

A Letter to Liborio Justo

Mike Banda

This letter, to the veteran Argentinian revolutionary Liborio Justo, dates from June 1992. However, despite being written over a decade ago, the themes raised in the letter retain their relevance today. Hopefully, it will provoke debate in the pages of this journal. The text has been shortened slightly for reasons of space.

DEAR Liborio, Many apologies for the long delay in writing and the frequent failures to deliver on my promises to write. I am a terrible letter writer. However I have at last found the time and summoned up enough mental concentration to write down my thoughts on some methodological problems of Marxism. I must warn you though that you might find this letter long, tedious and rambling – and only fit for the wastepaper basket. If you do, don't hesitate to put it in the shredder. On the other hand it might possibly provoke a "rebuttal" (an expression I learnt from the SWP!) and this might, conceivably, cast some light on the problems I am about to introduce.

The historic changes that have transformed the USSR and Eastern Europe have not only toppled regimes and discredited many so-called "leading statesmen" but they have, more importantly, transcended much of what the most eminent theoreticians of Marxism wrote on the strategy, tactics and perspectives for world socialism.

I am not in the least belittling what they did and wrote, least of all denying the colossal scope of their achievements but, like the French Revolution, the English Civil War and the American War of Independence, the greatest historical changes eventually give way to new social and cultural developments producing new contradictions, new problems and tasks which in turn call forth new programmes and leaders and demand a new examination of extant social and economic relations as well as the political institutions which serve them. Revolutionary periods alternate abruptly with evolutionary ones revealing again and again that the "limits of approximation of our knowledge to objective, absolute truth are historically conditional" (Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*).

Unhappily for society, the process of unravelling the conditionality of historical truth is itself a contradictory and, most often, a painful business, as millions of Russians, Central Asians and South Slavs are discovering to their cost. As Hegel said once: "Minerva, the owl of wisdom flies at dusk"!

The trouble, as I see it, is that the so-called Marxist movement in Europe is rushing around like a headless chicken without hindsight, foresight or any kind of comprehensive vision. This blindness and deafness to what is new and complex I feel stems from the fact that the very conquests of the Marxist movement – i.e. the Russian and Chinese Revolutions and Marx's critique of Capital – have generated a monstrous arrogance and intellectual complacency which, in the last few decades, has been converted into a kind of bureaucratic and dogmatic triumphalism. Instead of being a method of analysis and synthesis Marxism has degenerated into an apocalyptic fantasy. With every successful revolution each leadership absolutised its own relative and particular form of social practice. It then dogmatised its own specific theory and programme by calling it the Russian, Chinese, Albanian or Cuban Road and, having canonised it, made it the "Only Road". Instead of a creative application of dialectics whose precondition is a certain humility and an unashamed readiness to study your own mistakes and admit them to the masses – instead of this we had the opposite – the dogmatising and institutionalising of Marxism into a state religion whose ugliest creation was the cult of leadership infallibility. The most grotesque example of this form of idolatry is, unarguably, North Korea and Kim Il Sung. But that is only one end of a spectrum which includes almost all of the traditional "Marxist"

groups.

I think it can be said without any fear of contradiction that every science has been developed in the last 70 years – except the science of cognition which is the basis of a scientific world outlook.

So what we see throughout Europe is the complete prostration and intellectual bankruptcy of official and unofficial Marxism. This is the obverse side of a pervasive belief, itself inseparable from the cult of infallibility, that the great Marxist theoreticians have said everything there was to say about capitalism, imperialism and socialism.

An outstanding example of this form of epigonism was Trotsky himself. Do you recall what he wrote in *In Defence of Marxism*? Here it is: “The life and death task of the proletariat now consists not in interpreting the world anew but in remaking it from top to bottom. In the next epoch we can expect great revolutionists of action but *hardly a new Marx*. Only on the basis of socialist culture will mankind feel the need to review the ideological heritage of the past” (Open Letter to Burnham, p.97, English edition, 1971 [emphasis added].)

This is a grotesque piece of sophistry which I find impudently amateurish. Yet it is part of a universal trend which refuses to look at the whole of human social practice critically and which ignores history as the endless process of becoming, of emergence and negation. Not accidentally, no one at the time challenged Trotsky’s philosophical charlatanism. What Marx was saying was diametrically opposed to Trotsky’s superficial and pragmatic interpretation. Marx does not at all reject the need for a philosophical explanation of the world. He is certainly against *reducing* the mission of philosophy to the interpretation of *that which exists* because such self-restriction *opposes philosophy to the struggle for a radical transformation of reality*.

Thus the true meaning of Marx’s Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach is not only opposed to Trotsky’s quixotic invocation of a pragmatic practice but is an unambiguous directive for philosophers to make philosophy a theoretical substantiation of the need for the revolutionary transformation of the world. Above all it presupposes the need for philosophers to emulate Marx and enrich and transcend his work by creatively renewing the epistemology and ontology of Modern Materialism. Engels said something analogous when he warned philosophers that with every major discovery in physics materialism had to change its form. Theoretical thinking, as Engels explained, is, essentially, thinking in concepts and it develops by perfecting the conceptual scientific system, by *creating new concepts and categories*. Where would modern physics be if Einstein had taken Trotsky’s

advice and refused to correct his mentor – Newton?

Personally speaking I don’t have much time for Vaclav Havel, but like the stopped clock he can sometimes be right, as when he wrote: “The roots of the failure of communism lie in the intrinsic character of this most ambitious of ideologies, namely in its claims to explain anything and consequently in its efforts to control everything. Communism has striven to become a probably impossible system of thought; conflict free and complete at the same time. This has led to its most notable trait, its totalitarian character.” Shakespeare, I think, put it a bit more succinctly when Hamlet cautioned Horatio: “There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy”!

What happened to Hegelian idealism has now overtaken Marxism: the revolutionary method has been sacrificed to preserve a finished and immaculate system. Come back Kautsky and Bernstein, all is forgiven! Or, Two steps forward – one step back! The revolutionary movement has paid a high price for all this and will continue to pay an even higher one unless we make our own critique of Marxism and help regenerate it.

Let me try and explain some aspects of the problem. In my previous note to you I mentioned the Jewish question. Since then I have made an exhaustive investigation of this problem which has worried me for most of my adult life. As a child I was appalled and intrigued by anti-semitism and then the Holocaust. In fact I thought seriously of continuing my education in Israel because I believed instinctively that the Jews were a nation. But then I joined the Trotskyist movement and was told that neither Marx, Lenin, Stalin nor Trotsky considered the Jews as a nation. They were, instead, defined rather vaguely as a “religious community”. Thus the direct corollary to this specious argument was that Zionism or any Jewish nationalism was unnatural, reactionary and an expression of imperialist influence and manipulation. That left me in a quandary. Should I oppose the Holocaust? Unquestionably yes! Should I support the efforts of the Jews to escape from another holocaust by setting up a state of their own in their ancestral homeland? No! Definitely not!

The position of the WRP became bizarre and even obscene as the Israelis fought to consolidate their state against Arab attacks. The logic of our policy first led us not only to oppose the partition of Palestine but to call for the defeat of the Israelis in every war that occurred. In short, we were, in practice, for the continuation of the Holocaust in a new form. The poor old Jews were in a no-win situation.

The root cause of this confusion and political imbecility was the Marxist-Leninist definition of

the Jews as a religious community who were in a process of “assimilation” into gentile society. The prescribed task of Trotskyites, derived from this metaphysical presumption, was to assist this mythical process of assimilation and, conversely, oppose every effort of Jews to affirm their ethnic and cultural identity.

Marx, I regret to state, was an anti-semitic Jew who belonged to that group of Jews who rejected Judaism and accepted “emancipation” in the belief that they were being “assimilated”. They were victims of a fatal and generalised illusion prevalent in Wilhelmine and Bismarckian Germany that Jews could be integrated into German society provided they didn’t dominate the state, industry or finance. Jews were forbidden from owning land or working in factories. The German landowners, monarchy and bourgeoisie consciously encouraged this process of assimilation and utilised the talents, wealth and entrepreneurial skill of the Jews to build a modern Germany. Believe it or not there was an influential group of Jews known as “Kaiser Juden” because of their close friendship with Kaiser Wilhelm!

The result of all this fraternising was that the Jews, excluded from many vocations in German society, tended to dominate German culture – particularly music and poetry. But with the unification of Germany and the growth of German nationalism a profound sense of disenchantment with the Jewish intelligentsia began to affect the German nationalist intelligentsia. The standard bearer of this nationalism was Richard Wagner, Germany’s leading composer and coincidentally a fanatic anti-semite. Anti-semitism did not end with Wagner but grew in direct proportion to the growth of German monopoly capitalism and imperialism until it exploded after the 1914-18 war when the German bourgeoisie rewarded the Jews’ efforts at assimilation by making them a scapegoat for the war and the post-war crisis.

The dilemma of Jewish assimilation and the blind alley of “emancipation” tragically eluded Marx who, incidentally, remained indifferent to the persecution of his people in the Ottoman Empire. After the pogroms in Russia and the Mid-East and the expulsion of Jews from Spain in the 15th century it seemed to many Jews – including Marx – that Germany, if not a privileged sanctuary would at least be a secure refuge for the dispossessed Jews. But Germany was a trap. The seeds of the Holocaust were already sown in the 19th century. The development of German imperialism and militarism, combined with wars and crises, created the conditions for its germination. German nationalism and Jewish assimilation were irreconcilably opposed because the Jews were a nation without a territory or a state or even an identifiable language, while Germany, emerging from the

obscurity of its feudal past, had finally secured an unified territory and state and, armed with an aggressive nationalism, was determined to develop its own culture. To cut a long story short – there could be no peaceful cohabitation of two nations and two incompatible cultures in one country.

There is another aspect of the Holocaust which neither the “democratic” nor “socialist” nations are too keen to talk about and that is the question: who was responsible for the genocide of the Jewish nation? Conventional wisdom has it that the sole responsibility was borne by Hitler and the Nazis. But this, I firmly believe, was an oversimplification and a subterfuge at best or a monstrous perversion of the truth at worst. Hitler’s aim was to expel the Jews. The Nazis even collaborated with the Zionists in transporting Jews to Palestine. But it was the allied imperialists, fearful of their indigenous anti-semites, who became accessories to genocide because they consistently blocked the exodus of Jews with their quota system and, worse still, deliberately stifled all news of the Holocaust for fear of creating a stampede of Jews out of Europe. This explains – to some extent – why the notorious Wannsee decision for the Final Solution was adopted in December 1941 – 8 years after the Nazis came to power. The Gentile nations were part of the problem, not a solution, as they sanctimoniously maintain.

Nobody, except the Zionists – who remain authentic Jewish nationalists – wanted Israel. The British made a small gesture in the Balfour Declaration but quickly reneged on it when the Arab feudalists complained. The US sponsored Israel but not out of love for Jews, only as a bulwark against the twin threats of Soviet expansionism and Arab nationalism, i.e. Nasserism. Predictably, with the receding of these two threats the US now openly woos the Arab states and calls for the return of all Palestinians to Israel.

But Israel and the Jewish nation state has come to stay. With the recrudescence of anti-semitism throughout the world – I advisedly include Argentina here – the exodus will increase dramatically. What then? There will be massive demographic changes and, in all probability a new Palestine will emerge – in Jordan, which was Palestine before the British annexed it.

To some people this could seem to be a nightmare scenario but what is the alternative? Another betrayal by the Gentile world and a second instalment of the Holocaust? What would happen, for example, if Le Pen comes to power in France? More important: why has there not been one noteworthy analysis of the cause and course of the Holocaust by a single Marxist up to this day? To ask the question is to answer it. To even begin to answer this question it is necessary to look again at Marx.

I feel it is high time that Marxists transcended Marx's critique of Judaism contained in his "Judenfrage" article, because that article derailed the revolutionary movement and prevented it from understanding both the essence of the national problem as well as the real cause and content of the Holocaust.

The liberal and Marxist Left it seems is only too glad and willing to champion the right to national independence of most nations, but when it comes to the Jews they are invariably treated as an exception. The Left reserves no other fate for the Jews than that of absorption, a total conversion to the existing nationalities, not unlike that formerly demanded of them by the Christians. With deference to Fukuyama and in conformity with the perceptions of the Left, it has to be said that the existence of a Jewish minority is a sign that the end of History – à la Hegel – is not yet.

This, regrettably, is the message of Marx in his obscene tirade against Jewry – "Zur Judenfrage" (On the Jewish Question). It is a justified attack on bourgeois society and its vulgar worship of money – capital – yet he, paradoxically, blames the Jews for the domination of capital. The entire world it appears, according to Marx, has been reduced to what they (the Jews!) signify, because of them and through their means. The "practical spirit" that rules everything is the Jewish spirit, which has contaminated the universe. "Bourgeois society ceaselessly engenders the Jew out of its own entrails" so that "the social emancipation of the Jew is the emancipation of the society from Judaism". Unhappily for Marx this proposition, as Hitler and Heydrich proved, is perfectly reversible: the Jews will be liberated from themselves, society will be liberated from the Jews and from everything that is Judaic in it, when it succeeds in "suppressing the conflict between the individual and sensible essence of man, and his generic essence" (Marx). In other words, if the Jew is *possible*, it is because society is alienated. His existence is the *sign* of that alienation. Therefore – and logically speaking this is inescapable – his disappearance will be the sign of general liberation. Voilà!

While Marx was postulating his own theoretical version of the Final Solution of the Jewish Problem his predecessor – the philosopher Fichte – had already suggested a more abrasive solution in 1793 under the combined impact of the French Revolution and German "nationalism": "There is spread throughout nearly every country of Europe a powerful, inimical state which was continually against all others and often succeeds in bitterly oppressing their peoples – this state is Jewry.... The only way I can see of giving [the Jews] civil rights is to cut off their heads in a single night and equip them with new ones devoid of every

Jewish idea ... to protect ourselves against them, again I see no means except *to conquer their promised land and pack them all off to it*" (emphasis added). This is indeed curious. Fichte anticipated the Nazis and the Zionists by a century and four decades.

However to return to the Marxists. Marx in my opinion was an incomplete Marxist. His doctrine of historical and dialectical materialism was abandoned when confronted by the Jewish Question. In fact he capitulated to the very approach he had justly criticised in the absolute idealist Hegel. Hegel's error was to invert reality and to deduce the real world from an ideal abstract world – à la Plato. This was precisely Marx's error too. He deduced the *real* Jew – from an abstract one whose image was itself derived from the intellectual speculations of his predecessors from Kant to Bauer. Not surprisingly, Marx's distorted and essentially anti-semitic picture of his own people, making Jewish egoism the essence of Judaism, the source of human greed, was derived from the one-dimensional and very prejudiced sketches composed by Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach and the execrable Bauer. At the risk of sounding didactic I would like to quote a rather lengthy extract from an excellent and profound critique of Marx taken from Julius Carlebach's book *Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism*:

"The method by which Marx achieved the final reduction of the Jew, to expose his 'real social significance', is the same he had employed so effectively in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, the so-called 'transformative method of criticism', the method which had enabled Marx to turn Hegelianism, which was standing on its head, back on its feet. This was accomplished by reversing subject and predicate, so that if, according to Hegel, reality is the appearance of the idea, then to Marx the idea is the appearance of reality. If for Hermes, religion makes man, then for Marx, man makes religion. If for Bruno Bauer, the secret of the Jew is in his religion, then for Marx, the secret of the religion is in the Jew. Finally, then, if for Kant (and indeed for most of Christian Western Europe) the Jew is a trader, then for Marx, *the trader is a Jew*.

"Marx relied on phenomenological verification for his thesis. If the trader was a Jew in the consciousness of Western European society, then that was the reality – that was what the 'real' Jew was – with this reservation, however. Even if the image of the Jew could be shown to be objectively valid, such an image was still predicated on an idealised self-concept of Christian society. To that extent, therefore, Marx accused his critical predecessors of describing the 'real' Jew in a distorted – or better, idealistically conceived – society. Once this Christian society is itself sub-jected to the same vigorous critique, the Jew will appear no better,

except in that he is a natural and proper constituent part of Christian society itself, rather than an 'eyesore' within it. At this level, Marx argued, an attempt to deny the Jew political emancipation would be entirely contradictory, an assertion of an idealised community rejecting one of its elements on objective grounds. Only so contradictory a structure as a 'Christian state', which by definition is an incomplete and therefore 'underdeveloped' state, could be guilty of such a flagrant act of self-deception" (p.153).

Instead of trying to clarify this confusion, Lenin only added to it by his most unscientific critique of the Bundists. Lenin suffered from the same assimilationist cancer that affected everyone from the time of the Enlightenment – with the notable exception of Rousseau.

This is Lenin: "Jewish national culture is the slogan of rabbis and bourgeois, the slogan of our enemies.... Whoever proclaims, directly or indirectly, the slogan of Jewish national culture, is (however excellent his intentions) an enemy of the proletariat, a partisan of retrograde elements, branded with the caste character of Jewish society, an accomplice of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie. The Marxist Jews will *dissolve themselves* [sic] into the international Marxist organisations with the Russian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and other workers, bring their contributions (as Russians and Jews) to the creation of the international culture of the working-class movement; those Jews who oppose the separatism of the Bund, perpetuate the best Jewish traditions, combating the slogan of national culture." (Lenin, *Collected Works*, French Edition, Vol.XX, p.16, [emphasis added].)

Lenin never believed in a Jewish "nationality" even though the passports of Soviet Jews clearly affirmed their Jewish nationality! The only charitable thing one can say about Lenin's virulent attacks on Jewish nationality and culture is that he legitimised and unwittingly encouraged the anti-semitism which now prevails throughout Russia and the CIS. Of course it is possible to argue that there were extenuating factors at work, such as the absence of a Jewish state and that there was no Holocaust at the time, only pogroms. But that does not convince me. Even before Lenin, Rousseau had made his own profound observations on the Jews, which have been concretised today in the formation of the State of Israel:

"To make sure that his people did not become mingled with foreign peoples, he [Moses] gave them customs and usages which kept them apart from other nations, he burdened them with special rites and ceremonies, he constricted them in a thousand ways, to keep them in good fettle, and forever foreigners among other men. All the bonds of brotherhood he established between members

of the Republic were also barriers which kept them separate from their neighbours, preventing them from intermixing. Thus it is that this singular nation, so often subjugated, so often dispersed and to all appearances destroyed, but always idolatrously faithful to its own rules, has survived to our day, scattered among others without conforming to them, and that its customs and laws and ceremonies have survived and will continue to survive to the end of the world, despite the hatred and persecution on the part of the rest of the human race." (J.J. Rousseau, *Considerations on the Government of Poland and its Proposed Reformation*, quoted from *The Jews of the Diaspora or The Vocation of a Minority*, by R. Mariens Fras.)

All this raises very sharply the question: what is the relation of culture, language and ethnicity to proletarian internationalism and the "international culture" of the working class? Despite Lenin's worthy attempts to relate nationalism and self-determination to internationalism it is clear that the problems of nationality and culture were – in theory and practice – sacrificed to preserve the Soviet dictatorship and its strategic interests. It is no accident that Lenin won the argument with Stalin on the issue of autonomisation but he lost the administrative battle to implement genuine self-determination.

The creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics I think was a historical compromise between the needs of a centralistic bureaucracy whose guiding principle was "administrative convenience" and the interests of many nations who were only beginning to grasp the meaning of a national state but were too weak to resist the imposition of an alien centralistic administration.

Thus the Russian Revolution had two conflicting souls: one was Red, socialist, proletarian and international, the other was Black, chauvinistic, bureaucratic, parasitic and predatory. This was not the conscious product of Lenin or Stalin. It was the objectively inevitable product of a socialist revolution occurring in a backward country. It led to the paradox of a planned and nationalised economy which was based on a geographical division of labour as reactionary as any established by imperialism (Uzbekistan is a classic example). Stalin's Russia – even after the defeat of the Nazis – was a clay-footed colossus. Sooner or later Russia, like the Napoleonic French Empire, was bound to implode because of the unsustainable national tensions and the deepening hatred of the Muscovite bureaucracy. Afghanistan was the last straw. Trotsky, to his credit, did call for an independent Georgia and Ukraine but this was tied to a false prognosis of a political revolution by the working class led by the Fourth International. What transpired in the end was something quite different, where a section of the bur-

eaucracy was compelled, however reluctantly, to dismantle the USSR piece by piece with the passive support of the Russian workers and peasantry.

Another reprehensible example of Marxist deviationism is the Kurdish problem which, thanks to Saddam Hussein (and no thanks to Marxism), has finally arrived on the agenda of world politics. In my investigation into Kurdish history I was appalled to learn that the Comintern never adopted a single resolution on the Kurdish problem and did nothing to help the Kurds achieve their freedom. Why? Because there was no place for the Kurds in Soviet foreign policy, which was predicated on maintaining good neighbourliness with the butcher of Ankara – Kemal Ataturk. This policy of “Kemalism” was referred to by Zinoviev during the Chinese Revolution in relation to the policy vis-à-vis Chiang Kai-shek but by then the damage had been done. The Comintern had nothing to say about the genocide of 1½ million Armenians and did nothing to expose the Lausanne Treaty under which Kurdistan was annexed by Turkey.

In 1946-47 Stalin briefly supported the Kurdish Republic in Mahabad (Iran) but did nothing to prevent its overthrow by the Shah. After the 1958 Iraqi Revolution the Soviets gave lukewarm support to the Kurds, but after the Ba’athists came to power the Kurds were cynically abandoned and every atrocity of the Ba’athists was either supported or covered up by the Kremlin – this included the genocide of Kurds in 1988. If the Kurds have survived, it is in defiance of Soviet policy. In the USSR Stalin deported the Kurds twice – in 1934 and again in 1944. Worse still, he tried to forcibly assimilate them into Kazakhstan and Kirghizia but the Kurds – like many Jews – resisted successfully.

I myself was prevented from raising the Kurdish question in the WRP by Healy for fear of antagonising the Iranians and Iraqis! Under no condition must the unitary state be disrupted! Only revolutions in big states are permissible! Small states are expendable! Some members of the WRP leadership even applauded the execution of Kurdish guerrillas by Khomeini’s “revolutionary guards”.

This travesty of internationalism brings me to a more generalised critique of the sclerotic condition of the Marxist movement in the West. Why did Marxism – together with Western liberalism – fail to grasp the depth of the crisis of the Soviet system and to perceive the potency of the secessionist movements that dominated the political agenda in the ’90s throughout the world? Why couldn’t they distinguish between artificial constructs such as the Soviet, Yugoslav and Czechoslovak federations and the powerful and immovable historic realities of the peoples who

were their subjects? And why did these ideologies fail to anticipate that the first demand of the subject peoples would be to deal with one another as sovereign states? Why was this so?

I believe that this blindness to the potency of nationalism, despite Lenin’s somewhat frantic efforts to correct it, is inherent to Marxism. To be precise, it is an organic by-product of the Enlightenment and the rationalist philosophy that spawned both Marxism and liberalism.

For the Enlightenment thinkers, we were citizens of a democratic republic first. Our nationality and culture was secondary. (All men are brothers.) The main criterion was good, representative political institutions and a system of production that established the reign of reason – “liberty, fraternity and equality”. Despite its universal appeal Marxism contained a fatal weakness since it sought in the name of the worldwide unity of the working class to abolish the chief foundation of political legitimacy in our time: the common cultural identity expressed in nationality. In trying to do so, Marxism in its perverted Stalinist form evoked the most dangerous forms of that repressed identity: neo-fascism (East Germany), Islamic fundamentalism (Afghanistan) and xenophobic populism (Azerbaijan).

(At the time of the Afghanistan invasion in 1980 I wrote an article for the *Labour Review* pointing out the futility of a military-bureaucratic coup in a country so steeped in Islamic doctrine. It seemed to me that the Soviet Union was following the same fatal trajectory as the French state in its Bonapartist phase when Napoleon invaded Spain. Not accidentally, Gorbachev’s decision to withdraw Soviet forces from Afghanistan became the signal for the retreat of all Soviet forces from Eastern Europe, Ethiopia, Cuba, Caucasus, Baltic countries and Central Asia!)

Marxism made the profound error of assuming that the national struggles were being superseded just at the time when imperialist exploitation and Stalinist repression unleashed an unstoppable wave of secessionist struggles everywhere – including Kurdistan. Now even the union of England, Wales and Scotland is in doubt! The USSR and Yugoslavia – not to mention India – are no longer models to be emulated but warnings to be heeded. By the way, we recently had a visit from a representative of Mayan Indians who are campaigning in Mexico and Guatemala for the self-determination of the Mayans. Even in Peru, it seems that Sendero Luminoso is not only a social movement but an ethnic one since 90% of its members are Quechua speakers. My Sandinista friends refuse to accept this because they are mestizos!

It is for these reasons that I find myself in

disagreement with the basic premise of the *Communist Manifesto*: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle." Where does this leave the Jews? Ethnicity, language and culture, I believe, played a vital role in *determining the conditions under which production and the class struggle developed*. These factors precede the class struggle and will exist after it. It was precisely because of Marx's obsession with the class struggle and economic determinism that he – and his followers – failed to grasp the centrality of the Jewish problem in Europe. We can ignore this historic lesson only at our peril.

Please do not conclude from this that I despair of the class struggle and the Marxist heritage. What I am suggesting is the urgent necessity for a new synthesis of class, culture and ethnicity (the

Communist Manifesto never once mentions the national problem) which will become the ideological basis for a regenerated communist movement.

In its present form Marxism is only fit for the graveyard.

As a conscientious historian and a committed communist I hope you will agree with my conclusions. If you don't, then please send me your own thoughts on the subject. I welcome controversy and long ago gave up the notion that Trotskyism was a superior form of wisdom.

Bon Santé – and long life to you dear friend and comrade.

Yours fraternally,

Mike Banda

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