asiatic or semi-Asiatic mode of production that have not been subjected to the capitalistic mode of production as a prolonged and penetrating external influence." (pp. 149-150)

This conclusion, then, allows Melotti to reconcile the commonly-held conception of socialist society with the highly-alienated form of social organisation observable in the Soviet Union and China (particularly in the post-Mao period): these latter countries quite simply are not socialist, but logical successors of the highly-centralised states which characterised their past history.

Many aspects of Melotti's thesis are open to question. He fails, for example, to distinguish clearly between feudalism and the Asiatic mode of production. Samir Amin has argued that each is a variant of a single mode which he terms the "tribute-paying" mode of production.<sup>1</sup> He also fails to make a clear distinction between bureaucratic collectivism and its precursor, the Asiatic mode of production. Such a distinction is, of course, necessary to account for the rapid economic progress achieved in post-revolutionary Russia and China. The nature of his thinking on this point is no doubt reflected in a passage by Rizzi (from whom he derived the term "bureaucratic collectivism") which he quotes approvingly, to the effect that "nationalised" property in the Soviet Union "is exclusively controlled by a single class which then appropriates its fruits in just as blatant a fashion as did the former bourgeoisie." If this were the case, one might well accept it as an explanation for rapid economic growth, but to the present writer at least, the veracity of this statement is highly questionable.

For Melotti, the essential difference between the ruling class in the Soviet Union and a capitalist bourgeoisie is the collective and centralised nature of the former. This very difference leads him to the conclusion that the Soviet economic system cannot match the productive performance of capitalism: "such a system (bureaucratic collectivism) cannot develop in rich countries, where production is so highly organised and complex that it cannot survive being put into the strait-jacket of bureaucratic planning" (p. 149). This contention clearly ignores the inherent tendency within capitalism, identified long ago by Lenin, for production to become increasingly concentrated into huge, bureaucratically-organised, corporations. This tendency can largely be attributed to the advantages of centralised, rationally-organised decision-making which Melotti obviously does not appreciate. It can, I think, be argued quite forcibly on empirical grounds that the centralised planned economies of the Soviet Union and China are inherently more productive than capitalist organisation based on decentralised decision making. Certainly, the economic achievements of both these countries in the periods since their respective revolutions have been quite impressive. If this is so, then given Marx's notion of the "progressive" nature of history, it is more

## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### FILM: PUERTO RICO: PARADISE INVADED

An excellent film on the experience of Puerto Rico under United States imperialism, "Puerto Rico: Paradise Invaded," is available from the Latin American Film Project, Inc./ 215 West 90th St. 96/ New York, NY 10024, or from the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee, which has chapters in many US cities. The film details the conquest of Puerto Rico, the breakdown of its agriculture, the exploitation of its dispossessed people and the destruction of its environment and resources by runaway American firms, and its tremendous unemployment and resulting emigration to the American underclass. The film runs approximately thirty minutes and is in Spanish and English, with English subtitles.

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reasonable to regard the Soviet/Chinese system as subsequent, rather than parallel, to capitalism. But is it socialist?

To answer this question, it is appropriate at this stage to raise the issue, skirted by Melotti and avoided by Cook, of the distinction between socialism and communism. Marx made this distinction clearly, and referred to the idea of a transition from socialism to communism, a process to which he did not, apparently, devote much attention. Nevertheless, under the marxian conception of history, the only mechanism of historical movement is class struggle. From this, it may be inferred that any transition from socialism to communism will only result from class struggle, which further infers that socialist society must be a class society. This possibility is mentioned in a passage by Fejto contained in a footnote by Melotti (in.30 p. 202), although ignored in the text: "socialist society, erected on the ruins of bourgeois society, has not abolished class antagonisms; it has only substituted new classes for the old ones, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle."

If we can accept that socialism can be a class society, and that the Soviet/Chinese economic systems are productively superior to capitalism, then there is little difficulty in accepting them as socialist. How, then, does communism differ from socialism? The answer to this must surely be the elimination of centralised, alienated control of production (the "withering away of the state"). This implies a decentralised form of social organisation on the lines proposed by anarchist thinkers. It may be, then, that the historic role of the socialist "phase" is to develop productive forces to such a degree that decentralised living at a high material level will become technically feasible. Certainly for me, the major achievement of socialism in the Soviet Union has been to provide a reasonable living for at least most of its population, in stark contrast to capitalism (when viewed as a global system). Melotti, ironically, gives the following (among others) as defining characteristics of socialism: "social and economic preparation for communism, under which productive forces would be developed to at least as great an extent as under advanced capitalism and resources would be used more rationally, with a deliberate trend towards egalitarian distribution..." (p.141). For me (though not for Melotti) this describes the Soviet Union perfectly.

Our conclusion, then, is that anarchism and communism are one and the same thing, and that socialism is a necessary preparatory stage for their development. If this is so, and if one can wear the deterministic undertones, then it may be argued that the establishment of anarchist society prior to socialism is an impossibility, and that the objective of anarchist thinker located within capitalist society should be to work first of all for the establishment of socialism, within which context the quest for the ultimate goal can be further pursued.

### References

1. Samir Amin, "The precapitalist formations", in *Unequal Development*, Monthly Review Press, N.Y., 1975
2. B. Rizzi, *Il Collettivismo burocratico*, Galeati, Imola, 1967 67-8.
3. F. Fejto, *A History of the People's Democracies*, Pall Mall Press, London, 1971, p.274.

# *ABOUT THE USG*

The Union of Socialist Geographers was organised in Toronto in May 1974. The consensus of those gathered in Toronto was that an organisation - the USG - be formed to improve communication among those geographers who agree with the principles in the organisation's aims:

The purpose of our union is to work for the radical restructuring of our societies in accord with the principles of social justice. As geographers and as people we will contribute to this process in two complementary ways:

1. organising and working for radical change in our communities, and
2. developing geographic theory to contribute to revolutionary struggle.

Thus we subscribe to the principle: from each according to ability, to each according to need. We declare that the development of a humane, non-alienating society requires, as its most fundamental step, socialization of the ownership of the means of production.

The USG currently has members in Africa, Europe and Latin America as well as North America. Several active groups exist in both Canada and the United States, including academic and non-academic geographers, and non-geographers. An active section of the USG in Britain and Ireland plans to hold annual meetings at the time and place of the IBG annual meetings. The USG publishes a Newsletter several times a year and holds an annual meeting (in North America) in April or May each year.

The USG welcomes inquiries and new members. For further information, and the names of people to contact in your vicinity, write to

Eric Sheppard  
Department of Geography  
University of Minnesota  
414 Social Sciences Building  
Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA,

or write to one of the regional contact persons listed with the AGH minutes in this issue of the Newsletter.

To become a member (except if you're in Britain or Ireland) send your name, address and \$5 to

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