

Canadian nationalism

THE ANALYSIS ALSO HELPS TO CLARIFY the ongoing debates over Canadian nationalism. Many quarrel in abstract about 'nationalism'. Some say that nationalism is a secondary issue. (Some even say it is a reactionary issue.)

They argue that an anti-capitalist line must be stressed above everything. This tidy position forgets that struggle for the self-determination of a people is the basis of an anti-imperialist sentiment. And in the 20th century there cannot be an anti-capitalist sentiment that is not also an anti-imperialist one. A national liberation politics is the only viable foundation for this. I often think that the simplistic anti-capitalist, non-nationalist position is rooted in a bureaucratic, non-libertarian view of socialism (with Stalinist implications) because it ignores the history and political culture of people.

There are others who want a nationalist position that is not explicitly anti-imperialist. Those in and around the NDP and the magazine *Canadian Dimension* who say Canada must ultimately be socialist to be independent are an example. They naively believe that independence can be achieved legalistically (without a militant revolutionary nationalism) and that capitalism can be reformed or replaced through a parliamentary strategy. They fail to understand that capitalism today is international and that it cannot be countered by an unprincipled chauvinist nationalism. These unprincipled nationalists are the kind that will be fooled by the kind of rhetoric that the Corridor is spreading. Focussing on state power and ignoring the nature of the political economy (satellite state capitalism), these nationalists are prepared to make alliances and compromises to a point of accepting the colonization of the land. They are the ones who attack the militant nationalists in an attempt to dissociate themselves from any real struggle. Keeping their status within the satellite is ultimately more important than a commitment to the liberation of the country. Their habits are capitalist even though their rhetoric is socialist. (Colonial mentality underlies this.) And the corporations are not afraid of words that do not imply acts.

There are also those who argue that Canada is already too integrated into the United States to develop a national liberation movement. This too is

a false position. For one thing, Canada's North is just now becoming the frontier for U.S. imperialism. The fact that 20 million here are now relatively integrated into the corporate ideology does not mean that the new, more total colonization should not be resisted. Such a logic forgets the crisis that the U.S. empire now faces because of the national liberation movements abroad and the resistance movement at home. Even if Canada will be further colonized, the task of revolutionaries is to build further opposition to the empire and develop the foundation for a liberation movement.

If we do not specifically oppose our increasing colonization it is impossible to develop an anti-capitalist movement here. The struggle against the colonization of Canada will be the basis of any libertarian socialism that develops here. Such will not come from the liberal groupings that oppose imperialism elsewhere and/or work for reforms in capitalism at home (like the NDP). If our choice is to work for revolutionary change, this means developing a revolutionary nationalism as part of a continual struggle against our own colonization.

Some argue that nationalism based on regional strategies cannot lead to an anti-capitalist movement. They argue that regional separatism will fragment the social groupings that constitute the working classes. In the realm of tidy logical (i.e. non-dialectical) theory such may make sense. In the world of political struggle it does not. People must begin their struggle from their experience and their experience has contradictions (in ideology and commitments) out of which any radicalism must develop. If a national liberation movement is to develop (and such a movement must be non-authoritarian, hence decentralized) people must begin with regional issues and through political struggles come to see how the system and their problems are structurally related. Issues will then begin to form a hierarchy with a revolutionary change in the political economy symbolizing specifically desired changes.

There cannot be revolutionary theory without revolutionary practice and there can be no revolutionary practice without issues that are rooted in contradictions in the regional political economy. The increasing awareness of the international (i.e. corporate) social and economic structures of imperialism provides a new potential for recognizing such relationships.

Most of our confusion about nationalism comes from our colonial mentality. A deep socialization to the ideology of the nation state makes it difficult to see that self-determination (national liberation) will entail the abolition of the repressive structures of the nation state. These structures are increasingly synonymous with those of capitalism (hence the term 'state capitalism') and therefore a revolution within the present state form is impossible. This is what makes all parliamentary and Leninist strategies inappropriate to the Canadian situation.

Such colonial mentality keeps us from distinguishing between state capitalism and the historic experience of the Canadian people. The relationship of the people to the land and to the man-made environment is not reducible to the social and economic relationships of capitalism. These relationships mediate our lives, but, as a colonial land, we have a national culture which can be the basis of opposition and resistance to the system of power and control which maintains them.

The contradictions (e.g. class) within the social and economic relationships are then complemented by the ones resulting from colonization.

Ignorant of our history, we often see ourselves through grand theory. A vulgar leftism easily fits with a colonial mentality. Those who talk of "seizing state power" are the same people who fail to understand state capitalism and who associate nationalism with the ideology of the nation state; not with the struggle for national liberation. Our colonial mentality also often leads us to see our

situation through the categories of the U.S. movement. This is perhaps our greatest error at present. What is really an ignorance of the Canadian regions and an inability to see how an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist position implies, in practice, a national liberation orientation, is often cloaked in abstracted analysis based on imported categories. The detrimental effects of the U.S. movement on Canada must be continually evaluated. Our colonial mentality often shows in our inability to critically evaluate the appropriateness of radical style and rhetoric from the United States for our own struggle. We will clarify our own situation when we learn to challenge all those who import or deduce (deduction is bourgeois logic) analysis from abroad.

In dealing with the U.S. movement to be clear about our own priorities. I have argued that national liberation based in regional tactics must be the locus of all of them. Once (and if) this is accepted it is bound to shift our priorities. The anti-war sector of the Canadian movement must be related to the armed forces and military research of the satellite government and not be an appendage to the issues and actions of the U.S. movement. We will have to recognize that a constant analysis of Quebec nationalism and not of the black movement in the states must be a priority of national liberation movement throughout Canada. The tactics for dealing with the NDP must come directly from our experience. There is no comparable situation anywhere. We need the imagination to start over — to become conscious of how our colonial mentality has affected our rhetoric and tactics (and how this relates to our general inaction — we are afraid of anarchy and mindless activism before we have even started to act) — and rethink ourselves from the beginning.

As an example, an evaluation of the week of confrontations against the Corridor conference at Lakehead University in August should be more important in our critical development of tactics than Chicago, Columbia, San Francisco State, etc. Since we all have more access to news from the United States than from other parts of Canada we must deliberately develop a revolutionary media to help establish our own priorities. It is a further sign of colonial mentality that we know more about U.S. radicalism than about our own. The regional political economies are not only the basis of continentalism. They make awareness of radicalism across the country difficult.

The labor, farm, native and student movements in Canada are rooted in events specific to our history. That history is characterized by colonization. The more we learn about this history and why past movements were or weren't nurturing a revolutionary nationalism that gave an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist sentiment some basis in our political cultures, the faster we will be able to join the other forces on the globe that are working for human liberation. This land need not become part of the capitalist wasteland. It need not become integrated into the insanity of capitalist or any other form of urbanization. Those who will make it an insane wasteland already have power in governments, industry and education. Daily they undermine the potential of Canada as a liberated land and make Canada into a branch plant. It is time that the total struggle against imperialism in Canada was waged.

Our radicalism means nothing if it does not begin and end in a political understanding of, and struggle in, this country. We may wish for peace and an end for imperialism elsewhere but we can only work for this in our own lives in our own land.

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