

evoked. And the Russian bureaucracy — on which they modelled themselves — stands on the other side of a revolution of the working class and peasant masses, erecting its power on that revolution's political grave but also on its social-economic achievements and accomplishments.

In fact, as the statement of the Workers Action editorial board defined it (9.2.80):

"The 20-month history of the PDP-Army regime, until the Russian invasion essentially put an end to it and replaced it, was marked by the narrow base of the regime and the attempt to use the armed forces as the instrument of a social transformation which proved obnoxious, for varying reasons, to the big majority of the population.

"Despite its unusually close links with the bureaucracy of the degenerated workers' state, the regime never got beyond the stage of being a military-bureaucratic state capitalist regime attempting to carry through the bourgeois programme of land reform, educational reform, and some easing of the enslavement of women.

"Its methods in relation to the Afghan masses were never other than military-bureaucratic; the bombing and strafing of villages, including the use of napalm, from the first weeks of the regime, and the figure of 400,000 mainly non-combatant refugees, graphically sum up the military-bureaucratic regime's relationship with the Afghan masses".

The central point is that the PDP did not carry through a revolution, and proved unable to do so. There are few clearer examples of the impotence of the middle class to achieve a revolution and open the way for serious development in the Third World today (though there are special problems in Afghanistan).

It was a middle-class regime, symbiotic with the Russian Stalinist regime, but still resting on the old state. It never succeeded in making itself, still less the society, into a replica of the USSR's social institutions, and the invasion snuffed out its independent development.

'Proletarian bonapartism'

But Grant, as we have seen, views the Afghan events through the prism of his own special theory — the theory of 'proletarian bonapartism'.

'Proletarian bonapartism' describes regimes as identical to the Stalinist system on the sole basis of the state ownership of industry. It is a 'profile' derived from the features which the Stalinist states have in common 'in repose'. What the theory lacks is any conception of the dynamic and the struggles whereby the Stalinist states have come into existence.

The East European states were subjugated by Russian military power and assimilated to the Russian system. Apart from that, the only Stalinist-type states (that is, states identical to the USSR) which have achieved any stability have had in common mass peasant (and sometimes working-class) mobilisations, under the leadership and control of militarised Stalinist parties. The Stalinists, via the mass mobilisation, break the state machine, or at least the upper

layers linked to the old ruling classes, collectivise industry and the land, and radically root out the old ruling classes. As in 1928 in Russia, all major competitors for the surplus product are eliminated, and the newly-created bureaucracy then becomes the master of the state economy. In this way a truly radical break is made.

(Cuba is partly an exception. But there too there was a mass mobilisation and a radical overturn, with the new regime then settling over time into the Stalinist mould).

In contrast, the general experience of regimes which have emulated statism purely from on top, without a radical overturn, has been unstable. There has been no real replication of the existing Stalinist states. In Egypt, for example, industry was satisfied, but the old ruling class was kept on (stock exchange dealings in Government compensation bonds continued, for example), and eventually reasserted itself. The Army acted as agent and caretaker for the bourgeoisie.

Grant and Militant have a history of being unable to distinguish between real Stalinist-type transformations and developments like in Egypt in the late '50s and the '60s. They consider Syria, Burma, Ethiopia, Angola and Mozambique, for example, as of the same order as the Stalinist states (deformed and degenerated workers' states). Their urge to play at 'prophets' and to 'spot the trend' leads them repeatedly to make foolish and hasty judgments. They briefly hailed Portugal as a workers' state in 1975, and are now seemingly on the brink of so classifying Iran.

They see a fundamental trend — the autonomous movement of the productive forces — in the colonial revolutions of the Third World, manifesting itself everywhere, through many different forms. Thus Militant spent most of the '60s predicting the eventual manifestation of this trend within South Vietnam, and US withdrawal... while others were building the anti-war movement.

Analysing Afghanistan, Grant, the prisoner of his dogmas, scans the horizon for 'empirical' confirmation of what he knows in his heart, and so decrees that the PDP regime was proletarian Bonapartist — whereas the whole dynamic of the events he is dealing with derives from the PDP's failure to be what he calls a proletarian bonapartist regime.

When Grant assimilates the pre-invasion Afghan regime to his proletarian bonapartist scheme, then he, like the regime itself, mistakes form for substance, government decrees for achievements, impotent middle class aspirations to be a Stalinist bureaucracy for a society in which the old ruling class has been overthrown.

The invasion

Why, in Grant's view, did the Russians invade?

Because *"the Russian bureaucracy... could not tolerate the overthrow, for the first time in the post-war period, of a regime based on [?] the elimination of landlordism and capitalism and the victory of a feudal-capitalist counter-revolution, especially in a state bordering on the Soviet Union"*.

Fear of the ferment spilling over to the Muslim population of the USSR was

also a motive. The Russian bureaucracy, thus, intervened, *"not only because of Afghanistan's strategic position, but for reasons of their own power and prestige"*.

Grant denounces the hypocrisy of the imperialist outcry and chronicles recent imperialist 'interventions' — South Africa in Angola and Zimbabwe, Belgium in Zaire and France in Chad and Zaire. True, as far as it goes, but it obliterates in a cloud of minor propaganda/agitational points what is 'new' in Afghanistan — the fact that the USSR, acting from strength, was overstepping the agreed boundaries that had prevailed since world war 2.

The US, says Grant, is using the pretext of Afghanistan and *"attempting to hit at Russia because of the class character of the Soviet Union, where landlordism and capitalism have been eliminated"*. This is typical Grant-thought. Basic, general historic truths about capitalist class antagonism to the anti-capitalist regime are used to 'explain' specific developments.

What response should socialists make to the invasion? How do we advise the labour movement to see it?

Grant and Stalinism

Grant attacks the Communist Parties for opposing the invasion because, he says, they proceed from "abstract 'principles'" of opposition to "aggression between peoples", support for the UN, etc — *"instead of viewing the process from the point of view of the class struggle internationally and the class relations between the nations"*. Which means? Grant doesn't tell us. Others — his pupils — subsequently will. In fact, it is a way for Grant to evade the by no means abstract question of what the Afghan masses would choose.

Everything is skewed by Grant's basic attitude to Stalinism. 40 and more years after Trotsky and the Bolshevik rear-guard publicly declared that a river of blood separated Stalinism and Bolshevism, Grant is still — in his mind — engaged in a political and ideological dialogue with the Stalinist bureaucracy. The bureaucracy in the 1920s accused Trotsky of wanting to use the Red Army to 'export revolution'. (Grant mistakenly asserts that Trotsky did advocate this). Lo and behold, says Ted Grant in 1980, we now have a grossly bureaucratic use of the Red Army (the same Red Army?) without the support of the workers, etc. The point of course is that the Russian bureaucracy is necessarily *against* the workers and the common people of Afghanistan.

In the same vein, as a critic of the technique and crudities of the bureaucracy, Grant comes to his central objection to the invasion. *It will repel the international working class. The Russian state conducted itself differently in Lenin's and Trotsky's time. "They based themselves on proposals and actions which would raise the level of consciousness of the working class internationally". "Anything which acted to raise the consciousness of the working class was justified; anything which had the opposite effect was to be condemned"*, etc. etc. Yes (though the Bolsheviks were sometimes forced to do things irrespective of the