

# IN PRINT

*Socialist Register 1992*, Edited by Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch, London: Merlin Press, pp.285.

The theme of this twenty eighth volume of *Socialist Register*, containing fifteen essays is the so-called new world order. The *SR* is a major publication in Marxist/Socialist theory and ideas, as are the *New Left Review* and *Monthly Review*.

The transformation of the world in the context of the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the impending unification of Europe and further globalisation of capital are themes of intense ideological debates. Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis heralded the sense of ultimate victory for liberal capitalism, while President Bush's call during the Gulf War for a 'new world order' indicated the American pre-occupation with its own role in shaping a post-Cold War world order under U.S. hegemony. Meanwhile, in socialist and radical circles, a feeling of gloom and despair set in, particularly due to the apparent triumph of capitalism over socialism as it existed. And indeed, the collapse of the Soviet Union is no less important to modern history than was the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. However, the present transformation of the world cannot and should not be seen as a triumph for capitalism. The further penetration and expansion of capital on an almost global scale is very unlikely to lessen and lighten contradictions inherent in the global capitalist order.

This volume of *Socialist Register* focusses, from many perspectives on the immense changes that have occurred in the world since the eighties. While the general themes are on nature, constitution, the extent and the impact of the globalisation of capital, other major concerns include the decline of the United States in terms of its economic hegemony and its multiple internal crises, the emergence of Germany as the predominant power in Europe and of Japan in Asia, the impact of globalisation on the 'third world', and the shift of ex-socialist countries towards peripheral capitalism.

Among the contributors are Ralph Miliband, Harry Magdoff, Bob Sutcliffe, Immanuel Wallerstein, Basil Davidson, Stephen Gill and Makoto Ito. Socialists will find their essays extremely useful for the task of re-thinking alternatives for capitalism. As Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch note in their essay "The New World Order and the Socialist Agenda,

The economic crisis that currently envelopes global capitalism, even at the very moment of the ignominious collapse of its communist nemesis,

makes it possible that a different political climate entailing very different currents of thought will come to prevail against the bourgeois bravado we have grown used to over the past decade. As the shortcomings and contradictions of an unregulated market economy even in the 'affluent' societies become more and more manifest in the current crisis, the need for a comprehensive programme of radical economic change will again come to be felt keenly in labour and socialist movements, and indeed beyond.... In such a climate, there is an opportunity for the Left to think creatively about, and work constructively towards, the new forms and strategies that enhance its capacities to put a democratic socialism back on the agenda for the twenty-first century (p. 16).

The current and previous issues of *Socialist Register* are available for sale at Suriya Books, Wellawatte.

*TELOS*, No. 91, Spring 1992, *Special Issue on Federalism*, pp. 192, \$ 8.50.

*Telos* describes itself as 'a quarterly journal of critical thought' and those who are familiar with it know that this journal has consistently been a forum for unorthodox views, even within academic radicalism. Of late, *Telos* under the editorship of Paul Piccone has become a major link between intellectual movements in continental Europe and the English speaking world.

This special issue on federalism comes out in the context of political debates on the evolving patterns of European political integration. While Europe is rapidly moving towards economic and political integration, the federalist theme has emerged as the projected form of Europe in the next century. If an European federation is the political form of a unified Europe, then the post-Westphalian notion of sovereign state/nation state too will undergo a radical transformation. All this will in turn have profound implications on political theory, constitutional jurisprudence, international relations and historical analysis.

As Robert D'Amico and Paul Piccone note in their 'Introduction,' "[t]oday federalism is not accorded the *theoretical* attention it deserves largely because it has been relegated by Enlightenment ideology to the limbo of pre-modern politics or to the *de facto* logistics of highly centralized states such as the present US government"



(p.9). This is perhaps partly due to the absence, in the recent body of literature on political and legal philosophy, of any significant treatment of federalism as a theoretical problem. In fact, the vast body of literature on federalism has primarily treated the subject from functionalist perspectives. Ironically, federalism, though practised so widely in the modern world, is a concept without a Plato or an Aristotle.

What *Telos* does in this volume is bring back to the debate the theoretical ideas on federalism, evolved in the first half of this century in the context of German constitutional developments and of the League of Nations. These theoretical formulations are then examined in the light of contemporary European developments—the unification of Germany and the projected integration of Europe.

Two key essays by Carl Schmitt and Leopold Kohr on federalism are reproduced in this volume. A brilliant legal philosopher and political thinker of the twenties and thirties, Carl Schmitt was long considered a theoretician of Nazism. Interestingly, it was *Telos* that initiated the radical resurrection of Schmitt, devoting an entire volume to this controversially original critic of liberal democracy. Reproduced here is his 1928 treatise

on 'The Constitutional Theory of Federation,' a long forgotten essay which, according to the editors, "provides a detailed examination of federations in terms of which a theory and history of federalism can be reconstructed." Incidentally, Schmitt was not a defender of federalism as it existed in the US and Europe; however his theoretical treatment of federalism is outstanding: he identifies what he calls "the legal and political antinomies of federation" and then proposes solutions to them.

If Schmitt is skeptical about conventional forms of federalism (to him federalism and democracy have opposing philosophical bases), Leopold Kohr is the visionary of small-state federalism. Deeply suspicious of big states ('there is only one cause behind all forms of social misery: bigness,' Kohr argued in his 1957 book, *The Breakdown of Nations*), and taking Switzerland as the model, he proposed that small cells such as Swiss Cantons are preconditions of true democracy and successful federation. *Telos* has re-produced Kohr's seminal essay of 1941, 'Disunion Now: A Plea for a Society Based upon Small Autonomous Units.'

J. U.

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