

# INTRODUCTION

**M**ANY READERS will be familiar with Harry Ratner's excellent book, *Reluctant Revolutionary*, which details the more than two decades he spent as an activist in the Trotskyist movement before breaking from it in 1960. One of the features of the book was that, while the author no longer considered himself a Trotskyist, his was not an embittered account fuelled by personal resentment towards the movement to which he had once committed his life. On the contrary, Harry's memoirs were distinguished by an admirable objectivity, in which he gave credit to his former comrades as serious and honest socialists, while rejecting most of the main planks of the Trotskyist programme.

The articles in this collection continue the general approach of *Reluctant Revolutionary*, but in theoretical rather than autobiographical terms. Most of them were first published in the magazines *New Interventions* and *What Next?* between 1991 and 2001. They cover a wide range of subjects,

but have a consistent theme – the need to question what passes in Trotskyist circles for Marxist orthodoxy and face up to political reality. This is not, I imagine, a message that will be well received in some quarters.

Among the shibboleths Harry challenges are the necessity for centrally planned production in a socialist economy, the rejection of a parliamentary road to socialism, economic catastrophism, reductionist views on the "class character" of the state, the validity of the Bolshevik revolution, both in its own terms and as a model for future socialist struggles, and more. Even those who profoundly disagree with the author's conclusions will hopefully at least be provoked into re-examining their political assumptions.

Harry would welcome readers' comments on the issues raised in these essays. He can be emailed at [ratner1@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ratner1@hotmail.co.uk).

**Bob Pitt**

# CONTENTS

Marxism and the Productive Forces (Part 1) ( <i>New Interventions</i> Vol.2 No.1, 1991) .....	1	Class, Party, Ideology and State ( <i>New Interventions</i> Vol.7 No.1, 1996) .....	46
Marxism and the Productive Forces (Part 2) ( <i>New Interventions</i> Vol.2 No.2, 1991) .....	9	A Programme for the Left ( <i>New Interventions</i> Vol.7 No.3, 1997) .....	55
Where Do We Go from Here? ( <i>New Interventions</i> Vol.2 No.4, 1992) .....	13	Premature and Diseased from Infancy? ( <i>New Interventions</i> Vol.8 No.2, 1997-8) .....	62
Class Consciousness and Transitional Demands ( <i>New Interventions</i> Vol.3 No.2, 1992) .....	16	Revisionist Thoughts – Reformist Conclusions ( <i>New Interventions</i> Vol.8 No.3, 1998) .....	66
State Ownership and the Transition to Socialism ( <i>New Interventions</i> Vol.4 No.1, 1993) .....	20	Bill Hunter's <i>Lifelong Apprenticeship</i> – A Criticism ( <i>New Interventions</i> Vol.8 No.3, 1998) .....	72
Marxism and Determinism ( <i>New Interventions</i> Vol.4 No.2, 1993) .....	26	The <i>Transitional Programme</i> Reassessed ( <i>What Next?</i> No.12, 1999) .....	76
Labour and the Economy ( <i>New Interventions</i> Vol.4 No.3, 1993) .....	34	Historical Materialism – A Critical Look at Some of Its Aspects ( <i>New Interventions</i> Vol.10 No.2, 2000) .....	81
Feasible Socialism – Market or Plan or Both? ( <i>New Interventions</i> Vol.5 No.2, 1994) .....	37	The Fourth International in Perspective ( <i>What Next?</i> No.18, 2001) .....	89
A Balance Sheet of Trotskyism (From <i>Reluctant Revolutionary</i> ) .....	44		