

*The New* \_\_\_\_\_  
**INTERNATIONAL**

***Critics of American Socialism:  
Their Method and Politics***

IRVING HOWE

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***Aspects of Russian Imperialism***

A. KIMBAY and G. BLACKWELL

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***The Precursors of Marx***

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***Books in Review***

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## THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

A Marxist Review

Vol. VXIII, No. 3 Whole No. 154  
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America will deal with this effort so thoroughly and so devastatingly as we do. We believe that this issue of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL will become a handbook for socialists in the months and years ahead during which the discussion inaugurated here will run its course.

The lead article in this issue of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, *Critics of American Socialism; Their Method and Politics* deals with the most extensive and intensive effort yet put forth by American bourgeois intellectuals to analyze, and dispose of, socialism as an ideology and a movement in their own country. The fact that the authors of the work in question come not only from academic circles and the fields of bourgeois journalism, but also from the intellectual staffs of the labor movement, simply emphasizes how completely bourgeois in ideology and outlook are all circles of "official" American opinion.

Although this article will be of special interest to Americans in and around the socialist movement, we feel that it will also have considerable value for our readers abroad. In our correspondence and occasional discussions with many of them, we find that the one question above all about America which baffles foreigners is this: how is it that in our country there is no mass socialist or even "labor" political movement? How can it be that the American working class, so powerful in its economic organizations, so massive in its relative numerical and sociological weight in the country, has failed to reach, ideologically, the level of the working class in Europe and Asia?

The book to which we devote so much in this issue of our review seeks to explain and *justify* what is the political backwardness of the American working class as specifically exemplified in the weakness of the American socialist movement. We venture the guess that no other publication in

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## An Answer to

# Critics of American Socialism:

*An Analysis of Their Method and Politics*

The decline of American socialism—and it would be frivolous to deny this decline or minimize its extent—has led to a great many efforts at retrospection, criticism and premature burial. These studies, no matter how sincere their intention or refined their method, are usually signs of the phenomenon they treat; as witness the tone of supercilious complacency and superior distance in which many of them are written.

By far the most ambitious among these is a vast two-volume compilation, recently published under the auspices of the Princeton University seminar in American Civilization.\* This study is likely to be received as an authoritative work of scholarship and, more important, to be accepted

\**Socialism and American Life*, Two Volumes. Edited by Stow Persons and Donald Drew Egbert. Princeton University Press. pp. \$17.50.

as a basic text in the American universities. The first volume of *Socialism and American Life* contains a number of essays, the second an annotated and copious bibliography. The first is somewhat less than a contribution to the ages, the second is a work of genuine scholarship and within certain limits, to be specified later, extremely valuable to anyone interested in the subject.

Since a wide range of material is covered in this book, I will restrict myself, in this review-article, to four general headings: (1) the quality, reliability and scholarship of the articles; (2) the political theories of the major contributors; (3) the theory of social classes advanced by the major contributors; (4) the problem of the decline of American socialism. The detailed discussion which at least the last three of these calls for is here impossible; but a few introductory remarks may be helpful.

## I Some Notes on Scholarship

NO SINGLE PERSON is qualified to judge all the essays in this book. Suffice it to say that in terms of quality they are extremely uneven. The longest and most important is an historical sketch of American radicalism by Daniel Bell, and despite fundamental disagreements with its point of view, I think it fair to say that it is a work of careful scholarship and literary skill. Sidney Hook contributes a piece called "The Philosophical Basis of Marxian Socialism in the United States," merely a summary of what he has written elsewhere. Will Herberg, whose intellectual history comprises a span from Lovestone to Jehovah, is the author of "American Marxist Political Theory," written from his "neoliberal and theologically grounded" point of view. A study of "Sociological Aspects of American Socialist Theory and Practice" comes from Wilbert Moore, a prominent sociology professor at Princeton. The most competent pieces are the historical ones: a sketch of pre-Marxian socialism by E. Harris Harbison, a Princeton professor; a portrait of American utopian socialism by T. D. Seymour Bassett, the bibliographer of the project. There is also Harry Laidler's "European Socialism Since 1948," an article marvelously predictable in its unremitting pedestrianism.

Perhaps the range in quality is best suggested by a glance at the non-political articles. Professor Willard Thorp's study of the left-wing intellectuals during the 1930's is superficial, condescending and thoroughly *uninterested*. On the other hand, "Socialism and American Art" by Professor Donald Drew Egbert is an outstanding contribution, rich in detail, ready to extend its subject at least a tentative

sympathy, and obviously the result of intensive study.

The problem of point of view is more complicated. Anyone familiar with radical politics must be aware, merely from the list of contributors, that for all its claim to impartiality, the book is largely an expression of the views of the American Social Democracy. That most, if not all, the contributors have no organizational ties does not matter: American Social Democracy is less a movement than a climate. When the editors of this book write that "various shades of Marxist opinion are represented among the authors of several of the essays," they are either uninformed or disingenuous. Between Hook and Herberg there are important differences on God, but not society. Between Bell and Moore there is a startling discrepancy in tone, but not in politics. The only author representing a divergence from Social Democracy or liberalism is Paul Sweezy, who contributes a piece on Marxian economics which, except for a few friendly references to Stalinist Russia, has no political relevance. How curious it is that the *only* person the editors could find to provide a contrasting "shade of Marxist opinion" turns out to be . . . a quasi-Stalinist. That is purchasing one's objectivity rather cheaply.

Many readers are likely to accept the claim of the editors that they have included "various shades of Marxist opinion." Nowhere in the book, however, does any writer appear who speaks for Trotskyism, or revolutionary socialism, or left socialism—no writer of the left, that is, who represents any of the shades of socialist

opinion which reject both Stalinism and Social Democracy.

Partly because of this one-sidedness in the choice of contributors, *Socialism And American Life* is full of the misunderstandings, the points of ignorance and bursts of malice one would expect at a time when anti-Marxism has become a crowded and honored profession. There is, of course, much solid scholarship in this book; but there is also enough distortion, carelessness and ignorance to call it into serious questions as a reference work. I have noted many, but here, to avoid tedium, I will list only a few.

*Item.* In his generally valuable article on pre-Marxian socialism, Professor Harbison writes: "Marx and Engels felt they had purged their analysis of all nonscientific elements, but they left one notoriously utopian belief embedded in their system: the doctrine of the classless society." In obvious good faith, Professor Harbison has misconstrued the entire Marxist position. As every scholar should know, Marx and Engels declared previous varieties of socialism to be "utopian" not because they anticipated a classless society, but because they failed to realize that such a society is possible only on the foundation of an advanced technology, which alone permits a life of leisure and plenty. One may disagree with this idea, but to do so one must first state it clearly.

Now it is possible to believe, and at the moment all too fashionable, that the idea of a classless society is utopian; in that case, Marx and Engels did not, as Professor Harbison says, merely leave "one notoriously utopian belief in their system"; their *whole* program must then be dismissed as utopian. But if one is to use the word

"utopian" in this way, intellectual responsibility requires that one make clear Marx used it in an entirely different way.

In any case, to argue that the hope for a classless society is utopian is an absolutist dogma—of precisely the kind modern critics like to attribute to Marx: it assumes the continued existence of class society to be inevitable. If Professor Harbison means, however, that in a socialist society there might still be a wide range of talent, distinction and achievement, he is surely right—but has neglected the Marxist contention that in such a society there would not be economic exploitation of class by class. The only meaning that can be attributed to Professor Harbison's remark is that Marx and Engels were utopian . . . because they believed in socialism. It would be better to say such things directly.

*Item.* "Democratic centralism," Lenin's formula for party organization, is discussed by Professor Moore in his essay and by the editors in an introductory chapter. The editors write that in a democratic centralist party, once a political discussion is closed, "the decision is handed down from above by a small central group and is *supposed to be accepted by the rank and file without question or comment.*" (My emphasis—I. H.)

As a piece of scholarship this is scandalous. *Which* "small central group?" What evidence is there (none, of course, being cited) that Lenin ever urged the rank and file to accept any decision without question or comment? As a description of the Stalinist parties, the statement of the editors has a certain rough validity, but is still not at all precise: for even in the Stalinist parties decisions are not "sup-

posed" to be accepted without question or comment.

But more. Since Lenin is the author of the idea of democratic centralism, it would seem a matter of elementary intellectual loyalty to quote Lenin, or at least to state the notion as Lenin conceived it. Then, if you wish, criticize it; or try to show that it led to reprehensible practices in the Bolshevik Party; or even that it led to the totalitarian structure of the Stalinists. But first say what Lenin believed. It would, for example, enlighten the many inexperienced readers of *Socialism and American Life* to be informed that "the small central group" turns out to be, in Lenin's scheme of things, an *elected* executive or central committee, bound by the policy decisions of party conventions. It would further enlighten readers to be informed that nowhere in Lenin's writings (not even as shorn and mangled by David Shub) is there the faintest suggestion that the rank and file must not comment on decisions of the central committee. Such distortion seems to me beyond possible excuse: the editors should either inform themselves or write on other subjects. But, of course, one can plead *Zeitgeist*, which for a time permits everything.

Now, Professor Moore with his contribution. In a democratic centralist organization, he writes, "the minority may not question the decision of the majority. Decisions are binding down the line, and initiative for questioning current policy must always come from the top." Within context, there is reason to suppose that Professor Moore may have in mind the organizational life of Stalinists. If so, he is wrong. It is entirely meaningless to speak of "majorities" and "minorities" in Stalinist parties: no such creatures

exist. The trouble is that Professor Moore takes at face value the Stalinist claim to be "democratic centralist," not realizing that it is pointless to discuss Stalinist organizational methods in terms of their adherence to democratic centralism or *any other* organizational concept. For Stalinism has no interest in theory, but merely *utilizes* Marxist terminology and tradition for its own purposes. Stalinism is entirely totalitarian in its inner life; and one need not agree with Lenin's view of organization to realize that, whatever its real or fancied faults.

But as a careful scholar Professor Moore must surely be aware that the term "democratic centralism" refers, originally, to the Bolshevik party of Lenin. In this party minorities not merely questioned but fought against, howled and denounced the decisions of majorities. Surely Professor Moore is acquainted with the fact that in 1918 Bukharin and his group of "left communists" publicly agitated against Lenin's Brest-Litovsk policy, demanded in public newspapers that the German terms be rejected, and in effect set up a party of their own "within" the Bolshevik party. Professor Moore is very firm with Marxism for its lack of precision in defining social classes; it would have been more seemly if, in what is after all a much simpler matter, he had been a little precise himself.

*Item.* In his article Harry Laidler writes: "Many socialists have maintained since the Russian Revolution that communists did a great disservice to the world by their refusal in 1917 to join with the other socialist parties in Russia in forming a coalition socialist government." That this sentence has fewer errors than words is due to Laidler's gifts as a stylist.

Now the year 1917 is a rather important one in Russian history, two revolutions having occurred during its 12 months, one in March and the other in November. A careful scholar—and none other could enter the pages of our book—would specify *when* in 1917, before or after the revolution, the Bolsheviks "refused" to enter a coalition government. Perhaps he means to suggest that the Mensheviks and SRs were for a coalition government both before and after October?

Before the Bolsheviks took power, at a time when they had a minority in the Soviets and the Menshevik-SR bloc had a majority, Lenin put forward the slogan "All Power to the Soviets." On April 20, 1917 Lenin wrote: "It must be explained to the masses that the Soviet of Workers' Deputies is the only possible form of revolutionary government and, therefore, our task is, while this government is submitting to the influence of the bourgeoisie, to present a patient, systematic, and persistent analysis of its errors and tactics. . . . *While we are in the minority, we carry on the work of criticism and of exposing errors, advocating all along the necessity of transferring the entire power of state to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. . . .*" On June 23, 1917 Lenin wrote: "We hold that the unique institution known as the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies is the nearest approach to an all-people's organ for the expression of the will of the majority of the people, a revolutionary parliament. On principle we always have been, and are, in favor of having *all the power pass into the hands of such an organ, despite the fact that at present this organ is in the hands of the defencist Mensheviks and Socialist-*

*Revolutionists. . . .*" (My emphasis—I. H.)

Lenin was here urging that a government be established in which the Bolsheviks would not participate, a government of Mensheviks and SRs, provided the "10 capitalist ministers" were eliminated. Perhaps this was a bluff? Then Mensheviks and SRs need only have called it, need only have given land to the peasants and peace to the soldiers to have undercut the Bolshevik appeal.

If a government of Soviet parties were formed, wrote Lenin, a peaceful transition to socialism would be possible: "Only in Russia can power be transferred to already existing institutions, to the Soviets, immediately, peacefully, without turmoil, for the capitalists are not in a position to resist the Soviet. . . ." (June 20, 1917). But the Mensheviks and SRs did not want power, either for the Soviets or themselves—they preferred to maintain ministerial relations with the bourgeois parties and international relations with the Allies.

Later, after the Bolshevik government was formed, there was some talk of a coalition government of all socialist parties. The Mensheviks laid down as a condition for such a coalition that Lenin and Trotsky, those notorious "German agents," be excluded from the government. In effect, this was a proposal not for a partnership but for an act of political suicide by the Bolsheviks.

These, in brief, are the facts. Had Laidler mentioned at least a few of them, his readers might be better informed on the problem of coalition governments.

*Item.* Will Herberg writes: "Be-

is fixed on the world to come, the problem of living and working in this world becomes a very perplexing one. In harmony with its basic orientation, orthodox socialism can engage in but one really legitimate form of activity in the existing order—preparing for the revolution. In strict logic, therefore, 'immediate' or 'partial' demands—that is, demands that fall short of the socialist goal and may thus be granted within the framework of the capitalist system—can have no place in the socialist program."

These, exactly, are Herberg's words.

Would there be any point in reminding Herberg that socialists believe the struggle for immediate demands a frequent aid to the growth of socialist consciousness; that they really desire improvements in the conditions of the people, even under capitalism; that they do not consider extreme misery a fertile ground for the flowering of a socialist movement? It is a long time since Herberg has thought in Marxist terms, and he may not remember what these simple propositions mean. Let us therefore transpose them into a language he readily grasps. Orthodox Judaism, to which Herberg assents, anticipates the coming of the Messiah, for then alone can all men be united in love and justice. That, so to say, is its form of "socialism." Would it not, however, be malicious if a Marxist were to write that orthodox Jews, because their eyes are riveted on the coming of the Messiah, could not in strict logic struggle for religious liberty in this imperfect world? or that their expectation of the Messiah made "perplexing" their performance, meanwhile, of such religious duties as the conversion of non-believers, the saying of daily prayers, the rendering of charity to the poor?

If a Marxist wrote such nonsense, you can imagine what howls would rise from Herberg. And since *he* writes it, why don't we have the right to howl, say, just a little?

It would be tedious to list further errors of commission\*, of which

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\* Still, a word must be said about the 500 page bibliography. Immensely useful as it is, there are serious problems involved in its method. The editions have not been content with a mere compilation but have decided to annotate their entries. Unfortunately, they do not make explicit the (inevitable) political bias from which they work, and the result is that the bias comes through in a variety of indirect and disguised ways. Between their wish to be objective and their unacknowledged point of view there is frequent conflict. Usually, the latter dominates.

Because they have not declared their bias at the outset, which would have been the useful and honest thing to do, the bibliographers fall into a variety of confusions. Here is an example of that confusion at its worst: "No comparably objective literature exists on the sociological analysis of the socialist culture of Soviet Russia, the chief country where socialism has achieved complete power." Surely this vicious nonsense is not accepted by the contributors to the first volume.

Equally serious is the fact that the bibliographers, despite their evident conscientiousness, display a lack of first-hand knowledge of their subject; they have worked hard, but at a problem which is not theirs. For example:

"The Left Opposition would not participate [in the London Bureau set up in 1933] and later lost to the London Bureau the Spanish and Dutch Trotskyist adherents of popular fronts." Inaccurate: the Spanish and Dutch Trotskyists were not at the time adherents of popular fronts, and the issue at stake was something quite different.

Victor Serge "abandoned Trotskyism for democratic socialism"—not entirely accurate and certainly a heavily weighted statement.

"Leon Trotsky, in *The New Course*, and Max Shachtman in the same volume, attempt a compromise between democracy and bureaucratism." This far exceeds the permissible limits of bibliographical annotation; it is simply a political characterization—and in our opinion, a false one.

"The Trotskyist faction wrecked the Socialist Party organization before it was

there is a substantial number; but to complete the picture, a word is necessary about some errors of omission. We have here a group of writers who take a firm moral stand against the sins of Bolshevism—and who can oppose a firm moral stand against anyone's sins? But these very writers are strangely silent in other regards. You would never learn from this book that the Irish Easter Rebellion was suppressed by an English government in which leaders of the Labor Party participated. Or that the French Social Democrats have consistently supported "their" imperialism in Asia and Africa. Or that the German Social Democrats are said to have had some connection with the murder of Liebknecht and Luxemburg. Indeed, if you read no other book on socialism, you would be completely bewildered at coming across a statement made in his salad days by Sidney Hook: "*the historic function of social democracy since 1918 has been to suppress or abort all revolutionary*

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expelled in 1937." At the very least, a gross oversimplification, even if one believes, as I do, that the behavior of the Trotskyists in the Socialist Party is open to serious criticism. The Trotskyists entered the SP at a time when it was moving leftward. When the SP right-wing proposed policies unacceptable to both the Trotskyists and the "native" left-wing of the party, policies such as the support of a capitalist candidate, LaGuardia, in New York, a faction fight broke out. The struggle was, essentially, over ideological issues. To know this is to see how superficial and misleading the bibliographical comment is.

The bibliographical comment on "the Shachtman group" indicates that its author took a hurried glance at *The New Internationalist* but did not look again. Thus, an article by Shachtman is cited in which he claims the adherence of the Italian Trotskyists for his position on the Russian question. At best, this is of fifth rate importance. But Shachtman's article in the December 1940 *New Internationalist*—*Is Russia a Workers State?*—which is perhaps the most important theoretical statement he has made on Stalinism, is not cited.

*movements throughout the world independently of whether it shared power in a coalition government or not."*

ANOTHER QUITE REMARKABLE omission from this volume is any discussion of the fact that we are at present living in a war economy; that this war economy is largely responsible for the air of "prosperity" which pervades the land; that it obviously conditions both the socialist movement and the indifference to radicalism felt by most workers and intellectuals; in short, that the entire mood and tone of the book is, at the very least, strongly influenced by the historical moment in which it appears.

But by far the most serious omission in this immense volume is one that immediately disqualifies it as an attempt to understand either contemporary society or radicalism. *There is no effort in any of these essays to develop a theory of Stalinism, a theory of its sociology in Russia, its significance as an international movement, its relation to Asian nationalism, etc. etc.* The most important, difficult and challenging question of our day—surely not unrelated to the subject of this book—is left untouched. There is no effort even to develop the trite notion that Stalinism flows "inevitably" from Bolshevism, a notion which, even if stated, would not remove the necessity for treating Stalinism as a *distinct* phenomenon, a society and movement requiring special analysis. While the editors find room for chapters on 19th century utopian communities, Christian Socialism, and a number of other not quite burning matters, they have not thought to treat this most important subject of the day. If nothing else, this alone is enough to render the book an intellectual failure.

## II Theories of Politics

THE MAJOR THEORETICAL article in *Socialism and American Life* is by Will Herberg. It is difficult to cope with this article in political terms, since it does not really rest upon an examination of history or current politics, but consists mainly of maxims suggesting paths of desirable conduct and visions of desirable events. To polemicize against Herberg is somewhat like depreciating a man who has just delivered a solemn lecture against sin; the innocent and malicious alike may conclude that one is *for* sin.

I do not myself think that the expression of political maxims (e.g. democracy is an absolute good, power is always dangerous etc. etc.) is a worthless activity, if only because socialism, in some fundamental if implicit sense, is a moral goal and not merely a predicted stage of future society. While economic conditions may impel workers and other people to struggle against capitalism, that struggle acquires a socialist dimension only through consciousness and will; and once you *will* the existence of socialism, you are declaring a preference on the grounds, presumably, that it will be better for humanity. Even as it depends on and is limited by historical conditions, the conscious activity for socialism is a moral action. No matter how much Marxists may refer the socialist struggle to the needs of the working class, their wish that this class assume leadership in the march toward socialism rests upon a moral assumption that it is desirable for humanity to move toward socialism.

In pronouncing his maxims, Herberg does not trouble, however, to wonder whether they can be taken as

political tactics or solutions. Nowhere in his article is there an awareness of the tension of history, of the fact that a mere statement of a desired end does not yet settle the problem of how to reach it, or the fact that action within history must be conditioned by that which one acts against. To announce, as he does, that democracy is "an eternal human value" is laudable; but to assent to this maxim is not yet to consider how this value can be realized or thwarted, limited or expanded in practice. Herberg succumbs to the great fault of political moralists: he ignores, finally, the need for examining history in its particulars.

These general remarks are best illustrated by glancing at Herberg's treatment of the problem of revolution. Like most liberals and Social Democrats, he discusses the subject of reform and/or revolution as if it were primarily a question of *moral preference*: which is more desirable, a gradual peaceful slide into socialism or a bloody insurrection? Put this way, the question permits of only one (sane) answer. Unfortunately, it "proves" too much, for it makes Marx and Lenin seem neither wrong nor stupid but simply maniacs who should have been put away. I take it Herberg doesn't quite claim that.

The writings of the important Marxists have never rested on absolutist dogma. On the question of the "road to power," they have been based on the following items: (1) a study of past history, particularly major shifts of class power; (2) an analysis of capitalist society; (3) a prediction, partly drawn from the previous two factors, of the likelihood of violence,

or its absence, in future transfers of social power.

Every major change in social rule during the modern era has been accompanied by one or another degree of violence. The greatest of all bourgeois revolutions, the French; the English Revolution under Cromwell; even the sacrosanct American—all violent. Neither the bourgeoisie nor its political ideologues showed the faintest disinclination to use violence when advantageous to their ends. Had moralists urged the Continental Congress to eschew violence in 1776, only impatience would have been the response.\*

The writings of Marx and Engels on this subject contain a series of propositions something like the following: (1) when the bourgeoisie sought to achieve undisputed social domination, a conflict of violence arose; (2) the modern capitalist state rests on bodies of armed men far stronger than any known in previous societies; (3) even when capitalism is threatened, not by fundamental opposition, but by partial inroads in power, it does not hesitate to use force; (4) therefore it follows that when the working class and its allies try to establish socialism, or show a degree of power preparatory to the establishment of socialism, the defenders of the old order will probably not hesitate to use force.

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\* It may be said, however, that all of these revolutions occurred against autocratic regimes while the transition to socialism is likely to take place in democratic societies. This, to some extent, is true; the only problem is whether the defenders of capitalism will show sufficient restraint to permit, without violent interference, a democratic, majority-supported and peaceful transition to socialism. While it cannot be answered *a priori*, this problem can profitably be discussed. But Herberg will not deign to such details.

Marx listed three exceptions, Holland, England and America, countries where he believed a peaceful transition to socialism possible. Not too many years ago—in 1933—an American Marxist wrote on this subject:

At the very time when Marx was making his exception in favor of England she had the largest navy in the world, standing armies in India, Egypt and Ireland, a highly developed bureaucracy, and as Marx's letters testify, the most astute and class-conscious ruling class in the world. . . . Is this a country in which the social revolution could have taken place peacefully?

Nor is the reference to the United States any more fortunate. [At the time Marx made his exception], America had gone through her second revolution to break up the semi-feudal slavocracy which barred the expansion of industrial capitalism. At the very moment Marx was speaking, the North was exercising a virtual dictatorship over the South. . . . Was it likely that in a country in which feeble and "constitutional" attempts to abolish chattel slavery had called forth the most violent civil war of the nineteenth century, the abolition of wage slavery could be effected by moral suasion?

These intransigent lines may seem sectarian to some; and I cite them not to raise the issue of whether Marx or the commentator was correct. The point I wish to make, rather, is that the author (Sidney Hook) was arguing in terms of historical precedent, possibility and actuality; his argument was therefore open to verification and rebuttal. But Herberg does not write in this manner: he will not stoop to history.

Herberg tells us that the Bolsheviks insisted upon one thing "as a fixed dogma: the revolution could not be accomplished peacefully, without force or violence." This may sound pretty bad for the Bolsheviks, only it is not quite accurate. If Lenin had any



“fixed dogmas,” they were that capitalism offered no hope for humanity, socialism had to be instituted in fullness, the working class is the major actor in the revolutionary drama, etc. etc. As I have shown in earlier pages, Lenin was ready to suppose that the Russian Revolution *could* take place peacefully (and, by the way, it virtually did, the bulk of violence erupting only later, when the White armies, helped by the Western powers and by some though not all the Mensheviks, began a counter-revolution.) The two quotations cited from Lenin could be supplemented by many others, but to avoid tedium, I shall risk only one more: “The capitalist regards the Soviets of Workers’, etc., Deputies as anarchy, because such an organization of power does not commit the people beforehand and unconditionally to capitalist subjection; but provides liberty and order together with the possibility of peaceful and gradual transition to Socialism.” (April 27, 1917) Trotsky, discussing the English crisis of 1926, declared a peaceful transition possible (*Where is Britain Going?*); in 1941 the editor of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL expressed a similar opinion about contemporary England.

Still, it would be idle to deny that the Communist International in its “heroic period” believed that the revolutionary working class had to anticipate struggles in force. Why? Because Lenin was blood-thirsty and Trotsky a scoundrel?

One must remember that for several years after the first world war, Europe was gripped by a revolutionary situation; it seemed a definite possibility that the continent would go the path of Lenin. Reaction was desperate; in Italy Mussolini prepared to march on Rome; in Germany the Reichswehr plotted counter-revolu-

tion; Luxemburg and Liebknecht were murdered—was this an atmosphere in which one could envisage a smooth transfer of social power? Instead of announcing, *ex cathedra* and from his moral perch, that Lenin made force into a “fixed dogma,” might not Herberg more profitably considered whether Lenin was right or wrong in his estimate of Europe in 1920? If he cared to argue in terms of historical evidence, we should be happy to listen; we are far from persuaded that Lenin or anyone else was infallible; we believe in fact, that he, as anyone else, made serious mistakes; but if one is to propound maxims, one must be prepared to relate them to experience.

And, indeed, did not Italy in 1921, as later Germany in 1933, prove that Lenin had estimated the European situation with at least some realism? (Unless, of course, Herberg inclines toward that most philistine of opinions: if Lenin hadn’t started making revolutions, the fascists would never have arisen; *q.e.d.* Lenin is responsible for fascism. This is a piece with the Rotarian view that if agitators didn’t disturb the workers, there’d be no strikes and hence no strike-breaking.) Had the German workers taken power in 1920, a certain amount of blood might have been shed—the exact amount depending largely on the attitude of the Social Democratic leaders; but it would have been a tiny fraction of the blood spilled 15 years later in Germany because the workers had not taken power. It is right to urge that the cost of revolution be reckoned; but one must, at times, reckon the cost of abstention from revolution.

Now there are wiseacres—some testify for the FBI, some don’t—who say that all this is merely eyewash, for everyone “knows” that Marxists and

particularly Leninists believe in armed insurrection, coup d’etats etc. When such talk is not mere provocation, it is mere ignorance. For it is a fundamental tenet of Marxism that voluntary and active participation of socialism can be built only with the masses; without that participation, socialism cannot be weakened; to attempt to “sneak into” power is a certain way of betraying the socialist goal.

Nor is this a recent or retrospective discovery. Wrote Lenin on April 22, 1917: “To become a power, the class-conscious workers must win the majority over to their side. So long as no violence is committed against the masses, there is no other road to power. We are not Blanquists, we are not for the seizure of power by a minority.” Dozens of other citations are possible; here are two. April 27, 1917: “Blanquism consists in an effort to seize power by relying on the support of a minority. With us it is quite different. We are as yet a minority, we realize the need of winning a majority.” May 6, 1917: “the slogan of ‘Down With the Provisional Government’ is at the present moment not sound, because such a slogan, unless there is a solid (i.e., a class-conscious and organized) majority of the people on the side of the revolutionary proletariat, is either a mere phrase or, objectively, reduces itself to encouraging efforts of an adventurous nature.”

It would be absurd to suppose that the present-day disagreements between Marxists and reformists revolve about the question of “violence”; that is the version of textbooks, journalists and informers. By a revolution Marxists refer to a shift in social power from class to class, a transformation of property relations—and the means by which this change is

effected do not effect the definition. Violence can occur without social revolution, social revolution without violence. Every sane socialist, of whatever faction, hopes that the transition to socialism will occur peacefully; it would then be easier, quicker and, most important of all, more humane. But surely this is not the issue that agitates the radical movement today. If this were the only point of differences between Marxists and reformists, I would favor unity with the Social Democratic Federation — and would brook no aesthetic objections. What is reprehensible about Social Democracy is not at all that it fails to issue blood-curdling calls for violence, but that it accommodates itself to capitalism, to its institutions and values. Is your goal a fundamental social change or a blend of reforms? Do you believe in class independence or have you discovered the wisdom of class cooperation?

SURELY, NO MARXIST of reasonable intelligence criticized the British Labor government for enacting nationalization of industry through legislative means or, in principle, for compensating former owners. Our criticism was that Attlee showed no interest in stimulating workers’ participation in factory management or in developing a socialist foreign policy. Though it took socialistic steps of a kind unprecedented for a reformist government, the British Labor leadership still accepted far too much of the old order, still thought—as G. D. H. Cole wrote in England—of the workers as followers to be manipulated and directed. On such living issues did the clash between Marxist and reformist manifest itself.

Still, it may be asked, doesn’t the experience of the British Labor re-

gime raise the question once more of "the road to power?" Let us agree that it does. Clearly, a bolder party could have led England much further along the road to socialism, and probably have done so without suffering armed resistance. This is a phenomenon of the decline of capitalism, as the possibility of a peaceful transition envisaged was a phenomenon of its youth. Exhausted by two wars, worn down by international competition, deprived of large sections of its empire, burdened with an obsolete industrial plant, the English capitalist class lacked the strength and the spirit to consider, let alone begin, armed resistance. And it showed its usual class intelligence when it peacefully accepted nationalization, for it sensed that Attlee was not likely to deprive it of all unearned sustenance. Wait or risk everything in dubious gamble, was its choice; it chose wisely.

All this is true, but not enough. There is no evidence that the British bourgeoisie so much as contemplated armed resistance; it realized that in a country where the (domestic) democratic tradition is as strong as in England, any extra-parliamentary adventure, *by whichever party*, can end only in grief. Was it, however, also true that the English bourgeoisie was itself so imbued with the democratic spirit that it would not try to upset a democratically chosen government? The question is of 3rd rate importance, but worth a glance. Remember, for one, that this was a battered, if not defeated, class; no longer the proud ruler of an international empire, but the suppliant partner of the United States; a class that had lost a great deal of its self-confidence and morale. Remember, too, that the English bourgeoisie had never, in the past, hesitated to use force: to drown

Indian nationalism in blood, to break the general strike of 1926, to cloud the skies of Ireland with terror. Have the latter-day representatives of this class become so much more civilized? In truth, it had little choice—and considering its many difficulties it managed quite well to stay on its feet.

But it would, nonetheless, be a serious error to underestimate the power of the democratic tradition in a country like England, sullied though that tradition has been by politicians and publicists. In modern society, the democratic tradition, which comes to far more than a duplicate or veil for bourgeois ideology, is a force in frequent opposition to the state, a means of bequeathing and receiving values won from or against the state, and the very ground-work, the inseparable basis, of socialism. Had some fascist gang tried to overthrow the Labor regime, the vast majority of the population, including many who had not voted for Labor and some who had been temporarily hurt by its measures, would immediately have rallied to the government. For despite its painful backwardness with regard to imperialism, the British people have a profound if unarticulated appreciation of the value of democracy—and rightly so!\*

We see, therefore, that in some countries the problem of "the road to power" cannot be exhausted merely by an analysis of class relations or an appeal to historical precedents. The democratic tradition, a good in itself no matter how frequently vulgarized or traduced, plays a role in setting this

\* One need only compare the drive against civil liberties that has taken place during and, often enough, because of the Fair Deal regime with the relative respect for minority rights under both the Labor and, thus far, the Conservative cabinets.

problem; and if socialists, by their *principled* adherence to that tradition, strengthen it and endow it with fresh meaning, the path to socialism is likely to be eased. In America, of course, together with this tradition there is another one, based on mob violence; how the two are likely to interact in the future it would be risky to say. One thing is clear: the problem cannot be settled by a fatuous sneer at Leninist violence (generally, the sneer of a liberal ready to justify atom-bomb violence.) Perhaps it is true that the radical movement in the late twenties and early thirties, under the influence of Stalin and Zinoviev, had a barricade obsession; perhaps true, as well, that the Communist International, even in its brief best days, was inflexible on this matter. But surely Herberg's maxims help very little.

In practice, if not in formal statement, the socialist tendency speaking through THE NEW INTERNATIONAL has refined its position on these problems—returned to a Marxist view unsullied by Stalinist influence, or if you wish, modified its view under the impact of recent events. For example, the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" has virtually been dropped by most Marxists. To Marx, in the few places he used it, the phrase meant nothing more than a regime transitional to socialism, one in which the majority of the people, centered about the working class, protected its victory from armed counter-attack and prepared both the economy and itself for a classless society. Had Marx lived to see the horrors immediately suggested to the modern mind by what the Stalinists call "the dictatorship of the proletariat," he would surely have found another, less ambiguous description. Shifts in language being historically conditioned, it seems un-

likely, perhaps unnecessary, that "dictatorship of the proletariat" can ever recover its original, unobjectionable meaning. Today, socialists declare against dictatorship of any kind: we are for popular rule, for the defense of minority rights, for the preservation and enlargement of democracy to a point capitalism cannot reach.

The phrase is open to another variety of misinterpretation: the workers will "lord" it over their middle-class or agricultural allies, etc. But at least in industrially advanced countries, the transition to socialism might well be made with considerable ease, through a regime that would be far less dominated by any single class than the organ of a population bound together by a common, visibly liberating purpose.

Similar considerations apply to the term "bourgeois democracy." As traditionally used by Marxists, it suggests the *limitations* of democracy in a capitalist context; yet, through debasement, it sometimes came to suggest—and not only, though primarily, in the Stalinist movement—an impatience with or implicit depreciation of democracy.

Historically, democracy was the political form most advantageous, though not uniformly indispensable, to an expanding bourgeoisie; but more than that, too. It was the reward wrested by the masses from the bourgeoisie for help in its revolutions; and whatever its inadequacies or distortions, democracy is one of the two or three most precious conquests of human history.

The great values of freedom of speech, press, assemblage and belief; of *habeas corpus* and the assumption that a man is innocent until proven guilty—these are not bourgeois; they



are victories won through centuries of human effort, the very fundamental of socialism, the heritage of the past that is most precious for the future.

Herberg is right, I think, when he attacks the notion that democracy is a "transitory institution" and, instead, declares it an "enduring value." He is right, but in a vacuum; for he makes no effort to relate this enduring value to anything in or of society. Among Marxists the problem of democracy has received more serious and anxious attention during the past decade than ever before—and for very good reason. Democracy has never seemed more precarious, and capitalism less interested in or capable of defending it, than in recent years. Some decades back it could be assumed by socialists that democracy was an assured conquest which would outlive capitalism, and the problem was to build upon it, so to speak a socialist edifice. In a sense, democracy was taken for granted, perhaps too much so, but taken for granted since it was nowhere greatly threatened. The major conflict was between a reeling capitalism and a self-confident Marxism. Today, however, the situation is quite different: we live in a period when history has been thrown back, when the working-class, except in a few countries like England, hardly plays an independent political role. There is, today, no immediate possibility for the achievement of socialism in either continental Europe or the United States; but there is a very serious danger that democratic rights will be destroyed by Stalinism in Europe and by domestic reaction here. Consequently, socialists place a greater emphasis on democracy than ever before.

Is this mere opportunism, a tactic prompted by weakness? By no means! We realize, first, that if socialism is to

be reached democratic rights must be preserved; a world-wide totalitarian society, of whatever sort, means the death of socialist hopes for an indefinite future. *And we value these democratic rights in themselves*, defending them, if I may say so, with greater vigilance and consistency than those liberals who are ready to wink an eye at the persecution of Stalinists or, for that matter, of various kinds of anti-Stalinist radicals.

What might be maintained is that during the early Communist days in America, characterized as they were by romantic and thoughtless leftism, and during the thirties, when both Trotskyism and left socialism were contaminated by Stalinist germs, some Marxists had a tendency to take a cavalier attitude toward democracy, not so much in their formal programs as in their implicit attitudes. Like other people, they had not yet grasped the full meaning of totalitarianism; they were dizzy with fantasies of revolution quite unrelated to the realities of American life; and because the future seemed so near and so good, they were ready to discard or at least neglect the best of the past. But this, if true, is no longer true; and one of the most objectionable aspects of Herberg's article is that he nowhere indicates the numerous discussions of democracy that have concerned Marxists during the past decade, not least of all in the pages of this magazine.

HERBERG MAY BE MISLEADING ON "the road to power," but he is simply hair-raising on other subjects. Writing of "revolutionary socialist teaching" on "the Soviet system," he lists several tenets. Here are two:

"... the arbitrary, dictatorial character of the regime, free from all re-

strictions of law or convention." This is said, not about Bolshevik practice, which is open to debate, but about "revolutionary socialist teaching." In such teaching, however, the workers' regime is anything but arbitrary: it is based on a popular upsurge expressed through popular institutions. Nor is it dictatorial, except in the special sense that it is still a class society. (Surely, to confound this special sense of "dictatorship" with the generally-understood sense of totalitarianism is unworthy of a man with so acute a moral sensibility as Herberg.) As for being free from restrictions of law or convention, which law is Herberg talking about? Every new society establishes its own laws, keeping some from the past and discarding others. That is what the French did, and the British and Americans too. A socialist society would remove from the books those laws that preserve private property in the means of production, but would preserve those which guarantee fair trials and free speech. Similarly with conventions: some kept, some not. After the Russian Revolution people called each other comrade instead of mister. At the same time, we may suppose, men still gave up their seats in Moscow street-cars, if not to all women, then to pregnant women. If Herberg had thought for a moment, instead of indulging in the popular sport of Bolshevik-baiting, he would have realized that it is impossible for any society to be "free from all restrictions . . . of convention."

"... the direction of the total affairs of society by 'the party of the proletariat,' all other parties being outlawed as the expression of non-proletarian interests."

Herberg cannot be referring to the Stalinists for he is intelligent enough to write that Stalinist action "soon

lost all grounding in principle." If it is not, however, part of Stalinist teaching, he must be asserting that the "outlawing of all other parties" is found in "the revolutionary socialist teaching" of, say, Marx and Lenin. Nothing of the kind is true; no evidence is presented by Herberg for this wild assertion, nor can it be. To the contrary, there are numerous instances (cited frequently in past issues of this magazine) where the leading Marxists speak of several parties functioning within a workers' states.\* In Bolshevik Russia, it is true, the Mensheviks and SR's were outlawed shortly after the revolution; the correctness of this step is certainly open to debate; but it must be understood that they were declared illegal on the charge of joining and supporting the White counter-revolution, not because of any principle or doctrine. How much reality would creep into Herberg's schematic moralizing if he mentioned the fact, say, that the Social Revolutionary Fanny Kaplan tried to murder Lenin. And what is so malicious about all this is that Herberg argues, not that the Bolsheviks made mistakes or committed political crimes, but that they took the measures they did *because* they were adhering to some

\* During the mid-1920's some of the Bolshevik leaders, particularly those who, like Bukharin, made a bloc with Stalin, did speak of a state in which only one party was legal, the Communist Party. (There is nothing necessarily undemocratic about one party being in power, so long as the others have full rights of opposition.) But this, it must be remembered, was already the period of Stalinist decline, when the whole atmosphere of revolutionary Russia was poisoned. Even Trotsky, the leading fighter against Stalinist bureaucratism, wrote some things in *The New Course* that seem to condone the idea of a one-party state (see, particularly, page 27, paragraph 2.) There is no difficulty in taking an attitude toward this sort of thing: it needs only to be repudiated.

Marxist or Leninist principle of a one-party regime.

The one section of Herberg's article that has a certain interest is his criticism of *the image of the future* that is held by most socialists. Here proof is almost impossible, since no one can demonstrate by objective measurement that socialists hold one or another vision of the classless society; but impressions are not without value; and some of Herberg's, though by no means all, are worth discussing.

He finds that the usual image of socialism is too untroubled. All the conceivable difficulties of the future are lumped into the transitional workers' state which is assigned the task of solving them; after which, socialism. But if you think of socialism as a society which has solved all social problems, then clearly there is no point in discussing the problems of socialism. Let us take a difficult problem which, perhaps because it is concrete, Herberg does not raise. One of the great misfortunes of modern life is that millions of people have to do meaningless routine work. This is partly a consequence of the division of labor, and in turn a cause for the worker's alienation from his work. The difficulty is exacerbated by the conditions of capitalist production; but why are we to suppose that with the abolition of capitalism this problem would be solved? or even with the achievement of socialism? The high level of productivity which is a prerequisite for socialism makes the division of labor indispensable; the division of labor means, for many, uncreative work. Under socialism, to be sure, there would be more leisure, the workers would play a role in planning and managing factories, their cultural interests would be widened so that life outside the factory would be en-

riched—but *they would still be doing uncreative work*. How is this problem to be solved? I don't know. It doesn't require any immediate anxiety, if only because it is, alas, not an immediate problem; but an awareness of it helps keep our image of the desired future from degenerating into a dull and static Elysium, as intolerable as the Christian vision of Heaven.

EVEN IN A SOCIALIST society, writes Herberg, there would be social clashes—and not merely disputes over where to build dams or any of the other trivial examples given in socialist primers. The mistake socialists make, he says, is to believe that "the only conceivable universal motive of anti-social conduct is economic." Well, we can't be sure, not so long as we live in a class society; there do seem to be deep-seated aggressive drives in the human organism, but the degree to which these might be lessened or put to constructive use in a healthy society is a subject largely for speculation. On the other hand, it is a coarse error to suppose that human nature is ineradicably evil, though in these times a most fashionable error. Herberg refers, again without evidence, to the "power drive . . . rooted in the nature of man, much deeper than the superficial layers of economic interest through which it manifests itself . . . power creates its own interest and feeds insatiably on itself." If by bureaucracy one means the special privileges given a ruling stratum that rests upon one or another class, then it follows that in a class society this kind of bureaucracy, the most fundamental kind, would be eliminated. But it may be that the various procedures and habits associated with bureaucracy—the usurpation of special privileges, the "short-cutting" of democratic procedures, the excessive

respect accorded to the office, etc. etc.—rest not merely (even if primarily) on class rule; it may be that they follow from the sheer largeness and cumbersomeness of the modern economic and political and industrial unit. Under socialism, there is reason to suppose that a very considerable simplification of administrative procedures could be enforced, since many of the economic and social motivations now present for administrative complication would then be removed. But unless one wishes to say that under socialism bureaucracy is impossible by definition—in which case, it is fruitless to discuss any problem under socialism, since all evils can be declared impossible by definition—it must be granted that even with its main social cause removed, bureaucracy might still be a problem.

But if it is rash to assume that the removal of economic inequality would entail the complete eradication of bureaucracy, it is completely false to suppose that man has some unspecified and unanalyzed power drive (power for what? where? when?) which keeps him from cooperative behavior. This "power drive" is a category of political moralists, not of psychologists or anthropologists, who in fact have marshalled considerable evidence to show that in some societies (particularly among savages who have read neither Kierkegaard nor Niebuhr) it does not exist.

POLEMIZING AGAINST THE concept of the "vanguard party," Herberg deduces (but does not describe) how the party leadership becomes "the vanguard of the vanguard." And "what this doctrine has meant for the regime and practical activities of the Communist Party [which one?] it is hardly necessary to relate." But it is

preposterous to suppose that so complex a phenomenon as the rise of Stalinism can be explained by so limited a "cause" as the vanguard (or any other) theory of the party. In truth, every political organization, and particularly every socialist organization, sets itself up as some kind of vanguard movement: the CIO speaks "for" the workers, the ADA speaks "for" the liberals, the SP speaks "for" socialism, the SWP "speaks for" Trotskyism, etc. etc. A political party that does not lay present or future claim to leadership, is a contradiction in terms. This does not, of course, dispose of the problem of the "vanguard party." I think it makes sense to say that the vanguard theory shares with other theories of organization, and perhaps has even more than them, certain dangers: it is too easy to identify the "historical interests" of the class with the immediate interests of the party, particularly when the former are defined by the party; it is too easy for the party leadership to become a privileged stratum above the ranks, privileged in terms of prestige, not income; it is too easy to make a grand correlation between bureaucratic phenomena and class society, thereby passing over the concrete problems of bureaucracy in parties. But there is no sure-fire way of avoiding these problems, short of refraining from organization.

Another criticism of Herberg's is that the socialist movement tries to absorb the entire life of its members. On this, he is frank enough to admit that it was the German Social Democracy which first began to create a "whole life" for its members, everything from nurseries to literary societies. The notion of "everything in and through the movement" is certainly dubious, if only because there are many fields

of human activity which the movement is incompetent to approach. Nor is there good reason why it should try to approach them: the political party has specific purposes, sharply limited and in some ways to be regarded merely as a necessary burden. Again, it should be added that the notion of "everything in and through the party," which was favored in almost every wing of American radicalism some 15 years ago, has in practice been abandoned by the political tendency that expresses itself through

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL.

HERBERG'S MOST INTERESTING remarks about the image of socialism concern the problem of democracy. Two definitions, he says, are possible. "Democracy may be taken to mean the equalitarian mass state, the absolutism of popular sovereignty against which no individual or minority can conceivably claim any rights. But democracy may also be taken to mean a liberal, limited-power state, guaranteeing civil and political liberty, protecting the rights of individuals and groups against predatory minorities and oppressive majorities alike." Because, he continues, socialists have been "committed so uncritically to the cult of popular absolutism," they have dismissed as mere bourgeois shams the various checks and balances by which constitutional governments are limited in power.

The important point touched by Herberg is muddled by extreme and careless formulations. For one thing, the phrase "popular absolutism" is ambiguous and emotionally overcharged; "popular will" would be more accurate. Nor need it be supposed that the "equalitarian mass

state" is one in which, necessarily, no individual or minority can "conceivably claim any rights." Herberg may not know it, but his statement is itself a crude instance of the "inevitability" fallacy: he is saying that wherever popular sovereignty is supreme there is never a possibility for minority rights. Surely, this is a view that can be rejected, not only in terms of a socialist future, but even in terms of our experience in the capitalist present. The desired image of socialism, one shared by all the major socialist writers, is a society in which popular sovereignty or popular will is blended with the protection of minority rights. The transition period, the most dangerous and difficult of all, requires an intense political consciousness; and while there is no reason to suppose that such an intense political consciousness is a "normal" or even desirable feature of human life at all times, there can be no guarantee of minority rights except insofar as they are cherished in consciousness—and this is true for all societies. For the transition to socialism to be made democratically—that is, for the transition to be made at all—there must be a high level of political consciousness, a principled respect for democratic values, and the existence of "countervailing powers" in potential opposition to the state: parties, cooperatives, unions, industrial units, all independent from and able to resist the state.

These problems are of considerable interest to socialists, though by their very nature they neither permit nor require immediate solutions; still, it is good to be aware of them. One could take Herberg's hints and suggestions with a greater degree of seriousness if one were not aware that for his school

of thought they must necessarily be academic; for what is the point of raising problems about the shape and tone of a socialist society if your whole

politics comes, objectively, to little more than adaptation to the status quo—adaptation with reforms but adaptation nonetheless?

### III Theories of Classes

AMERICAN SOCIETY, writes Daniel Bell at the end of his article, has not fulfilled the classical pattern of Marxism. In America there are none of the hard-and-fast social groups Marx found in Europe: no Proletariat, no Bourgeoisie, no Aristocracy, no Military. Bell does not mean, of course, that we have no workers or capitalists or army officers; by his capitalized categories he wishes to refer to cohered classes or castes or status groups of a kind, he claims, that have not appeared in America. The position suggested here he has developed at greater length in an article "America's Un-Marxist Revolution" (*Commentary*, March 1949). It is the position of David Riesman in his book, *The Lonely Crowd*. And it receives its extreme and ludicrous statement in a recent article by Mary McCarthy (*The Reporter*, Jan. 22, 1952) who writes that "Class barriers disappear or become porous; the factory worker is an economic aristocrat in comparison to the middle-class clerk; even segregation is diminishing; consumption replaces acquisition as an incentive. The America . . . of vast inequalities and dramatic contrasts is rapidly ceasing to exist."

Miss McCarthy's remarks may be dismissed as mere fantasy, but the viewpoint of Bell has to be considered. A fair summary of it would run something like the following: American society has never settled to the hard social polarities suggested by Marx. The theory of class struggle may help

explain the conflict between merchant and agrarian classes in early America, but since then the social fluidity and economic expansion of this country has made for a situation in which veto groups jockey for power, prestige and income but do not align into two irreconcilable classes. Actually we have, as Bell says, "interest blocs: in functional terms, labor, farmer, business; in social terms, the aged, the veterans, the minority groups; in regional terms, the Missouri Valley Authority, Columbia Valley Authority, St. Lawrence waterway."

How else, inquires Bell, but in terms of competing power blocs can you explain the rise of Roosevelt? Political theorists have seen Roosevelt as "a temporizing solon, whose political reforms sought to stave off the revolution of the propertyless masses; a Tiberius Gracchus, a patrician who deserted his class to become the people's tribune; a Louis Napoleon, an ambitious power-hungry demagogue, manipulating first one class then another while straddling them all in order to assure his personal role." Bell rejects all these comparisons as "baroque," and sees him as a balance between competing pressure groups, adjusting their conflicts, evening out inequalities; a benevolent umpire of a "managed economy."

EVEN IN SIMPLE empirical terms, this analysis has curious weaknesses. Bell denies the existence of a cohered self-

conscious bourgeoisie at precisely the time when it is becoming more aware of its position and "destiny" than it ever was. Never before has there been such a flood of institutional "free-enterprise" propaganda as during the past decade; never before has the American capitalist class so consciously assumed responsibility for the defense and preservation of its system on an *international scale*. Nor has there been a time when the military as a group showed the degree of self-conscious independence it recently has.

It is true that all the competing groups have functioned in terms of cooperation-and-struggle, but this is a phenomenon of war economy—war economy being a dirty word that neither Bell nor any other self-respecting liberal will deign to use. The notion of an equilibrium between competing veto groups acquires plausibility only in moments of prosperity: it is a theory which arises, for example, in imperialist countries where the advantages of foreign exploitation are so large that some of those advantages drip down to the workers. In the United States today the situation is somewhat different: the apparent restraint of the competing classes or groups is due to the blessings of what Bell in his *Commentary* article delicately calls "managed economy." That these blessings no reform government of capitalism, certainly not the New Deal, has yet been able to sustain, we know from experience.

As for Bell's question about Roosevelt, he erects a puzzle where none need exist. The phenomenon of a liberal politician trying to patch up capitalism is well-enough known in Europe; and soon we shall know it well enough in America too. This may

not be *all* that Roosevelt was; but if you don't see that he was this primarily, you will never understand his social role. In terms of conscious motives, he may just possibly have been Gracchus serving as the people's tribune and more probably was a Solon offering reforms to stave off—perhaps not revolution—but certainly mass discontent; in terms of his objective role, he was surely more a Solon than anything else; and in his immediate behavior he occasionally did resemble Louis Napoleon. His extraordinary popularity or *charisma* is due partly to large personal gifts and partly to the panic of a country unused to the shock of so extreme a depression and therefore desperately seeking a father to save it. We need not enter into this problem here except to ask: if war had not broken out and the New Deal had continued in its failure to solve America's economic problems, how long would the Roosevelt legend have survived?

But since Bell's theory has, in one or another form, become quite popular lately, it may be useful to shift the discussion to a more abstract level and review both the Marxist notion of class and the writings of some American sociologists on this subject.

THERE ARE INNUMERABLE methods of stratifying a population: by religion, by prestige status, by social class, by urban-rural division, etc. etc. The Marxist approach emphasizes social class. Unhappily Marx did not offer a text-book definition of "class"; the chapter on classes at the end of *Capital*, Volume III, remains a mere fragment. This does not mean, however, that he failed to suggest in many contexts what his idea of class was. Because he was concerned with social struggles and looked upon society in

dynamic terms, he cared more about observing the movement of history than providing neat academic categories.

But there are definitions. Bukharin defined class as "the aggregate of persons playing the same part in production, standing in the same relation toward other persons in the production process, these relations being also expressed in things (instruments of labor.)" Trotsky offered a looser but in some respects more useful definition: a class is defined by "its independent role in the general structure of economy and by its independent roots in the economic foundation of society. Each class . . . works out its own special forms of property." A recent writer, Lewis Coser, offers a definition of the Marxist concept that is couched in the language of Max Weber: "a class [is] a group of men whose life situation is determined by their economic function within the total society, and whose conditions are similarly determined by this economic function." Useful as these definitions are for various purposes, the first two, at least, cannot encompass all problems; as Max Shachtman has pointed out, they do not apply to the merchants, whom Engels was ready to accept as a class even though they did not take part in production.

The Marxist approach to class is what sociologists call an "objective" one, though not, as we shall see, entirely so. It establishes social classes in terms of the roles played by groups of men in the process of economic production. Ownership or non-ownership of the means of production becomes a central criterion for determining class membership. And class opposition occurs with regard to the distribution of the total social product. In turn, this distribution is con-

ditioned by the relation of various groups to the mean of production.

But while one may consider it fundamental in some sense, the relation of men to the means of production is clearly not always a sufficient criterion for establishing class membership. Occupation, which is not quite equivalent to one's relation to the means of production, may often be, in specific instances, a more important criterion. Other objective factors are also important: income, power, common interest. Generally speaking, a class develops particular forms of behavior and cultural outlets; it has a distinct prestige rating in society; it develops a unique community of outlooks, a *class attitude*.

Still, this leaves us with many problems. If you define a proletarian as one who sells his labor power on the market, does that mean an engineer is a proletarian? Or a salaried business manager? Or a government official? We reject such descriptions empirically, for we know that in their styles of life, their identifications and their interests, these people are not generally aligned with the workers. Relation to the means of production and occupation, while often congruent, are not always so; and if one wants a still finer social distinction, one must consider other objective criteria, such as income or status. Even here difficulties appear: the income of a white-collar worker may be pretty much the same as that of an industrial worker yet their modes of life, their relations to classes, their patterns of culture are likely to be quite different.

A whole school of sociology follows the "subjectivist" approach to classes, agreeing with Sombart that a social class is a group "which, by its way of

thinking, stands for a particular system of economic organization." Richard Centers, an American scholar of this school, defines class as a "psychological phenomenon . . . A man's class is a part of his ego, a feeling on his part of belongingness to something; an identification with something larger than himself." And R. M. McIver writes: "class does not unite people and separate them from others unless they feel their unity or separation."

WHAT THE SUBJECTIVIST calls class, Marxist refers to as class-consciousness; what Marxists call class, one subjectivist writer, Centers, calls stratum. Does this mean, then, that the distinction between the two is largely verbal? To some extent, it is. An important reason for the distinction is that the two schools are really interested in different problems: they ask different questions and solicit different orders of response. But between the extreme versions of either approach there is a fundamental split. What McIver says above is clearly untrue: people are separated from each other—in occupation, housing, leisure activity, social friendship, even language habits—regardless of whether they feel it or not. This extreme subjectivist approach has no way of accounting for the indisputable fact that, at times, the conditions of men are determined by factors of which they are not aware; a worker caught up in a depression and deprived of his livelihood is a victim of capitalist crisis even if he clings to the ideology of Horatio Alger. Class position, class behavior, class attitudes—all exist regardless of, though not unaffected by, class awareness. The relations here vary: class position is almost untouched by class awareness,

but class attitudes depend very much on awareness. At the other extreme, merely to note that men are stratified according to their relation to the means of production is not yet to say very much, unless one concludes that certain consequences in behavior follow from this stratification. And once that is said, it follows that we have abandoned purely objective criteria. We may conclude, therefore, that a useful approach to class, while basing itself on objective criteria, would not confine itself to them; the dichotomy between objective and subjective, except in extreme instances, is not very meaningful. Once the problem is taken from the realm of abstract definition and placed in the context of historical movement, the two tend to become inseparable.

In his book *Historical Materialism* Bukharin has an excellent passage on this matter:

Class psychology and class ideology, the consciousness of the class, not only as to its momentary interests, but also as to permanent and universal interests, are a result of the position of the class in production, which by no means signifies that this position of the class will at once produce in it a consciousness of its general and basic interests. On the contrary, it may be said that this is rarely the case. [Bukharin here proceeds to offer reasons why there is a discrepancy between class position and class awareness.] The result is that a class discharging a definite function in the process of production may already exist as an aggregate of persons before it exists as a self-conscious class; we have a class, but no class consciousness. It exists as a factor in production, as a specific aggregate of production relations; it does not yet exist as a social, independent force that knows what it wants, that feels a mission, that is conscious of its peculiar position, of the hostility of its interests to those of other classes. As designations for these different stages in the process of class evolution, Marx makes use of two expressions: he calls

class '*an sich*' (in itself), a class not yet conscious of itself as such; he calls class '*für sich*' (for itself), a class already conscious of its social role."

THE BASIC MARXIST definition delimits class position. It also notices class opposition. Both of these are present despite the awareness of participants. At times, class struggle may break into open class warfare. Class struggle can occur on different levels of intensity, and with different degree of consciousness. Most of the discussions, particularly in academic circles, as to whether the American workers are class conscious simply ignore the fact that there is more than one degree of class consciousness. There is, for example, the class consciousness which exists in terms of competition within a commonly accepted system: the working class sees the capitalists as a kind of enemy but does not think of capitalism as an enemy. The present attitude of large sections of the American labor movement is probably close to this attitude.

Class consciousness depends on a vast number of factors. If there is a strong class tradition in a country, a tradition of socialism or militant unionism, obviously class consciousness will be intense. If there is great social mobility, it may hardly exist at all. If social mobility is possible but difficult, that may intensify class consciousness. A sudden extreme change of conditions is often a prod to class consciousness. War, international trade, foreign events, conditions of employment, political tendencies—these are further influencing agents.

It goes without saying that the theory of classes is a simplification; all hypotheses are. The only relevant question is this: can the theory be used with profit to understand and control society? Many of the objec-

tions raised against the Marxist theory of classes are based on misunderstanding or ignorance. Marxists do not say that there are only two classes in society; or that political behavior is invariably determined by class position ("a portion of the bourgeoisie," writes Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*, "goes over to the proletariat."); or that the development of class consciousness is automatic, a simple reflection or reflex from economic conditions.

And Marxists, it may be added, are aware that there are other significant stratifications in society besides those of class. It is true that Marx did not pay as much attention to these as have other social thinkers; the problems he was dealing with led him to concentrate on classes rather than castes or status groups. But what Max Weber writes on those latter seems to me entirely acceptable to Marxists. Status groups, he says, are bound together by some non-economic conception, a conception of "honor"—nobility, religion, race, etc. They are "communities" in a sense that "classes" only intermittently are. "Property as such is not always recognized as a status qualification, but in the long run it is, and with extraordinary regularity." When the style of life specific to a status group becomes formalized in law, convention or religion, and membership in it becomes hereditary, it becomes a caste. By contrast, writes Weber, classes represent "possible, and frequent, bases for communal action. We may speak of a 'class' when (1) a number of people have in common a specific casual component of their life-chances in so far as (2) this component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income, and (3) is represented



under the conditions of the commodity or labor market." Weber has recently become a favorite of American sociologists, sometimes being put in opposition to Marx; but there is more wisdom in these few lines than in all the writings on class of American sociologists, laid end to end, from Harvard to California.

A theory of classes involves the claim that, in some sense, *this* kind of stratification is more important than another. The test for this claim is empirical, but before the test can be made it is necessary to know the meaning of the claim. What do we mean by saying that economic classes form a more fundamental distinction in society than religious or vocational and racial groupings? And particularly since we are ready to grant that, in a given moment, conflicts among capitalists, or clashes between whites and Negroes, or splits in the working class may be more noticeable and exacerbated than the opposition between the classes.

In *Toward the Understanding of Karl Marx*, Sidney Hook offered one answer. All other antagonisms in capitalist society, he says, are reconcilable: all employers have a common interest in maintaining a high rate of profit, their inner disputes can be modulated through mergers and agreements, the opposition between vocational groups can also be mediated and in any case does not involve class exploitation. The test, then, of a fundamental social division is the difficulty of removing it. But the mere fact that the opposition between worker and capitalist may be declared integral to capitalism proves only that its duration will be equal to that of capitalism; not yet anything about its intensity or importance. In any case, the statement that the classes are irrecon-

cilable is a predictive statement; it involves a claim as to what will—that is, may—happen.

IN AN INTERESTING ARTICLE ("The Theory of Social Classes," *Marxist Quarterly*, April 1937), Abraham Edel offers another possible use of the word "fundamental." He suggests that "a certain division into classes will be found to be a fruitful hypothesis explaining a great variety of the interrelationships of social traits in any, or many, cultures." By assuming the most important social division to be that of class, you are able to explain social phenomena more adequately and control them more usefully than people who assume that the most important social divisions are, say, those of nation or philosophy or religion. This, of course, is an hypothesis to be tested, but an hypothesis made clear. If, however, the Marxist theory does help explain why at a certain moment mysticism becomes intellectually popular or large sections of the productive forces remain idle amidst general want, then it would seem likely that its efficacy results from the fact that it describes an actual relationship among people; that people are so situated as to make their relation to the means of production or their occupation a determining factor in the history of their lives. If it works, this hypothesis points back to an actuality. Otherwise, why should it work better than others? Why should we be prompted to start with this rather than another hypothesis?

If you want to estimate what Weber calls the "life-changes" of a person, the single most important fact to know about him is his occupation. That is true, however, only in situations where class relations predominate. It is not true in a society with rigid

caste divisions. Even there caste position and class status (or occupation) are, as a rule, closely correlated; but there are mixed situations, particularly in the South, where caste and class intersect, conflict and melt into each other. For a white man in the South, the most important determining factor of his life is generally not (as he would like to believe) his whiteness but his class position, his being a worker or a capitalist or a storekeeper. But for a Negro, caste position is still probably the most important factor: the middle-class Negro is still shaped and bent more by his condition as Negro than his income or occupation.

Basically, however, the Marxist theory of classes is intended far less as a device for social classification than a method for studying social change. It asserts that the major motions of modern society can best be understood in terms of class maneuver and class conflict; this is still an hypothesis, of course, but one for which the evidence is by now overwhelming.

FROM MOTIVES OF CURIOSITY I have devoted several weeks to glancing through the writings of American sociologists on the subject of class; I do not feel my time was well spent. There are a number of valuable empirical studies of class, but hardly a significant theoretical work. Only a few years ago the most prominent American sociologist, Talcott Parsons, Professor at Harvard, wrote: "the Marxian view of the importance of class structure has in a broad way been vindicated." (*Papers*, American Economic Association, May, 1949). But there is little evidence that this remark has been taken seriously by American sociologists.

For one thing, their very approach makes difficult a serious examination of class relations. This is a subject that cannot be studied in static terms, by taking a poll or conducting a survey—though, of course, such methods can be very helpful. The problem of class must be seen in dynamic historical terms: it makes no sense, for example, to discuss social mobility without correlating it with the movement of American society from war to prosperity to depression to war to war economy. And in most sociological studies, neither history nor politics is a welcome visitor.

In 1940 *Fortune* magazine ran a poll asking people to assign themselves to "upper" or "lower" or "middle" class. It triumphantly concluded that America was a middle class country because 90 per cent of the respondents classified themselves as "middle." The central weakness of this poll is, of course, its wording; where a scientist might not assign any emotional valuation to such words as "upper" and "lower," people answering the poll might very well do so. A much more serious effort in this direction is found in a study by Richard Centers, *The Social Psychology of Classes*, based on a questionnaire sent out to 1,100 people. (We need not here enter into the question of what makes an "adequate sample"; presumably, the pollsters of some intellectual sophistication have solved the problem.) Centers found that 51 per cent of his respondents identified themselves with the "working class." Obviously, working class does not have the depreciatory overtones of lower class; hence, more people were ready to make that identification. Even here the problem is complicated by the fact that many of the 1,100 answers were probably not based on any precise notion of what a



worker is; several factory owners placed themselves in that category. But clearly, it is a considerable advance over the *Fortune* poll.

Since Centers used a psychological definition of class, he could discover only what we would call data with regard to class-consciousness. Nonetheless, some of his material is highly interesting:

Whereas almost nine-tenths—87 per cent—of large business owners and managers are either conservative or ultra conservative in political and economic orientation, only about one-fifth—21 per cent—of semi-skilled manual workers are so oriented. Again, although 55.5 per cent of large businessmen can be described as ultra conservative, only 2.5 per cent of unskilled workers are found in this category. These differences are . . . not confined to the urban strata alone, but are manifested between the rural occupational strata as well.

Nearly three-quarters of all business, professional and white collar workers identify themselves with the middle or upper classes. An even larger proportion of all manual workers, 79 per cent, identify . . . with the working and lower classes.

There are large and statistically significant differences among occupational strata as determined by the battery of questions concerned with conservatism-radicalism. The top occupational strata are marked by their adherence to the status quo . . . the lowest occupational groups are distinguished by their lack of support of the status quo and by their endorsement of views clearly radical in character. [Center's use of "radicalism" is open to question; perhaps "social reform" would be more adequate.]

A substantial degree of relationship is also found between political behavior and occupational status. The higher groups are characterized by much greater support of the traditionally conservative Republican Party than is the case with the lower occupational strata.

These paragraphs, taken almost at random from Centers' book, do little

more than suggest its quality. He has been criticized in the academic journals for drawing conclusions favorable to a Marxist view from correlations not high enough to be conclusive. In any case, his book shows conclusively that in terms even of self-awareness, which often lags behind reality, the notion that America is a middle-class country, so dear to propagandists and professors, is simply untrue. And it must be remembered that by far the most serious limitation of such a study is that, at best, it tells us merely what people think about themselves.

ANOTHER EXTREMELY VALUABLE study of this kind is "Analysis of 'Class' Structure of Contemporary American Society—Psychological Bases of Class Divisions" by Professor Arthur Kornhauser in a compendium called *Industrial Conflict: A Psychological Interpretation*. Kornhauser states his problem as follows: "Problems of 'class' are concerned essentially with the social orientations presumed to grow out of people's contrasting objective conditions. . . . To what extent are the acknowledged income and occupational contrasts of our society accompanied by significant psychological differences?" Using a variety of polls, Kornhauser submits them to exhaustive analysis. Though unsympathetic to the Marxist approach, Kornhauser concludes: "In all these examples [of polls] from quite independent sources, marked differences in opinions are seen to be correlated with the objective differences in income and occupation. . . . There is some indication that upper and lower economic groups have tended to draw farther apart in the past few years—particularly as seen in the decreasing favor of the New Deal at high income levels. . . . On many issues, of course, attitudes

are not closely correlated with the objective economic position of groups. The most enlightening of these . . . are the questions relating to individual opportunity to rise as contrasted with the existence of fixed classes. On this issue, people at all levels adhere overwhelmingly to the traditional American belief. They expect either themselves or their children to 'get ahead.' " In other words, Kornhauser's data supports the common Marxist contention that there is a certain amount and kind of class consciousness in America—to be specified later—but not, or at least not yet, of the kind present in Europe or envisaged in the Marxist program itself.

The limitations of the psychological approach, particularly when based on polls which elicit purely formal responses, are obvious. Another prevalent approach in American sociology is the community study. Here greater flexibility of observation, distinctions between position and awareness, and particularly between verbal response and observable attitude are possible. But these studies suffer from one central limitation: for purpose of convenience they usually employ medium-sized mid-Western cities, usually of about 50,000 people. It happens, however, that the social weight of the United States at the present time is probably in the large cities; in the small-city community studies both the major institutions of capitalism and the major sectors of the working class must be by-passed.

Of these studies the most significant still remain Robert Lynd's *Middletown* and its sequel *Middletown in Transition*. Though Lynd did not find, of course, a thoroughly aware bourgeoisie pitted against a thoroughly aware proletariat, his analysis makes sense only in terms of generally Marx-

ist assumptions. "One's job," concluded Lynd, "is the watershed down which the rest of one's life tends to flow in Middletown."

Another valuable book of this kind is *Elmtown's Youth* by A. B. Hollingshead. This is a study of high-school youth in a Mid-Western town, "designed to test the hypothesis that the social behavior of adolescents is related functionally to the position their families occupy in the social structure of the community." The detailed answer to this question is, of course, the book itself; the summary conclusion, which does not even hint at the wealth of material collected by Hollingshead, is that "there is a functional relationship between the class position of an adolescent's family and his social behavior in the community."

IF WE TURN TO THE academic sociology journals, we find various minor empirical studies which demonstrate, for example, that even among elementary school children class position helps determine major areas of behavior; or that in a city like Oakland, California there is considerable social mobility, though most of it is to be found within the middle class and from the upper strata of the working class to the middle class. One interesting study, by Alfred Jones, investigated the attitudes of Akron, Ohio residents during the 1938 sit-down strikes; his questionnaire was focussed on opinions of corporate property. Slightly more than 75 per cent of the Akron population was found to be not "unfavorable" toward corporate property; 16 per cent violently anti-corporate and 8 per cent pro-corporate. This, in terms of conscious attitudes and opinions—at a time when the Akron workers were, objectively, challenging private property "rights"

through sit-down strikes. Here we have statistical verification of the common observation that there are great "contradictions" of attitude among the American workers.

And, indeed, it is hard to escape the feeling—though I think it should be resisted—that sociological research on class mainly confirms what we already "know" through observation and historical analysis. This is largely due to the fact that there is nowhere in existence a serious generalizing study of American class relations—a lack which casts as great discredit on American Marxists, with their claim to a special interest in the subject, as it does on professional sociologists, despite the fact that the latter have far greater opportunities for such a study.

Nonetheless, a few provisional remarks—and they will, finally, lead us back to Bell's thesis—are possible.

The classless ideal was closest to realization in America during the 1820's and 1830's. Seventy per cent of the gainfully occupied worked for themselves. The frontier made acquisition of landed property quite easy. Only 15 per cent of the gainfully employed were wage workers. Then, indeed, there was a middle-class America. In *Triumph of American Capitalism*, another product of salad days, Louis Hacker wrote:

... if industrial workers in America did not migrate westward to become free farmers, certainly *potential* workers did ... small farmers of New York, New England, the British Isles, Germany and Scandinavia who began to fill up first the old North West and then the prairie States would have been converted early into industrial workers ... if they had not had the opportunities to continue farming under more satisfactory conditions. These opportunities were to be found in the American West, certainly throughout the whole of the nineteenth

century, and in considerable measure, up to the end of the World War.

By 1870 most of this had changed. Among people employed in agriculture, 25 per cent were tenants and 30 per cent propertyless laborers. The old middle class, composed of small independent entrepreneurs, was clearly declining, and declining much as Marx predicted it would. In 1870 the independent middle class still formed 33 per cent of the gainfully employed; by 1940 it had shrunk to 20 per cent.

Writing in *The Marxist Quarterly*, January 1937, Lewis Corey found that "The economic power of independent enterprisers is as relatively insignificant as their numbers. Not more than 400,000 are engaged in manufacturing, mining, construction, and transportation, where they are overwhelmed by the might of concentrated corporate capital. They flourish most actively in trade, where the chain stores make constantly greater gains." Since Corey wrote, economic conditions have changed considerably, but this description, by and large, still holds.

A report of the Smaller War Plants Corporation in 1945 declared that:

The relative importance of big business, particularly the giant corporations, increased sharply during the war, while the position of small business declined. ... In each of the war industries, with but one exception, firms with 10,000 or more employees grew in relative importance. In manufacturing as a whole, these few giants accounted for 13 per cent of total employment in 1939, and for fully 31 per cent of the total in which made few gains during the war, 1944. ... In the nonwar industries, small business, generally speaking, held its own. Taking manufacturing as a whole, the giants expanded greatly, while all other firms, especially small business, suffered a substantial decline. ...

The destruction of the independent

middle class goes deeper than the figures might suggest, for it is often in the interests of big capital to leave certain of the independent strata on paper, although they are completely dependent on the big undertakings.

ABOUT THE FAMOUS "new middle class" there is not much need to write here\*; most of what needs to be said appears in C. Wright Mills' excellent book. A few points, however: The "new middle class," by virtue of being propertyless, is at least as dependent on capitalist production as the working class and perhaps, because of its comparative lack of social cohesion, even more so. The small entrepreneurs could, at one time, partly insulate themselves from capitalist crisis: the farmers, during the period of capitalist expansion, could avoid the worst effects of city depressions, if only because they consumed their own produce to a far greater extent than they

\*Except for a word on the article in *Socialism and American Life* by Wilbert Moore, the sociologist who has already distinguished himself with respect to democratic centralism. Moore challenges the Marxist analysis by citing the existence of several occupational groups which, he says, "do not fit into either of the approved Marxian categories." But this remark gives away his whole case: it assumes that Marx "approved" of only two categories, bourgeois and proletarian; it assumes, that is, that Marx was an ass. Professor Moore cites the presence of farmers, service-industry employees, white-collar workers and professionals; though what he supposes he is proving by this citation—other than the fact that many of these are not proletarians—is not clear. Modern industry has, he says, become bureaucratized to an extent unforeseen by Marx. Perhaps so, perhaps not; what Marx foresaw is not finally of first importance; but what is important is that this development does not conflict with the basic Marxist analysis. The growth of bureaucracy, insofar as it is not the consequence of war-time sloth, is due primarily to the shift from individual to corporate ownership. Professor Moore thinks this may sometimes make it difficult for the worker to identify just who the capitalist is!

do now. This was also somewhat true of independent artisans as well. But the "new middle class," often composed of salaried employees in tertiary ("service") industries and of bureaucratic fat in primary and secondary industries—these are highly vulnerable to capitalist crisis. They have no social stake in terms of property; they have only an economic stake in terms of income; their increasingly mechanized work "lowers" them to a semi-proletarian level; large numbers of them are ideologically oriented and smitten with the malaise characteristic of modern urban life. Consequently, they often form, as they did in Germany, one of the most explosive groups in modern society.

There remains, most important of all, the working class, and of all classes the least studied or analyzed. Comprising a majority of the gainfully-employed population, organized into powerful trade unions, this class retains its strategic position in society, immediately, as a powerful bargaining and pressure group, ultimately, as a lever for the establishment of socialism. Though the percentage of the working class in relation to the total of gainfully-employed has decreased somewhat since 1870, there has been a sharp increase in the number of workers engaged in manufacturing industries. Writes Fritz Sternberg:

In 1929 the number of workers in [manufacturing] industries was 10.5 millions, in 1938 it was 9.2 millions and in 1939 it was 10 millions. But during the war it rose to 15 millions in 1942, and reached its highest point in 1943, with 17.3 millions. But even in 1945 it was still 15.3 millions, and in 1948, 14.1 millions.

This concentration of workers in manufacturing industry seems all the more significant when one recalls that, despite the increase in agricultural

production, there has been a steady though not uninterrupted decrease in the number of farmers in America. Nor do these figures adequately suggest the social weight of the working class, its increasing coherence as a force in American life.

THERE REMAINS THE difficult problem: to what extent does social mobility still play a significant role in determining the life and attitudes of workers? No very precise answer can, or need, be given; it is enough to note that, despite the temporary increase in mobility that has undoubtedly occurred during the past decade, the general tendency during the past half century has been toward more rigid stratification. Writing in the early 1940's, the Temporary National Economic Committee of the U. S. Congress found that:

It is widely recognized that substantial opportunity for promotion does not exist for a large proportion of the workers. . . . Most of them, therefore, must look forward to remaining more or less at their current levels despite the havoc this may visit upon the American tradition of 'getting ahead.'

A recent study of employment in Oakland, California (by Reinhold Bendix and Seymour Lipset, *American Journal of Sociology*, February, 1952) indicates that there has been an increase of movement between top strata of the working class and the middle class; empirical observation among the Detroit auto workers suggests that during the war and immediate post-war years some of the more adventuresome left the factories to set up small businesses; but by and large there seems no reason for supposing that the degree of mobility among the workers has been nearly as great as among the various elements of the middle class-operators, fixers, bu-

reaucrats, quasi-intellectuals — for whom the war economy has provided a "natural culture" in which to thrive and spawn.

There is of course some mobility: that is what we mean by speaking of a class society rather than a caste society. In a fine study called "The Middle Classes in Middle-Sized Cities" (*American Sociological Review*, October 1946), C. Wright Mills found that the group of small businessmen and professionals contained the largest proportion of people who had climbed from lower strata, 18 per cent having had working class fathers and 9 per cent low-income white-collar fathers. But both the top, Big Business and Executive, and the bottom, Wage Worker, showed considerable rigidity, nine out of ten wage workers coming from wage working families.

What these facts (as many others that could be cited) suggest is aptly generalized in *Social Life*, one of the better sociology texts, by Melvin Tumin and John Bennett:

Mobility has slacked off as the United States developed a stable economy and wealth-power system. Instead of a general tendency toward mobility we find that mobility is highly variable for certain points in the class system where temporary economic changes require new personnel, as in the recent war when the demand for highly skilled workers was suddenly increased many times over pre-war conditions.

With this factual background, we can touch for a moment on the problem of class consciousness. To what extent, if at all, are American workers class conscious? It is easy enough for liberal writers to reach glib generalizations: the American workers are not socialists, hence they are not class conscious. Behind this argument there is the assumption that Marx filled out a prescription for the workers which

they, however, had enough sense not to use. Actually, of course, no class, except in very rare circumstances, can be said to have a homogeneous consciousness. In America today there are various levels of class consciousness among the workers, ranging from a tiny minority of socialists to a considerable minority which identifies itself with the middle class. But it is indisputable that there has been an immense increase of a certain kind of class consciousness during the past few decades. The rise of the CIO, one of the two or three most important events in 20th century American history, is sufficient evidence. Where most AFL unions previously cultivated a job or craft consciousness, the CIO has given a certain generalized content to the conception of "the labor movement"; has aligned a considerable section of the American workers, the most aware and militant, as a cohered group battle for common ends. True, the CIO accepts the continued existence of capitalism; it does not, of course, have socialist consciousness; but it represents a consolidation, both in economic and political terms, of the strongest elements within the American working class. This may not be entirely what Marxists want; neither is it however what the apologists for "a middle class America" presume to exist. It is an intermediary stage, mixed, complicated—as all developments in actual history, as distinct from theories about history, must be.

WE CAN NOW RETURN to Bell's theory of America as the scene of mobile competing pressure groups working in a flexible, managed economy, in which there is no ruling class but a sharing, with whatever friction, of political power.

I think it indisputable that during the past 50 years America has become increasingly stratified into social classes. The social mobility traditionally associated with this country is, except in certain limited sectors of the middle class, a thing of the past; and such of it as remains, is largely the dubious fruit of war economy. In terms of income, this stratification is graphically demonstrated. The Census Bureau, in its 1951 report, found that the top fifth of the American population gets nearly half, 47 per cent of the nation's money income (before taxes) while the bottom fifth gets only three per cent. The top 40 per cent of the nation's money income (before money income while the bottom 60 per cent gets 20 per cent of income. This is hardly a picture of equality or even of fairly evenly balanced competing groups.

Of the "interest blocs" proposed by Bell, three—labor, farmer, business—are social classes; three others, vaguely referred to in terms of Valley Authorities, are apparently regional groupings. Only the remaining three—the aged, the veterans, and the minority groups—may properly be called interest blocs, and even they split up along class lines. But if it is merely the existence of either the regional groupings or the special interest blocs that invalidates the Marxist theory, then that theory was never valid even in Europe. Both France and Germany have often been disturbed by conflicts between provinces and regions; England has witnessed long struggles between England proper and Scotland, as recently England proper and Wales. No one has yet thought to suggest that the presence of these conflicts removed class struggles from the countries of Europe; and unless someone is bold enough to declare the conflict of in-

terest between the Columbia Valley Authority and, say, the Tennessee Valley Authority (or any conflict like it) more important to an understanding of American life than the conflict between capitalists and workers, then the mere listing of nine groups in an unequal series does nothing to disprove the Marxist approach either.

In certain limited situations, the Bell hypothesis has limited use. If you want to take a narrow-focus view of American politics, to examine why certain temporary alignments occur in the Democratic Party, it may be profitable to think in terms of competing interest blocs. But so soon as you try to define trends that run deeper and longer than a transient manoeuvre, you will have to think in terms of classes.

The relation between the "interest bloc" and the "social class" resembles the relation between an eclectic multi-cause approach to history and historical materialism. The shorter a period of history you study, the less usable historical materialism generally is; all sorts of minor problems arise which the generalization of the Marxist approach cannot handle; but if you want to study large-scale movements of societies and classes, then the Marxist approach gives you a far deeper appreciation and understanding than any other. Something of the same seems to me true with regard to "interest bloc" and "social class."

For the error that Bell makes is not in suggesting that the "interest bloc" approach can be valuable, but that it should be counterposed to the Marxist approach. The trouble with Bell's method is, however, that when used for large-scale social intervals it fails to recognize any principle of subordination among blocs; it fails to see that

in the long run these blocs align into social classes. Merely to point to a multiplicity of causes or factors in history represents no very great wisdom; the problem is to *weigh* causes and factors, to see them in internal relationship. This much done, it becomes clear that the farm bloc in American history, for all its importance, has not been able to shape fundamental policy, and never will.

The conflicts—and they are real enough—that occur between big business and the state are conflicts between sectional capitalist interests and the general political interests of American capitalism which, because of its unprecedented international position, must take into account all sorts of domestic pressures from labor, farmers and other groups in order to preserve the necessary domestic balance for the creation of a war economy. Yet the power of the capitalist class remains unchallenged, if not unchecked. The most significant test during World War II concerned the financing of new industrial construction; and here Big Business succeeded in throwing the risk entirely onto the shoulders of the state, after which it took over the factories. Everything followed the blueprint (the non-existent blueprint, no doubt, for none was necessary) of the capitalist class.

IN THE COMING PERIOD the basic question with regard to class relations is this: assuming no immediate war, will the U. S. economic system be in a position to utilize its gigantic productive capacity to the full or will it again become involved in market difficulties and economic crisis?

In his book *Capitalism and Socialism on Trial*, Fritz Sternberg offers an answer of the Marxist type:

"we may regard it as out of the question that in the future there will be any economic expansion of the United States beyond her own frontiers to an extent that will make it a decisive factor for the solution of the market problem . . .

The industrial production of the United States is much greater than that of Europe, not including the Soviet Union. Now when a social organism which accounts for almost half the total production of the world enters a phase of outward expansion, then that expansion must take on an incomparably greater scale if it is to obtain the same results as were obtained by European capitalist expansion in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Sternberg then proceeds to show that in the United States foreign trade in relation to production as a whole was always much smaller than was the case with any of the European industrial powers. During the past several years, the ratio between U. S. military expenditure and private capital exports has been 25 to 1. So long as this situation continues, "it is unlikely that U. S. private capital will be willing to make investments on a large scale outside the country."

Thus, the problem of markets, now "solved" by war production, is not likely to be solved by foreign investments. This leaves only the prospect of another New Deal, that is, further experiment with welfare economics within the framework of capitalism. Continues Sternberg:

On the assumption that there is no world war, the time will come when the U. S. armaments sector stabilizes itself at a certain level, and perhaps even declines. When this comes about, the U. S. economic system and U. S. society will be faced with the question which Roosevelt tried and failed to answer in the 'New Deal'—namely, how to close the gap between a gigantic volume of production and a volume of consumption which lags behind it, or, perhaps better,

how to prevent the gap from opening up in an economic organism for which the process of external expansion has not, and cannot have, anything like the effect that it formerly had for Europe . . . the U. S. economic organism has become extremely vulnerable to economic crisis—as the 1929 crisis clearly demonstrated—the gigantic increase of production and industrial concentration has still further increased this vulnerability. . . .

Another New Deal, then, would, if it had any chance for success, have to manage the economy so radically that it could create full employment with a steady growth of production and labor productivity. Thus far, not a single capitalist state has succeeded in doing this. In Britain, where full employment was achieved, it came from a mixture of war economy and an effort to transform the capitalist system.

The major problem of capitalism, still unsolved and, so far as one can see, beyond solution, the problem which more than any single other factor determines its development and shapes the struggle between classes, is this:

The power of capitalist society to accumulate capital is much greater than its capacity to make sustained use of additional capital in private profit-making industry.

As against this analysis, there is Bell's conclusion: "If a democratic society is to survive . . . then some new sense of civic obligation must arise that will be strong enough to commend the allegiance of all groups and provide a principle of equity in the distribution of the rewards and privileges of society." Imagine: to have labored with such energy and talent, only to produce so scraggly a mouse!

## IV Setbacks to American Socialism

WHY HAS SOCIALISM FAILED to thrive in America? Of course, this question can be misleading since there were times when it did thrive, most of all, during the period of 1912-1918 and, to a lesser extent, during the early 1930's. Nonetheless, socialism in America has never established itself as the formidable force that it became in Europe, never won the support of the labor movement or any appreciable section of the population. The usual reason for this fact are well enough known, and despite their lamentable lack of novelty (which would immediately disqualify them in the eyes of some intellectuals) they seem to me still true. Without ado, let me list these reasons briefly:

(1) The absence of a feudal past in America, which meant that capitalism could develop here with a minimum of restrictions.

(2) The tremendous natural resources available on the American continent, untapped and readily accessible.

(3) America has been a unified land area, thus avoiding the problem of frontiers cutting up natural economic units, as they have in Europe.

(4) Because capitalist society started largely afresh in this country, or at least only against a past of small farming and handicraft, it did not have to fight the usual *internal* bourgeois revolution except as against the slave-owning South. Consequently, the working class was not involved in revolutionary struggles during its infancy.

(5) The great demand for labor power and the constant scarcity of

labor meant, during the most of the 19th and part of the 20th centuries, that the working class could enjoy relatively high wages. Simultaneously, the scarcity of labor stimulated the invention of labor-saving devices, which, in turn, meant a high level of productivity.

(6) For many decades, until the beginning and perhaps into the 20th century, the Western frontier, by absorbing critical sections of the population, prevented an exacerbation of class conflict in the East.

(7) Because of the constant influx of immigrants from central and eastern Europe, the American working class was sharply split into native aristocrat and depressed immigrant, a split which postponed the emergence of class unity.

(8) Strategically located at a (until recently) safe distance from Europe, the United States was not burdened with the upkeep of a large standing army.

(9) As one of the last major capitalist powers to appear on the world market, the United States could take advantage of the most recent industrial innovations of Europe and apply them on a mass scale beyond the resources of Europe.

(10) Because of the above factors, there has been, during the past half-century or so, a rise in real wages in the United States, that is, a rise in the standard of living—by no means commensurate with the possibilities opened up by the expansion of production and the increase of productivity, but a rise nonetheless. "On the reefs of roast beef and apple pie,"

sneered Sombart, "socialistic Utopias of every sort are sent to their doom."

(11) American Marxism! at least since 1919, has been dependent on the course of European Marxism. The decline during the past two decades of the American socialist groups, while partly the result of native conditions, is to a large extent a reflection of the numerous defeats suffered by European radicalism.

(12) The damage done by Stalinism to the socialist cause is incalculable. Coming in a country already inhospitable to socialism, the appearance of Stalinism as a powerful force in the thirties and forties created a misapprehension as to the nature of socialism that is likely to linger for some time.

IN LISTING THESE causes and conditions, I do not wish to minimize the ineptitude of American socialism itself, the many failures it brought upon its own back; but that is the subject for another article. Suffice it to say that this ineptitude is, in part, a reflex of the unfavorable historical setting which the United States has presented to socialism; and while I do not believe that the hour always calls forth the required movement or man, surely a more favorable situation would have led to a larger and more significant socialist movement.

Bell does not exactly ignore the above factors, but he insists that most of them are "not causes but conditions"—a distinction of limited value, since a condition militating against the growth of socialism may also be seen as a cause of its failure to grow. His own explanation is:

that the failure of the socialist movement in the United States is rooted in its in-

ability to resolve a basic dilemma of ethics and politics. The socialist movement, by its very statement of goal and in its rejection of the capitalist order as a whole, could not relate itself to the specific problems of social action in the here-and-now, give-and-take political world. It was trapped by the unhappy problem of living 'in but not of the world,' so it could only act, and then inadequately, as the moral, but not political, man in immoral society. It could never resolve but only straddle the basic issue of either accepting capitalist society, and seeking to transform it from within as the labor movement did, or becoming the sworn enemy of that society, like the communists.

If the fancy distinction between politics and morality is for the moment removed, this description is rather like the classical one of a "centrist" party, one that is neither Marxist nor reformist, but vacillates between the two. Bell's explanation for the American socialist movement having been in this predicament is much too portentous and unhistorical. The socialist movement proved unable to relate itself to the "here-and-now" political world *not* because of its rejection of the capitalist order; for there were clearly many radical parties in Europe which rejected the capitalist order and yet managed very much to relate themselves to "here-and-now" politics. The socialist movement in America failed to do this because of specific conditions which kept it, for the most part, in the unhappy condition of being a sect. In other words, the problem is explained in specific historical terms, not in terms of some timeless and portentous pattern which has the socialist movement forever torn between political immediacy and moral motivation.

Now Bell has, in his own way, hit upon a real problem: how does a Marxist group survive in historically unfavorable intervals? The radical



movement is characterized, he says, by the "orgiastic chiasm" of the Anabaptists, a phrase Karl Mannheim applied to suggest messianic hope, ecstatic faith in the millennium to come. "But the 'revolution' is not always in sight, and the question of how to discipline this chiliastic zeal and hold it in readiness has been the basic problem of socialist strategy." Continues Bell:

In effect, the Socialist Party acknowledged the fact that it lived 'in' the world, but refused the responsibility of becoming a part 'of' it. But such a straddle is impossible for a *political* movement. . . . Each issue could be met only by an ambiguous political formula which would satisfy neither the purist nor the activist who lived with the daily problem of choice. When the Loyalists in Spain demanded arms, for example, the Socialist Party could only respond with a feeble policy of 'workers aid,' not (capitalist) government aid; but to the Spaniards, arms, not theoretical niceties, were the need of the moment. When the young trade unionists, whom the socialists seeded into the labor movement, faced the necessity of going along politically with Roosevelt and the New Deal in order to safeguard progressive legislative gains, the socialists proposed a 'labor party' rather than work with the Democrats, and so the Socialist Party lost almost its entire trade-union base. The threat of fascism and World War II finally proved to be the clashing rocks through which the socialist argonauts could not row safely. How to defeat Hitler without supporting capitalist society? Some socialists raised the slogan of a 'third force.' The Socialist Party, however, realized the futility of that effort; in characteristic form, it chose abnegation. The best way to stem fascism, it stated, 'is to make democracy work at home.' But could the issue be resolved other than militarily? The main concern of the anti-fascist movement had to be with the political center of fascist power, Hitler's Berlin, and any other concern was peripheral.

I am not going to discuss the specific points raised by Bell; a few are

shrewdly put, others reveal a total neglect of the role of political ideas in shaping the course of history. But let us grant that this description has a certain rough empirical relevance for American socialism. What Bell fails entirely to consider is: *how does it work for Europe?*

It doesn't. It doesn't work for either the reformists or the Marxists, for the practical politicians or the chiliastic moralist. Take the chiliastic Communist Party of Germany in the early 1920's (when it still was a Communist Party.) It had no trouble in deeply involving itself in every concrete political problem of the moment. Or the greatest chiliasts of them all, the Russian Bolsheviks. They came to power by finding immediate slogans which corresponded to both their chiliastic intentions and the social needs of the masses. So we see that the mere fact of intransigent opposition to society (being *in* but not *of* it) does not *necessarily* prevent a political movement from making contact with the realities of the moment.

And the same thing, in a different way, is true of the Social Democrats. Leon Blum, the Social Democratic leader, was prime minister of France during the Spanish Civil War. Unlike his impotent American comrades, he was in a position to do something very concrete for the Spanish Loyalists; he didn't have to content himself with vague phrases about "workers aid," though in France even that would have meant a great deal; he could have utilized his position of power, as head of the Peoples Front, to help Loyalist Spain on a mass scale. Why didn't he? Surely he was no chiliast, surely he was not torn by the conflict between politics *and* morality, immediacy and ultimates?

The point can be generalized. European Social Democracy was repeatedly close to power, repeatedly had at its command the allegiance of masses of people, yet never did it succeed in solving even those immediate problems which, Bell tells us, the chiliastic zeal of American socialists prevented them from solving. And why? Precisely because the European Social Democrats had become *of* society rather than merely being *in* it; precisely because they had abandoned their earlier intransigent opposition. Bell's argument is shattered by the fact that, particularly in Europe, immediate problems can no longer be solved in themselves; they wait upon a fundamental social reorganization.

BELL'S GENERAL SCHEMA HAS, then, no validity for either Marxism or Social Democracy on a world-wide scale; at best, it tells us what we know only too well: that in a country with relative social stability, it is difficult to keep a Marxist group intact, caught as it is between its unrealizable final program and the pressures to treat immediate issues in terms of political compromise. But this is hardly news: it is the one problem more than any other that American Marxists have discussed *ad infinitum* and, I am almost tempted to say, *ad nauseam*. And by its very nature it is an insoluble problem: so long as the situations exist that forces Marxist groups to remain sects, they will be in a condition of intermittent or chronic crisis.

But if Bell's theory is not very helpful, its implications are very interesting. In effect, he is saying that socialists should abandon the whole idea of building an independent movement, that they should integrate themselves (as so many have, and with such delightful comfort!) into the institutions

of capitalist society. His position is different from that of the traditional Social Democrats in one major respect: he realizes that in America there is no room for a Social Democratic organization. Whereas in Europe Social Democracy built its own bureaucratic structure with its own jobs and status and power, in America the Social Democrats have had to find their jobs and their status and their power in the trade unions, the state and the quasi-intellectual industries. And what Bell is saying to his friends of the Rand School is, in effect: let's recognize the situation for what it is.

For our part, we have no objection whatever, to this advice. We merely insist, however, that the problem of socialism remains; that it is not, in this modern world, an academic one; that it offers the only solution to a crisis of society that is steadily destroying civilization.

In a certain sense, then, Bell's view helps clear the air: it forces people to decide whether socialism still has any *real-life* meaning for them or whether it is merely a pleasant recollection. Bell makes his choice, we ours.

IF THE READER HAS been indulgent thus far, he may wonder what positive conclusions follow from my polemic against the articles in *Socialism and American Life*. In a sense, none. I think nothing is more preposterous than the kind of crankism that periodically afflict the socialist movement: if only we pass this resolution or adopt that tactic, or "turn our faces" here, all will be well. But clearly, for the next period, all will not be well; and nothing, no frenzied gesture here or desperate device there, will seriously change things.



But there are other opportunities. One of the false notions that has arisen in recent years is that the American socialist movement failed because it was too "theoretical." If anything it was the other way: the movement was not theoretical enough. In no major country has Marxism been so intellectually barren, so devoid of original or even serious critical work. At various times, this may not have mattered too much, say in 1912, when the movement was expanding, or in 1933, when an appreciable group of trained intellectuals spoke in the name of Marxism. Today, however, when the number of difficult political problems that beset socialists is so large, and the number of intellectual opponents who batter at our walls so tremendous, the need is clearly for sustained and serious intellectual work. It will not do much longer—it should never have

done—for socialists to sneer at the fact that no full-scale study of class relations in this country has been undertaken by professional sociologists. Why has no Marxist undertaken it? And similarly with other problems: the changing nature of imperialism, the historical estimate of Bolshevism, the theoretical description of Stalinism, etc. etc. If we find unsatisfactory, as we must, the contributions in *Socialism and American Life*, we had better acknowledge that there is nothing of similar solidity or size from a Marxist point of view. Why this is so, I shall not try here to explain. But the time is surely at hand—perhaps long overdue—for sustained intellectual work, for an assessment of the tradition, for a confrontation of critics, for an examination of problems on more than a tactical or empirical or journalistic level. Irving HOWE

# Aspects of Russian Imperialism

## The Drives Behind Russian Aggrandizement

FROM THE TURN OF THE CENTURY to the Stalin-Hitler pact, Marxists discussed imperialism primarily as a phenomenon of capitalist society. Imperialism in pre-capitalist societies was, of course, recognized. No Marxist denied the existence of Roman imperialism, whose aim was the extraction of loot, slaves and tribute from surrounding barbarians. Imperialism in antiquity was widespread and feudal imperialism, too, was known and acknowledged as such. "The policy, practice or advocacy of seeking to extend the control, dominion or empire of a nation" was a broad definition of imperialism applying to all societies engaged in the systematic spoliation of foreign states for the express benefit of the exploiting power.

therefore non-imperialist. This is the line of thinking of not only confused people but has become a favorite device of the "theoretical" apologists for Russia's countless violations of the rights of weaker nations.

Examining the Russian policy in the light of our earlier definition, however, will tend to eliminate confusion resulting from a comparison of imperialisms stemming from two distinctly different systems. It is the purpose of this article to examine some of the methods which Russian Stalinism uses in its attempts to extend Russia's "control, dominion or empire" for the benefit of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

FROM SHIFTING CENTERS of world power modern capitalist imperialism penetrated backward areas, transforming their economies and subordinating them to the world market. It did not, however, transform its subject areas into replicas of the home countries, and the colonial areas were never allowed to reach an advanced level of industrial development.

Because it exports neither its advanced economy nor its bourgeois democracy to colonial areas, the capitalist world presents a varied picture of political and social institutions. Stalinist imperialism, however, offers no such variety. If there appears to be a different emphasis in its policy toward various satellite countries, this is only because certain areas serve distinctive needs of the Russian ruling class, and must be treated accordingly.

The exploitation of the satellites

It is, unfortunately, the view of many within the Marxist movement today that imperialism is unique to capitalism. The concern of Marxists before the advent of Stalinism with capitalist imperialism was a natural one as no other form of imperialism presented an existing threat to the democratic and socialist movement, and Stalinist imperialism was not a predictable phenomenon. Consequently, the only imperialism many can recognize is capitalist imperialism, characterized by the export of capital, the exploitation of foreign labor-power and the acquisition of cheap sources of raw material in an effort to increase the rate of profit. But Russia does not export capital, she has no individual capitalist benefiting from a higher rate of profit, industries in satellite nations are being nationalized, etc. Conclusion: Russia is anti-capitalist

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cannot be mere expropriation of their surplus goods. Their economic subordination to the needs of Russia's war economy must be assured even if it is accomplished through fundamental upheavals in the productive patterns of the satellite countries which contradict their own basic economic needs.

The Titoists, for instance, have claimed that Russian national policy expressed itself in the maintenance of a basically agricultural economy in Yugoslavia impeding her native need for industrialization. Russia wished to maintain Yugoslavia as a source of agricultural exploitation, and to industrialize her around an agricultural base: developing industries which increased agricultural produce, such as the processing of materials, for fertilizer or the manufacture of products from agricultural materials. Thus the national need for the development of a powerful native industry was obviated in favor of the Russian need for a Yugoslavian agricultural economy.

In Bulgaria we can see the realization of the agricultural economy which Russia had intended to put into effect in Yugoslavia. Large quantities of Bulgarian farm products are appropriated for Russian use, or for sale on the world market to obtain foreign currency. All Bulgarian industrialization is oriented solely toward the exploitation of its agriculture. Large factories have been built for processing tobacco (which Russia sells abroad), for production of nitrogen fertilizer to aid farm production and for the spinning of cotton to be shipped to Russia. Wherever she finds it more advantageous Russia appropriates agricultural products and manufactures them in the USSR. This is done without any regard for the needs of the Bulgarian population.

Consequently Bulgaria sends wool and leather to Russia despite grave shortages of shoes and clothing at home. When raw materials exist in sufficient quantities to justify continued production the Russians often allow the satellites to maintain existing plants which do not manufacture farm products.

Bulgarian copper plants continue to purify native ore—for use in Russia's metallurgical factories. The "Vulcan" factory still manufactures cement for export to Russia, and the thermoelectric plant, "Republic," uses coal from the Pernik mines. Whenever possible, Bulgarian production is used as an auxiliary to Russian military manufacture, and munition plants and factories for overhauling Russian military vehicles have been built.<sup>1</sup>

In Hungary, on the other hand, industrialization is progressing along lines originally initiated by the old Austro-Hungarian monarchy, again with no effort being made by Russia to integrate Hungarian industry with adequate supplies of native raw materials. Hungary suffers from basic shortages and has already announced her intention of importing additional raw materials to maintain her heavy industry. Furthermore, capital goods investments have tended to create an unbalanced productivity and it becomes increasingly evident that the distortion of her economy cannot continue on a permanent basis without further economic disturbances.

The direct orientation of the satellites (both in production and in trade) toward the USSR, distorts native economy, and is further aggravated by

<sup>1</sup> **Bulgarian Economy** by Ivanko Gabensky. National Committee for a Free Europe.

Russia's inability to alter her own productivity in order to provide for the development of joint production in an even if one sided manner. Russia and her satellites do not have complementary economies, in that the Kremlin is unable to supply the subjugated nations with the machinery required for their industrialization. Nevertheless, she makes increasing demands on them for delivery of goods and these demands tend to create intolerable pressures on the local economy. The bulk of the industrial aid required by the satellite states, moreover, does not come from the USSR but from the more highly industrialized countries within the Russian sphere of influence. The aid offered by Russia in the form of a \$300 million loan to China and additional small loans to Poland are a mere token when considering the actual needs of these countries. Trade agreements between satellites aid in their mutual industrialization. Czechoslovakia, for example, sends industrial equipment and raw materials to Hungary and East Germany supplies Rumania and Poland with machinery.

Although it is true that the Russians occasionally aid the productive economy of the satellite states, exploitation of these countries by the Russian bureaucracy prevents them from building up capital goods for further expansion. Normally, they would have been able to sell finished commodities abroad and use the proceeds to further their purchase of machinery and required raw materials. Appropriation by the Russians of a large proportion of the finished commodity, therefore, acts as a powerful force to dampen their economic progress and Russia, in turn, cannot compensate for this loss since she herself has no surplus of machinery to export.

That the Eastern countries are very much in need of such economic assistance can best be illustrated by the fact that in 1947 both Poland and Czechoslovakia expressed their willingness to accept aid under the Marshall Plan.

THE RUSSIANS HOLD complete domination over all foreign trade with the satellite countries. In 1948 Russia imported goods totalling 169 million dollars from the Eastern European countries (excluding Yugoslavia) as compared with 7 million dollars in 1938. She exported a total of 128 millions in 1948 (excluding Yugoslavia) as compared with 14 millions in 1932.<sup>2</sup> Much of this increase in export was made possible by production in satellite states, which Russia is able to obtain at a price far below the prevailing market price, and to resell abroad at below current prices in order to obtain foreign currency.<sup>3</sup> Bulgarian rose oil, tobacco, shoes, Chinese bristles and Polish coal have all been utilized in this manner. When Russia sells goods to the satellite states, however, this situation is completely reversed. After a severe drought in 1948, Czechoslovakia paid to Russia \$4.00 per ton of grain, 50 per cent more than the prices prevailing on the world market at the time. In addition to this, Russia often acts as the middleman in transactions between two of the satellite states; buying from

<sup>2</sup> **Russia's Satellites in Europe**—Ygael Gluckstein—George Allen & Unwin Ltd., p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Russia bought, from Poland, at \$1.25 per ton, a supply of coal for which Denmark and Sweden had offered \$12. She realized from this transaction, in the course of but a single year, more than \$100 million clear profit. Never did Britain's capitalists realize so large a profit from their Indian colony as did the Russian imperialists from this one example of brotherly assistance. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

one, and reselling to the other at a higher price. Not imperialism—just Russian expansionism!

RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM HAS PLACED A further brake on the economic development of its satellites by cutting off their trade with the Marshall Plan countries. In 1950 trade between the United States and the Eastern block reflected a wide margin of imports over exports, resulting in a dollar balance of 54 millions which could be used by the Eastern countries to purchase necessary industrial goods and raw materials abroad.<sup>4</sup> In this connection, American restrictions on the import of certain types of goods from these countries will affect them severely. This is particularly true because many plants in Eastern Europe use western machines, the parts for which are no longer obtainable.

The decline in trade with the West and the increasing demands of Russia on the Eastern economy was the basis of the recent International Economic Conference held in Moscow. It attempted to reestablish trade with the West, and to offset the effects of trade decline with the Marshall Plan coun-

<sup>4</sup> *Review of International Affairs*—July 18, 1951.

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tries by an increase in trade with non-Stalinized sections of the world which were also outside of the Marshall Plan orbit. This would include Switzerland, Sweden, and other “neutral” areas in South America, Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

To obtain additional goods for export to these areas, Russia is forcing satellite regimes to withhold food and consumer goods from its own population. The Latvian radio, for example, repeatedly boasts of the large quantities of canned goods, cheese, textiles, beer and tobacco, which is shipped to Russia, while Lithuania claims that it has increased its grain export to Russia by 100,000 tons. (The grain sent to India during the summer of 1951 as a “gift from the Soviet Union to the starving masses” also came from Lithuania.)

The expropriation of food and consumer goods from the satellite populations combined with the high rate of capital investment have resulted in a marked decline in the standards of living in the Eastern countries. Disequilibrium in industry takes place in different forms but possesses one uniform feature, the refusal to invest substantially in consumer goods. Capital investment in the satellite nations is now 20-25 per cent of national income as compared with 3-4 per cent before the war.<sup>5</sup> There has been, however, an actual decline in capital investment for agricultural consumer produce. In Hungary only 3.5 per cent of all manufacturing investment is slated for consumer industries, and in Poland only 1.1 per cent. This small figure is further reduced by the acknowledged failure on the part of the government

<sup>5</sup> *Russia's Satellites in Europe*—Ygael Gluckstein—George Allen & Unwin Ltd., p. 74.

to carry out the official plan for agricultural and consumer products. The decline in the standard of living is reflected in the wage-price changes in Bulgaria since 1939. While wages have risen from an average of 63.6 leva in 1939 to the current average wage of 350-400 leva, prices have skyrocketed, as shown on the following table.<sup>6</sup>

	Prices in 1939 (In Leva)	Current Prices (In Leva)
Wheat, 1 klg.	4	100
One Egg	1.5	50
Raw Wool (unwashed) 1 klg.	47.5	2,000
Sugar, 1 klg.	25	240
Cheese, 1 klg.	26	400
Beef Meat—1 klg.	20	400
Butter, 1 klg.	60	850
Man's Suit (domestic fabric)	1,200	1,700
Men's Cotton Socks, 1 pair	16	400
Men's Leather Shoes, 1 pair	300	5,000
Calico, 1 meter	30	600

THE DECLINE in the standard of living is also characterized by recurring complaints in the press concerning the decline in the quality of goods.

<sup>6</sup> *Bulgarian Economy* by Ivanko Gabensky, National Committee for a Free Europe, p. 32.

A graphic comparison of the differences between the standards of living prevailing in Lithuania and the U. S., for instance, can be seen in the reports of Lithuanian refugees. Where an average of 35 hours work will purchase a man's suit in America, the Lithuanian worker will pay 1666 man hours. The average salary of an unskilled worker in Lithuania is 300 rubles per month; a suit costs 1500-2300 rubles, and a kilogram of butter ranges from 25-44 rubles.

The appropriation of a worker's earnings by the various Stalinist regimes is carried out in many ways. Workers are obliged to participate in forced savings programs, from which they are not allowed to withdraw money for long periods of time, making a portion of their wages available to the state. The “turnover tax,” a special sales tax imported from Russia, constitutes the most important single source of revenue for the satellite regimes.

In addition to this the currency “reforms” in Eastern Europe have wiped out the savings of the masses, particularly the peasantry. In Rumania, Article 13 of the currency decree is of particular interest, in that it provided

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for a recalculation of the population's payment obligations to the state at a ratio of 20 old lei to one new lei, while the price of rationed articles was also divided by 20. However, only 80 per cent was offered on sums below 1000 lei (\$6.75) and up to 95 per cent on sums over 2,000 lei (\$20.00).<sup>7</sup>

Higher investments are made possible by the increased exploitation of the working class, brought about by the sharp fall in his standard of living. This lower living standard, however, is reflected in lower production of inferior merchandise, to which can be traced the repeated references in the East European press to "poor worker morale."

The recent plan failures are to a large extent, based on the "lack of enthusiasm" shown by the working class and their continued castigation for "refusing to show proper enthusiasm" is a recurring theme in the satellite press. Because of the coal shortage in Russia coal is vital to the war economy, yet Polish coal miners have never reached their pre-war productivity. In Czechoslovakia, too, coal is a major production bottleneck. This is again traceable to the poor living conditions enjoyed by coal miners, particularly in the Ostrava coal basin, a major source of Czechoslovakian hard coal.

ALTHOUGH WORKING CLASS resistance is an important factor, it is by no means the only counteracting force to Stalinist "expansion." As in Russia, the very existence of bureaucratic planning and the terror and inefficiency arising therefrom is an impor-

<sup>7</sup> News from Behind the Iron Curtain, March, 1952.

tant factor operating against maximum industrial progress. An analysis of the Russian five-year plans indicates that the bureaucracy is unable to set wages and prices with a reasonably definite knowledge of their effect on the total economy. The many sharp swerves in wages and prices which Russia has put into effect since the inception of the fourth "five-year plan," and the variations in result from the original expressed intentions of this plan indicates the accuracy of this conclusion, as do the complaints of Russian economists to the effect that "no theory of planning actually exists." Fear of punishment by plant directors in a bureaucratic society leads to falsification of the productive picture. The directors tend to minimize the plant potential, for instance, so that production demands made upon them may be lessened. Articles in the Soviet press referring to managers who "speed up production only at the end of the month" reflects their unwillingness to exceed quotas even when possible, for fear of an increase in succeeding quotas. Bourgeois economists have often proclaimed the efficiency of capitalist productive methods, resulting from the dynamic character of private ownership. This claim contains an element of truth when compared to police state planning insofar as the private owner or manager is freer to make decisions concerning the conditions of production and employment. Under socialist planning production will find a powerful stimulus in the positive attitude of the working class toward the factories and their produce; and will be further stimulated by the rapport between national and local interests. Under Stalinism, however, the manager is neither free to make independent decisions, nor does he represent any local interests whatever.

Unlike his prototype in capitalist society, the Russian manager regards private decisions as risky, dangerous—possibly fatal! Without instructions from above, he is afraid to hire additional labor, request credit for the purchase of machinery, or obtain needed supplies through any but the regular (bureaucratic) channels. In order to meet his plan requirements, however, the Russian director often finds it necessary to commit illegal acts. In *The New Soviet Empire*, Dalling reveals the existence of a large group of "middlemen" in Moscow, whose sole function is to obtain additional supplies for factory managers through illegal barter.

Terror, bureaucracy, economic inefficiency brought about by the lack of democratic planning on the local level, all act as counter-acting tendencies toward increased productivity in the Stalinist "colonies." In a modern industrial nation such as Czechoslovakia, the damage to the economy is most pronounced. One of the reasons advanced by the Czech government for failure to meet the 1951 plan was the "manner in which the plan has been applied"; and there can be no doubt that the imposition of political terror, backward methods and bureaucratic inefficiency on advanced economies is one of the outstanding regressive traits present in Stalinist imperialism. In Czechoslovakia we see the rare historical example and dire consequences of a backward nation imposing its institutions on an advanced society.

ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT CHARACTERISTIC of Russian imperialism is its attempt to "Russianize" as large a portion of the Stalinist empire as possible. Any deviation from the official policy is regarded as the possible nucleus of

future opposition, and national differences, containing the memory of independent political states, are considered highly dangerous. The process of Russianization has reached its highest level in the Baltic countries, the first areas annexed by the Russians. In this area, many of the well-known party leaders have been purged and replaced by Russians and by natives of Russian extraction. Even the high ranking officials are suspect if they stem from other than Russian origins. Twenty-five of the 115 members of the Esthonian Supreme Council do not even speak the language of the people they are supposed to represent. Kolkhozes are named, not after native, but after Russian heroes. Only one such farm in Esthonia bears the name of a living Esthonian: Johannes Kotkhas, wrestling champion of the Soviet Union. In present day Esthonian culture, Russian drama, music and art predominate almost exclusively. Even the teachers in Esthonian

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schools are, to a large extent, imported from Russia. The same tendencies are apparent in other sections, of "the empire." In Poland, ten thousand Russian specialists dominate the native economy and army down to the very lowest units. The Russian language is glorified, and taught to Polish workers in their "off" hours. Rarely are native heroes glorified in the local press, this honor being reserved for Russian heroes and it is usually their images which are deemed worthy to appear on the face of Polish postage stamps.

According to an exile report in the March, 1952 issue of *News From Behind the Iron Curtain*:

Soviet control in Bulgaria is exercised mainly through the system of Soviet "specialists" and through the Cominform. The Cominform issues orders to the Party for carrying out its policies through the Liaison Section of the Central Committee. The Central Committee in turn sends reports of its activities to the Cominform where these are carefully evaluated and criticized. The Cominform also determines special campaigns, such as "aid to Korea," "the peace campaign" and recruiting members for international brigades.

Almost all important positions in the Party, the entire Central Committee and heads of the Army, Police and Economy, are in the hands of Bulgarian Communists who have been appointed by Moscow or by Soviet agencies such as the MVD. General Ivan Michailov, Vice-President of the Ministerial Council, General Peter Panchevski, Minister of War, and General Assen Grekov, for example, were transferred from the Soviet Army only a few years ago. "Specialists" from the Red Army control all sections of the Ministry of War, i.e., military intelligence, political education, operations, etc. The transfer of men from the Soviet Army to the Bulgarian was promulgated by decree Number 132 of July 28, 1950, providing for extra payment to officers and generals who served in or were trained by the Soviet Army. Leadership of the People's Militia is also in the

hands of Soviet "specialists," such as Minister of Interior Georgi Tzankov, who was trained in the Moscow MVD. The Inspectorate of Party Cadres of the Central Committee, which controls all activities of Party members, consists of MVD agents who prepare and carry out purges and direct leading Party cells. The Commission of State Control, which supervises the economy, is headed by another "specialist," Dimo Dichev, a Soviet agent for many years. Other Soviet "specialists" head the Commission of Science, Art and Culture and have even been elected to the Bulgarian Academy of Science. These include Alexander Nesmeynov, Constantin Bikov and Alexander Oparin. Soviet komsomols use the DUPY [Dimitrov Union of People's Youth] to reeducate youth in Stalin's Communism. Some of their leaders are Zoya Toumanova, Nisnetzev and Solovod. And finally, all members of the Central Committee pledge fidelity to the Soviet Union with the oath: "We are determined to remain true to the death to our genial teacher Stalin."

The satellite press apes *Pravda* in every conceivable way, even down to the cartoons and layout. Bulgarian army uniforms are an almost exact replica of those in use by the Russian army. The destruction of distinguishing national characteristics appears to have become one of the principal aims of Russian imperialism.

The Stalinist attempt to destroy national institutions and thus prevent them from becoming centers of independence from Moscow, is directed against all the subject nations. This policy has gained considerable impetus as a result of the emergence of Titoism in Yugoslavia, a dynamic nationalism which hits at the heart of Stalinist imperialism. The watchful eyes of Russia's secret police are forever alert to the possible development of Titoism in the other satellite nations. Stalinist exploitation of subject countries is a relatively new phenomenon and gives rise to innumerable conflicts between the Russian and na-

tive bureaucracies. Local leaders want power for themselves. To be sure they are not pure power machines but also ideologists, despite many differences between their public and private ideologies. When Rumania's Ana Pauker marched into a department store in Bucharest demanding the finest clothes from the sales clerks and demanding "Do you think we are pigs?" she indicated her conception of the role which she played in the revolution.

Russian nationalism has shown that it cannot countenance national power on any level, however, and Ana Pauker has now fallen from power. The Russians distrust native rank and file CP members because of their connection with the masses, and their suspected "leniency" toward the peasants and workers.

Moscow has recognized that nationalism in Eastern Europe received a powerful impetus during the German occupation and that many of the rank and file within the CP were inspired by nationalistic motives. She therefore favors party members of Russian origin who can have no national feelings toward the satellite countries, and distrusts not only the rank and file but even the native leadership. The constant purges of satellite leaders are accompanied by a playing down of the importance of those still in power, who might find themselves in opposition to Moscow policy. The ousting of Kostov for instance followed a split in the Bulgarian party concerning the exploitation of Bulgaria by Russia. Moscow is aware that the pressures which existed in Yugoslavia and which eventually caused Tito to split, exist in all Cominform countries. Yet Titoism is a natural if not always an inevitable outgrowth of Stalinist im-

perialism. The Russians are opposed to separate national power yet local Stalinist leaderships are indispensable political agents to assure Russian imperialist aspirations. Stalinists in other areas cannot regard the purge trials in the satellite countries with equanimity, nor view the approach of Russian domination without concern. Their fears constitute a powerful factor within Stalinism pointing toward its eventual destruction.

DESPITE THEIR EVIDENT distrust of the populations in the "colonial" areas, the Russian government has found it difficult to maintain the same direct surveillance over foreign nations that it is able to exercise over its own people.

The G.P.U., while it undoubtedly exerts a strong influence in maintaining Russian leadership in satellite parties, is itself insufficient to insure their domination. The elimination of native leaders removes what may be an important wedge in retaining what little support the Russians may still have among the workers. Continuous reference is made in the satellite press to the "low morale" of the working class (read working class opposition), which has expressed itself in strikes and slowdowns. The strike of Polish longshoremen in the city of Szczecin following the 1950 currency reforms is an example of such opposition. The Communist Party in Eastern Europe, particularly its lower levels, had achieved considerable success in posing as highly sympathetic friends of the poor peasantry. This is an important factor in Russia's anxiety over continued native CP loyalty at least for the present. Yet every peasant in the satellite countries knows that he is being collectivized by a foreign pow-

er, with whom he cannot feel any national identity which would normally tend to minimize the feeling of outrage brought about by the commission of similar acts by a native regime. This expropriation of lands and stock becomes an act of foreign imperialist robbery. In order to reduce the native peasant to the level of passivity existing in Russia, Stalinism believes that it must wipe out the living memory of an independent political state. To achieve this aim will require a longer and more terrifying process than the consolidation of Stalinism in Russia itself.

In their efforts to achieve control over their satellites and increase native production the Russians have exported one of the most distinctive features of life in Stalinist Russia today—the slave labor camp. These camps in addition to their punitive value, are centers of “cheap” labor for direct exploitation by the Russian bureaucracy itself, which dual function causes them to be regarded with great favor by the Stalinist rulers.

According to refugee reports, 60,000 persons in Bulgaria were sent to slave

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labor camps in 1950. A goodly part of Russian slave labor is drawn from the mass deportations in the Eastern countries, and one exile reports that 1/5 of the entire population of Bucharest has been deported, either to small villages or to “work camps.” Another source indicates that 550,000 persons have been deported in Lithuania, and that over 50,000 Lithuanians have been killed by the Russian police during the past few years. Yugoslavia’s “*Slovenski Porocevalec*” reports that large scale deportations are organized to provide settlement areas for Russian colonies. In this connection 150,000 Turks were deported from Bulgaria to Turkey and 100,000 Bulgarians were re-located in other parts of the country while Russian “colonies” are in existence on the shores of the Danube Black Sea canal.

We have examined but a small portion of the acts committed by Stalinist imperialism in Europe. The full picture is even more nightmarish and in the form of Russian imperialism is different from that of its capitalist prototypes, the effect upon the colonial states is at least as repressive.

Terror, robbery, appropriation of goods, actual enslavement of portions of the population, maintenance of occupying armies (both native and foreign) and the conscription of local men for service in the cause of future imperialist activities have, in the past, been the tools of various exploiting groups. The Stalinists have adopted this complete arsenal and neither semantic use of “expansionist” cloaks nor dissertations on the non-capitalist nature of the Russian economy can hide the primitive and violent character of Russian imperialism.

A. KIMBAY and  
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THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

# The Precursors of Marx

## Discussion of a Vast Appendix to Capital

To a Marxist, Marx’s economic theories are the cornerstone upon which the entire superstructure of Marxism is erected. Those who have accepted certain tenets or conclusions of scientific socialism while ignoring or rejecting Marxian economics have generally ended up by foundering in the morass of revisionism and social patriotism. Consequently, any book that throws light on some of Marx’s fundamental economic concepts provides a welcome addition to Marxian literature.

Terence McCarthy and The Langland Press are to be congratulated for having made available for the first time in English the first part of Marx’s notes that Engels intended to publish as Volume IV of *Capital*, but which Kautsky properly published in 1904 as a companion volume to *Capital* under Marx’s manuscript title, *Theories of Surplus Value*.\* It is to be hoped that the remaining two parts, dealing with Ricardo and with Malthus and the decay of the Ricardian school, will rapidly appear in English.

It is interesting to note that at the same time that McCarthy has published this volume, the Stalinists have come out with an abridged *Theories of Surplus Value*, translated from the German by G. A. Bonner and Emile Burns, published by International Publishers. A fragmentary and random spot check indicates that the Stalinist version loses much from a too

liberal translation from the German. It also reveals that it is not good policy to abridge Marx; sometimes, to be sure, it is easier to grasp Marx’s meaning from a complete re-write, but rarely from excerpts. The McCarthy translation, moreover, is exceptionally smooth. Whether this happy result was achieved because McCarthy worked from Molitor’s French translation or because he employs a freer translation style while preserving the essential meaning, we cannot say as the French version was not available to us. (McCarthy’s translation, by the way, was checked with the original German text by competent friends.)

Be that as it may, the present volume, especially in its major portion dealing with Adam Smith’s Theory of Productive Labor, reads like Marx at his best. For these 100-odd pages alone, the book is well worth reading by any Marxist or by anyone interested in understanding the essence of Marxian economics. This does not mean that Marx would have published this work in its present form. On the contrary, as Kautsky states in his preface:

I repeat that Marx, writing the manuscript for his own use, had not intended it for publication as it stood. This is proved above all by the form he gave it. It is true that the style is precise and terse, like all the works of Marx; Marx could not write otherwise, even when not addressing himself to others. But he let himself go more than was usual with him. Marx, who put the greatest possible value on style, worked and reworked each of his manuscripts before permitting them to go to press. Far removed from such polish, we find here whole propositions only hinted at and by no means worked out in full. The criticisms he levels at certain authors are so sharp as

\*A HISTORY OF ECONOMIC THEORIES—From the Physiocrats to Adam Smith, by Karl Marx. Translated from the French by Terence McCarthy, The Langland Press, New York, 1952; 337 pp. \$5.00.



to recall Aristophanes. Above all, the peculiar and higgledy-piggledy mixture of German, French, and English in which the text is written proves it to be unready for the printer. Marx was equally facile in all three languages. Any of the three might suggest itself to him. Therefore, he habitually availed himself of exactly that one which seemed best to express the spirit of what he was trying to say, or which was suggested to him by whatever quotation he was discussing. . . ."

WE CANNOT SHARE McCarthy's view that his choice of title, "A History of Economic Theories," is superior to the Marx-Engels-Kautsky title, "Theories of Surplus Value." It is rather pretentious. Had Marx been interested in writing a history of economic doctrines or theories, it would have been far more comprehensive and illuminating than the present work. Naturally, since the theory of profit and surplus value is the kernel of any history of *bourgeois* economic theories, from the Marxist point of view, some of the present material would have been contained in any such project, but it would have been entirely different in character, emphasizing the particular relationship between a given author and the state of capitalist development that prevailed, as well as the role of the individual author and his theory in advancing and justifying the extension of bourgeois power.

Nor does there appear to be any justification for McCarthy's contention that the present work should have been the first volume of *Capital*. That any such arrangement would have prevented the "interpreters" of Marx from muddying the waters with their various explanations of what Marx really meant is far-fetched, far-fickled. As McCarthy says in his introduction: "There would still have been disagreement with Marx's views. The

Austrian school would still have come into being and the various marginal utility theories would have been propounded." To go in the very next sentence from this eminently correct statement to such a phrase as—"But to the extent that the schools of political economy which succeeded Marx are based in part upon opposition to what people who have not read the whole of Marx believe he had to say, the earlier appearance of this work would have dispelled much misunderstanding and disputation." (Our italics)—reveals a rather dubious comprehension of the dependence of economic theory on the state of the class struggle and the general economic environment. The implication is that bourgeois economists following Marx abandoned the doctrines of the English classical school of Smith and Ricardo not because Marx had succeeded in developing the labor theory of value and surplus value into an instrument that laid bare the inner workings of capitalism, but because they did not fully understand Marx.

LET US RECALL merely two statements from Marx to explain his understanding of the relationship of economic theory to the state of the class struggle. The first is from *Poverty of Philosophy* (pp. 134-135) and reveals his appreciation of the role of the English classicists: "Economists like Adam Smith and Ricardo, who are the historians of this epoch, have no other mission than to demonstrate how wealth is acquired in the relations of bourgeois production, to formulate these relations in categories, in laws, and to demonstrate how far these laws, these categories, are, for the production of wealth, superior to the laws and categories of feudal society. Poverty in their eyes is only the

pain which accompanies all child-birth, in nature as well as in industry."

The second is from Marx's famous preface to the second edition of *Capital* (Kerr edition, pp. 17-19):

Since 1848 capitalist production has developed rapidly in Germany, and at the present time (1873) it is in the full bloom of speculation and swindling. But fate is still unpropitious to our professional economists. At the time when they were able to deal with Political Economy in a straightforward fashion, modern economic conditions did not actually exist in Germany. And as soon as these conditions did come into existence, they did so under circumstances that no longer allowed of their being really and impartially investigated within the bounds of the bourgeois horizon. In so far as Political Economy remains within that horizon, in so far, i.e., as the capitalist régime is looked upon as the absolutely final form of social production, instead of as a passing historical phase of its evolution, Political Economy can remain a science only so long as the class-struggle is latent or manifests itself only in isolated and sporadic phenomena.

Let us take England. Its political economy belongs to the period in which the class-struggle was as yet undeveloped. Its last great representative, Ricardo, in the end, consciously makes the antagonism of class-interests, of wages and profits, of profits and rent, the starting-point of his investigations, naively taking this antagonism for a social law of nature. But by this start the science of bourgeois economy had reached the limits beyond which it could not pass. . . . With the year 1830 came the decisive crisis.

In France and in England the bourgeoisie had conquered political power. Thenceforth, the class-struggle, practically as well as theoretically, took on more and more outspoken and threatening forms. It sounded the knell of scientific bourgeois economy. It was thenceforth no longer a question, whether this theorem or that was true, but whether it was useful to capital or harmful, expedient or inexpedient, politically dangerous or not. In place of disinterested

enquirers, there were hired prize-fighters; in place of genuine scientific research, the bad conscience and the evil intent of apologetic.

HAD MCCARTHY'S INTRODUCTION been confined to a technical explanation of his translation, it would have been in better taste and have avoided a number of errors. To refer to the "legendary" Volume IV of *Capital*, and to Adam Smith as "the overwhelming influence upon the mature Marx," smacks of sensationalism. The book, however, will be read primarily by serious students of Marx and Marxism. For these will readily understand that the work essentially represents some of Marx's notes on surplus value and on the theory of productive labor. Some of the passages, particularly the concluding chapter on "Notes on the Theory of Productive Labor," are brilliant examples of Marx's best thought and style.

It is therefore a pity that McCarthy, to whom all of us owe such thanks, is guilty of some loose formulations, especially in relation to productive labor. On the one hand, he states: "Thus, labor was productive under capitalism, regardless of its content, or the form or nature of its product or the service it rendered, if it produced a profit." A few sentences later he states: "Productive labor under capitalism, according to Marx, was that labor which not merely reproduced its own means of subsistence but produced an excess." The two statements are not quite the same thing, nor is either *fully* reflective of Marx's basic thought—although admittedly it is difficult to summarize Marx's views on productive labor both because they are complex and the subject itself presents several ambiguities. Nevertheless, productive la-

bor must produce surplus value, not merely profit which is one form of surplus value. Moreover, unpaid surplus labor existed under feudalism and exists under Stalinism. Its existence is merely one aspect of productive labor under capitalism. By itself it does not sufficiently delineate capitalism from other modes of production.

A fuller explanation of productive labor is required, for it lays bare the essence of capitalism. To obtain Marx's true views on the question, it is necessary to turn to the last chapter in the present volume. States Marx:

That labor alone is productive which produces surplus value, or which serves capital as a means whereby to produce surplus value and, consequently, sets itself up as capital, as capital which employs itself in the production of surplus value."

Further:

Only this fixed relationship with labor transforms money and commodities into capital; and we designate productive that labor which, because of this relationship to the means of production,

which is equivalent to the functional relationship actually existing in the real process of production, transforms money or commodities into capital, that is to say conserves and augments the value of materialized labor through this relation to labor power. The expression '*productive labor*' is merely an abbreviation which indicates the relationship and the manner in which labor power figures in the process of capitalist production. This distinction between types of labor is extremely important because it gives us the piece form of that labor upon which rests the whole of capitalist production and capital itself. (Our italics.)

Therefore, in the capitalist system of production, productive labor is that labor which produces surplus value for its employer, which transforms the objective conditions of labor into capital and their proprietor into a capitalist, which produces its own product as capital.

It is therefore crystal clear that for labor under capitalism to be productive, labor power must be employed (consumed) to produce surplus value. While profit can be produced in unproductive spheres of the economy (the labor expended in which may be productive of profit or unpaid labor for the individual capitalist if ex-

changed for capital), surplus values arise only in production. From the point of view of society as a whole, the distinction is important. The aggregate capital of the bourgeoisie cannot be produced and accumulated without the transformation of labor power into surplus value. Nor can the profits of any given section of the capitalist class exist without the prior production of surplus values. Unpaid labor must result in the expansion of the entire capital in order for the labor involved to be judged as truly productive.

THIS LEADS MARX to a subsidiary, but important characteristic of productive labor:

In examining the essential character of capitalist production, one may also suppose (because, as happens more and more, it becomes the principal aim, and because only under these circumstances can the productive powers of labor be developed to their highest point) that, in theory or in fact, all the world of commodities, all spheres of material production, of the production of material wealth, are subjected to the capitalist mode of production. This hypothesis expresses the ultimate aim or limit and consequently approaches closer and closer to absolute correctness. All workers engaged in the production of commodities are wage workers, and the means of production are capital for everybody alike. Therefore, it can be said, the characteristic of productive laborers, of laborers producing capital, is that their labor realizes itself in commodities, in material wealth. We have thus found a second subsidiary characteristic of productive labor

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distinct from its determining characteristic and absolutely independent of the content of the labor (Our italics).

Marx thus endorses one of Adam Smith's more important contributions: from the point of view of capitalist society as a whole, productive labor must not only produce surplus values in exchange for capital (as against labor power exchanged for revenue), but must also be engaged in the production of commodities—a point which Adam Smith stressed in characterizing the labor of domestic servants, government employees, etc., as unproductive. Some of Marx's comments on unproductive labor and the attempts of the apologists of the bourgeoisie to refute Smith are priceless.

Illumination is thrown on many other complicated questions of economic theory, notably the reproduction of constant capital and the manner in which constant capital is transformed into value, as well as the origin of surplus value and its division among profit, interest, rent and taxes. The English classicists, the immediate precursors of Marx's economic theories, came closer to a correct explanation of these basic phenomena of

capitalism than did the Physiocrats or the early exponents of a primitive labor theory of value, such as Petty and Locke, but they were immeasurably handicapped by their lack of the concept of labor power. Despite his tremendous superiority over his contemporaries, Adam Smith was further confused by the contradiction between his labor-cost and labor-command theories of value, the former leading in a direct line to Ricardo and Marx, with the latter being developed by Malthus and resulting in the ultimate disintegration of the classical school, thereby paving the way for a variety of bourgeois apologetics based on numerous subjective theories of value.

While Marx clearly planned the history of the theory of surplus value as the last volume of *Capital*, the entire work is more illuminating as an example of Marx's method, of how he drew upon the work of his precursors and turned their fundamental thoughts to exposing the laws of motion of capitalism. As such, it constitutes a vast appendix to *Capital*, one which every genuine Marxist will wish to read and to study.

ANALYTIKOS

## BOOKS IN REVIEW

### A Poor Try

THE ANATOMY OF COMMUNISM,  
by Andrew Scott MacKay. Philosophical Library, 190 pp.

AT OTHER TIMES and under other circumstances, this extraordinary pitiful 190 page volume might just have squirmed its way past the technical requirements of a Ph.D. thesis; perhaps published privately by the author (if at all) and distributed proudly to friends and relatives. But these are not other times and circumstances, for today there is an open market for any and every assault on "communism," however puerile and clumsy. This little intellectual atrocity symbolizes the degree to which scientific standards have been degraded.

The book presumes to be an analysis of the relation of Marxist doctrine to "contemporary communism." It is immediately apparent, however, that despite some energetic quotation-gathering and heavy cramming in the works of Marx and Engels, the author's ignorance is so pure and unqualified as to make it easy for him to reach the longest conclusions by the shortest route possible. In light of the state of literature on precisely the same theme, it is amusing to see the author write that "an examination of a sizeable part of the secondary literature on Marxism and Communism revealed no discussion of these ideas. . . ." To be sure, if all the secondary sources are those he has listed in his bibliography under "secondary sources" (Eastman's, *Marx and Lenin*; Finer's *Mussolini's Italy*; J. J. Rousseau's *Confessions* and the *Social Contract and Discourses*)

then what he says is quite true. But then he should have used a library just a shade larger.

The technique of the book is quite simple. For example, Chapter I is entitled "The Marxian Psychology; Its Nature and Implications." This subject is disposed of in nine brief pages as follows: a quotation from Marx and/or Engels on the subject; then a general remark designed to annihilate them. One example will suffice. Marx is quoted: "But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations." Thus Marx. Now Scott's translation: "The individual is not the master of his social life, but its creature. He is dissolved into his conditions of production." Obviously, this is ridiculous since people are not dissolved, they exist, they function, etc. Thus Marx is all wet. It doesn't matter that even in some of the other Scott quotations that Marx says that people's natures *depend* on material conditions and that in fact the Marxist theory of human nature is not so simple and crude and insists upon man's role as a changer of this environment. Scott literally disposes of the subject by a few words, by giving it a name "The reflection theory of psychology" and concludes that since Marx can only show that the 'superstructure' is influenced by the economic 'substructure' rather than determined by it, his entire one-sided theory of social change must be rejected" (p. 7). And if that is not enough "since Marx and Engels cannot show that men as individuals are compelled to 'reflect' objective economic conditions, they are further unable to show that 'classes' are a reflection of these same economic conditions. Thus, the Marxian conception of 'class' must also be rejected." And, I

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suppose, if there is anything else the reader might like rejected at the same time, he can throw it into the basket of the "reflection theory of psychology." This is the stuff the book is made of.

In this manner the book begins and it must be said that there is no let down. There are, of course, some sections which scintillate more than others. One such nugget on page 84 says: "The workings of 'class consciousness' are never illustrated or explained by Marx and Engels because they cannot be illustrated or explained. Psychologically and physiologically speaking 'class consciousness' is a fiction. There is no sixth sense represented by an awareness of class. There is no instinct revealing the mystical importance of class." The brilliance of that stroke requires no comment. Or on page 118: "On close examination (perhaps that means some deep digging into Rousseau's *Confessions* among his secondary sources) the mighty 'proletarian revolution' appears to have been nothing more than a coup d'etat . . . almost deserving to be described as a palace revolution. . ."

There is lots more of the same for those who make a morbid hobby of collecting specimens of political mutilation and ignorance. Needless to add, the book

has its quota of comments about Lenin as a man who dissembled belief in democracy in order to subvert it, of Communism being evil, etc. As for any comprehension of Stalinism and "contemporary Communism" the author cannot in all fairness be accused of having a trace of any such thing. And in a way it can't be expected of him, for judging from his bibliography, he had not read anything on the subject except the works of Stalin.

From a scientific point of view, the book borders on the hilarious. What is not so funny is that it gets published. If a book like this were written by, let us say, an Eastman or a Burnham (although it could not be so crude in their hands) it would have had its "justification" as written by "experts" and would have had the special virtue of measuring the metamorphosis of these erstwhile socialists. But from someone whose name means nothing and whose book merits even less, the publication confirms what seems to be so evident, that the main requirement today is to sledgehammer Marxism with a bagful of quotations interlarded with commentary to hit the starved market. This may be good for aspiring young writers who can't get

published but is that worth the degradation of serious scientific thought?

B. MOTT

## Old Fables In New Jargon

THE ORGANIZATIONAL WEAPON, A Study of Bolshevik Strategy and Tactics, by Philip Selznick. The Rand Corporation. Published by McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1952.

OF THE RAPIDLY expanding list of books by non-Marxists purporting to analyze the nature of Stalinism, few can be credited with a serious attempt at a theoretical explanation. To the list of works by would-be scholars and quotation-collectors there has recently been added another which deserves some attention, not because of its intrinsic merit but merely for the fact that its stock anti-Bolshevik cliches, innuendos and prejudices which have been woven together into a supposedly scientific theory may because of their political popularity achieve a degree of academic respectability. Philip Selznick, the author of *The Organizational Weapon*, attempts to develop a theory of Stalinism as the extension and application of "Leninist principles of organization."

Naturally, in such an attempt he draws not only upon the stock stories about Kronstadt, which circulate so freely in certain circles, but where his theory needs amplification he does not hesitate to give birth to new inventions. Thus he can write that "elections in the Communist parties do not involve the normal processes of faction and debate: a fundamental Leninist principle states that 'no movement can be durable without a stable organization of leaders to maintain continuity.' Challenges to the leadership as

a whole are not tolerated in a Communist party." This *description*, it must be remembered, refers not to Stalinism where it would be correct, but to its ideological counterpart, *Leninism*, which supposedly unlike non-Bolshevik movements, rejects the perspective of gaining power "by propaganda alone." Lenin, the fountain of totalitarian ideas "urged the need to forge a group which, beginning with an ideological commitment, would use whatever means were available to influence decision in society. For him, the task was not so much to spread the 'truth' as to raise to power a select group of communicants," and so forth and so on for dozens of pages.

It is important to recognize, however, that fundamental to Selznick's theory is a rejection not only of Leninism, but also of all fundamental principles of Marxism, a further factor which will tend to make this book "popular" particularly with the ex-Marxists whom Selznick represents. In opposition to Marxism which holds that class divisions in capitalist society are irreconcilable to the extent that they can only be suppressed through the efforts of the state, Selznick presents the state as a "voluntary association" while classes are *replaced* by masses and "elites" who manipulate them, or at least attempt to do so.

The basic distinction made between political tendencies is their recognition or rejection of the "commonly accepted rules of behavior which control legitimate controversy." Democratic movements (as opposed to "subversive" ones) have aims which are "limited," which can be absorbed into the established framework of the going political system, which have "a stake in the status quo" and aims which are consistent with its preservation, or at least its modification by methods acceptable to all elements of the political community, i.e., to all social classes.

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Beginning with these premises, Selznick proceeds to define Leninism as that "modification of Marxism" which consists of the "subordination of all doctrinal precepts to the needs of the struggle for power." Its aim is "the concentration of total social power in the hands of a ruling group."

Selznick continues: insofar as Stalinism can be distinguished from Leninism, it is only to the extent that the former has "matured" or "developed" Leninist ideas by freeing them from "sectarian" doctrinal orientation. For those who will not accept this too readily Selznick points out that Stalinism does not represent the genuine interests of the working class. Somehow or other this is intended to prove that Stalinism has no class content but represents the efforts of a group of obviously evil men who have at least partially succeeded in the Leninist objective of gaining "a total monopoly of social power."

We must interject a comment about Selznick's style at this point. The stale dish he has been serving us is made positively inedible by the pretentiousness and fuzziness of its "sociological" jargon. Avoiding "Marxist jargon" is indispensable in most sociology circles today. But we suggest that these "sociologists" might write books with greater literary and scientific merit if they developed a jargon used with tasteful economy which might more precisely sum up intelligible ideas.

The jargon freely used by Selznick cannot hide the inadequacy of his devil theory of history explanation of Stalinism. The harm in this theory is that inherent in it is a confession of an inability to intelligently cope with the origin and nature of Stalinism; and not to be able to understand the nature of Stalinism is to facilitate its victory. How can Selznick explain the loyalty of French Stalinist leaders today to the Kremlin if Stalinism in Russia is merely a

group of evil, power-hungry men with no social interests or motivations deeper than their insatiable appetites for power. How can one explain the growth of Stalinism in Europe and Asia *and its unswerving fealty to Russia*. And within Russia how is Stalinism perpetuated if it is not a class society? Is the group of power-hungry men in the Kremlin whose modus vivendi is More Power going to sustain itself by recruiting men who are equally unpleasantly motivated by a power drive? How does Selznick explain the differences between, let us say, Bukharin and Stalin on the agricultural question? Were these conflicts merely between power-hungry men? There are thousands of such questions which cannot find a rational answer from anyone holding to the devil theory of history. It is a poor substitute for a more painstaking analysis of Stalinism. To attempt to search for an explanation of Russian Stalinism outside of the social development and political events surrounding the degeneration of the Russian revolution, to fail to recognize that Stalinism on a world scale today has its roots within the decay of capitalist society itself, not to acknowledge Stalinism as a powerful *social* movement, means that we can develop no program or movement capable of combatting Stalinism on a healthy, democratic basis. To attempt to explain Stalinism in personal and psychological terms alone is to perform an unwitting service to Stalinism.

IF SELZNICK'S BOOK provides no answer to the problem of the nature of Stalinism, what is the significance of his discussion of the "combat party?" It is common adherence to this conception, presumably, which make Leninism, Stalinism and Trotskyism basically similar if not identical. The "theoretical model" of what is supposed to be the key to Bolshevism is constructed on the basis of (1) descriptions of actual Stalinist prac-

tices; (2) quotations from Lenin, Stalin, Dimitrov, a whole series of lesser figures, as well as Trotsky and James P. Cannon (whose remarks are considered as being "especially significant") and (3) Selznick's own fanciful ideas or logical deductions from his own theory. Thus it is easy to demonstrate that, up to the time of Stalin's "Bolshevization" of the parties of the Third International, no such creature as Selznick describes ever existed. For example, the idea that factions, factional organs and the unrestricted right of criticism are inimical to Lenin's ideas on organization simply

has no basis either in his writings or in the rich history of the pre-Stalin Communist movements. (The providential quotations from Cannon's "organizational document" certainly do no credit to "Trotskyism"; they serve less, however, as evidence against Lenin's conceptions than as testimony to the peculiar misinterpretation to which these are subjected in the Socialist Workers Party.)

Selznick, however, who certainly knows or should know what the *real* practices of Lenin's party were, stresses the importance of his *conceptions*, and their

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significance with regard to two aspects of Party functioning. These are (1) the attempt to gain the "total involvement" of the individual in the party and (2) the attempt to create a "managerial organization" out of a voluntary association. Basically, Selznick's thesis can be reduced to this: that the evils of Bolshevism flow from the attempt to build a party which demands responsibility and activity from its membership. It is these principles which make Lenin's writings on organization the "bible" of Stalinism, and which, in practice, have led to the totalitarian development of Stalinism.

Because Selznick is not writing from the standpoint of socialism, it is not necessary for him to question the relationship of Lenin's "organizational principles" to his *political*, i.e., his socialist ideas. Selznick can dismiss the latter as mere rationalization by showing that *Stalinists* consistently violate Marxist political principles. Yet for Lenin, the significance of organization, of building a socialist party, followed from the idea that "the proletariat can become and inevitably will become a dominant force only because its intellectual unity created by the principles of Marxism is fortified by the material unity of organization which welds millions of toilers into an army of the working class."

Contrary to popular opinion, Lenin did not believe that he was introducing any "new" ideas about organization into the socialist movement. Time and again he pointed to the example of German Social Democracy as his "model" party, subject to modifications because of the special conditions of Czarist illegality. And, much as it may surprise some, even in his emphasis on centralism he always stressed the *democratic* nature of such principles: that the majority of the party has the *right* to decide policy, and the *duty* to see that it is practiced. Those

who disagree have the right to criticize, to form factions to fight for their viewpoint, or to leave the party if they feel their differences sufficiently important. Lenin's own political history shows he never considered "party loyalty" to be more than subordinate to political ideas.

Revolutionary Marxists are not committed to any total, much less uncritical acceptance of Lenin's ideas on organization, any more than to any other aspect of his thought. Insofar as they were originally developed and intended to apply to a movement which was necessarily conspiratorial (and certainly subversive) the same emphasis need not be placed on the need for *secrecy* and a highly limited membership (as Lenin pointed out would be the case in democratic countries). And where a Bolshevik action *was* undemocratic (such as in the case of temporarily abolishing factions in 1921) it is possible (and necessary) to criticize such practices even while showing that they do not follow from any real or alleged "Leninist principles of organization."

But before we accept what would automatically follow from Selznick's thesis that the attempt to create a socialist party on the basis of "democratic centralism" is the road to totalitarianism we must examine the alternatives. Selznick's alternatives, insofar as they serve as non-totalitarian "models" are the British Labor Party and . . . Norman Thomas, neither of which are known to be free from bureaucratic traits. His, however, is a political judgment as well as an organizational one: what is important about Norman Thomas is that when the alternatives are "harshly posed" capitalism is supported over communism (and over the Third Camp as well).

As opposed to the theories of all those who are preoccupied with the "importance" of the organizational question, as the key to politics, Marxists make or-

ganization *subject* to sociology and politics. Different conditions and different classes call forth parties of different types and organized according to different "principles." The opulent capitalism of America has produced the corrupt machines which exist on the basis of patronage and social demagoguery. Stalinism creates bureaucratized and monolithic parties to serve as instruments for international bureaucratic collectivist aims. The working class needs parties of a different kind.

There can be no rules for creating a socialist party, much less for "guaranteeing" it from degeneration. Those who search for guarantees, in organizational principles independent from political practice are bound to be disappointed. While bad organizational practices may contribute to, or even generate the development of political differences, to attribute any independent significance, and more than that, a predominantly influential role to them, is to turn matters upside down. D. HARRIS

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