example, the employer himself often makes union membership a condition of employment. The State also finds unions of great value as agencies of control, especially in wartime. In short, the modern union is a bureaucratized mass-organization which simply extends the conventional patterns of society into the working class and has little significance as as expression of a specific working class consciousness. It may be a narrowminded economic pressure-group, or, more typically, the kind of to a disintegrating status quo the Social Democracy was in Weimar Germany and the TUC is today in somewhat similar circumstances in England. In either case, what it has to do with either socialism or revolution is obscure.

Political: the Parties

The most obvious fact about the Proletarian Revolution is that it has never occurred.[8] Such revolutions as have taken place have not followed the working class pattern which Marxism anticipates. The Paris Commune had a very mixed class character and materialized more along the line of Blanqui or Proudhon than of Marx. The other revolutionary upheavals have been in the least advanced, not the most advanced, countries, and have therefore had a mixed peasant-worker character (Russia, China, Spain). These revolutions in backward lands have either failed or produced new tyrannies; the Marxist explanation is that the low level of economic development made socialism impossible. But when countries are highly developed, their workers don't make revolutions at all.

The proletarian revolution today is even less of a historical possibility than it was in 1900. The first world war was the turning point. The reformist-socialist movements of Europe, by supporting their capitalist governments in that war, permanently discredited the Second International. It looked for as time as though the situation had been saved by the revolutionary wing of Marxism, as represented by the Bolsheviks. Lenin had at least understood that the working class

[8] And probably never will occur. See Appendix A for a discussion of the peculiar metaphysics of Marxism re. the working class, and also the special weakness of the proletariat as an aspiring ruling class.

Dwight Macdonald

The Root Is Man

1946

even amid the worst reaction — as in Paris at the present — can simply no longer be smashed."

Engels was partially right: unions can no longer be "simply" smashed; they tend, indeed, to become ever stronger as capitalism matures. But this increasing strength has not led in any way to the "emancipation of the downtrodden millions." In England the "new unionism" which began with the great dock strikes of 1889 led by socialists like Tim Mann and John Burns, and which the aged Engels hopefully saluted in the preface to the 1892 edition of *The Condition of the British Working Class in 1844* — this movement towards industrial unionism of the most oppressed parts of the British proletariat laid the foundations for . . . the British Labor Party. In Germany, the debacle of the mighty Social-Democratic trade union movement, on which Marx and Engels placed their main hope for socialist leadership, hardly needs underlining here. Nor is it necessary to elaborate on the evolution — devolution, rather — of our own CIO, which ten years ago unionized the millions of industrial workers who form the backbone of the American working class, and which in that short space of time has recapitulated the history of European trade unionism, from the rebellious youth to bureaucratic senility.

Instead of broadening their objectives, as Marx expected them to, and aspiring finally to "the emancipation of the downtrodden millions," unions have usually followed precisely the opposite course. At least, in the instances cited above, it is striking how in each case the early struggle to establish unions had an anti-capitalist character which more and more disappeared as time went on. The evolution has been at first into simple pressure groups fighting for labor's interests *against* the rest of society (which does not by any means consist only of bankers in silk hats) and with an attitude of devil take the hindmost so long as "we get ours"; Lewis' United Mine Workers and the old-line A.F. of L. unions are still in this stage. There is also a later stage, more typical of mature capitalism, which indeed involves the assumption of a broad social responsibility, but as an integral part of capitalism rather than a force for labor's emancipation *from* capitalism. Industrialists often find it advantageous to have their work force controlled by a "responsible" union bureaucracy with whom they can deal on a "reasonable" basis — in England, for

4. The Mirage of the Proletarian Revolution

It was to the working class that Marx looked to bring in a better society. And it is in that direction that his followers today still look, as a glance at the minute coverage of labor news in almost any Marxist organ will show. I think it is time for us to recognize that, although the working class is certainly *an* element in any reconstitution of society along more tolerable lines, it is not now, and possibly never was, *the* element Marx thought it was. The evidence for this is familiar, and most Marxists will admit almost every item in detail. They shrink, however, and understandably enough, from drawing the logical but unpleasant conclusions that follow. In my opinion, the weight that Marx attached to the proletariat was excessive *economically* in that the organization of the workers into unions has failed to develop into the broader kind of action Marx expected it to. And it was excessively *politically* is that neither the reformist nor the Bolshevik tactic has led to the hoped-for results.

Economic: the Unions

In the resolution on trade unions he drew up for the Geneva conference (1866) of the First International, Marx wrote that "while the immediate object" of trade unions is "confined to everyday necessities . . . to questions of wages and time of labor," they must also broaden their objectives and "convince the world at large that their efforts, far from being narrow and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions." For, he continued: "If the trade unions are required for guerrilla fights between capital and labor, they are still more important as organized agencies for superseding the very system of wage labor . . . They must now learn to act deliberately as organizing centers of the working class in the broad interest of its complete emancipation." Engels wrote to Bebel in similar strain (March 18, 1875), describing the trade union as "the real organization of the proletariat, in which it carries on its daily struggles with capital, in which it trains itself, and which nowadays

Contents

inevitable results." The necessity has proved to be putty, the results quite evitable. The rock of Historical Process on which Marx built his house has turned out to be sand.

It is sometimes said in defense of Marx on this point that he did not predict the inevitable victory of socialism but rather said that the choice before mankind was either socialism or barbarism; and that today we are getting the latter. but what did "barbarism" mean to Marx? From the context of his whole thought, I venture to say it meant disorganization, chaos, a regression in the scientific-technological sphere — the sort of thing that took place after the fall of the Roman Empire. But what we see today is just the opposite: it is the very triumph of scientific organization of matter (and of men) that is the root of our trouble; and the greatest triumph of applied science in generations, the splitting of the atom, may bring us to utter destruction. Nor is there anything chaotic or disorganized about Soviet Russia, where ethical barbarism is nonetheless at its height.

How unlikely, furthermore, this alternative of "barbarism" appeared to be to Marx and Engels is evident in the slight attention they gave it. They threw it in, perhaps from scientific caution, perhaps to heighten the attractiveness of socialism, but they never bothered to define it, and it runs counter to the general optimistic spirit of their work. Marx spent most of his life investigating the "laws of motion" of capitalism; this investment was justified by his assumption that if he could show, as he did, that these were working to destroy capitalism, he had also demonstrated the "iron necessity" of socialism.

In the following three sections, I try to show that (1) the working class has "come of age" without advancing us towards socialism; (2) a great shift away from capitalism is taking place without advancing us towards socialism; (3) modern war, far from offering "revolutionary opportunities" for socialism, is creating new conditions which make the struggle for socialism even more difficult. This failure of history to take the anticipated course might not be fatal to some systems of political thought but it is so to Marxism, because that system is built not on ethical principles but on the historical process itself.

own terms. Even that concept of change, the essence of his dialectical method, which Marx thought was intrinsically progressive, has become ambiguous. One is attracted to his "critical and revolutionary" spirit which "lets nothing impose on it" — and yet one cannot but recall that the Nazis were revolutionaries in their own way, who considered nothing sacrosanct, who let nothing impose on them, and whose only principle was a willingness to change anything at any time. This problem of how one roots one's values, which will be treated more extensively later on, seems to me to be the heart of "the question of Marxism."

The Rock that Turned Out to Be Sand

When Marx concentrated his great intellectual powers on the economic process of capitalism, he thought he was building on a rock. In the preface to *Capital* he quotes approvingly from a Russian review: "The one thing which is of moment to Marx is to find the law of phenomena with whose investigation he is concerned . . . This law once discovered, he investigates in detail the effects in which it manifests itself in social life. Consequently, Marx only troubles himself about one thing: to show, by rigid scientific investigation, the necessity of successive determinate orders of social conditions . . . Marx treats the social movement as a process of natural history, governed by laws not only independent of human will, consciousness and intelligence, but rather on the contrary, determining that will, consciousness and intelligence . . . The scientific value of such an inquiry lies in the disclosing of the special laws that regulate the origin, existence, development and death of a given social organism and its replacement by another and higher one." The optimism of the 19th century, both about Progress and about the possibilities of scientific inquiry, is strikingly expressed here. Also the influence of Darwin's evolutionary theory on Marx, with its reinforcement of the idea of Progress that had arisen in the 18th century and its emphasis on external environmental factors over human consciousness. In the same preface, Marx grandiosely writes of "the natural laws of capitalist production . . . working with iron necessity towards

Introduction by Kevin Coogan

(2) the description of how the overthrow of capitalism, the final step in this evolution, would come about.

(1) The belief in Progress is central to Marx's thought, although his more sophisticated followers today, for understandable reasons, say as little as possible about it. As I shall show later on, Marx's concept of historical Progress has not only proved to be empirically false, but it has also been used by the Communists as an ideology to justify the most atrocious policies. So long as we are bemused by the will-o-the-wisp of Progress, we can never become truly radical, we can never make man the root.

(2) Marx predicted that the contradiction between the increasing productivity of industry and the forms of private property would "burst asunder" the capitalist "integument" and lead to "socialised property." The agency that would accomplish this change would be the proletariat, lashed to the task by increasing misery and historically fitted for it by the fact that collectivism was to its interest as a class (and, so far as Marx ever states, to the interest of no other class). The result of the change would be a nonantagonistic form of social production in which, for the first time in history, the masses would expropriate "a few usurpers" instead of the other way around. As we have seen already in this article, private capitalism is indeed decaying and the bourgeois are being expropriated, but the agency is not the proletariat but rather a new *political* ruling class which is substituting its rule for the old ruling class in the time-honored way. The process on which Marx banked so heavily is being brought about from the top, not the bottom, and is directed toward nationalism and war. The result is not the liberation of the masses but their even more complete enslavement, not the coming of the Kingdom of Freedom but the creation of an even more crushing Kingdom of Necessity. The external process is working out, but the inner spirit is the reverse of what Marx expected.

The weakness of Marxism seems to me to be precisely its most distinctive contribution to socialist thinking: the expectation that external, materialistic factors (such as changes in class and property relationships) will bring about certain desired results with "iron necessity." Ends, values, cannot safely be treated only as functions of materialistic factors but must be defined and communicated in their

broad outline we can designate the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the modern bourgeois methods of production as so many epochs in the progress of the economics formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production — antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from conditions surrounding the life of individuals in society. At the same time, the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation constitutes, therefore, the closing chapter of the prehistoric stage of human society." (Marx's *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.*)

"Along with the constantly diminishing number of magnates of capital . . . grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production . . . Centralization of the means of production and socialization of labor at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated . . . The transformation of scattered private property, arising from individual labor, into capitalist private property is, naturally, a process incomparably more protracted, violent and difficult than the transformation of capitalistic private property, already practically resting on socialised production, into socialised property. In the former case, we had the expropriation of the mass of the people by a few usurpers; in the latter, we have the expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of people." (*Capital,* Vol. I.)

How It Really Is Coming About

Two aspects of the passages concern us here: (1) the assumption that there is a progressive evolution in history from worse to better;

"The Root Is Man" Then and Now

> Marxism is the most profound expression of what has been the dominant theme in Western culture since the 18th century: the belief that the advance of science, with the resulting increase of man's mastery over nature, is the climax of a historical pattern of Progress. If we have come to question this pattern, before we can find any new roads, we must first reject the magnificent system which Marx elaborated on its basis. A break with a whole cultural tradition is involved, and Marxism looms up as the last and greatest systematic defense of that tradition.
>
> ("The Root Is Man," 1946)

The collapse of the Soviet Union ended a historical epoch that began with the storming of the Bastille. Today, history no longer absolves Fidel. The disintegration of the Marxist project has left the Left exhausted. Like it or not, the breakdown of Marxism, the unraveling of its scientific and moral claims, is a fact.

Marxism's demise is not just the extinction of capitalism's strongest ideological foe. Marxism was also one of the most profound intellectual expressions of the High Enlightenment belief in Science, Progress and Reason. Marxism's crackup reveals(to those willing to look) gaping fault lines in the philosophical foundations of the modern age.

In the spring of 1946, Dwight Macdonald published "The Root Is Man" in *politics,* the journal he and his then-wife Nancy created after breaking with *Partisan Review* three years earlier. "The Root Is Man" is largely about the theories of one man: Karl Marx. Macdonald argues that any serious critique of Marxism must come to terms with Marxism's origins in the European Enlightenment. Macdonald shows us the Victorian optimist in Marx, the would-be Charles Darwin who believed he had finally uncovered the evolutionary law of human history but whose system unwittingly articulated, as well as challenged, the desires and values of his own time. "The Root Is Man," however, was not an exercize in armchair Marxicology or

another obituary for a god that failed but a painful reexamination of views Macdonald had held for over a decade both as a Communist Party fellow traveller and later as a Trotskyist revolutionary.

Born in New York City in 1905 and educated at Phillips Exert and Yale, Dwight Macdonald entered radical politics in the early 1930's as a fellow traveller of the American Communist Party. After Stalin's famous Moscow trials, Macdonald broke with the CP and became a strong supporter of Leon Trotsky. In 1939, shortly after the signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, Macdonald joined the Socialist Workers Part (SWP), the American branch of Trotsky's Fourth International.

Macdonald made it clear early on that he would be one troublesome Trot. When submitting his first article to the Trotskyist journal *New International* in July 1938, Macdonald enclosed a long letter to the editor attacking a previous contribution by Trotsky that defended the crushing of the Kronstadt soviet of sailors and workers in 1921. Macdonald thought Trotsky's piece "disappointing and embarrassing." In his letter Macdonald question a Bolshevik Party that "concentrates power in the hands of a small group of politicians so well insulated (by a hierarchical, bureaucratic, party apparatus) against pressure from the masses that they don't respond to the needs of the masses until too late." Despite dangers from the Right, "Are not the dangers of an airtight dictatorship, insulated against mass pressure, even greater?" The "Old Man" (Trotsky) was not amused. "Everyone has a natural right to be stupid," Trotsky wrote in reply to Macdonald, "but beyond a certain point it becomes an intolerable privilege." (This was later popularized into: "Every mans has a right to be stupid on occasion, but comrade Macdonald abuses it" — which was the way Macdonald always — and frequently — cited it.) James Cannon, Trotsky's chief American lieutenant and SWP National Secretary, also knew trouble when he saw it. Cannon dubbed Macdonald "flighty Dwighty" and mocked him as the "very model" of a "political Alice in Wonderland." In *Memoirs of a Revolutionist,* Macdonald mocked back:

> Alice is presented in Carroll's book as a normal and reasonable person who is constantly being amused, bewildered or distressed by the fantastic behavior and logic of the inhabitants

the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished; after labor, from a means of life, has itself become the prime necessity of life; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly — only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully left behind and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

The political seal of this future society would be the elimination of all forms of coercion, i.e., the withering away of the State. Some critics of Marx, in particular certain anarchists whose sectarian intemperance matches that of certain Marxists, make him out an ideological apologist for the State. There is indeed a potential towards Statism in Marxism, but it lies not is Marx's values, but, as I shall show presently, in his "historical" method of thinking about those values. From the splendid polemic against Hegel's *Philosophy of Law* in 1844 to the Gotha Critique thirty years later, Marx consistently criticized Statism from the standpoint of human liberation. As a moralist, Marx viewed the individual as the End and society as the Means.

How He Thought It Would Come About

So much for Marx's ethical aims. I think it needs no demonstration that such a society is farther off today than it was in Marx's time. Now what about the way Marx conceived the historical process that would realize these aims? Two passages will give us the grand outlines:

"At a certain stage of their development, the material forms of production in society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or — what is but a legal expression for the same thing — with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production, these relations turn into their fetter. Then comes the period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation, the entire immense superstructure in more or less rapidly transformed . . . In

The Ambiguity of Marxism

Marxism is not simply, or even primarily, an interpretation of history. It is a guide to political action. The worst fate that can befall a philosophy of action is for it to become ambiguous. This is what has happened to Marxism. Its ambiguity stems from the fact that Marx's ethical aims have not been realized — quite the contrary! — while the historical process by which he thought they would be realized has to a large extent worked out as he predicted it would. It is possible to reach opposite conclusions, on the basis of Marxism, about Soviet Russia, depending on whether one emphasizes Marx's ethical values or his idea of the historical process. Since Marx himself made the process significant rather than the values, the Stalinists would seem to have a somewhat better claim to be the "real" Marxists than their more ethically-minded opponents. But the point is not which is "really" the Marxist view; the point is that each view may be maintained, on the basis of Marx's thought, with a good deal of reason. There is an ambiguity here, fatal to a philosophy conceived as a basis for action, which was not apparent during Marx's lifetime, when history seemed to be going his way, but which is all too clear now that history is going contrary to socialist values.

What Marx Wanted

Marx's vision of a good society was essentially the same as that of the anarchists, the Utopian socialists, and the great 18th century liberals — also as that of those today whom I call "Radicals." The same theme runs through his writings from beginning to end. *The Communist Manifesto* (1848): "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." *Capital,* Vol. I (1867): "a society in which the full and free development of every individual becomes the ruling principle . . . production by freely associated men." *The Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875) gives us the most explicit and famous formulation:

"In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of individuals under division of labor, and therewith also

> of Wonderland . . . [In] the Trotskyist movement, I must confess I often felt like Alice.

In "The Root Is Man," Macdonald was more biter: "Anyone who has been through the Trotskyist movement . . . as I have, knows that in respect to decent personal behavior, truthfulness, and respect for dissident opinion, the 'comrades' are generally much inferior to the average stockbroker."

At the time Macdonald joined the SWP the situation inside the tiny sect was particularly savage. The SWP was racked by a series of fierce internal political debates; debates that would crucially influence "The Root Is Man." Macdonald had been drawn to the Trotskyists precisely because of his reservations about the nature of Stalin's Russia. Now the SWP was fissuring over the same basic question: What was the correct Marxist view of the Soviet Union?

On August 22, 1939, the foreign ministers of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact that stunned the world. One week later, Germany successfully invaded Poland. The USSR, in turn, seized large sections of Eastern Poland with the approval of the Nazis. In late 1939 the Soviet Union also launched its own "defensive" war against Finland.

The SWP majority argued that the Nazi-Soviet Pact did not change the Trotskyist view of the USSR as a degenerated workers' state worthy of critical support. Trotsky saw Stalinism as a temporary distortion of the world revolution caused by backward economic and social conditions in Russia. Yet as long as the Soviet Union maintained a socialist economic base (the nationalized economy), Trotsky insisted that the USSR remained true to its revolutionary origins.

Throughout the 1930's, Trotsky worried that the real threat to socialism stemmed not from Stalin but from Nicholai Bukharin, another Old Bolshevik who would be a major defendant at Stalin's Moscow Trials. Bukharin strongly opposed Trotsky's call for the forced industrialization of the USSR. Bukharin argued that the Soviet Union should return to some intermediate form of a market economy and not antagonize the country's vast peasant population. Trotsky saw Bukharin as a stalking horse for a capitalist restoration

of the USSR and feared Bukharin's ideas would be used by "rightist" bureaucrats to justify dismantling the nationalized economy.

For Trotsky, Stalin was a centrist concerned only with the preservation of personal power. During times of world political stagnation, Stalinism tilted toward the capitalist-restorationist siren song of Bukharin inside the USSR and the appeasement of capitalist powers abroad. Yet, in times of revolutionary upheaval, the same Stalinist machine could either realign with Trotsky, the leading advocate of "permanent revolution," or risk its own destruction in a new radical upsurge.

Stalin's adoption of the Trotskyist Left Opposition call for the forced industrialization of the USSR (a policy that led to countless deaths, the destruction of agriculture and a virtual civil war in the country side) was, for Trotsky, objectively progressive because it strengthened the socialist economic base of the society. Stalin's failure to advocate revolutionary class war, however, mirrored the backward nature of the Stalinist bureaucratic caste. To see Stalinism as a simultaneous reflection of both the progressive economic base of the USSR as well as Russia's backward economic, cultural and political superstructure was, Trotsky argued, to think dialectically. Events like the Hitler-Stalin Pact, far from shaking Trotsky's faith, only confirmed his view that the Soviet bureaucracy could make the most radical reversals in policy. Under the right historical circumstances, Stalin could turn around and adopt Trotsky's policies easily as he embraced Hitler.

To the SWP minority, Trotsky's defense of the USSR (no matter how brilliantly argued) was radically wrong. Instead of seeing the USSR as a degenerated workers' state worthy of critical support, the minority argued that Stalin's Russia had become a bureaucratic collectivist nightmare, a modern despotism of immense proportion drenched in blood. Trapped in this new, more brutal Ottoman Empire, ordinary workers enjoyed far less freedom than in the capitalist West. The fact that the USSR had a nationalized economy only meant that much more power for the Stalinist elite as it extended its totalitarian rule into all aspects of civil society.

the Republican floor leader in the House, Martin, who proposes an international agreement to abolish conscription everywhere; while the New Dealers, led by first Roosevelt and now Truman, line up behind the General Staff in favor of conscription.

3. The Question of Marxism

Both in culture and in politics, Marxism today exercises as extraordinary influence. In the "social sciences," the historical-materialist approach first developed by Marx is widely accepted. (See, for example, my note on "The Revival of Political Economy" in *politics* for March 1944.) Many workers in these fields who would be horrified at the idea of being Marxist nonetheless think in the tradition he established — filtered down (and watered down) through more "respectable" thinkers, as, for example, Weber and Mannheim in sociology. As for the influence of Marxism in world politics today, I have already tried to show that in detail.

This strange flickering-up of Marxist concepts, at a time when Marx's ethical aims are in ashes, is the afterglow of a great historical period that is going down in darkness. Marxism is the most profound expression of what has been the dominant theme in Western culture since the 18^{th} century: the belief that the advance of science, with the resulting increase of man's mastery over nature, is the climax of a historical pattern of Progress. If we have come to question this pattern, before we can find any *new* roads, we must first reject the magnificent system which Marx elaborated on its basis. A break with a whole cultural tradition is involved, and Marxism looms up as the last and greatest systematic defense of that tradition. We who reject Marxism are indebted to Marx for the very fact that the boldness and intellectual grandeur of his work make it possible for us to formulate more clearly our own position in the the process of distinguishing it from his; this is the service which and great thinker renders to his critics. I know of no better way to come to the heart of our modern dilemma than by showing the defects of the Marxian solution.

Wheeler, who expresses indignation at the extremes to which the victors are going in Germany; the Rightist Republican Senator Wherry makes speeches about our policy of starving Europe, especially Germany, which read like editorials from this magazine. It is the liberal Senator Kilgore who defends the use of German slave labor, and it is Mrs. Roosevelt who praises Louis Nizer's racial tirade against Germans and minimizes the current starvation in Germany. The actual proposals for postwar Germany of the reactionary German-baiter, Vansittart, are positively humane compared with those of the New Dealer, Morgenthau (who recently joined the committee to feed the General Motors strikers), while the Leftist paper, *P.M.,* has far outstripped the Hearst press in its hate-the-Germans-and-Japs campaign.[7] On the other issue of peacetime conscription, it is the Right Republican Senator Taft who leads the fight against it, and

[7] "The German people have let Max Lerner down," I wrote in the April, 1945, *politics.* "They have failed him and damn near busted his big progressive heart. It seems that Lerner was scooting along behind the advancing Ninth Army in his jeep when he came across a group of German civilians. 'It was a drizzly afternoon and they were clustered under a cement shed open at one end. There was a woman with a several-weeks old baby, and there was an old man of 87. Most were men and women in their early forties, with a scattering of children. They were almost all farmers.' They had been hiding in cellars for three days while American guns destroyed their village in the course of 'the war that they themselves had brought on.' (How 'they themselves had brought it on' is not specified.)

"Descending from his jeep, Lerner asked them: Are You Guilty? He records no reply from the baby, but the others answered that they never trusted or liked Hitler, that they had always considered the Nazis criminals and that they were Catholics and hence opposed for religious reasons to Hitler's policies. Why then, asks Lerner, did you allow the Nazis to do these things? 'With one accord, they answered that they had yielded to force, and to force alone.' But this doesn't go down with Lerner, he points out to the shivering, bomb-dazed farmers that the people of France, Belgium, Poland, and Russia didn't yield to Nazi force, so why did they? (According to reliable sources, the above countries were at war with Germany.) This was a blockbuster: 'They were silent.' (Different interpretations might be put on this silence.)

"'I came away heartsick and discouraged,' writes Lerner. 'The crime of these people was cowardice and moral callousness rather than active criminality. [He's trying to be fair, after all.] Nowhere did I find the moral strength to face the fact of guilt. Only protests that they were not responsible for what had happened.' Even the baby, judging by its silence, lacked a sense of responsibility for Hitler, which shows how deeply ingrained moral callousness is in the German national character."

Dwight Macdonald entered the SWP a firm supporter of the minority. Eager to join the fray but very much the new kid on the block, Macdonald complained:

> I wrote three long articles for the "Internal Bulletin" [of the SWP] but, although I had no trouble getting printed in *Fortune, Harper's, The Nation, The New Yorker* — or for the matter *The New International* — my manuscripts were monotonously rejected. The 800 members of the party, steeped in Marxicology, aged in the Bolshevik-Leninist wood, were a highly esoteric audience, while I was a highly esoteric writer. They were professionals, I was an amateur.
>
> (Macdonald, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*)

Finally Macdonald did get published and Trotsky again took note. Macdonald's article (which appeared shortly after the minority had broken from the SWP) included the sentence: "Only if we meet the stormy and terrible years ahead with both *skepticism* and devotion — skepticism toward *all* theories, governments and social systems; devotion to the revolutionary fight of the masses — only then can we justify ourselves as intellectuals." Trotsky was enraged. Just a few weeks before he was murdered, the old lion roared back:

> How can we work without a theory? . . . The whole article is scandalous and a party which can tolerate such a man is not serious . . . We can only develop a revolutionary devotion if we are sure it is rational and possible, and we cannot have such assurances without a working theory. He who propagates theoretical skepticism is a traitor.
>
> (Trotsky, "On the 'Workers' Party'")

For Trotsky, theoretical skepticism was a more dangerous threat to Marxism than any Stalinist assassin. Marxism was the most advanced expression of Reason, the High Enlightenment's ultimate tribunal for human action. Trotsky believed Marxism's scientific method supplied a foundation for moral and political action far superior to abstract religious or bourgeois class morality.

Marxism, however, was a peculiar science. In science (at least the banal, bourgeois kind) anyone using as accepted method can reproduce the findings of others. Yet Marxism's own history seemed guaranteed to encourage theoretical skepticism. For wasn't Bukharin also a Marxist? (Indeed, Bukharin was considered the leading Bolshevik experts on Marxist economics.) And Kautsky? And Stalin? And what about the Mensheviks — weren't they Marxists, too?

The key issue, of course, was not the denial of the usefulness of Marxist theory in giving profound insight into issues of history, culture, art and science. Instead, the debate centered on absolutist claims by various Marxists who wrapped their own subjective political decisions in the mantle of Marxist orthodoxy.

Like his Stalinist foes, Trotsky used appeals to the class basis of moral values and the supposed demands of historical necessity to defend acts otherwise hard to justify. After all, it was Trotsky (not Stalin) who as the major author of War Communism supported the drafting of workers into factories and the abolition of independent trade unions. It was Trotsky who helped create the gulag work camp system and it was Trotsky who had nothing but praise for the Bolshevik secret police when Social Revolutionary, Left Menshevik and Anarchist critics of Bolshevism were being brutally imprisoned, executed or forced into permanent exile. And it was Trotsky who encouraged Stalin's disastrous forced industrialization of the Soviet Union. In his book *The Breakdown* (Volume Three of *Main Currents of Marxism,* Leszek Kolakowski argues that for Trotsky:

> All "abstract" principles of good and bad, all universal rules of democracy, freedom, and cultural value were without significance within themselves: they were to be accepted or rejected as political expediency might dictate . . . for Trotsky there was no question of democracy as a form of government, or of civil liberties as a cultural value . . . To say that a thing was good or bad in itself, irrespective of political consequences, was tantamount to believing in God. It was meaningless to ask, for instance, whether it was right in itself to murder the children of one's political opponents. It had been right (as Trotsky says everywhere) to kill the Tsar's children, because it was politically

War I was still strong enough to make its *general* feeling about war negative; also, its whole tradition was anti-war.

When war came — after Stalin's pact with Hitler had shown the political ambiguity of these new societies — it was the traditionally war-hating Left which was enthusiastic about the war, while the traditionally bellicose Right went into it with much the same reluctance the Left had shown in World War I, and for much the same reasons: they could see no way to avoid it, and yet they felt that their class interests would not be advanced by it. The Left, furthermore, was able to prosecute the war more effectively because the high degree of State control a modern war necessitates fitted in better with its ideology. So in this country, we see the Left, which in the early thirties had applauded the Nye Committee's exposure of the "merchants of death," becoming increasingly belligerent after Roosevelt's Chicago speech (1937), while the Republican Right was almost solidly isolationist. The British Tories were the architects of Munich; it took the collaboration of the Labor Party to put real and real vigor and heart into the British war effort. In France, the contrast was even sharper. "Between the years 1933 and 1938," writes Charles Micaud in his recent study, *The French Right and Nazi Germany,* "there took place a complete change in the foreign policy of the majority of the Right as well as in that of the Left: the nationalist Right began to preach pacifism, and the pacifist Left to urge Resistance. 'The reversal of these attitudes,' wrote M. Pierre Brossolete in *L'Europe Nouvelle* shortly before Munich, 'has been of a prodigious suddenness . . . And so it is today one can see the most serious organs of the Right speak of a "Leftist bellicism," while the Left returns to the Right their old accusation of being "in the service of Germany."'"

The same reversal may be observed in our own postwar policies. The Right favors a relatively "soft peace," partly because it never believed in the war as an antifascist crusade, and partly because it hopes to make Germany a barrier to Russian advance; while the Left insists on the collective responsibility of the German people and presses for vengeance. The CIO, like the British TUC, has put on record its belief in the war guilt of the German *people.* It is Rightists like President Hutchins, of the University of Chicago, and Senator

In World War I, these attitudes were consistent in themselves and cleanly opposed to each other. The Right was chauvinist — after all, as the ruling class, they felt it was *their* country — and favored the war for the simplest, most straightforward economic motives (competition, "merchants of death" — the complete absence of the latter phrase in World War II is significant). The bulk of the Left submitted to the "necessity" of the war, since it was unwilling to take a revolutionary anti-war stand, but its attitude was passive, rather shamefaced. Before the war, the Right was a militarist and favored a "forward" foreign policy, while the Left was pacifist and anti-imperialist. After the war, the Right pressed for a Carthaginian peace (or what passed for such in those innocent days) and emphasized the collective responsibility of the German people, while the Left tries to lighten reparations and to limit war guilt to the German ruling classes.

The situation in World War II was much more complex, because in the interim two phenomena had arisen which cut across the old alignments: the bureaucratic-collective dictatorships of Hitler and Stalin. The Franco-Anglo-American bourgeoisie had seen the Kaiser's Germany as simply an imperialist competitor, but towards Hitler they had an ambivalent attitude. Insofar as he was a powerful competitor, they opposed him, but they supported him insofar as he had created an "orderly" society by liquidating his own Left and insofar as he seemed to be preparing for war against the USSR. Through Munich, indeed right up to Hitler's attack on Poland and in some cases even later, the Right saw Hitler mainly as an ally against the Left, specifically against the USSR. They put up with his aggressions, therefore, and failed to arm against him. On the other hand, they didn't trust him enough to join him in a war against Russia, as the Marxists (and Hitler) had supposed they would. They correctly saw that Nazism was something new (and dangerous to them), not just an extreme form of monopoly capitalism. So they were unable to act at all. The Left was also paralyzed by the cross-currents set up by these new phenomena which didn't fit into the old Left-Right pattern. On the one hand, it opposed Hitler for the same reasons the Right favored him, and demanded "collective security" and a firm stand against Nazi aggression. At the same time, the disillusionment with World

justified. Why then was it wrong for Stalin to murder Trotsky's children? Because Stalin did not represent the proletariat.

Trotsky defended such twists and turns by repeated appeals to dialectics and Marxist scientific method. Not surprisingly, the SWP opposition began to hammer away at Trotsky's attempt to make himself the chosen interpreter of Marx's method. In his essay "Science and Style," James Burnham, then an NYU philosophy professor and the SWP minority's leading theorist, challenged Trotsky:

> . . . it is a direct falsehood to say that I, or any other member of the opposition, reject the Marxian theory of the state. We disagree with your *interpretation* and *application* of the Marxian theory of the state . . . Since when have we granted one individual the right of infallible interpretation?

As for Trotsky's invocation of science, Burnham asked:

> Does science, as you understand it, and the truths it demonstrates, have a name? What name? "Proletarian" science and "proletarian" truth? . . . You are on treacherous ground, Comrade Trotsky. The doctrine of "class truth" is the road of Plato's Philosopher-Kings, of prophets and Popes and Stalins. For all of them, also, a man must be among the anointed in order to know the truth.

Trotsky immediately grasped the threat. In "An Open Letter to Comrade Burnham," Trotsky's answer to "Science and Style," he warned:

> The opposition leaders split sociology from dialectic materialism. They split politics from sociology . . . History becomes transformed into a series of exceptional incidents; politics becomes transformed into a series of improvisations. We have here, in the full sense of the term, the disintegration of Marxism, the disintegration of theoretical thought . . .

(both "Science and Style" as well as "An Open Letter to Comrade Burnham" can be found in Pathfinder's *In Defense of Marxism.*)

Trotsky's argument was specious. The opposition did not deny the validity of trying to find continuity or development in history. Yet on a deeper level, Trotsky's fears were justified. In essence, the opposition challenged Trotsky's privileged position as interpreted of Marxist *doxa.* But if Marxism was an open method,rather than an exact science, specific political decisions could no longer be grounded on appeals to historical necessity since it was not clear that anyone could honestly claim to know that necessity in the same way science knows the exact distance between the earth and the moon.

Throughout the history of Marxism, personality cults have arisen both in tiny sects and vast nations to repress open claims to interpretation. As soon as such claims are advanced and the scientific mantle surrounding Marxism deconstructed, so too are the totalitarian structures of one-party rule, "objective truth" and heresy hunting that go hand-in-hand with them.

The painful truth about Trotsky was that he didn't have the slightest philosophical (or moral) problem with the suppression of the Mensheviks or Anarchists. The Objective Demands of History justified all. now the evil genie of subjectivism and limits to knowledge (themes crucial to "The Root Is Man") appeared inside the purest of Marxist sects. No wonder Trotsky feared the "disintegration of Marxism, the disintegration of theoretical thought . . . " Marxism as a system modeled after the paradigms of 19th century science was becoming unhinged; its truth claims relativized.

The minority challenge, however, went deeper. The SWP opposition also called into question orthodox Marxism's emphasis on the economic base as the ultimate determinant of the political and cultural superstructure. by claiming that the base had been so subordinated to the superstructure that the USSR could no longer be defended as a workers' state but opposed as a new, more horrible form of totalitarianism, the SWP minority denied the most fundamental fixed category of classic Marxist analysis.

After leaving the SWP in 1940, the minority renamed itself the Workers Party (best known as the Shachtmanites after their leader, Max Shachtman, who had been one of Trotsky's top lieutenants). Besides Shachtman, the Workers Party had other outstanding members like C.L.R. James and Hal Draper. But the Workers party had

> one might ask why the Trotskyists and Anarchists have been denied licenses. When the Constituent Assembly opened debate on the preamble to the new Constitution, *The New York Times* reported (March 7, 1946): "The discussion appeared confused by reason of the fact that the moderates and members of the reactionary groups seemed to be defending the 'immortal principles' of the 'illustrious ancestors' of the 1789, while the extremists of the Left were demanding restrictions on some of those liberties championed for generations by the sons of the revolution." The rewrite job on the Rights of Man, which eliminated free speech and such luxuries, was done by a commission composed only of Communists and Socialists. Copeau, a Resistance leader, "asserted that the rights of 1789 were typically bourgeois whereas the situation today required social protection and adaptation to a coming Marxist society." The fight for a free press was led by old Edouard Herriot, leader of the almost defunct bourgeois party, the Radical Socialists, who made an eloquent speech which the Right applauded and the Left heard in a disapproving silence.[6]

"Left" and "Right" in Two World Wars

It is revealing to compare Left-Right attitudes in World War I with those in World War II.

---

[6] A few recent *curiosa* may be added: Since he broke with the workers' fatherland and came under the influence of the hyenas of decadent Western capitalism, Tito has instituted a long series of democratic reforms in Yugoslavia, including curbing the powers of the secret police and abolishing forced labor . . . At the opening of a recent session of the French National Assembly, there was a seating crisis because, according to *The New York Times* of July 2, 1951, "Nobody wishes to be seated on the right." . . .During the 1951 trial of the Rosenburgs and the other atomic spies, one Max Elitcher testified: "He inquired if I knew of any engineering students or graduates who were 'progressive,' who would be safe to approach on espionage." . . . In 1948, Peron added labor attachés to the staffs of all Argentine embassies . . . Also cf. the amusing chapter on "Babbitt Revisited" in Peter Viereck's new book, *The Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals,* in which George F. Babbitt's son is depicted as an orthodox liblab just as conventional and naively philistine as his father only in an opposite political direction.

- in the first issue of *politics,* I called attention to what I called "the Bolivian Pattern": the putsch by fascist-minded Army officers which overthrew the former conservative regime backed by native big business and the U.S. State Department. The revolutionaries were anti-USA, anti-capitalist . . . and anti-Semitic. When they took power, they shot one of the "big three" tin magnates, passed Bolivia's first laws favoring the exploited Indian tin miners . . . and strengthened the Army. Currently in Argentina we see the pro-Nazi, dictatorial Army boss, Peron, leading a working class movement against the bourgeoisie, decreeing enormous wage advances, trampling on property rights, and getting himself overwhelmingly elected president in the first honest election in years. The opposing candidate, Tamborini, was backed by Argentine big business, the U.S. State Department . . . and *The Nation.*
- A century and a half ago, France gave the world the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Last summer the dying act of the French resistance movement was the fiasco of the "Estates General of the French Renaissance," a convention which rashly challenged comparison with the great Estates General of 1789. Out of it cam a "Proclamation and Oath" which merely mentioned in passing "equality of rights for all human beings," devoting itself to those two great themes of modern Progressivism: patriotism and production. Quote: "The independence and prosperity of the nation, the conditions for its power, depend upon the unity of all Frenchmen, who must be linked by a common patriotic aspiration . . . The Estates General proclaim: the people may remain master of their own destiny only if they become mobilized in a patriotic and enthusiastic spirit, making a determined effort to increase production. It is the sacred duty of each man and woman to protest against anything which could impede this effort." This is not the *Comite des Forges* speaking, but the Communists and Socialists. These Leftists have fulfilled their sacred duty by protesting against . . . the freedom of the press. They are the ones who have insisted on making a government license a prerequisite of publication. If they reply that this is to prevent big business and former collaborationists from corrupting the press,

also unwittingly debunked the very rationale of the vanguard party. James Burnham was one of the first to realize this. Almost immediately after splitting with the SWP, Burnham quit the Workers party and announced he had lost faith in Marxist dialectics.

Unlike Burnham, Macdonald remained a Workers Party supporter although he resigned from the sect because he was unwilling to follow party discipline and have his articles vetted by the leadership before publication. (At the time Macdonald was both a writer and editor of *Partisan Review.)* It would take the catastrophe of the second World War to further awaken the enlightened Marxist Macdonald from the security of his own dogmatic slumber.

Dwight Macdonald opposed American involvement in the Second World War. His opposition was rooter in the American Left's anti-war tradition and, in particular, the Socialist Party's resistance to U.S. involvement in World War I. Along with his comrades in the Workers Party, Macdonald called for a revolutionary uprising of workers both in Germany and the Allied powers to end the slaughter, a policy that echoed the famous Zimmerwald line of the Socialist International's left opposition in World War I.

Macdonald's anti-war stance also grew out of his understanding of the danger of the State. Sl thought dubbed "Burnham's orphan" by Trotsky, James Burnham was Dwight Macdonald's evil twin. For some time Burnham (along with a dubious Italian Trotskyist-turned-fascist named Bruno Rizzi) had been developing the theory that both Germany and Russia represented new, more advanced "bureaucratic collectivist" societies governed not by swashbuckling capitalist tycoons but rational managers; a new, more scientific elite of power mandarins. (After leaving the Workers Party, Burnham wrote a best seller called *The Managerial Revolution* predicting the rise of such bureaucracies throughout the world.)

Clearly Macdonald's fears were justified. Yet the issue remained: Did one simply hope for a world revolutionary uprising while Hitler took over Europe? Macdonald and his fellow editors at *Partisan Review* bitterly disagreed. For Phillip Rahv and Sidney Hook the necessity of stopping Hitler overcame any reservations about joining sides in an "inter-imperialist war."

By 1943 the disagreement had become so bitter that Dwight and Nancy Macdonald quit *Partisan Review* and launched their own journal, *politics,* the first issue of which appeared in February 1944. The Macdonalds financed *politics* from their own savings (which included Nancy's trust fund), as well as from a gift of a thousand dollars from Margaret De Silver, the widow of the murdered Italian anarchist Carlo Tresca. Nancy Macdonald (who had been the business manager of *Partisan Review* took over the same job at *politics.*

Years later Macdonald would call his opposition to World War II a "creative mistake." That "mistake" led to a series of brilliant essays on the war in *politics* that culminated in Macdonald's classic 1945 piece, "The Responsibility of Peoples," that opposed the idea of the collective responsibility of the German people for Nazism. Macdonald also wrote to save lives. He believed the Allied demand for the unconditional surrender of Germany, coupled with massive bombing raids against the German civilian population, only encouraged the Germans to fight harder by confirming Nazi propaganda about the Carthaginian peace Germany would be faced with should Hitler lose.

In "The Responsibility of Peoples," Macdonald held up a mirror to the victorious Allies and asked:

> If "they," the German people, are responsible for the atrocious policies and actions of "their" . . . government, then "we," the peoples of Russia, England, and America, must also take on a big load of responsibility . . .
>
> In the present war, we have carried the saturation bombing of German cities to a point where "military objectives" are secondary to the incineration of suffocation of great numbers of civilians; we have betrayed the Polish underground fighters in Warsaw into the hands of the Nazis, have deported hundreds of thousands of Poles to slow-death camps in Siberia, and have taken by force a third of Poland's territory; we have conducted a civil war against another ally, Greece, in order to restore a reactionary and unpopular monarch; we have starved those parts of Europe our armies have "liberated" almost as badly as

militarily with other nations. There are antagonisms, it is true, sharp and sometimes bloody battles. But these clashes are on secondary issues; they do not affect the trend towards war and social regimentation. For the struggle is not over a new kind of society, but over who is to dominate the existing society, the Old Guard or the Tribunes of the People. It is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish the "Right" from the "Left" wing.

The reason for this confusion is basically simple: the historical process to which the Left has traditionally looked for progress in a desirable direction has been going on but the result is often not progress but the reverse. The liberals put their faith is social and economic reforms; these are being made, but often go hand in hand with moral barbarism. The Marxists looked to the expropriation of the bourgeois; this is taking place, but new and in many ways even more oppressive rulers are replacing the old ones. We are all in the position of a man going upstairs who thinks there is another step, and finds there is not. We are off balance. How far may be suggested by some random examples.

- The failure of the British Labor Party to behave very differently from the Tories once it got into power has been described in *politics* already. (See the September and November, 1945, issues.) One tiny recent news item may be added: "London, March 7: Britain's secret service will cost about $10,000,000 during the coming year, according to government civil estimates published today. This is five times more than was spent in 1939."
- Australia has had a 100% Labor government since 1943. All but 3 of the 19 cabinet ministers are former trade union officials. This government carries out a "White Australia" policy, i.e.,complete exclusion of all immigrants with brown, black, or yellow skins. It also complains that the reactionary General MacArthur is "too soft" on the defeated Japanese people.
- The New Zealand government is also completely Labor, has been in office since 1935, and has put through a great deal of very "advanced" social legislation. It also bans all Asiatic immigrants.

the interests of their rulers, so that the tribunes of the people find themselves in the absurd and demoralizing position of demanding what will be granted anyway. They have no vocabulary with which to ask for the things what are today really in the interests of the oppressed — and which will *not* be granted from above.

The social systems of the victorious powers are developing a common tendency towards a planned, State-controlled economy which considers the citizen a cell in the social organism and thus at once the ward of the State, entitled to a job and to average living standards in exchange for his usefulness in production on the armed forces, and also the State's docile instrument who could no more rebel than a cell could develop independently of the total organism. If this latter *does* happen, modern political theory agrees with biology in calling the result cancer, which must be cut out lest the organism die. The Organic State is directed towards one great end: to assert effectively against other competing States its own nationalistic interests, which mean preparation for World War III. All this is a matter of common knowledge in upper-class circles in the USA, the USSR and other big powers, although, for obvious reasons, it is not discussed in public.

Now, with such a society developing, what kind of demands do the tribunes of people put forth today? Do they proclaim a new Rights of Man? Do they turn pacifist, denounce war as the greatest of evils, insist on immediate disarmament, beginning with their own country, expose the fraudulent character if World War II? Do they agitate for greater freedom of the the press and opinion? Do they push toward decentralization of industry until its scale becomes human, regardless of the effects on munitions production? Do they take up arms against the growing powers of the State? Do they fight against the growth of nationalism?

These are, of course, rhetorical questions. The reformist movements like the British Labor Party and our own labor unions are apathetic on such issues. The Communists are not apathetic; they are intensely hostile. What kind of aims do both liblabs and Communists actually have? They want Full Production, Nationalization, Planning, and above all Security, of both the Social and National varieties. These is nothing in these demands incompatible with the interests of the ruling class in organizing a strong nation to compete

the Nazis did . . . we have followed Nazi racist theories in segregating Negro soldiers in our military forces and in deporting from their homes on the West Coast to concentration camps in the interior tens of thousands of citizens who happened to be of Japanese ancestry; we have made ourselves the accomplice of the Maidanek butchers by refusing to permit more than a tiny trickle of the Jews of Europe to take refuge inside our borders; we have rule India brutally, imprisoning the people's leaders, denying the most elementary of civil liberties, causing a famine last year in which hundreds of thousands perished; we have —

But this is monstrous, you say? We, the people, didn't do these things. They were done by a few political leaders and the majority of Americans, Englishmen and (perhaps — who knows?) Russians deplore them and favor quite different policies. Or if they don't, then it is because they have not had a chance to become aware of the real issues and act on them . . . Precisely. And the Germans could say the same thing . . . It is a terrible fact, but it is a fact, that few people have the imagination or the moral sensitivity to get very excited about actions which they don't participate in themselves (and hence about which they feel no personal responsibility). The scale and complexity of modern Governmental organization, and the concentration of political power are excluded from this participation. How Many votes did Roosevelt's refugee policy cost him? . . . As the French say, to ask such questions is to answer them.

Concluding "The Responsibility of Peoples," Macdonald wrote:

The common peoples of the world are coming to have less and less control over the policies of "their" governments, while at the same time they are being more and more closely identified with those governments . . . not for many centuries have individuals been at once so powerless to influence what is done by the national collectivities to which they belong, and at the same time so generally held responsible for what is done by those collectivities.

With the development of the atomic bomb, Macdonald's fear of the descent of the West into state barbarism and public powerlessness had been fully realized. One month after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Macdonald wrote in *politics:*

> It seems fitting that The Bomb was not developed by any of the totalitarian powers, where the political atmosphere might at first glance seem to be more suited to it, but by the two "democracies," the last major powers to continue to pay at least ideological respect to the humanitarian-democratic tradition. It also seems fitting that the heads of these governments, by the time The Bomb exploded, were not Roosevelt and Churchill, figures of a certain historical and personal stature, but Attlee and Truman, both colorless mediocrities. Average Men elevated to their positions by the mechanics of the system.

Some forty-five years before the "war" with Iraq, Macdonald noted:

> All this emphasizes that perfect automatism, that absolute lack of human consciousness or aims which our society is rapidly achieving . . . The more common-place the personalities and senseless the institutions, the more grandiose the destruction. It is a *Götterdäm-merung* without the gods.

It took Macdonald two years to write "The Root Is Man." The scope of the essay intimidated him. He also had other demands on his time such as writing, editing, proofreading and publishing *politics.*

Politics never had more than 5,000 subscribers. They were the first to read one of the most remarkable American intellectual journals of the twentieth century. Although this is not the place for a full evaluation of *politics,* one can get a sense of its uniqueness by listing some of its writers: Simone Weil, Albert Camus, Victor Serge, Georges Bataille, Jean-Paul Satre, Karl Jaspers, George Woodcock, Mary McCarthy, John Berryman, Robert Duncan, Paul Mattick, Bruno Bettleheim, George Padmore, Meyer Shapiro, Simone de Beauvoir, Paul

where imperialistic policy is more aggressive then anywhere else on earth, where 180 million people live in a combination barracks and munitions plant over which floats the red banner of Marxian revolution.[3]

If the present tendency of history works out its logic unchecked, then in the USSR we have the image of the future society. I do not know of a single party or movement of any size in the world today that is working to check this tendency in the only way I think it can be checked: through changing our present social structure in a libertarian socialist direction.[4]

Nowhere is there visible a party of any size which even aspires — let alone has the power to do so — to shatter the institutions, beginning with the nation State, who blind workings are bringing on the next war. All we ave on the Left is still that banal and hopeless clash of two unsatisfactory alternatives: the totalitarian heirs of Bolshevism, and those sapless sons of ineffectual fathers, the liblabs[5] and socialists.

The Step that Wasn't There

It will not do to lay the chief blame for this collapse on Stalinist "betrayal" or even on the overwhelming amount of military force in the hands of the Big Three. What has happened is that the traditional aspirations which dominate Marxian ideology has implanted in the masses of Europe have come to coincide to a dangerous degree with

---

[3] As of 1953, amen!

[4] By "socialism" I mean a classless society in which the State has disappeared, production is cooperative, and no man has political or economic power over another. The touchstone would be the extent to which each individual could develop his own talents and personality.

[5] I.e., liberal-labor, a Britishism I like because it expresses the flipflop, wishywashy nature of the beast and because it does not confuse our modern "liberals" with their individualistic 19th century forbears. The old liberals *were* liberal — they believed in free trade and free speech for everybody and they detested the State as a collective restraint on the individual — but the modern "liberals" limit freedom to those who are "progressive," i.e., on the side of "the people" and "the workers"; as for the State; they love it, if it's on *their* side.

The World as It Is

Even to the most mechanical Marxist, the above picture will appear overdrawn. Yet this is the clearly absurd conclusion we reach if we simply follow the Marxist stress on institutional changes. I say "clearly absurd," but the absurdity is apparent only in different degrees to the various groups on the Left: the Stalinists don't see it at all, being wholly optimistic now that Russian collectivism is on the ascendant; the liberal weeklies are more sceptical, but on the whole see numerous "encouraging" features in these changes; the Socialists and Trotskyists are the most critical of all, but find consolation in such things as the British Labor Party victory and the strength shown by the CIO in the recent strikes. All of these groups are, in my opinion, too optimistic about the state of the world; and their optimism stems from the fact that they all share a common "progressive" viewpoint inherited mostly from Marx.

Those of us, however, who look at the human content rather that the historical form, who think in terms of values rather than of process, believe that socialism today is farther away than ever. War and the preparation of war has become the normal mode of existence of great nations. There is a general collapse of the old dreams of international brotherhood. Nationalism is constantly becoming more virulent, until even the persecuted minorities like the Negros and Jews are developing, in their despair, chauvinisms of their own. A *sauve-qui-peut* philosophy flourishes everywhere; everyone today is a two-bit *realpolitiker.* In this country and abroad, significant sections of the working class stood out against World War I, but the British and American labor movements were almost solidly behind World War II. The power of the State has never been greater the helplessness of the great mass of citizens never more extreme. All these sinister trends find their intense expression in the one great non-capitalist nation, the USSR, where science is worshiped and industrial production is God, where nationalism has reached a paranoiac pitch,

---

current looks to me not like a flood sweeping away the Leftist postwar gains but simply a tide that will ebb in its turn — part of the systole and diastole of the heartbeat of the status quo.

Goodman, James Agee, Marshall McLuhan, Richard Hofstadter, Irving Howe, Nicola Chiaromonte, Lionel Abel, Andrea Caffi and C. Wright Mills.

There were four remarkable women in the *politics* circle. Most important was Nancy Macdonald who managed the journal's business affairs while at the same time running various relief efforts to aid veterans of the Spanish Civil War and victims of Nazism. (The breakup of the Macdonalds' marriage in 1949 would be a major factor in the decision to stop publishing *politics.)* Another organizer of *politics,* Mary McCarthy, was one of Macdonald's closest allies in the libertarian left. (It was McCarthy who translated Simone Weil's famous essay on Homer's *Iliad.)* Hannah Arendt (while not writing for *politics)* became one of Macdonald's most important co-conspirators. In the late 1960's, Arendt would write the introduction to a reprint edition of the complete set of *politics.*

Yet the most powerful intellectual influence on the journal was Simone Weil, whose critique of violence and essay on Homer had been brought to Macdonald's attention by Nicola Chiaromonte, a Spanish civil war vet, anti-Fascist exile, and one of Macdonald's closest friends. Through Chiaromonte, the thought of Simone Weil was first introduces to America in the pages of *politics.*

Politics also covered such issues as the suppression of the Greek insurrection, the anti-French insurgency in Indochina, America's refusal to aid the starving people of Europe, the question of the Soviet Union, the American civil rights struggle, the need for equal treatment of homosexuals, the ideas of Wilhelm Reich, attacks on mass culture as studies on Max Weber, de Tocqueville, Utopian Socialists like Charles Fourier and anarchists such as Proudhon and Godwin.

One could order from *politics* Anton Ciliga's *The Russian Enigma* (which has a major impact on Macdonald), Alexander Berkman's *The ABC of Anarchism,* Camillo Berneri's *Peter Kropotkin's Federal Ideas,* Jomo Kenyatta's *Kenya, Land of Conflicts,* Leo Tolstoy's *The Slavery of our Times,* George Woodcock's *New Life to the Land,* Raymond Michelet's *African Empires and Civilizations,* Oscar Wilde's *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* and Rosa Luxemburg's *Letters from Prison.*

Politics spoke to radicals who rejected both Stalin and Trotsky but who were equally intransigent in opposing capitalism. *Politics* was

part of a larger anti-totalitarian anarchist, pacifist and independent Marxist milieu that existed in the late 1940's before the pressures of the Cold War rigidified political discourse for years to come. Other anarchist journals like *Resistance* and *Retort* in America and George Woodcock's *Now* in England echoed many of *politics'* themes, as did two classic books of that time: *Animal Farm* and *1984,* by *politics* fellow traveller George Orwell. Forums in New York around ideas *politics* discussed drew significant audiences. many of *politics'* most active supporters were leftwing conscientious objectors influenced by Ghandi's massive civil disobedience movement in India. It was out of this ferment that "The Root Is Man" emerged, the most famous essay in a series of critical pieces which appeared under the banner "New Roads in Politics." This essay caused an immediate storm. One lengthy rebuttal by Irving Howe (then a Workers Party member who worked for Macdonald in the *politics* office) called "The Thirteenth Disciple" asked:

> Where is one to begin in a reply to Macdonald? His forty page article is a grab-bag of modern confusionism; a pinch of Proudhon; a whiff of pacifism; a nod to existentialism; a bow to Wilhelm Reich, founder of the "psychology of the orgasm"; a few scrappings from the anarchists; a touch of philosophical idealism and a large debt to that illustrious thinker, Paul Goodman.

Years later, in *A Margin of Hope,* Howe had eased up a bit;

> *The Root Is Man . . .* (is) in many ways the most poignant and authentic expression of the plight of those few intellectuals — Nicola Chiaromonte, Paul Goodman, Macdonald — who wished to disassociate themselves from the post-war turn to Realpolitik but could not find ways of transforming sentiments of rectitude and visions of utopia into a workable politics.

Yet reading "The Root Is Man" today is no mere exercise in nostalgia. Macdonald raised issues that, almost 50 years later, have become even more critical.

> the British have been forced by the gathering intensity of revolt in India to make the mot definite proposals to date for Indian freedom.
> - The Soviet Union is still a collective economy; it has emerged as the second most powerful nation in the world, and dominates directly all of Eastern Europe, from the Baltic to the Balkans, a vast area in which its puppet "people's governments" have broken the power of the old bourgeoisie and divided up the big estates among the poor peasants.
> - The one great power in which the pre-war bourgeois order has survived more or less intact is the USA. Yet even here we see the unions holding much more of their wartime gains than was anticipated and strong enough to force the Federal Government to help them win postwar wage increases. We also see the State continuing to intervene in the economy, and the permanent acceptance, by the courts and by public opinion, of such social measures as the Wagner Act, the Wages & Hours law, Social Security, and Federal unemployment relief. (Cf. the aftermath of World War I: the Palmer "Red raids," industry's successful "Open Shop" campaign against the unions, the complete control of the government by big business.)

In short, from the standpoint of the kind of institutional changes Marxism stresses, the world should be closer to socialism today than ever before.[2]

---

[2] True, this "leftist" tide has somewhat ebbed in the last few years: the Right, especially DeGaulle, has gained in France at the expense of the Left, and still more in Italy; the Tories have come to power in Britain and the Republicans here. (On the other hand, India is free and China has gone Communist.) But these political changes haven't gone deep enough to alter the big picture: the Tories have not gone in for denationalizing, nor is their foreign policy very different from Labor's; the Republicans have accepted the New Deal social reforms and the strong position of the unions, although in political civil-rights, their tolerance of McCarthy is ominous (but *political* tolerance was not very noticeable in the Roosevelt-Truman regimes either, as cf. the early Smith Act prosecutions, the loyalty purge, the Attorney-General's black list of subversive groups, and the "resettlement" — i.e., forced deportation to camps in the interior — of the entire Japanese-American population of the West Coast after Pearl Harbor). No, to date at least, the Rightist

For the full bitterness of working class defeat is realized only in victory, a paradox illustrated in the twenties by the Bolsheviks and the German Social Democracy, and today by the British Labor Party.

The World through Marxist Spectacles

- All over Europe the old bourgeois parties are much weaker than before the war, where they have not practically disappeared like the Radical Socialists in France. In Scandinavia, Holland, Belgium, Austria, Italy, and most of the other lesser European countries, the two great movements with a Marxian socialist ideology, the Communists and the reformist Socialists, dominate the political scene.
- In France, two-thirds of the electorate is represented by the Communists and the Socialists, with the ambiguous "Christian socialist" MRP as the nearest thing left to a bourgeois group. The Bank of France has been nationalized (remember the "200 families"?) and further nationalizations are in prospect.
- Great Britain (and the British Empire!) is ruled by a Labor Party based on the trade unions and explicitly socialist in its program; it was elected by a landslide majority last summer and has a constitutional expectation of holding power for the next five years. The Bank of England has been nationalized, and the party is committed to nationalizing steel, coal, power, the railroads and other basic industries.
- In the defeated powers, Germany and Japan, the victors are expropriating the former ruling classes to great degree and breaking down the industrial structure on which that class rule was based; the logic of this forces the victors to tolerate the new growth of unions and left-wing parties which results from this weakening of the big bourgeois. (*Cf.* World War I, where the victors left intact Germany's big capitalism, and in fact covertly supported it as a counterweight to "Bolshevism.")
- In Asia, the Chinese Communists retain their strength and are being admitted as a partner with the Kuomintang in a new "liberalized" regime; the Indonesian rebellion seems to be succeeding;

Macdonald's assault on the scientific model of thinking echoed Frankfurt School critiques of instrumental reason. Macdonald, however, located Marxism itself in the general crisis of Enlightenment thought. For that alone, "The Root Is Man" is extraordinary.

Other crucial issues raised by Macdonald included the question of active resistance to unfettered growth and the need for economic decentralization coupled with political democracy. He also took up the question of reification, citing George Lukács (not a household name is 1946) to argue that, in the concept of alienation, Marxism made its most powerful critique of the human condition under capital. The issue of reification and the damaging effect of mass culture that so concerned Macdonald would appear again in the mid-60's Situationist polemic against the "society of the spectacle" whose roots in dissident Western Marxism can be found in "The Root Is Man" and *politics* in general.

Above all, Macdonald was most concerned with the way we organize our daily political action. His insight into how mass socialist and communist parties reproduce the same deadening effect on the individual as other forms of bourgeois organization rings true today:

> What is not so generally understood is that the traditional progressive approach, taking history as the starting-point and thinking in terms of mass political parties, bases itself on this same alienation of man which it thinks it is combating. It puts the individual in the same powerless, alienated role vis-à-vis the party or trade union as the manipulators of the modern State do, except that the slogans are different . . . The brutal fact is that the man in the street everywhere is quite simply *bored* with socialism, as expounded by the Socialist, Stalinist, and Trotskyist epigones of Marx . . . Above all, he feels that there is no interest in it for *him,* as an individual human being — that he is as powerless and manipulated vis-à-vis his socialist mass-organization as he is towards his capitalist employers and their social and legal institutions.

As soon as "The Root Is Man" was published it came under immediate fire for denying the viability of class struggle. the other major

criticism of "The Root Is Man" was its stress on absolute values transcending history. In fact, only two years after publication of his essay, Macdonald abandoned one of the absolutes he had endorsed (radical pacifism) in the wake of what he saw as Stalin's threat to the West during the Berlin Crisis.

Along with the 1948 Berlin Crisis and the assassination of Gandhi that same year, the general threat of a new world war deeply depressed Macdonald and contributed to his marital breakup. Attempts by the *politics* network to organize groups in Europe and communes here also failed. *Politics* finally ceased publication in 1949. Macdonald's fierce anti-communist and sense of doom as the radical movement fell apart led him into the ranks of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), a group supported by many leading anti-Stalinist left-intellectuals. Years later Macdonald would discover the CIA's role in funding the CCF and its journals like *Encounter*.(See Appendix D for a further discussion of Macdonald and the CCF.)

While Macdonald throughout the 1950's attacked McCarthyism, he focused more and more on the need to make a living both as a staff writer for *The new Yorker* and freelance journalist. Yet even during the dog days of the Eisenhower-Nixon era, Macdonald continued to give radical talks on campuses. One of his favorite themes was the relevance of anarchy. While Macdonald no longer considered the abolition of private property necessary, his take on anarchism (in *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*) is still striking:

> It was odd that anarchism took no root in the thirties, considering (1) the American temperament, lawless and individualistic, (2) the American anarchist tradition, from Benjamin Tucker to the Wobblies, and (3) that anarchism gave a better answer to the real modern problem, the encroachment of the State, than did Marxism, which was revolutionary only about bourgeois private property (not a real issue anymore) and was thoroughly reactionary on the question of the State. But (3) also explains Marxism's popularity (though it doesn't justify it): while the centralized State is the chief danger now to freedom, it is also necessary to the operation of a mass society based on large-scale industry. Thus Marxism is "practical," since it fits into

an ethically superior kind of society as rooted in that sphere, however its growth may be shaped by historical process. This is the sphere of human, personal interests, and in this sense, the root is man.

The best of the Marxists today see no reason for the dissection of the old Left that is proposed here. They still hold fast to the classic Left faith in human liberation through scientific progress, while admitting that revisions of doctrine and refinements of method are necessary. This was my opinion until I began publishing *politics*. In "The Future of Democratic Values" (*Partisan Review*, July-August, 1943), I argued that Marxism, the the heir of 18th century liberalism, was the only reliable guide to a democratic future; the experience of editing this magazine, however, and consequently being forced to follow the tragic events of the last two years in some detail, has slowly changed my mind. The difficulties lie much deeper, I now think, than is assumed by Progressives, and the crisis is much more serious. The brutality and irrationality of Western social institutions have reached a pitch which would have seemed incredible a short generation ago; our lives have come to be dominated by warfare of a ferocity and on a scale unprecedented in history; horrors have been committed by the governments of civilized nations which could hardly have been improved on by Attila: the extermination of the Jewish people by the Nazis; the vast forced-labor camps of the Soviet Union; our own saturation bombing of German cities and "atomization" of the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is against this background that the present article is written; it is all this which has forced me to question beliefs I have long held.

2. The World We Live In

Let me demonstrate, by reference to recent events in various countries, how confusing the old categories of "Left" and "Right" have become, and how inadequate the Marxian schema. As we shall see, it is not just a matter of the working class revolution failing to materialize. The situation is far more complex, and far more discouraging.

(the interests of Society or the Working Class); the Radical stresses the individual conscience and sensibility. The Progressive starts off from what actually is happening; the Radical starts off from what he wants to happen. The former must have the feeling that History is "on his side." The latter goes along the road pointed out by his own individual conscience; if History is going his way, too, he is pleased; but he is quite stubborn about following "what ought to be" rather that "what is."

Because its tragic, ethical and non-scientific emphasis corresponds partly with the old Right attitude, leading to criticisms of Progressive doctrine that often sound very much like those that used to be made from the Right, the Radical viewpoint causes a good deal of confusion today. it is sometimes called "objectively reactionary." It would not be hard, however, to show the peculiar bedfellows, notably the Stalinists, the Progressives have today. For the fact is that *both* the Progressive and the radical attitudes, as here defined, cut across the old Left-Right dividing line, and in this sense both are confusing and even "objectively reactionary" if one continues to think in the old terms.

Another frequent allegation of the Progressives, especially those of the Marxian persuasion, is that the Radical viewpoint which *politics* frequently expresses is of necessity a religious one. If by "religious" is simply meant non-materialistic or non-scientific, then this is true. But if God and some kind of otherworldly order of reality is meant, then I don't think it is true. The Radical viewpoint is certainly *compatible* with religion, as Progressivism is not; and such radicals as D. S. Savage and Will Herberg are religious-minded; but I personally see no necessary connection, nor am I conscious of any particular interest in religion myself.

I might add that the Radical approach, as I understand it at least, does not deny the importance and validity of science in its own proper sphere, or of historical, sociological and economic studies. Nor does it assert that the only reality is the individual and his conscience. It rather defines a sphere which is outside the reach of scientific investigation, and whose value judgment cannot be proved (though they can be demonstrated in appropriate and completely unscientific terms); this is the traditional sphere of art and morality. The Radical sees any movement like socialism which aspires towards

> the *status quo* — as in Soviet Russia — while anarchism is "impractical" because it threatens it. The revolutionary alternative to the *status quo* today is not collectivized property administered by a "workers' state" whatever *that* means, but some kind of anarchist decentralization that will break up mass society into small communities where individuals can live together as variegated human beings instead of as impersonal units in the mass sum . . . Marxism glorifies "the masses" and endorses the State. Anarchism leads back to the individual and the community, which is "impractical" but necessary — that is to say, it is revolutionary.

In the mid-1950's the thaw in Russia after Stalin's death and the Twentieth Party Congress slowly rejuvenated Macdonald. Although he always remained a strong anti-communist, Macdonald no longer saw the USSR as a more advanced version of Hitler's Germany. In 1960, Macdonald became active as a civil libertarian in the cases of Morton Sobell (a supposed member of the supposed Rosenberg spy ring) and Junius Scales, another Communist sent to prison under the Smith Act. Macdonald also became an early member of the New Left and spoke at the closing session of the first national convention of SDS in 1960. Meanwhile "The Root Is Man" was rediscovered by a new generation of activists. Macdonald's critical support of student radicals culminated in his speaking at the "Counter Commencement" held at Columbia during the 1968 strike. Macdonald's activism also led him to participate in a picket line outside the Waldorf-Astoria to protest the war in Vietnam. The year was 1963, a time when most Americans could not find Vietnam on a map. Later, in 1967, Macdonald played an important role (with Robert Lowell and Norman Mailer) in the first big peace march on the Pentagon. Macdonald's radicalism was in striking contrast not just to *National Review* editor James Burnham but to Workers Party leader Max Shachtman who by this time had become a major behind-the-scenes advisor to the AFL-CIO on both domestic and foreign policy. At various demos, Macdonald would sometimes bump into young SWP activists who delighted in reminding the old factionalist that his current views were not so dissimilar to theirs. "Even a broken watch occasionally

tells the right time," Macdonald would grumble in response. Dwight Macdonald died in 1982.

Nietzsche defined nihilism as a situation where "everything is permitted," and today we might add "for the right price." Our time has also spawned a series of Jihads against the New World Order. There is now a frantic search for absolutes, foundational principles, a search which inspires religious fundamentalists of the Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Moslem variety as well as those who kill for an inscribed ethnic or national identity to build their racial Utopias. Contrasted to them are the efficient, orderly, passionless, non-smoking, technologically advanced killing machines of the West.

In just such a world it is long past time to rediscover individualist-centered radical thought from America's rich tradition as well as thinkers as different as Fourier, Stirner, Kropotkin and Nietzsche. While the insights of Marxism must continue to inform our actions, we must also be aware of its glaring weaknesses. It is again time to take seriously the brilliant battle-cry that concludes Oscar Wilde's *The Soul of Man Under Socialism:* "The new Individualism is the new Hellenism."

Quoting Wilde is especially appropriate in concluding a discussion of "The Root Is Man" because Macdonald's essay is also an attempt to reclaim the spirit of art itself, its values and legislative rights, and to explore the link between the aesthetic and moral sphere. Macdonald captures the necessity for a world that imagination, a renewed capacity to envision the world that makes the very idea of revolt meaningful. Although T.S. Elliot was a tremendous admirer of *politics,* Macdonald does not believe that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world: he does insist that if the oppressed are ever to rule themselves we must reignite the utopian spark that mass society relentlessly seeks to subvert, co-opt or destroy.

Of course the terminally hip will scorn any analysis that takes seriously such Philosophy 101 questions as "How Do We Live Today?" that so tortured Macdonald. But for me, "flighty Dwighty" Macdonald still speaks and no more brilliantly than in "The Root Is Man," one of the great lost classics of American radicalism.

Kevin Coogan

British Laborites, and the European Socialists, to small revolutionary groups like the Trotskyists.[1]

"Radical" would apply to the as yet few individuals — mostly anarchists, conscientious objectors, and renegade Marxists like myself — who reject the concept of Progress, who judge things by their present meaning and effect, who think the ability of science to guide us in human affairs has been overrated and who therefore redress the balance by emphasizing the ethical aspect of politics. They, or rather we, think it is an open question whether the increase of man's mastery over nature is good or bad in its actual effects on human life to date, and favor adjusting technology to man, even if it means — as may be the case — a technological regression, rather than adjusting man to technology. We do not, of course, "reject" scientific method, as is often charged, but rather think the scope within which it can yield fruitful results in narrower than is generally assumed today. And we feel that the firmest ground from which to struggle for that human liberation which was the goal of the old Left is the ground not of History but of those non-historical values (truth, justice, love, etc.) which Marx has made unfashionable among socialists.

The Progressive makes History the center of his ideology. The Radical puts Man there. The Progressive's attitude is optimistic both about human nature (which he thinks is basically good, hence all that is needed is to change institutions so as to give this goodness a chance to work) and about the possibility of understanding history through scientific method. The Radical is, if not exactly pessimistic, at least more sensitive to the dual nature of man; he sees evil as well as good at the base of human nature; he is sceptical about the ability of science to explain things beyond a certain point; he is aware of the tragic element in man's fate not only today but in any conceivable kind o society. The Progressive thinks in collective terms

[1] It is not intended to suggest there are not important differences between these tendencies. The Stalinists, in particular, should be most definitely set off from the rest. Their Progressivism is a complete abandonment to the historical process, so that absolutely anything goes, so long as it is in the interests of Russia, a "higher" form of society. The other groups, although they put more emphasis on the historical process than is compatible with the values they profess, do stand by certain general principles and do recognize certain ethical boundaries.

society, in which society is the end and the citizen the means. they justified inequalities of income and privilege by alleging an intrinsic inequality of individuals, both as to abilities and human worth.

This great dividing line has become increasingly nebulous with the rise of Nazism and Stalinism, both of which combine Left and Right elements in a bewildering way. Or, put differently, both the old Right and the old left have almost ceased to exist as historical realities, and their elements have been recombined in the dominant modern tendency: an inegalitarian and organic society in which the citizen is a means, not an end, and whose rulers are anti-traditional and scientifically minded. Change is accepted in principle — indeed, the unpleasant aspects of the present are justified precisely as the price that must be paid to insure a desirable future, whether it be Hitler's domination of lesser races by the Nordics, or Stalin's emancipation of the world working class, or our own liberals' peaceful future world to be achieved through war. The whole idea of historical process, which a century ago was the badge of the Left, has become the most persuasive appeal of the apologists for the status quo.

In this Left-Right hybrid, the notion of Progress is central. A more accurate terminology might therefore be to reserve the term "Right" for such old-fashioned conservatives as Herbert Hoover and Winston Churchill and to drop the term "Left" entirely, replacing it with two words: "Progressive" and "Radical."

By "Progressive" would be understood those who see the Present as an episode on the road to a better Future; those who think more in terms of historical process than of moral values; those who believe that the main trouble with the world is partly lack of scientific knowledge and partly the failure to apply to human affairs such knowledge as we do have; those who, above all, regard the increase of man's mastery over nature as good is itself and see its use for bad ends, as atomic bombs, as a perversion. This definition, I think, covers fairly well the great bulk of what is still called the Left, from Communists ("Stalinists")through reformist groups like our own New Dealers, the

THE ROOT IS MAN

To be radical is to grasp the matter by to root. Now the root for mankind is man himself.

— Karl Marx(1844)

Shortly after the second world war began, Trotsky wrote a remarkable article entitled "The USSR in War" (see *The New International,* November 1939). It was and attempt to refute the theory that a new form of society had developed in the Soviet Union, one that was neither capitalist nor socialist ("degenerated workers' state" in Trotsky's phrase) but something quite distinct from either of the two classic alternatives. This theory of a "third alternative" had been foreshadowed in certain passages of Anton Ciliga's *The Russian Enigma* (Paris, 1938) and had been developed in detail by a certain "Bruno R." in *La Bureaucratisation du Monde* (Paris, 1939).[1] The proponents of the new theory called it "bureaucratic collectivism."

If this theory is correct, the consequences far the Marxist schema are obviously quite serious; and so Trotsky attempted to demonstrate its falsity. His article is remarkable because, with a boldness and a sense of intellectual responsibility not common among present-day Marxists, he ventured to draw the consequences for Marxism if indeed capitalism's heir were to be bureaucratic collectivism. More, he even dared to set a "deadline" for the long-awaited world revolution.

"The second world war has begun," he wrote. "It attests incontrovertibly to the fact that society can no longer live on the basis of capitalism. Thereby it subjects the proletariat to a new and perhaps decisive test.

"If this war provokes, as we firmly believe it will, a proletarian revolution, it must inevitably lead to the overthrow of the bureaucracy in the USSR and the regeneration of Soviet democracy on a far higher economic and cultural basis than in 1918. In the case, the question as to whether the Stalinist bureaucracy was a 'class' or a parasitic growth on the workers' state will be automatically solved.

[1] In 1941, James Burnham gave popular currency to the idea in *The Managerial Revolution.* Unfortunately, he vulgarized it so enthusiastically as to make it a source of confusion rather than enlightenment. (See the reviews by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills in *Ethics,* Jan. 1942, and by myself in *Partisan Review,* Jan.-Feb. 1942.)

PART 1: MARXISM IS OBSOLETE

1. We Need a New Political Vocabulary

The first great victory of Bureaucratic Collectivism came in 1928, when Stalin finally drove Trotsky into exile and prepared, the following year, to initiate the First Five Year Plan. Between the French Revolution (1789) and 1928, political tendencies could fairly accurately be divided into "Right" and "Left." But the terms of the struggle for human liberation shifted in 1928 — the shift had been in process long before then, of course, but 1928 may be taken as a convenient watershed. It was Trotsky's failure to realize this that gave an increasingly unreal character to his handling of "the Russian question," just as it is the continued blindness of liberals and socialists to this change that makes academic, if not worse, their present-day political behavior.

Let me try to define the 1789–1928 "Left" and "Right."

The left comprised those who favored a change in social institutions which would make the distribution of income more equal (or completely equal) and would reduce class privileges (or do away with classes altogether). The central intellectual concept was the validity of the scientific method; the central moral concept was the dignity of Man and the individual's right to liberty and a full personal development. Society was therefore conceived of as a means to an end: the happiness of the individual. There were important differences in method (as, reform v. revolution, liberalism v. class struggle) but on the above principles the Left was pretty much agreed.

The Right was made up of those who were either satisfied with the status quo (conservatives) or wanted it to become even more inegalitarian (reactionaries). In the name of Authority, the Right resisted change, and in the name of Tradition, it also, logically enough, opposed what had become the cultural motor of change: that willingness , common alike to Bentham and Marx, Jefferson and Kropotkin, to follow scientific inquiry wherever it led and to reshape institutions accordingly. Those of the Right thought in terms of an "organic"

Part II ("Toward a New Radicalism") is an attempt to suggest an alternative to Marxism as a political approach for those profoundly dissatisfied with the status quo. It discusses the relationship between scientific method and value judgments, questions that "Idea of Progress" that has been the basis of Left-wing thought for almost two centuries, and tries to show why the "Radical" approach, based on moral feelings, is more valid today in both ethical and political terms than the "Progressive" approach, based on scientific method, that is still dominant among American intellectuals. It also suggests certain specific modes of political behavior and reaction that characterize this kind of Radicalism.

To every single person it will become clear that in the process of this development of the world revolution, the Soviet bureaucracy was only an episodic relapse.

"If, however, it is conceded that the present war will provoke not revolution but a decline of the proletariat, then there remains another alternative: the further decay of monopoly capitalism, its further fusion with the State and the replacement of democracy wherever it still persists, by a totalitarian regime. The inability of the proletariat to take into its hands the leadership of society could actually lead to the growth of a new exploiting class from the Bonapartist fascist bureaucracy. This would be, according to all indications, a regime of decline, signalizing the eclipse of civilization. . .

"However onerous the second perspective may be, if the world proletariat should actually prove incapable of fulfilling the mission placed upon it by the course of development, nothing else would remain except openly to recognize that the socialist program based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society ended as Utopia. It is self-evident that a new minimum program would be required — for the defense of the interests of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic society."

The war is now ended, in unparalleled devastation, hunger, misery in Asia and Europe, in the shattering of the old class structure of Europe and the loosening of imperialist bonds in the colonies. Yet no revolution has succeeded anywhere, or even been attempted; the kind of defensive battle the EAM put up in Greece, however heroic, cannot be called a revolution. The "revolutionary opportunities" which we socialists expected to occur after this war have indeed materialized; but the masses have not taken advantage of them. Although the second world war has been far more destructive of the old order than was the first, the level both of mass consciousness and of socialist leadership is far lower that it was in 1917–20. Is it not striking, for example, that the entire European resistance movement has ebbed away without producing a single new political tendency, or a single leader of any stature?[2]

[2] It did indeed produce Tito and DeGaulle, but they led away from democratic socialism and towards nationalist authoritarianism.

The reasons for this decadence will be considered presently. The fact is what concerns us now. I think it is time for socialists to face the situation that actually exists instead of continuing to fix our eyes on a distant future in which History will bring us at last what we want. It is strange, by the way, that Marxists, who pride themselves on their realism, should habitually regard the Present as merely the mean entrance-hall to the spacious palace of the Future. For the entrance-hall seems to stretch out interminably; it may or may not lead to a palace; meanwhile, it is all the palace we have, and we must live in it. I think we shall live in it better and even find the way to the palace better (if there *is* a palace), if we try living in the present instead of in the Future. To begin with, let us face the fact that Trotsky's deadline is here and that his revolution is not.

The Plan and Purpose of This Essay

If, writes Trotsky, the war provokes "not revolution but a decline of the proletariat" and if, consequently, Marxists must recognize that Bureaucratic Collectivism, not Socialism, is the historical successor to Capitalism, then: "nothing else would remain except openly to recognize that the socialist program, based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society, ended as a Utopia."

This seems to me as accurate summary of the dilemma Marxists find themselves in today. For if one bases one's socialist program on capitalist contradictions, and if those contradictions conduct one not to Socialism but the Bureaucratic Collectivism, then one has no real basis for socialism. Also, if one assumes that history has only one possible pattern, predictable in advance if one can discover society's "laws of motion," then the triumph of Bureaucratic Collectivism is Russia and its much greater strength (compared to Socialism) in other parts of the world today — these developments force one to conclude, with Trotsky, that totalitarianism is "the" future alternative to Capitalism. In this case, Trotsky's "minimum program . . . for the defense of the interests of the slaves of totalitarian" society is all that can be logically attempted. Who is going to take any risks for, or even get very interested in such an uninspiring — however worthy — program, one that by definition can never go further than defense? Do not the Russian and German experiences, in fact, show that such a limited program is quite impossible under totalitarianism — that one must either go much farther, or not stir at all?

But why not, after all, base one's socialism on what Trotsky contemptuously calls "Utopian" aspirations? Why not begin with what we living human beings *want,* what we think and feel is *good?* And then see how we can come closest to it — instead of looking to historical process for a justification of our socialism? It is the purpose of this article to show that a different approach may be made and must be made, one that denies the existence of any such rigid pattern to history as Marxism assumes, one that will start off from one's own personal interests and feelings, working from the individual to society rather that the other way around. Above all, its ethical dynamic come from absolute and non-historical values, such as Truth and Justice, rather than from the course of history.

It is only fair to say right now that readers who expect either a new theoretical system to replace Marxism or some novel program of action will save themselves disappointment by not reading further. All I attempt here is to explain, as coherently as possible, why the Marxian approach to socialism no longer satisfies me, and to indicate the general direction in which I think a more fruitful approach may be made. Those looking for either Certainty or Directives will find little to interest them here.

This essay falls into two main parts.

Part I ("Marxism is Obsolete"), which follows immediately, argues that Marxism is no longer a reliable guide either to radical political action or to an understanding of modern politics. It proposes that the traditional distinction between "Left" and "Right" be replaced by a new "Progressive-Radical" division, showing the confusion that comes from trying to fit recent history into the old "Left-Right" pattern. And it attempts to show, in some detail, that Marx's basic concepts, when they are applied to the contemporary world, are at best beside the point and at worst positively misleading (since their logic tends to justify the perfect tyranny of the USSR as against the imperfect democracy of the West).

as there was an indefinite future before us, this kind of Progressive metaphysics had at least the appearance of reasonability. No one could prove, after all, that after several centuries or even several millennia of sufferings, detours, and "temporary regressions," history would *not* finally lead humanity to the promised kingdom. It was thus logical — how sensible is another matter — to view the present in terms of the future. But now that we confront the actual, scientific possibility of The End being written to human history and at a not so distant date, the concept of the future, so powerful an element in traditional socialist thought, loses for us its validity. This bitter enlightenment, if from it we can learn to live in the here and now, may offer us the one possible escape from our fate.

A Digression on Marx and Homer

To the Progressive, art is as awkward a subject as ethics. Esthetic values cannot be scientifically grounded any more than morals can. Nor can art be fitted into the pattern of historical progress; the Greeks were technologically as primitive as they were esthetically civilized; we have outstripped Archimedes but not Sophocles. Finally, if values are taken to be historically relative, why do we enjoy art created thousands of years ago and expressing a way of life alien to ours in most ways?

These questions bothered Marx, who was personally sensitive to literature ant to that of the Greeks especially. He tries to answer them at the end of the *Critique of Political Economy:*

"It is well known that certain periods of highest development of art stand in no direct connection with the general development of society, nor with the material basis and the skeleton structure of its organization. Witness the example of the Greeks as compared with the modern nations . . . The difficulty lies only in the general formulation of these contradictions. No sooner are they specified than they are explained. Let us take for instance the relation of Greek art . . . to our own . . . Is the view of nature and of social relations which shaped Greek imagination and Greek art possible in the age of automatic machinery and railways and locomotives and

by itself could develop no further than trade union consciousness; this was, as has been pointed out by Max Eastman in his *Marx, Lenin and the Science of Revolution* (1925), a basic revision of Marx. The early years of the Russian revolution were in many ways inspiring. But the revolution failed to spread to more advanced countries, and the dangers of bureaucracy and dictatorship which Marxian critics of Leninism like Rosa Luxemburg and Otto Ruhle had correctly predicted as a consequence of the "revolutionary elite" theory by which Lenin had tried to repair the defect in Marx's idea of the working class — these became more and more dominant.

In 1928, Stalin signalized his complete victory over Trotsky by exiling the latter. The failure turned out to have been merely delayed; and when it came, it was much worse that the reformist failure. The existence of the Soviet Union is today the worst threat to socialism and the most confusing factor in any attempts at advance, because Stalinism is not only a much stronger and more ruthless and determined enemy than the Second International reformists ever were, but it is also thought by millions of workers and sincere socialists to be not foe but friend. This ambiguity is its most dangerous feature.

Our Own Experience in America

For the last thirty years, socialism in America has been an "as if" movement; we middle class intellectuals who have comprised its main body of adherents have generally behaved "as if" our movement were a historical reality. It has not been anything of the sort since 1918; that is, socialism of any variety has not in that period influenced the behavior of a historically significant number of Americans; even the Communists, despite the material and psychological help of their success in Russian, have never played the role in the trade union movement or in national politics which the pre-war radical groups played. After the first world war, American Radicalism lost its mass roots. This fact should always be kept in mind in evaluating the American leftist movement; it explains many things.

Between the Civil War and World War I, there arose various mass movements in America based on the perspective of fundamental

social change: the Knights of Labor, the IWW, the Socialist Party of Debs. In 1910, for example, the Socialist Party had 58,000 dues-paying members, 29 English and 22 foreign-language weeklies, and 3 English and 6 foreign-language *dailies.* By 1912, the party membership was 126,000; Debs got almost a million votes that year for President of the USA; such powerful unions as the United Mine Workers were predominantly socialist, and at that year's A.F. of L. convention the Socialist candidate, running against Gompers for the presidency, got over one-third of the votes. (Walter Lippmann is 1913 was not only a Socialist, but a leftwing Socialist who protested the party's expulsion of Big Bill Haywood for preaching class-war violence.) In the last American presidential election, the Socialist candidate got less votes than there were dues-paying party members in 1910. The Wobblies (IWW) have been even more completely eclipsed: before World War I, they were a major force in American labor, leading strikes involving hundreds of thousands of industrial workers, preaching (and practicing) an uncompromising class-war doctrine based on a libertarian, practically anarchist, philosophy. Today they are almost extinct. I cannot here go into the reasons for this depressing evolution — though it is interesting to note , in connection with the section of this article devoted to the question of war, that the first world was unquestionably was the greatest factor. American radicalism was making great strides right up to 1914; the war was the rock on which it shattered.[9]

The same pattern is found in the history of American trade unionism. Gompers and all of his associates in founding the A.F. of L. were Marxists, and many of them were active members of the First International. In his autobiography, Gompers writes, "In the early seventies, New York City looked like Paris during the Commune." He describes the seething mass of Garibaldi redshirts, Irish home-rulers, Germany "forty-eighters," Russian and Austrian revolutionaries who made New York "the cradle of the modern American labor movement." When Gompers went to Ferdinand Laurell, the "mental

[9] For an excellent history and analysis of the political rise and decline of American socialism, see Daniel Bell's chapter in *Socialism and American Life* (Princeton, 1952, 2 vols.).

progress has reached its "end," and the end is turning out to be the end (without quotes) of man himself.[7]

What becomes of the chief argument of Progressives — that out of present evil will come future good — if we now confront the possibility that there may not *be* a future? In that once popular expression of the Progressive ideology of the last century, Winwood Reade's *The Martyrdom of Man,* the author writes: "I give to universal history a strange but true title: 'The Martyrdom of Man.' In each generation, the human race has been tortured that their children might profit by their woes. Our own prosperity is founded on the agonies of the past. Is it therefore unjust that we should also suffer for the benefit of those who are to come?" And what a future Reade saw rising out of the agonies of the present! He expected scientific progress to enable man to travel among the stars, to manufacture his own suns and solar systems, to conquer death itself. The progress has not failed, but it has brought universal death; instead of manufacturing new solar systems, man seems more likely to destroy his own little globe. And our sufferings, far from being for the benefit of those who are to come, are more likely to remove the first condition of their coming: the existence of an inhabited earth.

It is the materialistic Reade who today appears grotesquely metaphysical in his assumptions. So, too, Engels: "The process of replacing some 500,000 Russian landowners and some 80 million peasants by a new class of bourgeois landed proprietors cannot be carried out except under the most fearful sufferings and convulsions. But history is about the most cruel of goddesses, and she drives her triumphal car over heaps of corpses, not only in war but also in 'peaceful' economic development. And we men and women are unfortunately so stupid that we can never pluck up courage to a real progress unless urged to it by sufferings almost out of proportion . . . There is no great historical evil without a compensating historical progress." (Letters to Danielson, Feb. 24 and Oct. 17, 1893.) So long

[7] There is now (1953) another delightful vista looming up ahead on the March of Scientific Progress: the possibility that the new hydrogen bomb, if used in quantity in a war, may set up radioactivity which will affect the human genes so that future generations of "mutants" — i.e., Charles Addams monstrosities — will appear. A more optimistic forecast is that it will render everybody sterile.

can be good, and also of how scientific inquiry may be utilized for good ends. The answer will depend, first, on our value judgment and to what *is* good; and second on the results of scientific inquiry into the ways, in a certain time and place, science and technology may be used to bring about this good. I suspect there is a point of technological development beyond which the bad human results *must* outweigh the good ones under any conceivable social system. But I am not at all sure this is true; and Paul and Percival Goodman, for example, have come to the opposite conclusion: that a conflict between technological efficiency and human good is theoretically impossible, and that where one seems to exist it is because our faulty culture leads us to a false conception of efficiency. They would argue, for example, that the saving in producing automobiles in huge plants like River Rouge is more than offset by the waste involved in the workers travelling long distances to the job, the huge distributive network necessary, etc. Their book, *Communitas,* demonstrate this thesis. It may be true; I hope it is. But my point here is that the harmony of industrial efficiency and human good is still an open question, not a closed one, as the Progressives assume.

The Atomic Bomb, or the End in Sight

The bomb that vaporized Hiroshima less than a year ago also levelled — though some of us don't seem yet aware of it — the whole structure of Progressive assumptions on which liberal and socialist theory has been built up for two centuries. For now, for the first time in history, humanity faces the possibility that its own activity may result in the destruction not of some people of some part of the world, but of all people and the whole world for all time. The end may come through radioactive substances which will poison the atmosphere, or through a chain reaction riping apart the earth's crust, releasing the molten rock in the interior. Most scientists say that *at the present stage of development* of atomic energy, that it not possible (though others say it is). But no one can say definitely what will happen in another decade or two of Atomic Progress. Scientific

guide through many of my early struggles" to whom he dedicates his book, and asked for "something fundamental, something upon which one could base a constructive program," he was given . . . *The Communist Manifesto.* "That document brought me an interpretation of much that before had been only inarticulate feeling. This insight into a hidden world of thought aroused me to master the German language in order that I might read for myself . . . I real all the German economic literature that I could lay my hands on — Marx, Engels, Lassalle and others . . ." Marxism was the theoretical base on which Gompers and his friends founded the A.F. of L. Their main objection to the Knights of Labor was its amorphous class character and its lack of a specifically working class program.[10]

The first step towards the A.F. of L. was taken in 1875 when the Gompers group circulated a call to a conference of trade unionists. This letter begins: "Throughout the history of the United State, there exist numerous organized bodies of workingmen who declare that the present degraded dependence of the workingman upon the capitalist for the means of livelihood is the cause of the greater part of the intellectual, moral and economic degradation that afflicts society, that every political movement must be subordinate to the first great social end, viz., the economic emancipation of the working class." And the preamble to the constitution which the A.F. of L. adopted ten years later — and which is still its official program — begins with an echo of the thunder of *The Communist Manifesto*: "A struggle is going on in all nations of the civilized world between the oppressors and the oppressed . . . the capitalist and the laborer."

Compare the preamble to the constitution of an exceptionally militant and progressive present-day union, the United Automobile

[10] Considering the later development of Gompers and the labor movement he founded, this original Marxism has a double meaning to the modern observer: it suggests not only the radicalism of the youthful Gompers but also the ambiguity of Marxism as a guide towards socialism; for although Gompers discarded the socialist aims of Marxism, he never gave up what Marx himself always emphasized as the road to those aims: the struggle for the specific class interests of labor. His dedicating his life-story to the Marxist, Laurrell, and the way he describes his early Marxist leanings show that Gompers himself was unaware of any basic change in his philosophy.

Workers. This begins not with an echo of *The Communist Manifesto* but with a literal reproduction of . . . the Declaration of Independence — self-evident truths, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and all the rest. But even the 1776 brand of radicalism is too strong for these modern proletarians: they include the statement about governments "deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed," but they omit the rest of the sentence, which declares that the people have a right to overthrow a government if they don't like it. The builders of the new Jefferson Memorial in Washington made precisely the same excision when they cut this quotation into the marble wall of that pompous edifice. But the auto workers go them one better: they actually substitute for Jefferson's subversive idea, the following: "Within the orderly process of such Government lies the hope of the worker." The rest of their preamble is in the same spirit. Far from unions being called on to change society, the growth of unionism itself is presented as evidence of such a change *already accomplished!* ("We believe the right of the workers to organize for mutual protection is . . . evidence . . . of an economic and social change in our civilization.") These proletarians roar gently as any sucking dove. They have nothing against capitalism or the wage system; all they want is "a mutually satisfactory and beneficial employer-employee relationship" and "a place at the conference table, together with management." And this is in many ways the most class-conscious union in the country!

"The grandiose economic crisis, acquiring the character of a social crisis," wrote Trotsky in 1931, "will inevitably become transformed into the crisis of the political consciousness of the American working class." Fifteen years later, some 150,000 American proletarians, each carrying a union card, labored for many months on an unknown product in the plants of the "Manhattan District" project. When the first atomic bombing revealed to them what they had been making, they reacted with patriotic cheers. There may have been other reactions, but I have seen no reports of them. Furthermore, the petit-bourgeois scientists who developed The Bomb have expressed the utmost concern over the effects of their creation — forming associations, issuing statements, proposing various policies, trying to

and Russia. The one great power today whose culture is most materialistic, whose leaders proclaim themselves Marxists, where the crudest optimism of progress is rampant, is also the one where the alienation of man from his own products has gone the farthest, the one whose citizens lead the lives of bees or of ants but not of men, the one whose soldiers, fresh from the land of materialistic progress and Five Year Plans, are astounded at the ease, luxury and comfort of life in Bulgaria and will commit any crime to possess themselves of a bicycle. So we, too, may perish in the next war because atomic fission is the latest stage of scientific discovery, and Progress depends on the advancement of science. But a simple-minded person might see in such modern truisms as that you must reach socialism through dictatorship ("Sure, the Soviet Union isn't democratic, but that's the only way a backward country can be raised to an industrial level that will support democratic institutions later on — just wait fifty years!") or that atomic fission holds ultimate promise of the Abundant Life — such a simple person might see in these propositions a similarity to that promise of a better life in Heaven on which the Catholic Church banks so heavily.

(2) It may be that the fact that Western intellectuals are showing more and more signs of what Sidney Hook has called "the new failure of nerve" — i.e., skepticism about scientific progress — is of some historical significance, for intellectuals often sense now what most people will believe later on. Is it fantastic to imagine that large masses of people may become, as life grows increasingly unbearable in our scientifically-planned jungle, what might be called Human materialists (as against the Historical and Progressive variety)? That they may conclude that they don't want electric iceboxes if the industrial system required to produce them also produces World War III, or that they would prefer fewer and worse or even no automobiles if the price for more and better is the regimentation of people on a scale which precludes their behaving humanly toward each other?

I would draw the reader's attention to the word "if" in the preceding sentence. I am *not* saying that it is impossible to produce automobiles without also producing war and bureaucracy; I am merely proposing a line of action *if* this turns out to be the case. It is a complex question what is the maximum scale on which institutions

sufficient, for the effects would spread rapidly."(*New York Times,* May 25, 1946.)

According to the scientific metaphysician, this sort of things is a regrettable by-product of Progress, a perversion, in fact. He will point out that this lethal germ spray has also been developed, in the form of DDT, to rid mankind of those insect pests which cause $5,678,945,001 worth of damage *in this country alone* every year (or fill in your own figures). And he will conclude that the problem is to use it for Good instead of Evil, or more specifically, to spray it on insects but not on people. The solution of this problem is for us to become even more scientifically-minded than we are now, to extend the sway of scientific method over ethics; if he is a Marxist, he will call this approach "dialectical." if one suggests that perhaps there may be more Evil than Good in scientific progress, not in the sense that there is anything *intrinsically* (*i.e.* metaphysically) good or bad about such progress, but in the *historical* sense that up to now the Bad results of every technological advance seem to outweigh the Good ones, and that what with The Bomb and our new DDT-for-People this promises to be even more strikingly the case in the future — if one ventures such a wild notion, his reaction is violent. One is told — and I speak from experience — that one is (1) an ascetic who rejects this-worldly, human satisfaction in favor of some kind of mortification of the flesh; (2) a Utopian dreamer whose value judgment, regardless of its ethical merits, has not the slightest practical significance or chance of historical realization.

I think it can be argued, in both cases, that the shoe is on the other foot.

(1) Personally, I am not particularly ascetic. It is, indeed, just because I do value human, this-worldly satisfactions that I am skeptical about Scientific Progress. The real materialists today are those who reject Historical Materialism. For man's mastery of nature has led to nature's mastering man. The ever more efficient organization of technology in the form of large, disciplined aggregations of producers implies the modern mass-society which implies authoritarian controls and the kind of irrational — subrational, rather — nationalist ideology we have seen developed to its highest pitch in Germany

arouse the public. But I have seen not a single protest, recommendation, or any other expression from the union locals that worked on The Bomb.[11]

5. Bureaucratic Collectivism: The "Third Alternative"

A form of society has come into being which is not Socialist but rather an even more oppressive form of class society than Capitalism, and yet which has resolved those economic contradictions on which Marx based his expectation of progress to socialism. It is a "third alternative" to both capitalism and socialism. So far we have had two examples, one in a backward country (Russia under Stalin), the other in the most advanced nation of Europe (Nazi Germany after 1936). Tendencies in the same direction, which may be called "Bureaucratic Collectivism," have been growing in other nations: the Keynesian economic policies of the New Deal, the postwar nationalization trend in England and on the continent. The dominance of war and the preparation for war in the last decade, and the continuance of this pattern as the tension between the Russian and the Anglo-American bloc grows — these factors stimulate Bureaucratic Collectivist tendencies. For if Capitalism was primarily a new method of producing and distributing the products of industry, Bureaucratic Collectivism might be regarded as a new method of organizing national resources — human, cultural, economic — for effective warmaking. Since I do not see in history the dialectical progressive pattern Marx found

[11] When, in the summer of 1946, some pacifist members of the Workers Defense League planned to picket the Oak Ridge atom bomb plant to protest against atomic warfare, the League was pressured to prevent them by the local CIO leadership, which feared the picketing would do "irreparable harm to our current organizing drive among the Oak Ridge workers." The director of the CIO's Tennessee Regional Office wrote that if the pickets persisted "We will be forced to take drastic measures to denounce your program, which we would not like to do." Confronted by this unexpected opposition, the would-be pickets, who were mostly socialists and so starry-eyed about labor unions, called off the demonstration. (See *politics,* Aug. 1946, for the text of the letters in this episode, with my own comment thereon.)

there, and so can see a number of *possible* alternatives at any given point in history, Bureaucratic Collectivism does not appear to me (as it does to Marxists and to Marxists-turned-inside-out like James Burnham) the sole and inevitable successor to capitalism. Libertarian socialism may be another alternative at certain times and places under certain conditions. Therefore, I do not draw the hopeless conclusion Trotsky, for instance, does as to the future if Bureaucratic Collectivism is historically "viable." All that one can say at present, and it is not precisely cheerful, is that Socialism has not materialized and Bureaucratic Collectivism has.

Since I have already written at length on Bureaucratic Collectivism, I shall not recapitulate it all here. My ideas on this subject (at least) have not changed greatly. The interested reader is referred to "The End of Capitalism in Germany" (*Partisan Review,* May-June 1941), "Wallace and the Labor Draft" (*politics,* February 1945), and "Labor Imperialism" (*politics,* September 1945). Here I shall take the liberty of drawing largely on two other old articles of mine which get at the heart of the question. The first is an analysis of Nazi economics designed to show the main lines of difference between Bureaucratic Collectivism and Capitalism (taken from "What Is the Fascist State?"; *The New International,* February 1941). The second is an application of the concept to perhaps the most important question confronting socialists today: the nature of the Soviet Union (taken from "Why 'Politics?'"; *politics,* February 1944).

What Is Capitalism?

The feature which distinguishes capitalism from all other systems of property relations is production for profit, which mean the regulation of production by the market. It is the destruction of the capitalist market that decisively marked Nazism as a new and different system.

In his introduction to the *Living thoughts of Karl Marx* volume, Trotsky writes (emphasis mine throughout):

"In contemporary society, man's cardinal tie is exchange. Any product of lobar that enters into the process of exchange becomes a commodity. Marx began his investigation with the commodity and

alternative terms. One things is, finally, notable: since 1914, it has not been the Marxists who have made important contributions to historical thinking (although theirs is *par-excellence* a historical discipline) but rather non-materialistic and anti-socialist historians like Toynbee and Spengler.

The Metaphysics of Progress

As D.S. Savage has pointed out ("Socialism in Extremis," *politics,* January 1945), those who build their political philosophy on the idea of progress tend to justify the Means by the End, the Present by the Future, the Here by the There. the Progressive can swallow war as a Means to the End, peace; he can overlook the unsatisfactory Present by fixing his eyes on a distant and perfect Future, as in the case of the USSR; he can justify the loss of individual's freedom Here as necessary to a workable organization of society There. He is able to perform these considerable feats of abstract thinking because he, who makes so free with the charge of "metaphysician" and "Utopian," is actually the arch-metaphysician of our time, quite prepared to sacrifice indefinitely and on the most grandiose scale the real, material, concrete interests of living human beings on the altar of a metaphysical concept of Progress which he assumes (again metaphysically) is the "real essence" of history.

And what an assumption this idea is based on: nothing less than the daring hypothesis — which the Progressive advances as if it were the most elementary common sense — that the "real" nature of scientific advance is to benefit humanity. There are, it is admitted, certain regrettable by-products of this advance. The atomic bomb is one, and another is the new "germ spray" developed by our own scientists which promises to make The Bomb look positively benevolent. An unidentified member of Congress gives a lyrical account of its possibilities:

"They have developed a weapon that can wipe out all forms of life in a large city. It is a germ proposition and is sprayed from airplanes . . . It is quick and certain death. You would not have to drop a germ on every person in a city. One operation would be

be called natural-science materialism. Engels, who vulgarized and distorted so much of Marx's thought, is responsible for the confusion here too: his famous pamphlet, *Socialism — Utopian and Scientific,* draws the line between Marx and the "Utopians" entirely in terms of historical theory; it was such a brilliantly effective piece of special-pleading that to this day the friends and enemies of Marxism alike agree (wrongly) that it is indeed the sole form of "scientific socialism."

The second similarity — the optimism about the ultimate rationality of history — is interesting, too. It may be that one of the reasons for the lack in our time of any socialist theoreticians that measure up to the giants of the 19th century is that society has become *too* irrational and humanly destructive. A minimum degree of human rationality is perhaps necessary in a social system for its opponents to criticize it effectively, just as disagreement is not possible unless the disputants have something in common; parallel lines do not conflict. Marx's exposé of capitalist economics, or Proudhon's of representative government — such achievements were possible only because there was a certain minimum rationality in the institutions criticized, so that their defenders were compelled to stand on certain general principles. The difficulty in evolving a theoretical criticism of Bureaucratic Collectivism today may partly lie in the completely destructive, opportunistic and nihilistic character of the phenomenon, so that there is nothing to get a hold of, so to speak, On the one hand, the fraudulent pretensions of The Enemy to rationality and human decency can easily be refuted — all too easily. But on the other hand, the power of The Enemy to maintain this fraud is far greater than it was in the last century. Thus we have social institutions which are more easily shown to be bad than were those in Marx's and Proudhon's time, and yet which show a survival power quite unexpected by those great but far too confident thinkers. The process of history, in a word, appears now to be a more complex and tragic matter than it appeared to the socialist and anarchist thinkers, who were, after all, children of *their* age, not ours. The area of of the unpredictably, perhaps even unknowable, appears far greater now than it did then. At least it does if we think in their rational and scientific terms — and we have not yet worked out satisfactory

deduced from that fundamental cell of capitalist society those social relations that have objectively shaped themselves on the basis of exchange, *independently of man's will.* Only by pursuing this course is it possible to solve the fundamental puzzle — how in capitalist society, *in which each man thinks for himself and no one thinks for all,* are created the relative proportions of the various branched of economy indispensable to life.

"The worker sells his labor power, the farmer takes his produce to market, the money lender or banker grants loans, the storekeeper offers an assortment of merchandise, the industrialist builds a plant, the speculator buys and sells stocks and bonds — *each having his own considerations, his own private plans,* his own concern about wages or profit. Nevertheless, out of this chaos of individual strivings and actions emerges a certain economic whole, which, true, is not harmonious but contradictory, yet does give society the possibility not merely to exist but even to develop. This means that, after all, chaos is not chaos at all, that in some way it is *regulated automatically, if not consciously . . .* By accepting and rejecting commodities, *the market,* as the arena of exchange, decides whether they do or do not contain within themselves socially necessary labor, thereby *determines the ratios of various kinds of commodities necessary for society . . . "*

This seems to me a reasonably accurate description of how capitalism works. There are two main elements: (1) production is regulated by exchange, that is, by the prospects of the individual and corporate property owners making a profit by selling their goods on the market; (2) this market regulates "not consciously" but as an impersonal, autonomous mechanism working "independent of man's will."

Now let us apply this definition of capitalism to the Nazi Germany of 1936–1945, an economy I believe to have been essentially Bureaucratic Collectivist although it had remnants of capitalism. (The same arguments would apply, of course, even more fully to Soviet Russia.) We may begin by comparing Trotsky's description of capitalist economy with the Nazi press chief, Otto Dietrich's description of fascist economy as "not a mechanism regulating itself automatically" but rather "an organism that is regulated and directed from one central point." Under Hitler, the market continued to exist, but it lost its autonomy: it did not determine production but was used merely as

a means of measuring and expressing in economic terms the production which was planned and controlled by the Nazi bureaucracy. The old capitalist *forms* existed, but they expressed a new *content.*[12] After 1936, production in Germany is determined not by the market but by the needs of *Wehrwirstschaft*: guns, tanks, shoes, steel, cement are produced in greater or lesser quantities not because there is more or less prospect of making profits on this or that commodity, but because this or that is considered more or less useful for making war. *Economically,* this is production for use, the use being, of course, a highly undesirable one from the *social* point of view. Nor is this production controlled by a market mechanism working "independent of man's will" but by a bureaucratic apparatus which *plans* production (as against the well-known "anarchy" of capitalist production) and which consciously and willfully works out the best solution to the particular problem. No individual producer thinks "for himself"; on the contrary, if not one man, at least a small group of top bureaucrats, "think for all."

Commodities Lose Their Mystery

The two great riddles which Marx so brilliantly solved — the nature of commodity production and the process of extracting surplus value — seem to lose, in a fascist economy, most of the subtle mystery which cloaks them under capitalism.

"The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails," begins *Capital,* "presents itself as 'an immense accumulation of commodities,' its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity." What is a commodity? It is, says Marx, "a very queer thing,

[12] Those Marxists who insist that the persistence of these forms — profits, wages, prices, etc. — proves that the Nazi economy is still capitalist should remember that in the Soviet Union these forms also largely exist. The Soviet state trusts keep books in capitalist style and if they don't show profits, the managers are liquidated; the workers are paid wages in rubles and spend them in shops on food, clothing, etc.; there is even a budding rentier class, living on the proceeds of investments in 6% government bonds. But most of us would agree that this is not a capitalist economy, that its contradictions are not those of capitalism but of quite another kind.

There is a quantitative science which compels agreement, excludes the arbitrary, rejects all Utopian fancies; a science of physical phenomena which grounds itself only on the observation of data . . . There ought to be also a science of society — a science which is not to be *invented* but rather *discovered.* (*De la Celebration du Dimanche;* quoted in *La Pensée Vivante de Proudhon,* edited by Lucien Maury; Paris, 1942, p. 7.)

Kropotkin: Anarchism is a world-concept based upon a mechanical explanation of all phenomena, embracing the whole of nature — that is, including in it the life of human societies and their economic, political and moral problems. Its method of investigation is that of the exact natural sciences . . . Its aim is to construct a synthetic philosophy comprehending in one generalization all the phenomena of nature — and therefore also the life of societies . . . Whether or not anarchism is right in its conclusions will be shown by a scientific criticism of its bases and by the practical life of the future. But in one thing it is absolutely right: in that it has included the study of social institutions in the sphere of natural-scientific investigations; has forever parted company with metaphysics; and makes use of the method by which modern natural science and modern materialist philosophy were developed. ("Modern Science and Anarchism"; in *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets,* New York, 1927, pp. 150 and 193.)

There are two striking similarities between the above quotations and Marxist doctrine: (1) the rejection of philosophical idealism and the attempt to put socialism on a scientific and materialistic basis; (2) a related optimism about history, in the sense that it is assumed that the more contradictory, irrational and humanly destructive social institutions are, the more surely will they be superseded by socialism.

The first similarity is interesting in the light of the Marxists' successful appropriation — shall we say "expropriation?" — of the once-magic term "scientific socialism." As the above quotations show, the anarchists and Utopians were just as concerned as Marx was to put socialism on a scientific basis. The difference is simply that where he, following Hegel, looked to history for this, they, following rather the French Encyclopedists, looked to biology, psychology, and anthropology. If Marxism is historical materialism, their theories might

to the efforts of the physicists as she is to yours? no, for they study her laws instead of dictating laws to her . . . What a contrast between your blunderings and the achievements of the exact sciences! Each day you add new errors to the old ones, while each day sees the physical sciences advancing upon the road of truth . . . (*Selections from the Works of Fourier,* edited by Charles Gide; London, 1901; pp. 51–54.)

SAINT-SIMON: A new science, a science as *positive* as any that deserves the name, has been conceived by Saint-Simon: the science of man. Its method is the same as that of astronomy or physics . . . From our first meeting we have repeated that Saint-Simon's conception was provable by history. Do not expect from us either the discussion of isolated facts — laws as simple and constant as those of biology . . . Saint-Simon;s mission was to discover these laws . . . Mankind, he said, is a collective being which grows from one generation to the next as a single man grows throughout his lifetime. This being has grown in obedience to its own physiological law; and this law is that of progressive development . . . Cast away your fears, then, gentlemen, and struggle no more against the tide that bears you along with us toward a happy future; put an end to the doubt that withers your heart and strikes you impotent. Lovingly embrace the altar of reconciliation, for the time is come and the hour will soon sounds when *all* will be called and *all* will be chose. (*Doctrine de Saint-Simon* — a series of lectures by Bazard, Enfantin and other disciples of Saint-Simon; originally published 1829; republished Paris, 1924; pp. 92–3, 158, 161, 178.)

Proudhon: With the revolution, it is another matter . . . The idea of Progress replaces that of the Absolute in philosophy . . . Reason, aided by Experience, shows man the laws of nature and of society, and says to him: "These are the laws of necessity itself. No man has made them; Nobody forces them upon you. They have little by little been discovered, and I exist only to bear witness to them. If you observe them, you will be just and righteous. If you violate them, you will be unjust and wicked. I propose no other sanction for you." (*General Idea of the Revolution in the 19th Century,* London, 1923, pp. 294–295.)

abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties." The reason for this mystery is the dual nature of commodities: they are "both objects of utility and, at the same time, depositories of value," that is, they exist as both "use values" and "exchange values." It is the latter which gives them their capitalist character, and Marx describes how these "exchange values" are realized through the market (emphasis mine):

"As a general rule, articles of utility become commodities only because they are products of the labor of private individuals or groups of individuals who carry on their work *independently of each other.* The sum total of the labor of all these private individuals forms the aggregate labor of society. *Since the producers do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer's labor does not show itself excepts in the act of exchange.*"

When a state bureaucracy displaces the market as the regulator of production, the individual producers come into social contact with each other in the sphere of production, that is, they produce according to a conscious, prearranged plan, so that it would be technically possible — however politically inadvisable — for each individual producer to know *before he begins to produce* just where his own contribution fits into the general scheme.

A page or two later, Marx writes:

"The categories of bourgeois economy consist of such like forms. [He had been describing the forms in which capitalist value is expressed.] They are forms of thought expressing with social validity the conditions and relations of a definite, historically determined mode of production, viz.., the production of commodities. The whole mystery of commodities, all the magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labor as long as they take the form of commodities, vanishes, therefore, as soon as we come to other forms of production."

We may see in Nazi Germany what Marx meant: "the whole mystery of commodities" had indeed vanished there. Steel was produced there for use, in guns, in tanks, in ships. Shoes were produced for use, on feet. The fact that the shortage of shoes (in itself produced by state planning) would have made the building of a new shoe plants

extremely profitable in the last few years meant nothing to the bureaucracy. The was a "theological nicety" they disregarded in the interests of *Wehrwirstschaf.*

Labor's Fetters Become Visible

So, too, with the other great mystery of the capitalist mode of production: the extraction of surplus value. "The essential difference," writes Marx, "between the various economic forms of society, between, for instance, a society based on slave labor and one based on wage labor, lies only in the mode in which this surplus-labor is in each case extracted from the actual producer, the laborer." Under slavery this surplus-labor (the labor over and above that needed for the maintenance and reproductions of the laborer himself) is appropriated by the ruling class in one way, under feudalism in another, and under capitalism in still another, through the appropriation of "surplus value."

Surplus value is realized through the mechanism of the market system. The worker sells his labor power to the capitalist. Here, as in the case of the commodity, what seems at first glance a perfectly simple transaction, Marx was able to demonstrate, is actually very subtle and complex. In previous forms of economy, the subject class could not possibly overlook the fact of its subjection, since its surplus-labor was directly, openly appropriated by the ruling class. But under capitalism, this relationship is concealed by the market mechanism. "He [the worker] and the owner of money meet in the market, and deal with each other as on the basis of equal rights, with this difference alone, that one is buyer, the other seller; both, therefore, equal in the eyes of the law . . . He must constantly look upon his labor-power as his own property, his own commodity, and this he can only do by placing it at the disposal of the buyer temporarily, for a definite period of time. By this means alone can he avoid renouncing his rights of ownership over it." The result is that the worker conceives of himself as the owner of a commodity (his labor-power) which he sells to the employer just as any owner sells any other commodity — free to dispose of his private property as he

novelists. That something was lacking in the 18th century ideology of scientific progress could be deduced from the fact that it is hard to find a literary man of the first rank whose values were either bourgeois or socialist. Even Tolstoy, whose novels are perhaps the most successful examples of naturalism in art we have, came to reject in the most thoroughgoing way, the scientific and materialistic assumptions on which naturalism is based.

This is such a crucial point, and the claims of Marxism to be the one and only form of "scientific socialism" are today so generally accepted by both its friends and enemies, that it seems worth documenting it a little. Let us hear what the three great Utopians and the two most important anarchist theoreticians have to say on the question of science and progress:

ROBERT OWEN: . . . for the first time, I explained the science of constructing a rational system of society for forming the character and governing human nature beneficially for all our race . . . knowledge of this scientific development of society was forced upon me by thirty years of extensive practice through various departments of the business of real life, and by much study to overcome the many obstacles which stood in the way of combining a scientific arrangement of society to *prevent* the innumerable evils inflicted by error on the human race . . . the first publication ever given to the world which explained, even in its outline, the circle of the practical science of society to form a good and superior character for all, to produce abundance of superior wealth for all, to unite all as members of a superior enlightened family. (*The Life of Robert Owen, by Himself;* New York, 1920, p. 322.)

FOURIER: Our destiny is to advance; every social period must progress toward the one above; it is Nature's wish that barbarism should tend toward civilization and attain to it by degrees . . . It is in vain, then, Philosophers, that you accumulate libraries to search for happiness, while the root of all social ills has not been eradicated: industrial parcelling, or incoherent labor, which is the antipodes of God's designs. You complain that Nature refuses you the knowledge of her laws: well! if you have, up to the present, been unable to discover them, why do you hesitate to recognize the insufficiency of your methods, and to seek new ones? . . . Do you see her refractory

underlying reality: the development of the instruments of production. For it is just in this field that science is most competent, so that we can console ourselves for present unpleasantnesses by a vision of a future in which science will have created for us the splendid "materialistic base" for a glorious superstructure. The awkward thing, of course, is that science has more than done its part and has presented us by now with a materialistic base even grander than Marx ever hoped for, culminating in atomic fission; while the results are not, to say the least, glorious. But of that, more later.

Ancestral Voices Prophesying Progress

It is important to recognize that, although Marx carried the notion of scientific progress so far that he was able to monopolize the magic term, "scientific socialism," for his own system, this approach was by no means peculiar to him but was rather that of Left political thinkers, bourgeois and socialist alike, in the 19th century. The only important exception that occurs to me in Alexander Herzen.

Practically all our ideological ancestors were agreed on the notion of scientific progress. The French Encyclopedists established this concept in the 18th century, and Condorcet's *Historical Outline of the Progress of the Human Spirit* (1795) was its first great statement. The 19th century socialists — Utopian, Marxian and anarchist — who were the historical heirs of the Encyclopedists, all tried to justify their political systems in scientific terms. In this, they were the children of their time. The only sceptical or hostile voices were those of political conservatives like Burkhardt and De Tocqueville, of religious spokesmen like Kierkegaard — and of the poets and

---

we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived , in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus *no longer retain the semblance of independence*." (*The German Ideology*; my emphasis.)

thinks best, to sell or not to sell according to the price offered. Thus he doesn't realize he is contributing surplus labor to the employer, and it was of course Marx's great task to make this clear to him. "The Roman slave was held by fetters; the wage laborer is bound to his owner by invisible threads . . . His economical bondage is both brought about and concealed by the periodic sale of himself, by his change of masters, and by the oscillation in the market price of labor power."

In Nazi Germany, the threads again became visible. Since wages were frozen along with prices by state action, there were no more "oscillations in the market price of labor power." Nor was there any "change of masters," since the state was now his master, exercizing all the functions of the employer: setting of wage rates, conditions of labor, hiring and firing. It is true that the forms of the old labor market were still for the most part kept up — though there was a trend towards direct state conscription of labor power — but these, as in the case of the capitalist market in general, were purely forms. A strike for higher wages or shorter hours would have had to be directed against the state power which decided wages and hours; it would have become at once a political act, to be dealt with directly by the Gestapo. The private "employer" was little more than a straw boss, enforcing orders handed down to him by the state bureaucracy. This change in some ways greatly intensified the sharpness of the struggle between exploited and exploiter. But this struggle took place in terms quite different from those which Marx described as characteristic of the capitalist system of society.

The Nature of the Soviet Union

I do not consider the Soviet Union to be any sort of socialist or "workers" State, whether "degenerated" or not, but rather a new form of class society based on collective ownership of the means of production by the ruling bureaucracy. It is not only not socialism, but it is a form of society profoundly repugnant to the ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity which have been shared by most radicals, bourgeois or socialist, since 1789. That it is based on collectivised

property, and that it is the heir of the first successful proletarian revolution — these facts call for a revision of traditional Marxist conceptions.

The most important attempt to apply Marxist theories to the development of Soviet Russia was, of course, Trotsky's. His analysis seems to me wrong in two major respects: (1) he expected the counter-revolution to some in the form of a restoration of capitalist property relations; (2) he saw a basic antagonism between the collectivised economy and the totalitarian political regime. These judgments flowed from his Marxist belief that capitalism and socialism are the only historical alternatives today. In the turning-point year 1928, Trotsky therefore considered the chief threat to the revolution to come from the kulaks and nepmen, with Bukharin as their spokesman. Stalin he actually termed a "centrist" who would soon be brushed aside once the renascent bourgeoisie had consolidated their position — or, given a more favorable turn, after the workers had rallied to Trotsky's own socialist platform. When the next year Stalin crushed Bukharin, began to liquidate the kulaks, and instituted the First Five Year Plan, Trotsky was compelled by the logic of his theories to salute all this as a "leftward" step. Actually, I think Anton Ciliga is right, in his remarkable book, *The Russian Enigma,* when he presents the First Five Year Plan as the foundation of the totalitarian society Stalin has built. The key passage (pp. 103–4) is worth quoting — it should be remembered Ciliga is describing the conclusions he came to in 1930 after several years of life in Russia:

"Did not the captains of the Five Year Plan bear a resemblance to the ships' captains of Cortes? Was there not the same thirst for pillage and conquest under a guise that was sometimes ingenuous and sometimes had the cynicism of Christian — or Communist — missionary activity? Both ancient and modern conquistadors brought not only guns and blood but also a new order, more oppressive but on a higher level than the old. The conquerors did not bring happiness to the people; they brought them civilization.

"These reflections, this interpretation of the Five Year Plan, were in direct contradiction to the official theories of Stalinism, as well as to those of the Trotskyist Opposition. Trotskyism as well as Stalinism

the elaboration of scientific investigation, at least the bureaucrats who led the German Social Democracy to shameful defeat would have had more difficulty in appropriating Marxism as an ideology — just as would also the Stalinists today.

9. The Idea of Progress

The modern faith in Science is closely related to another great modern faith: the belief in Progress. This conception resolves the contradiction between scientific method and value judgments by asserting that there are not *two* worlds — but rather only one world, a world that is in theory completely understandable through the scientific method. If there is only one world, then there is no problem of values — indeed, values exist only as reflections of more basic factors. To the believer in Progress, however, this conclusion appears to mean that, in the working-out of science, *good* values are implicit. (The self-contradictions of this position have been examined in the preceding section.) For it can easily be shown that there has been enormous progress in science, and if scientific method can be applied to all of mankind's problems, then there is justification, almost a necessity, for seeing a progressive pattern in man's history. Not much progress can be shown, it is true, in precisely the spheres which some of us think are outside the scope of scientific method — ethics and art — though there have been brave attempts to demonstrate even this, as when Engels writes in the *Anti-Duhring:* "That . . . there has on the whole been progress in morality, as in all other branches of human knowledge, cannot be doubted." But if we assume, as does Marx, the most thoroughgoing of the prophets of Science and Progress, that art and morality are projections of some underlying reality which is accessible to science, then the problem solves itself easily enough.[6] Especially if we adopt Marx's particular

[6] With what exultation do the young Marx and Engels announce this reductive idea — the joy of system-builders who have dug down to the bedrock on which their system can be firmly constructed: "In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say,

not put down on paper with any concreteness what he meant by "Communism" or what were the long-range aims of socialism, as he saw them. These disjointed notes on a long-forgotten program are still the closet approach we have to a discussion by Marx of these principles. No wonder Bebel and Liebknecht blundered, no wonder Marxists still disagree as to just what Marx "really" meant to say about many basic questions.

It is also significant that Marx and Engels, for tactical reasons, did not make public their disagreement with the basic program of their German followers. Engels explains why in a letter to Bebel (Oct. 12, 1875): "The asses of the bourgeois papers have taken this program quite seriously, have read into it what is not there and interpreted it in a communist sense. The workers appear to do the same. It is this circumstance alone which has made it possible for Marx and myself not to dissociate ourselves publicly from such a program. So long as our opponents and the workers likewise insert our views into this program, it is possible for us to keep silent about it." (What could be a more striking example of the pragmatic approach to communication: that the meaning of a statement lies in the effect it produces on the audience? Again, Dewey and Marx come close . . .) So it was not until 16 years later that Marx's *Critique* was first published.

Instead of the teacher who enlightens, the revolutionary who inspires by telling the truth however awkward the moment, Marx here as too often elsewhere appears as the *realpolitiker,* willing to engage in chicanery for an apparent political advantage. I write "apparent" because, as is often the case, this kind of pragmatic manipulation of the truth turned out to be most unrealistic. For we know how the German Social Democracy developed, how timidly respectable it was, how grotesquely unfitted to make any kind of revolution. These tendencies were clear in the Gotha Program, and Marx saw them, yet he refrained from saying anything in public about them because the bourgeois "asses" could not see them. But the working class were also asses, since they "do the same"; and one might have expected Marx to want to enlighten *them* at least. How much difference it would have made is a question. If Marx had been bolder and more responsible in his handling of the Gotha Program, if the clear definition of principles had appeared to him to be as important as

saw in these events only a struggle between two social orders: proletariat versus bourgeois, the latter embracing the kulaks and the relics of the former ruling classes. As for me, I had come to the conclusion that three social systems were taking part in the struggle: State capitalism,[13] private capitalism and socialism, and that these three systems represented three classes: the bureaucracy, the bourgeois (including the kulaks) and the proletariat . . . The difference between Trotsky and Stalin lay in the fact that . . . Stalin saw the triumph of pure socialism, pure dictatorship of the proletariat, whereas Trotsky perceived and stressed the gaps and bureaucratic deformations of the system . . . The experience of subsequent years showed me the strength of the organic bonds that united the Trotskyist Opposition withe the bureaucratic regime of the Soviets."

Because he saw a fictitious antagonism between collectivism and dictatorship, Trotsky insisted that the Stalinist bureaucracy were Bonapartist usurpers, a gang of bandits who had grabbed control of the collectivised economy but who were forced, in order to maintain their political power, to take actions which clashed with the needs of this economy. But it would now appear that *there is no such conflict,* that economic collectivisation and total dictatorship can exist peacefully side by side, their gears meshing in smoothly together. The very thing which today is to many people an indication of the progressive nature of the Soviet Union, namely the successful resistance to German invasion, seems to me to show something quite different: that the decisive contradictions Trotsky saw between collectivism and dictatorship do exist. Trotsky always predicted that this alleged contradiction would cause great internal political difficulties for Stalin in the event of war, especially if the war began with big defeats. The strain of war would widen the alleged fissure between the masses and the bureaucracy, he thought. But the actual course of events has been quite different: although the war began with the most catastrophic large-scale defeats, not even a rumor has reached us of any political opposition to the regime at any time.[14] This does not

[13] This is what I call "Bureaucratic Collectivism." Since the market seems to me the distinguishing mark of capitalism, the term "State capitalism" has always appeared a contradiction in terms.

mean Stalin's regime is therefore progressive; Hitler also had wide popular support. Modern totalitarianism can integrate the masses so completely into the political structure, through terror and propaganda, that they become the architects of their own enslavement. This does not make the slavery less, but on the contrary more — a paradox there is no space to unravel here. Bureaucratic collectivism, not capitalism, is the most dangerous future enemy of socialism.[15]

6. Modern War and the Class Struggle

In the century after Waterloo (1815–1914), there was only one war in Europe between first-class powers: the Franco-Prussian War. The the first half of the 20th century, there have already occurred two world wars which involved not only all the great European powers but also the USA, Russia and Japan; and a third world war is generally anticipated. Furthermore, World War II was much more destructive of lives, property and culture than World War I, and the atomic bomb promises to make World War III devastating beyond any historical parallel.

These are commonplaces, but it is easy (and pleasant) to forget them. It is also easy to forget that the whole body of socialist theory, from the Utopians through Marx, Engels, Proudhon and Kropotkin to Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky (after whom it ceased to develop significantly) was built up during the "Hundred Years Peace" after Waterloo.

[14] It now appears that there was, in the first year of the war, not political opposition but at least widespread though unorganized disaffection, and that the dizzy speed of the German advance — the *panzer* divisions smashed through to within fifty miles of Moscow in the first months — was due partly to mass surrenders of Russian soldiers. But the Nazis speedily cemented up again this split between the people and the Kremlin by the brutality with which they treated occupied Russia, much as Roosevelt's Unconditional Surrender policy plus the terror bombings gave the Germans no alternative except to support the Nazis to the bitter end. (Cf. Weil's description of modern warfare as a joint conspiracy of the opposing general staffs and governments against the peoples on both sides of the battle line.)

[15] See Appendix B for elaboration of this point.

means, presumably, that Marx's values are implicit in his whole work, that, as Marxists have put it to me, Marx constantly demonstrates in his analysis of capitalism what he means by Justice and Freedom, even if he does not formally define these concepts and work out their implications. This is even alleged to be a superior way to approach these questions. I deny this. Marx's failure to state clearly what his ethical assumptions were, and to devote as much thought o this kind of problem as the anarchist theoreticians, for example, did, has given his doctrine an ambiguity which anarchism has never had. Because he concentrated so ferociously on capitalism as the Enemy and denied so vigorously the validity of any general moral values, it is possible for the most inhumane and authoritarian class society in the world to make his doctrines the basis of its official ideology. No doubt some Stalinist pundit has already demonstrated that Freedom and justice have a historical content in the Soviet union which Marx was naturally unable to foresee, that they are indubitably very different from the bourgeois ideas of these things which Marx attacked (the most cynical apologist for the English factory system of 1830 could hardly have imagined anything so horrible as a Soviet forced-labor camp), and hence that — lacking any general principles on the subject from Marx — non-Freedom in Russia today is actually a historically higher form of Freedom and would have been so recognized by Marx were he alive today. That Marx would *not* so react to the Soviet Union I think may be taken for granted; but he certainly went out of his way to make it easy for such an interpretation to be made.

The Gotha Program episode suggests the dangers of Marx's practice of *assuming* his basic principles, and therefore neglecting to define them clearly. In 1875, the Marxists and Lassalleans united to form the German Workers Party, the parent of the Social Democratic Party. Although the Marxists were led by Bebel and Liebknecht, with whom Marx and Engels had been in close personal touch for years, they agreed to a programmatic statement which was decidedly unMarxian. Marx's criticism is just and penetrating; it exposes the philistinism, the lack of revolutionary insight, the narrow nationalism and above all the State-idolatry of the program. But why did he have to make it? How could his closest followers mistake so grievously his teachings? The answer is that up to then Marx had

class societies. This would imply that the authors have a concrete idea of what this new communist morality looks like (else how do they know it will be either different or superior?). But of course they don't. Quite the contrary. The above passage is preceded by the famous section in which the authors meet the various charges that communism will ruin family life, abolish property, destroy culture, etc., by showing quite convincingly that only bourgeois minority actually enjoy these blessings and that capitalism has already taken them away from the mass of people. They state repeatedly that it is only the *bourgeois* form of these things that communism proposes to abolish; in the communist future, men will for the first time experience *real* Freedom, *real* Justice, *real* morality — as against the past, in which such concepts have been perverted into ideological coverings for exploitation. This is indeed an important difference, but it is not the one we began discussing here. For what can possibly be the content of this future *real* morality if it is not he persisting core of past morality stripped of all class-exploitative perversions? If Marx and Engels are not simply projecting into the communist future those "eternal truths" they make such fun of, smuggling them in disguised as "the real thing," then what *is* their conception of that future communist morality which will be so much better than what we have known up to now that they devoted their whole lives to trying to realize it, and called on the workers of the world to ceaselessly rebel until it is achieved? How do we know the struggle is worth it unless we get some idea of what these fine new values are? To have "invented" a brand-new morality would have indeed been writing "recipes for the cook-shops of the future," and Marx wisely, and in line with his own historical approach, refrained from doing this. But the only other way to get any idea of what this future morality would look like was to project the "real" (read "supra-historical") core of *past* morality into the future, which is what Marx did without admitting it.

But why is it important that Marx assumed his ethics instead of stating them explicitly, so long as he did have values and admirable ones (as I agree he did)? Thus Sidney Hook, defending Marxism against the criticisms made recently in these pages, describes it as "a huge scientific judgment of value" (*New Leader,* Feb. 23, 1946). He

From these facts, two conclusions emerge. (1) The preparation and waging of war is now the normal mode of existence of every great nation; the creation of military force is no longer one among other means of advancing the national interest but rather, it *is* now the national interest (cf. Simone Weil's "Words and War" in the May, 1946, *politics*). (2) Since the chronic world warfare of our day was unknown to them, the theoreticians of socialism devoted their attention mainly to the internal class struggle and failed to work out an adequate theory of the political significance of war; this gap will remains to be filled; until it is, modern socialism will continue to have a somewhat academic flavor.[16]

The Inadequacy of the Marxian View of War

Marxism regards war as a means to an end, a method of advancing certain definite class interests; as a means, it is subordinated to its end, so that if the destruction it causes seems likely to exceed the gains to those groups using this means, they will presumably not use it; there is implied in this whole view a certain rationality, even moderation and limit, to warfare, so that one can say that a given war may offer a "revolutionary opportunity" or that the victory of one side may be more advantageous to the cause of socialism than the victory of the other.

There was some truth in these ideas in Marx's time, but they are now obsolete. War has become an end in itself; instead of advancing certain class or national interests at the expense of others, war tends more and more to make the situation of the "victors" indistinguishable from that of the "defeated," as in Europe today; the effects of the technical measures that must be taken to fight a modern war

[16] For some non-academic thinking on modern war and politics, see Simone Weil's "Reflections on War" (*politics*, Feb. 1946) and "Words and War" (*politics,* March 1946); also two remarkable and not-enough-noticed-at-the-time pieces by "European" in *politics:* "Is a Revolutionary War a Contradiction in Terms?" (April 1946) and "Violence and Sociability" (Jan. 1947); also, of course, that little classic from the first World War, Randolph Bourne's *The State,* with its sombre refrain: "War is the Health of the State!"

have become more important than any political effect of the war's outcome. In a word, was seems to have lost its rationality, so that one might say there will probably be a third world war because there has been a second world war; that is, the existence of powerful warmaking apparatuses, with economies and social institutions deformed to support them, and the quite justified fears of every nation of attack from every other nation — these factors are the key to the problem, rather than the expansive needs of capitalist imperialism (which the new State-capitalist economic techniques have largely obviated) or the "contradiction" between Soviet collectivism and American private capitalism (which exists but is not so automatic in its effects as Marxists think). The machine is out of control and is grinding away according to its own logic. Here is another example of "reification" ("thing-ification"): human creations developing their own dynamic and imposing their own laws on their creators.

Although Marx was the first to analyze this tendency in capitalism ("the fetishism of commodities"), he had no such insight about warmaking. One is struck by the superficiality of Marx's ideas about war, in contrast to his understanding of capitalism. "However the war may end," he wrote during the Franco-Prussian war, "it has given the French proletariat practice in arms, and that is the best guarantee of the future." (*Letters to Kugelmann,* p. 116) The proletariat has by now had plenty of such practice; our problem is to get less of it. This simplistic notion of Marx's (whose very simplicity shows what a perfunctory interest he took in the question of war, for his mind was not a simple one) was understandable in his day, but what would we think of a modern socialist who would advance it?

So, too, with the related expectation that out of the chaos of war would come revolutionary opportunities. "Marx and Engels hailed the Crimean War," writes a biographer, "for, after all, the war did mean that the three major powers which had been the mainstay of counter-revolution had fallen out, and when thieves fall out, honest folks are likely to benefit by it." And Engels, after a remarkably accurate prediction of the nature and even the line-up of World War I, added ". . . only one result absolutely certain: general exhaustion and the establishment of the conditions for the ultimate victory of the working class . . . This, my lords, princes and statesmen, is where

Text III

> "Undoubtedly," it will be said, "religious, moral, philosophical and juridical ideas have been modified in the course of historical development. But religion, morality, philosophy, political science and law constantly survive this change. There are, besides, eternal truths, such as Freedom, Justice, etc., that are common to all states of society. But Communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis; it therefore acts in contradiction to all past historical experience."
>
> What does this accusation reduce itself to? The history of all past society has consisted in the development of class antagonisms . . . One fact is common to all past ages, viz., the exploitation of one part of society by the other. No wonder, then, that the social consciousness of past ages, despite all the multiplicity and variety it displays, moves within certain common forms, or general ideas, which cannot completely vanish except with the total disappearance of class antagonisms.
>
> The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with the traditional property relations; no wonder its development involves the most radical rupture with the traditional ideas of all of the bourgeoisie. But let us have done with the bourgeois objections to Communism!
>
> (*The Communist Manifesto,* Part II.)

The Argument that the author put into the mouth of their bourgeois critic seems to me sound, and perhaps the impatient interjection, "But let us have done . . .," with which they break off their reply shows that they themselves were vaguely aware they had failed to meet it. Their reply is that what seem to be "eternal" truths are really truths that have been common to all past societies, and that the common character of these truths reflects the common nature of these societies, which have all been based on class exploitation. Since the future communist society will be classless, its concepts of Justice, Freedom, etc., will be different from and superior to those of past

criterion that is outside historical development, i.e., is an absolute existing "only in the imagination?" How can we test this alleged progression if we have no definition of "higher" that is independent of the process itself?

The passage from Engels, by the way, strikingly anticipates Dewey's concepts of "experience" and "knowledge as a process," to which the same objections apply. On this whole question, Dewey is close to Marx.

Text II

> To know what is useful for a dog, one must study dog nature. This nature itself is not to be deduced from the principle of utility. Applying this to man, he that would criticize all human acts, movements, relations, etc., by the principle of utility, must first deal with human nature in general, and then with human nature as modified in each historical epoch. Bentham makes short work of it. With the driest naiveté he takes the modern shopkeeper, especially the English shopkeeper, as the normal man.
>
> (Marx, *Capital,* V. I p. 668, footnote.)

But where does Marx himself consider "human nature in general?" Does he not, on the contrary, constantly deny there is any such thing and constantly assert that human nature only exists "as modified in each historical epoch?" Does he not also arbitrarily take as "the normal man" not, true enough, the British shopkeeper, but at least the kind of man whose needs the French Enlightenment has assumed, for all sorts of historical reasons, it was the proper aim of social institutions to satisfy? (I'm not saying it wasn't perhaps as good a model as was then available; I'm simply pointing out that Marx, like Bentham, naively took as an example of human nature in general, without any critical examination, a historically limited human type.) Marx can see very well the fallacy in Bentham's making utility his value-principle without asking "useful for what?" But he is blind to his own similar failing.

in your wisdom you have brought old Europe. And when nothing more remains to you but to open the last great war dance — that will suit us all right. The war may perhaps temporarily push us into the background , may wrench from us many a position already conquered. But when you have set free forces which you will be unable to control, things may go as they will: at the end of the tragedy, you will be ruined and the victory of the proletariat will either be already achieved or at any rate inevitable."

The quotation from Trotsky at the head of this article shows the persistence of this approach to war among Marxists even today. Now we see that even after *two* world wars, the victory Engels expected has turned out to be all too evitable. It is true that capitalism (and bureaucratic collectivism) has "set free forces" it is "unable to control," but the socialists are equally unable to control these forces. The "general exhaustion" Engels rightly foresaw as an aftermath of world war includes also the proletariat. Modern warfare is so insanely destructive that the seeds of a new order are wiped out along with the old order. The failure of anything to come out of the European resistance movement shows that the masses are at the moment incapable of political effort. Nerves twisted by saturation bombing raids, feelings numbed by massacre and suffering, vigor sapped by too little food for too many years — out of these thistles we must not expect figs.

A related Marxian illusion is that the victory of one or the other side in a modern war may advance the cause of socialism. Marx and Engels took sides, on this basis, in the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War. I think it may be questioned now whether the beneficial results they expected from these conflicts (abolition of slavery, unification of Germany) have turned out to be quite so important to "progress" as they expected. The hardboiled pragmatic attitude of Marxism show up at its worst in this now crucial matter of taking a stand in war. See, for example, the extraordinary letters Engels wrote to Bebel in 1891 on the proper line to take in the war he saw materializing between Germany and France-Russia. He reasoned that because "we [i.e., the German Social-Democracy] have the almost absolute certainty of coming to power within ten years," a German victory was essential. "The victory of Germany is therefore

the victory of the revolution, and if it comes to war we must not only desire victory but further it by every means . . . We must *demand* the general arming of the people." (My emphasis — D.M.) In sketching out the military strategy of such a war, Engels sounds like a member of the Imperial General Staff. And all this, of course, in the name of revolution. (See *Selected Correspondence of Marx and Engels,* pp. 488–493.) This superficial view of war — I had almost said "frivolous" — is perhaps excusable in a 19th century thinker, but it cannot be forgiven after World Wars I and II. Yet the great bulk of the Second International took it in both these wars, with the addition of the Stalinist in this war; and already we hear the same kind of reasoning advanced in lining up sides in World War III.[17]

Such small Marxist groups as the Trotskyists and the British I.L.P. do not share this illusion, which is good, but they hold to an explanation of the origin of modern war which is also based on a Marxist analysis and which blinds them to the primary nature of the problem. Namely, that the expansive needs of capitalism and the resulting competition for colonies, foreign markets, and overseas outlets for investment is the cause of wars. This theory cannot explain the warlike tendencies of bureaucratic collectivisms like the Soviet Union or post-1936 Germany, the most militarily aggressive powers of our times. And even capitalistic power, as Weil pointed out, go to war now rather to gain or defend the means of making war (oil fields, strategic bases, friendly smaller nations) than for the classic Marxian reasons. The capitalist, motivated by rationalistic profit and loss considerations, fears the risk of war much more than the military man, the bureaucrat, or even the idealistic liblab. In Japan, the big-business Zaibatsu were the peace party; it was the militarists, basing themselves on the peasant conscripts and playing a demagogically "popular" game against the big-business politicians, who pushed Japan along its imperialist path after 1932. Perhaps the strongest argument against the Marxist interpretation is the failure

[17] I must confess that I myself now line up with the West in the cold war and probably will continue to do so when and if it becomes hot, but for, I hope, more sober reasons than Engels' — out of disillusion and despair rather than illusion and hope. But see Appendix C for why I have felt forced to come, reluctantly and still a bit tentatively, to this bleak conclusion.

8. Marxism and Values — Three Texts with Comments

Text I

> Truth, the cognition of which is the business of philosophy, became in the hands of Hegel no longer an aggregate of finished dogmatic statements which, once discovered, had merely to be learned by heart. Truth lay now in the process of cognition itself, in the long historical development of science, which mounts from lower to ever higher levels of knowledge without ever reaching, by discovering so-called 'absolute-truth,' a point at which it can proceed no further . . . Just as knowledge is unable to reach a perfected termination in a perfect, ideal condition of humanity, so is history unable to do so; a perfect society, a perfect state are things which can only exist in the imagination. On the contrary, all successive historical situations are only transitory stages in the endless course of development of human society from the lower to the higher.
>
> (Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach,* p. 21)

I agree that absolute truth is unattainable, that a perfect society can exist "only in the imagination," and that Hegel and after him Marx made a great intellectual advance in emphasizing the historical-relative aspect of truth. But I don't see why one must accept Engels' conclusion that there is no absolute truth outside the historical process. Engels thinks that because such truth can exist "only in the imagination" — the "only" in revealing, by the way — it must therefore be unreal. But why? The imagination is part of life, too, and absolute, unchanging truth may be quite real even if one grants the imperfection of humanity and the consequent impossibility of absolute truth ever being realized outside the imagination. If there is a contradiction here, it is because human life is contradictory. And Engels himself is caught in the contradiction, for how can he speak of historical evolution from the "lower" to the "higher" without some

"rejecting science." I don't expect this explanation to still them. Since the great experiment at Hiroshima, I have discussed with many people the above question, and I have observed how deeply "scientised" our culture has become, so that otherwise coolheaded and rational persons react to the slightest questioning of scientific progress the way a Tennessee fundamentalist reacts to Darwin's theories. Any suggestion, for example, that maybe we know more about nature by now than is good for us, that a moratorium on atomic research might lose us cheaper power but gain us the inhabited globe — the slightest speculative hint of such an idea is greeted with anger, contempt, ridicule. And why not? A god is being profaned.

At the *politics* meetings last winter [i.e., 1946], most of the audience showed this cultural reflex. If a speaker said he doubted the value of scientific method in certain relations, he was at once attacked from the floor: "What! You want to junk science and go back to stone axes?" Many listeners could not distinguish between the statement "Scientific method has its limitations," and the statement, "Scientific method is worthless." When I said, "Science cannot tell us what values to choose," someone rose to object: "Macdonald says science leads us to choose bad values."

It is, of course, not enough to just assert values; unless they are acted on, values aren't meaningful at all, and the concrete way they are acted on in a given specific situation *is* their reality. Put differently: it is true that is Truth, Love and Justice are not closely defined, both rationally and in actual situations, they are so vague that almost any evil may be committed, and has been committed, under their cover; ethical teaching and speculation is an attempt to define them partly by analysis, partly by appealing to people to realize them here and now in their everyday lives. To say that Marx's demonstration of the historical shifts that take place in values, of Dewey's concept of experience are misleading when made the only approach to values in not to say that they should be "junked." In my opinion, they are great advances in our understanding (as is also Freud's exploration of unconscious motivation) which it would be a real cultural regression to abandon. What should be rejected is what seemed to these thinkers the main point: the reduction of all experience to their terms.

of American imperialism to dominate Europe, as Trotsky predicted it would, after World War I, and the even more striking weakness of American foreign policy today. In the case of the Big Three, the degree of imperialist aggressiveness seems to be in inverse proportion to the strength of capitalist institutions.

Not only has it become impossible to fit modern war into the Marxian framework, but a reverse action has also taken place: war has had a shattering effect on that framework.

Economic: "More Work, Better Pay"

Marx and Engels regarded the periodic economic crises which they predicted would occur under capitalism as the immediate causes of revolutions. "We can almost calculate the moment," wrote the latter is his preface to the first volume of *Capital*, "when the unemployed, losing patience, will take their own fate into their hands." And Marx, in *The Class Struggles in France,* noted that "a real revolution is only possible in the periods when these two factors, the modern productive forces and the bourgeois production forms, come into collision with each other . . . A new revolution is only possible in consequence of a new crisis. It is, however, just as certain as this." How do these crises arise? Marx sums it up in *Capital* (V. III, p. 568): "The last cause of all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses as compared to the tendency of capitalist production to develop productive forces such a way that only the absolute power of consumption of the entire society would be the limit."

In a fully-developed Bureaucratic Collectivist society like that of Russia, none of the above applies: crises may occur, but they have a political character and cannot be shown — or at least have not been shown — to arise from the kind of periodic and automatic economic imbalance described by Marx. The forms of production still conflict with the productive forces — but along new lines. In societies like our own and England, which are still capitalist but in which Bureaucratic Collectivism is spreading, techniques of State spending, economic control, and deficit financing have been developed which in practice

have avoided crises and in theory *should* be able to do so. These new economic forms are closely related to preparation for warfare. As Stalin's recent election speech emphasized, the Five Year Plans were primarily armament-building programs. Hitler's rearming of Germany was made possible by the brilliant adaptation Dr. Schacht made of Keynes' theories, which he carried so far as to produce by 1936 (and quite without intending to do so) an economy that was more Bureaucratic Collectivist than it was capitalist. As for the military implications of New Deal economics, note that in 1933, after four years of Hoover's laisser-faire capitalism, there were 16 million unemployed, or one out of every three workers. The New Deal's Keynesian approach did reduce employment to manageable proportions — from 7 to 10 millions. But it was war that really solved the problem: by 1943, unemployment had practically vanished (1 million), nor has it to date — since the hot war has been followed by the cold — again risen to significant heights.

The modern war-making State, even if it is still mainly capitalist, thus avoids Marx's "inevitable" economic crises. Through deficit spending, it enlarges the purchasing power of the masses. And it brings to bear "the power of consumption of the entire society" through vast orders of munitions (a form of buying which has the further advantage of removing the goods entirely outside the market sphere so that they don't compete for a share of the public spending power: the ultimate consumer of munitions — and the adjective is most fitting — is the Enemy soldier). There is also largely eliminated another one of the factors to which Marx looked for the self-disintegration of capitalism: the "industrial reserve army of the unemployed." In wartime, this becomes a real army. In peacetime, it gets employment through the measures just noted. For, while Marx was able to demonstrate how essential "an industrial reserve army" was to the bourgeoisie to keep down the price of labor, such an army is of no advantage to the rulers of a warmaking society, which needs two things above all: "national unity" and full production. Unemployment, with its idle and discontented millions, from this standpoint has only disadvantages.

Finally, nothing improves the economic position of the working class and strengthens its trade unions more than a really good war.

an element which is not historically relative, except in the sense of relating to human beings on this earth and not to Saturnians or Martians.

What Is NOT Asserted about Science

Science is competent to help us behave more wisely, once we have chosen our Ends, but it cannot help us choose them. Or, put differently: it can improve our technique of action, but it cannot supply the initial impetus for action, which is a value-choice: I want this, not that. At that crucial initial moment in any action, the moment of choice, I maintain that science is incompetent, and that there is some intuition or whatever involved which we simply do not understand. It is not the *validity* of scientific method, but rather its proper *scope.* An Attempt is made to deflate the over-emphasis on science in Western culture of the past two centuries, to reduce scientific method to its proper role of means to ends that are outside its province. In short, a dualistic approach is suggested. But a dualist appears to a materialist to be merely a disguised idealist, whence the outcries about

---

certainly tell the mob or the police that he was not. To tell the truth in such circumstances would be to sacrifice the greater moral obligation for the lesser. So, too, with violence: even if one believes it wrong in principle, as I do, I think non-violence at times could also result in greater wrong than violence, as if one refused to defend a child against violence or allowed an armed man to kill someone rather than use force to disarm him. My one-sided insistence on *absolute* truth in this passage was a reaction to the relativism of the Marxian approach to ethics, which in the case of the Bolsheviks shaded off into cynicism. I was trying to build some barrier against the sort of corruption described in the following anecdote related by Ignazio Silone: "They were discussing one day, in a special commission of the Comintern Executive [in Moscow], the ultimatum issued by the central committee of the British trade unions ordering its local branches not to support the Communist-led minority movement on pain of expulsion . . . The Russian delegate, Piatnitsky, put forward a suggestion which seemed to him as obvious as Columbus' egg: 'The branches should declare that they submit to the discipline demanded, and then should do exactly the contrary.' The English representative interrupted: 'But that would be a lie.' Loud laughter greeted his ingenuous objection — frank, cordial, interminable laughter, the like of which the gloomy offices of the International had perhaps never heard before. The joke quickly spread all over Moscow." (*The God That Failed*; R. Gossman, ed.; Harper, 1949.)

who stone him to death, something deep down, far below the level accessible to scientific study (Gallup polls) or to rational argument.

This "something is common" cannot be the mores of the historical period in question, for it is just his own time which rejects most violently the prophet's teachings, while for thousands of years after his death people in widely different social conditions continue to be deeply moved by them. How can one, for example, on historical-materialist grounds, explain the attraction of Tolstoy in 19th century Russia or some of us today in this country feel towards the ideas of Lao-Tse, who lived in China in the seventh century B.C.? In this sense, we may say that Truth, Love, Justice, and other values are absolute: that, in addition to the variations in these conceptions which appear under different historical circumstances, there is also an unchanging residue which is *not* historically relative. The similarities between men's values in widely different historical periods seem to me at least as striking as the differences which, following Marx, it has been customary to emphasize. The "something in common" seems to be related to the nature of the human beings who have inhabited this earth during the last five or six thousand years. (I am willing to concede that this "something is common" is historically relative to this extent: that an inhabitant of Saturn, who may well have six legs, no head and a body the size of a cockroach, probably would not understand Plato's notions of Justice.)

To sum up:

1. The locus of value-choice (and hence of action) lies within the feelings of the individual, not in Marx's History, Dewey's Science, or Tolstoy's God.
2. Free will exists; the area of free choice, from the standpoint of action, is the only one worth talking about since the rest is by definition determined.
3. Moral values are absolute in two senses: (1) They are ends in themselves; if Truth is a value for one, then a lie is not justified even if it is in the class interests of the proletariat.[5] (2) They have

[5] I now think I was wrong here. Some kinds of lies *are* justified. If a refugee from a lynch mob, or from the Soviet secret police, were hiding in my house, I should

This phenomenon, which was uneasily noted by Marxists in World War I, has become positively absurd in World War II. In this country, there was a considerable increase in union membership during the war, and "maintenance-of-membership" clauses, which give the union a certain degree of stability, became standard procedure in War Labor Board awards. Manufacturing wages went up 71% (from $26 to $45 a week average) between 1940 and 1943. This is all common knowledge, but it puts an odd twist on the idea that the improvement of the class position of the workers is necessarily connected with progress. And it makes it very difficult to convince the workers *as workers* that war is a curse.

> Jésus Espinosa, a Mexican gardener of the city of San Antonio, Texas, was asked last week to venture an opinion on an important subject. What did he think of the atomic bomb?
>
> Jésus stared, then shrugged his shoulders eloquently.
>
> Should the U.S. give it to other nations?
>
> "Why not?" said Jésus.
>
> But what if the other nations started a war with it?
>
> Jésus brightened, "More work, better pay," he said.
>
> Did he and his friends discuss the possibilities of atomic energy?
>
> Jésus gave his interviewer a long, pitying look and went back to shoveling dirt.
>
> (*Time,* March 18, 1945.)

Political: The Dominance of Foreign Policy

It is true that Mussolini was demagogic when he transposed the class-struggle theme by speaking of "proletarian nations" like Italy whose hope lay in rebellion against "bourgeois nations" like England (stifling at the same time his own working class movement the better to fight what might be — demagogically — called "the international class struggle"). But the point is he was not *just* being demagogic.

Nor was Hitler when he joined those hitherto warring concepts "national" and "socialism." Everywhere today we see the class struggle *inside* nations yielding to struggle *between* nations, so that the main conflict nowadays is between peoples and not between exploiters and exploited. If history *has* indeed a motor — which I doubt, just as I doubt the existence of History with a capital "H" — the motor is war, not revolution. Everywhere "national unity" is weakening the class struggle: politically, it moderates class conflicts by emphasizing the common national enemy; economically, it makes concessions to the masses in return for their support is warmaking. In Russia, where Hitler's "national socialism" has been realized far more completely than it ever was in Germany, the political control of the rulers over the ruled is so complete that the economic concessions are the most trifling, the gap between the living standards of the masses and their exploiters is the widest.

Marxists will retort that revolutionary class struggle inside each nation is the way to weaken the present supernationalism that is leading us to a third world war. I would agree that it is certainly and important method, but this simply raises the question of WHY there is so little class struggle today, WHY the masses follow their leaders to war with such docility. It is one purpose of this article to suggest that the Marxist answers to this question of WHY are superficial and in large measure obsolete. And certainly, until we can answer the question WHY the condition exists, we cannot do much effectively about changing it.

The more war becomes dominant, the more the ruling classes can monopolize continually — not just in time of actual hostilities — the most powerful ideological weapon they have ever grasped: the appeal for "unity" of the whole nation against a threat from the outside. This weapon is powerful psychologically, because it plays on very deep fears and in-group loyalties. It is also powerful in rational terms, because it is perfectly true that national defeat is catastrophic for *all* classes, not just for the ruling class. Thus the strongest appeal of the Nazis in the terrible final year of the war was their picture of what the consequences of defeat would be for the German people; and now we see — and doubtless the Germans see even better — that the Nazis were quite right in all their predictions.

answer seems to me another form of determinism, and hence is alien to Man ans degrades him to a parasite of a superior power. Why should we recognize the overlordship of God anymore than that of History or Science or the Unconscious? Thirdly, the very fact that the religious hypothesis, for the same reason, is suspect: the "trick" in living seems to me precisely to reject all complete and well-rounded solutions and to live in a continual state of tension and contradiction, which reflects the real nature of man's existence. Not the object at rest but the gyroscope, which harmonizes without destroying the contradictory forces of motion and inertia, should be our model. Perhaps the most serious objection to Marxism is that, in this sense, it is not dialectical *enough.*

The attempt to give values either a religious or a scientific basis seems to me an attempt to objectify what is a subjective, personal, even arbitrary process. I think each man's values come from intuitions which are peculiar to himself and yet — if he is talented as a moralist — also strike common chords that vibrate respondingly in other people's consciences. This is what ethical teachers have always done; it is the only way we have ever learned anything essential about ethics or communicated our discoveries to others; that is should appear such a mysterious business today, if not downright childish, is one of the many signs of the disproportionate place scientific method has come to occupy in our consciousness. For the fact that there is no scientific base for ethics does not mean there is no base at all (or only a religious one), any more than the fact that, as I do believe, it is impossible to decide scientifically whether a poem is any good or not means that there is no way to tell (or proves the existence of God). It simply meant that there are two worlds and that we in practice live on two levels all the time.

Tolstoy gives three characteristics of a prophecy: "First, it is entirely opposed to the general ideas people in the midst of whom it is uttered; second, all who hear it feel its truth; and thirdly, above all, it urges men to realize what it foretells." Here we see the paradox: the great ethical teachers have always put forward ideas which the majority of men of their time think nonsense or worse — and yet which these same men also feel are true. The prophecy strike through to *something in common* the prophet and the very people

influence of scientifically determinable factors (glandular, sexual, climatic, historical, etc.) on every choice that one makes? One must conclude, and I do conclude, that although vast areas if human motivation are determined, there is a certain area — a vital core, so to speak — where we have a free choice. (A *determined* choice is a contradiction is terms.) So far as action goes, this core is the "point," since the rest is determined — i.e., we *react* rather than act. Whether Free Will exists or not, it thus seems necessary to behave as though it did; just as whether or not values exist independent of scientifically explainable causes, it also seems necessary to behave as though they did. Necessary, that is, if we aspire — as all socialists, whether of the Radical or the Marxian-Progressive variety, do aspire at least in theory — not to perpetuate the status quo (to react) but on the contrary to revolutionize it (to act).

On What, Then, CAN We Base Our Values?

Once we have divorced value judgments from scientific method, we are embarked on a slope which can easily lead if not to Hell at least to Heaven. For if we assume that men decide what is Good, True, Just and Beautiful by a partially free choice, then the blank question confronts us: if our value-choices are not wholly determined by the scientifically understandable "real" world (I put "real" in quotes because what the scientificians call the "unreal" world seems to me equally real), then where in the world or out of it, DO they come from? The easiest answer is the religious one: that there is some kind of divine pattern, of otherworldly origin, to which our choices conform. This I reject for three reasons. The most important is that, even in adolescence, religion has never interested or attracted me.[4] Here I stand with the young Marx, who wrote in his doctoral thesis: "Philosophy makes no secret of the fact: her creed is the creed of Prometheus: 'In a word, I detest all the gods.'" Secondly, the religious

[4] Those who are curious as to why I am not religious — and so many seem to think it odd, given the rest of my attitudes, that I'm beginning to think maybe it's odd myself — should consult my answer in *Partisan Review*'s symposium, "Religion and the Intellectuals" (May-June 1950, pp. 476–480).

One striking confirmation of the way war rather than class struggle has become the center of our world is the importance that foreign policy now assumes. The disagreements between "Left" and "Right" on domestic policy, unsubstantial enough precisely because of the needs of "national unity" in order to present a strong front to competing nations, vanish completely when the really vital question of foreign policy arises. Thus at the 1943 United Auto Workers' convention in Buffalo, the biggest sign in the hall read: "THE UAW-CIO STAND UNITED WITH OUR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, FRANKLIN D. REOOSEVELT." Thus the British Labor Party Foreign Minister Bevin takes pride in the "continuity" of his policies with those of his Tory predecessor, Eden. Not enough attention, by the way, was paid to a speech Bevin made last April during the election campaign in which he proposed that "foreign policy should henceforth be treated as an all-party matter." It is true that the French Socialists favored a smaller army than DeGaulle, but that was because they had a more sober appreciation of what is economically possible now than the romantic general had, not because of any principled difference. Thus when Foreign Minister Bidault, speaking in the National Assembly, defended France's colonial record and defied the rest of the world to try to dispossess France of her sovereignty over certain territories, *Time* (April 9, 1945) reported: "For once, no cries of dissent welled from the Assembly. For Right, Center and Left alike, empire was above politics." This too, was "continuity of policy," for on February 3, 1939, the French Chamber of Deputies *unanimously* resolved "that all parts of the Empire are placed under the protection of the nation to the same extent as continental France, that the sovereignty of France is indivisible and cannot be transmitted, delegated or shared."

Now that the national State has become the great menace, and war and foreign policy the great issues, the "realistic" attitude that has always distinguished Marx and his followers on these matters has become quite unrealistic (if one's aim is not effective warmaking or the furtherance of nationalistic ambitions). The Anarchists' uncompromising rejection of the State, the subject of Marxian sneers for its "absolutist" and "Utopian" character, makes much better sense in the present era than the Marxian relativist and historical approach.[18]

The pacifists also seem to be more realistic than the Marxists both in their understanding of modern war and also in their attempts to do something about it. A very interesting essay could be written today about the unrealism of Realism and the metaphysical nature of Materialism.

[18] "Bakunin has a peculiar theory," Engels wrote to Cuno in 1872, "the chief point of which is that he does not regard capital, and therefore the class contradiction between capitalists and wage-earners . . . as the main evil to be abolished. Instead, he regards the State as the main evil . . . Therefore, it is above all the State which must be done away with, and then capitalism will go to hell itself. We, on the contrary, say: do away with capital, the appropriation of the whole means of production in the hands of the few, and the State will fall away itself. The difference is an essential one." It is indeed.

self, for example, it becomes more and more difficult to tell which needs are "real and materialist" and which are not. One can only solve this question by constructing a metaphysical and scientifically unverifiable model of "real" or "true" human nature — i.e., what one's heart tells one men *should* be like — and applying this as a standard to the vast mass of contradictory data one's scientific labors have amassed. The only possible *scientific* model of human nature is, we have seen above, the one arrived at by ascertaining what in fact most people have wanted most of the time. But an ethics based on this would not be an attractive one. Most people in the past and today have been conditioned by exploitative social institutions to want such things as to be fed in return for submission to authority, or to play god in their own family circle, or to despise the weak and honor the strong. if these unpleasant traits are held to be perversions of human nature, then one must ask on what scientific basis this finding is made; it is an odd conception of normality which expresses itself only in a few individuals and cultures throughout mankind's long history. Scientifically, the Machiavellians would seem to have the better of this argument.

Marx and Dewey are at least *bothered* by the problem of values, even though unable to reconcile it with their scientific monism. The more consistent scientific-monists, however, simply deny the reality of the whole problem. They argue that one has merely the illusion of value-choice: in "reality," one reacts to stimuli of which one may not be conscious but which there is no reason to suppose are intrinsically incapable of being understood through science. They maintain that, just as the advance of science has shown us that many phenomena can now be explained scientifically, so in the future those areas of human motivation which now seem to us out side the sphere of science will be likewise brought safely under control.

This takes us to the philosophical problem of Free Will, which I don't feel competent to discuss beyond saying that *either* thoroughgoing answer to it seems to me absurd. If there is no Free Will, then there must be a cause for every result; but how does one arrive at First Cause — what causes *that?* (Religion answers this with God, but this seems to me more an evasion than an answer.) But if there *is* Free Will, complete and unforced, then how can one explain the

a "self-evident" that Man ought to want Life rather than Death, or Plenty rather than Poverty; once some such assumption is made, then of course that have no difficulty showing how science can help us reach this End. But if the assumption is questioned, it soon becomes clear that it is based on other assumptions: that "Man" means "most people of the time and place we are talking about," and that the "normal" or "natural" as defined in this statistical way is what one *ought* to want. It is understandable that their answer should take a quantitative form, since science deals only in measurable quantities. But if what most people want is one's criterion of value, then there is no problem involved beyond ascertaining what in fact people *do* want — a question that can indeed be answered by science, but not the one we started out with. For this answer simply raises the original question in a different form: why *should* one want what most people want? The very contrary would seem to be the case: those who have taught us what we know about ethics, from Socrates and Christ to Tolstoy, Thoreau, and Gandhi, have usually wanted precisely what most people of their time did *not* want, and have often met violent death for that reason.

But, it will be objected, surely it is possible to base an ethical system on human needs by investigating "human nature" through such sciences as psychology, anthropology and sociology. "Ideals need not be idealist," writes Helen Constas (*politics,* January 1946). "The ethical standards of socialism can be and are derived directly from the physical and psychological needs of human beings, and are therefore quite real and materialist. This is the only scientific base for socialism." This is a plausible and attractive idea; it is the approach of the main theoreticians of both anarchism and Utopian socialism (see below under "Ancestral Voices Prophesying Progress"). What could be more direct and satisfying a solution than to discover, by scientific inquiry, what human needs are and then to construct an ethical system that will give the maximum satisfaction to those needs? But how is one to tell the "real" or "normal" or "good" human needs from the "perverted" or "bad" ones? As one extends the scope of one's investigation over large masses of people, the variety and mutual exclusiveness of human needs becomes ever more confusing; and as one intensifies one's vision into any single individual — one's

PART 2: TOWARD A NEW RADICALISM

This part of my argument I undertake reluctantly, for I have no philosophical training and don't feel at home in this field. Those more at home may perhaps dismiss what follows with Sheridan's criticism of a young politician's first speech: "The honorable member has said much that is sound and much that is new; but what is sound is not new and what is new is not sound." I have long thought, however, that our over-specialized culture would profit if amateurs were more daring in treating matters usually left to experts, and have acted often on that assumption. In any case, the course which our society is taking is so catastrophic that one is forced to rethink for himself all sorts of basic theoretical questions which in a happier age could have been taken for granted. Questions which formerly seemed to me either closed or meaningless are now beginning to appear open and significant. Such questions are those of Determinism v. Free Will, Materialism v. Idealism, the concept of Progress, the basis for making value judgments, the precise usefulness of science to human ends, and the nature of man himself. (In this I am not particularly original, of course: a similar shift of interest may be observed among most Western intellectuals, the most recent example being the vogue of existentialism.) I do not propose to try to settle any of these vast questions here — indeed I am coming to suspect that most of them cannot ever be settled in the definite way I once assumed they could be. But it will be necessary to go into them somewhat in order to make clear the necessity, for those who still believe in the ethical aims of socialism, of adopting a "Radical" attitude.

Definitions

By "scientific method" I mean the process of gathering measurable data, setting up hypotheses to explain the past behavior of whatever is being investigated, and testing these hypotheses by finding out

if they enable one to predict correctly future behavior. The essence is the ability to accept or reject a scientific conclusion by means of objective — and ultimately quantitative — tests whose outcome is unambiguous: that is, there is recognized to be a universal standard *independent of the individual observer* which forces *everyone* to assent to a given conclusion if it can be shown to meet the requirements of this standard. As Karl Pearson puts it: "The scientific man has above all things to strive at self-elimination in his judgments, to provide an argument which is true for each individual mind as for his own. The classification of facts, the recognition of their sequence and relative significance is the function of science, and the habit of forming a judgment upon these facts *unbiased by personal feeling* is characteristic of the scientific frame of mind." (*The Grammar of Science;* Everyman edition, p. 11; my emphasis.)

By "value judgment" I mean a statement that involves the notion of "Good" and "Bad" in either an ethical or an esthetic sense. Such a judgment is always ambiguous because it involves a qualitative discrimination about something which is by its very nature *not* reducible to uniform and hence measurable units; the "personal feeling" of the observer not only enters into the judgment but is the chief determinant of the judgment. It is impossible, therefore, ever to solve a moral or esthetic problem in the definite way that a scientific problem can be solved, which is why one age can build on the scientific achievements of all past ages, whereas it is notorious that in art and ethics no such progress may be observable. It is also impossible to *prove* an ethical or esthetic judgment in such a way as to compel everybody else, or indeed anybody else, to assent to it. This is not to say that communication, persuasion, and demonstration are not possible in this realm. It is, but along unscientific lines. In a word, there seems to be something intrinsically unknowable about values, *in a scientific sense,* although artists and moral teachers have shown us for several thousand years that knowledge is attainable by other methods.[1]

[1] "What is the wisdom that world literature has accumulated or the virtue it has taught? Poetry and philosophy look as confusing and as contradictory as life itself. Can any one summarize what he has learned from Shakespeare and Cervantes?

central question: what values *should* we choose, what End *ought* we to want? Science comes into play only *after* the values have been chosen, the End selected. For it, the End must always be "given," that is, assumed as a fact, a datum which scientific method cannot and should not "justify" any more than it can tell why coal "ought to be" coal.[3]

Many, perhaps most, scientists will agree with this limitation of the scope of scientific method — and with the more general proposition it rests on, that the world of value judgment is intrinsically unknowable through science. So, too, will those at the other extreme: the religiously minded. It is the Progressives who deny this limitation; in this they follow their masters, Marx and Dewey, each of whom has made a Promethean effort to unify the two worlds by deducing values from scientific inquiry.

Is a Scientifically-Grounded Ethics Possible?

I have discussed this problem of values with Marxists and Deweyans a good deal of late. They generally begin by assuming

[3] Nor can science (or knowledge or scholarship) tell us what to value esthetically. The ethical and the esthetic spheres are oddly linked in being two great areas impenetrable to scientific method, because in both cases the question is not how or why something occurs but rather a judgment as to what value one puts on it. "I don't know anything about art but I know what I like" is a bromidic but also a perfectly sensible statement. (A *New Yorker* cartoon showed two people in an art gallery discussing a bespectacled, bearded intellectual peering anxiously at a picture: "He knows all about art but he doesn't know what he likes.") Apropos all this: a University of California sociologist wrote me a friendly but rather contemptuous letter after this article appeared in *politics* dismissing as "nonsense" the statement that "there seems to be something intrinsically unknowable about values, in a scientific sense," saying I reminded him of a colleague who "tells his classes that men are born with a sense of right and wrong," and predicting: "You are faced with these possible courses: (a) suicide, (b) religion, of the Friends variety, (c) ethical hedonism. At your present stage, (b) seems most likely." None of these predictions have yet materialized. But *his* future turned out quite interesting — in fact, *he* seems to have chosen alternative (c): a year or so ago, he was convicted of burglary, which, it appeared, he had been practicing for some time as a means of supplementing his academic salary. (In all fairness, I must admit that I know of no other critic of my article who has been convicted of any serious crime.)

could not understand why we should be shocked . . . " (*P.M.,* January 30, 1941.)

The fact that "everybody" agrees that war, torture, and the massacre of helpless people are Evil in not reassuring to me. It seems to show that our ethical code is no longer *experienced,* but is simply *assumed,* so that it becomes a collection of "mere platitudes." One does not take any ricks for a platitude. Ask a dozen passersby, picked at random, whether they believe it is right to kill helpless people; they will reply of course not (the "of course" is ominous) and will probably denounce the inquirer as a monster for even suggesting there could be two answers to the question. But they will all "go along" with their government in World War III and kill as many helpless enemy people as possible. (While the monstrous questioner may well become a C.O.) Good and Evil can only have reality for us if we do not take them for granted, if they are not regarded as platitudes but as agonizing problems. Thus the easy, universal agreement that war is Evil is a matter for suspicion, not congratulation.[2]

The Limitations of Scientific Method

Scientific method cannot answer Tolstoy's question. It can tell us everything about a work of art or a way of life — its psychological and economic motivation, its historical significance, its effects on the beholder or the participant — everything except the one essential thing: is it Good? Scientific method can tell us how to reach a given End: the chances of success by one method against another, the past experience of other people, the favorable and unfavorable factors. It can tell us what the consequences of reaching a given End will be. It can even tell us a good deal about why we in fact choose one set of values (i.e., on End) rather than another; that is, it can tell us all about the historical, economic, glandular, psychological and other objective actors involved in value choices. All this information is important and useful. But science is mute on what is, after all, the

[2] Since I'm no longer a pacifist, I could no longer write this eloquent paragraph. Again, see Appendix C.

An example may bring out the contrast. The modern detective story and the novels of Henry James share a common structural pattern: a mystery, a problem is proposed, and the dramatic interest lies in the reader's sense of coming to the solution of the mystery. With not too much straining, it might also be said that the problem is the same in each case: what kind of people are these "really," as James would say, which are the Good ones, which are the Bad? The difference is that a detective-story writer reduces this to a question that is scientifically manageable: who pulled the trigger, who poisoned the medicine? So we always at the end get a solution of the mystery; we find that so-and-so is the criminal, and hence that, since

. . . What then, in all seriousness, does one learn about wisdom and virtue from the poet? The answer is simple. One learns *that they exist.* And if that seems very little, perhaps it will seem not unimportant nevertheless when one realizes that nowhere else can one learn that fact either so well or, perhaps, even at all. All the sciences and techniques, from politics to plumbing, are concerned primarily with ways and means. So too is the day-to-day living of most men. All are methods for getting what one wants without must question concerning why one wants it or whether one ought to want it at all. But that why and that whether are the real subject of literature; it reminds us continuously that they ought to be inquired into."

"Probably the very men who were ready to give up 'the humanities' as a bad job [he refers to the trustees of a foundation who had decided to give only to scientific research because they felt that the humanities failed to provide any clear guidance to human betterment] are well enough aware that what the world needs most is a sense of values. Probably they have some faint hope that sociology will define them in some formula or science discover them in some test tube. But in neither such way will or *can* the thing ever come about. Nothing can be made to seem good or bad merely by doing it, only by contemplating it. And literature is concerned, not with doing things, but with contemplating things that have been done. From it only one consensus of opinion can be deduced, but that one is unanimous. It is not merely that this or that is wise or good but merely that things are either wise or foolish, good or bad in themselves, and that a good deal depends on our decision which is which . . .

"In any event, the world of humanities is simply that vision of the world in which the question of values is assumed to be the most important question of all. Anyone who has ever read much literature has almost inevitably formed the habit of making that fundamental assumption. And if he has not 'got anywhere,' he has at least stayed somewhere that it is very important that man should stay. In fact, it is the only place he can stay and remain Man." (Joseph Wood Krutch: "Thinking Makes It So"; *The Nation,* Aug. 13, 1949.)

the committing or not committing of a physical act is our only criterion, so-and-so is quite definitely the Bad character. But in James, despite the most subtle and laborious analysis and despite a whole series of dramatic revelations, we find that the clearing-up of one ambiguity simply opens up several others, which in turn suggest other mysteries undreamed of before the process of elucidation began, so that the onion is never, so to speak, completely stripped. For the heart of James' onion, unlike that of the detective writer, is unattainable, since the problem he sets himself is ethical and esthetic rather that scientific, a problem of values which by its very nature can never be "solved" but only demonstrated. *The Golden Bowl* is an inquiry into the moral behavior of four people; at the end we are no farther along towards a final judgment as to who is Good and who is Bad than we were at the beginning — we have even lost ground, in fact — and yet we have learned a great deal about both the people and their ethics. The greater the artist, the more we feel this about his work, which is one reason Henry James is more interesting than Agatha Christie.

A thoroughgoing scientific approach, such as Marx's was in intention, sees the world as of one piece, all of it by its nature able to be understood scientifically; to the extent that it is not so understood, the imperfection of our present knowledge is to blame. This view sees judgments as illusory in their own terms (since with sufficient scientific knowledge it is assumed they could be shown to be simply reflections of some deeper scientifically-graspable reality — historical according to Marx, psychological according to Freud) although of course values are conceded to be real enough as phenomena.

My own view is that value judgments are real in both the above senses, that they as in fact our ultimate basis for action whether we realize it or not, and that they belong to an order of reality permanently outside the reach of scientific method. There are *two* worlds, not one. I suppose I am, philosophically, a dualist; there is precedent for such a position, but the contemporary trend on the Left has been along Marxian or Deweyan lines so that one feels quite uncomfortable in it. At any rate, the crucial question seems to me to be not how we arrive at our values, or what consequences their realization will have, but rather what values we *should* hold. How may we tell

Good from Evil? In Tolstoy's great phrase: What Should a Man Live By?

7. Scientific Method and Value Judgment

The question of what we base our value judgments on, how we know what is Good and what is Evil, may seem remote and academic in an age which has witnessed Maidanek and Hiroshima. Confronted by such gross violations of the most modest ethical code, may we not take it for granted that there is general agreement that such things are Evil, and instead of splitting hairs about metaphysical questions like the nature of values, devote ourselves rather to the practical implementation of this universal agreement? In a word, when Evil is so patent, is our problem not a scientific one (devising Means to an agreed-on End) rather than an ethical one (deciding what Ends we want)?

This is "just common sense" — which means it will not stand close examination. That extreme Evils are committed today, with no large-scale opposition, by the agents of great nations — this leads me to conclude not, with the liberals and the Marxists, that the peoples of those nations are horrified by these Evils, groaning under the bondage of a system which permits such things to happen, and waiting expectantly for a practical program to be put forward which will eliminate them; but rather that, on the contrary, these Evils are rejected only on a superficial, conventional, public-oration and copybook-maxim plane, while they are accepted or at least temporized with on more fundamental, private levels. How deeply does modern modern man experience the moral code he professes in public? One recalls the encounter of two liblab American journalists with a Labor member of the British cabinet during the war. They asked him for "some sort of idea about what Britain was fighting for." The Laborite was puzzled. "Then he smiles and said that Britain, of course, could state the sort of aims we seemed to demand, of course, Britain could get out a list of points. But he asked us what they would mean — they would be mere platitudes. He was intensely sincere and he

Dwight Macdonald
The Root Is Man
1946

Transcribed from the 1995 Autonomedia republication of the 1953 update of the 1946 original work by "Flighty Dwighty" Macdonald, by grigor
Macdonald, Dwight. "The Root Is Man."
Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1995. Print.

electric telegraphs? Where does Vulcan come in as against Roberts & Co.; Jupiter as against the lightning rod; and Hermes as against the Credit Mobilizer? All mythology, i.e., that nature and even the form of society are wrought up in popular fancy in an unconsciously artistic fashion . . . Is Achilles possible side by side with powder and lead? Or is *The Iliad* at all compatible with the printing press and the steam press? Do not singing and reciting and the muses necessarily go out of existence with the appearance of the printer's bar, and do not, therefore, disappear the requisites of epic poetry?"

Two things are striking about this passage: (1) the way Marx goes to the heart of a question; (2) the fact that it is not the question he started to answer. Instead of showing, in historical-materialist terms, how the existence of a high art may be reconciled with its low material base (the "high" and "low," as Marx uses them, are value terms, please note), he slides over into a demonstration of quite another matter: that Greek art presupposes mythology, which is no longer possible once man has mastered nature. From a value problem which his system cannot deal with, Marx slips into a historical problem it can handle admirably.

But one of the signs that Marx was a great thinker is that his thought is often more profound than his system, which is why he bothered by all sorts of things it never occurred to his epigones to see as problems at all. A Kautsky would have let it go at the above passage, quite satisfied (not that he could lave written it in the first place; he would have taken twenty pages and would have muffled the point in the end). But Marx was evidently still uneasy, vaguely aware that he had evaded the real problem. So he returns to it: "But the difficultly is not in grasping the idea that Greek art and epos are bound up with certain forms of social development. It rather lies in understanding why they still constitute with us a source of esthetic enjoyment and in certain respects prevail as the standard and model beyond attainment."

Here at least Marx puts the question unequivocally. His answer is less satisfactory: "A man cannot become a child again unless he becomes childish. But does he not enjoy the artless ways of the child and must he not strive to reproduce its truth on a higher plane? . . . Why should the social childhood of mankind, where it had obtained

its most beautiful development, not exert an eternal charm as an age that will never return? There are ill-bred children and precocious children . . . The Greeks were normal children . . . The charm their art does for us does not conflict with the primitive character of the social order from which it had sprung. It is rather the product of the latter, and is rather due to the fact that the unripe social conditions under which the art arose and under which it alone could appear can never return."

This seems to me an appalling judgment. In the typical philistine-sentimental manner, Marx affects to see Greek art as a charming object from a vanished past, something which the modern stands apart from and appreciates, which an indulgent smile, as the adult looks at the little joys and sorrows of children. To the philistine, indeed, it is precisely the *apartness,* the definitely long-done-with-ness of Greek art that is its most fascinating characteristic; since thus he may accept it without letting it disturb his complacency about the Progress made since then ("unripe social conditions"). Marx was not a philistine, which is why I said he "affected" to view Homer in this light. I think that his esthetic sensibility was too lively, his imagination too profound, for him to make such a judgment spontaneously. He was coerced to it by the necessities of his historical-materialist system, in which he was imprisoned, alienated from values as surely as the proletarian is alienated from the products of his labor; there was no other way for him to escape acknowledging that there are suprahistorical values in art.

As it chances, Simone Weil's "The Iliad, or the Poem of Force" (*politics,* November 1945), puts forward the opposite thesis to Marx's. She shows that the Homeric Greeks had a more adult conception of warfare and suffering than we have — it is we who are children, and ill-bred children at that — and that, far from being able to stand apart and view *The Iliad* as an expression of a primitive, long-past world, we are so close to its mood today that we can view our own deepest fears and emotions in its terms. Without a single direct reference to the present — the essay was written in the months following the fall of Paris — Weil is able to communicate our modern tragedy through a scrupulous analysis of the ethical content of *The Iliad.* Except for a few Marxists, who could not understand why a political

magazine should feature a "literary" article, everyone who read the article seemed to grasp the point at once: that by writing about a poem written three thousand years ago, Simone Weil has somehow been able to come closer to contemporary reality that the journalists who comment on current events. She had, of course, the immense advantage over Marx of living in a time when the 19th century dream of progress has collapsed in brutality, cruel and helpless suffering so that our kinship with Homer's dark times emerge clearly. Thus the historical method may be used to show its own limitations. For we can now see, from our own present experience, that during the last century, for certain historical reasons, the grim visage of History was overlaid for a time by illusions which were powerful enough to deceive even so profound a sensibility as Marx's — and one of such a naturally *tragic* cast, too.

10. Wanted: A New Concept of Political Action

My purpose in writing this article is to find a basis for political action.[8] This may seem an odd statement, since the article deals with only the most general kind of theoretical questions while its proposals for actions, as will shortly appear, are of the most modest nature. But it is because the traditional assumptions of the Left about

[8] I didn't find it and I can't say I'm still looking very hard for it. Too discouraging. And my own personal life too absorbing — this being both a cause and effect of my diminished interest in politics. But I'm sure these pages won't do any harm to those who are still carrying the banner of radical revolution, or should I say carrying to torch for it? Maybe my age (47) has something to do with it. Maybe people become conservative as they age because a young man thinks of the future as infinite, since the end (death) is not imaginable to him, and so he lives in it. But a middle-aged man feels that This Offer Is Good For A Limited Time Only, that the future is all too finite, the end all too conceivable. So, in time, he looks to the present, and in space, his interests contract closer to his personal life. The young man, feeling he has "all the time in the world," plans his house on a noble scale and starts to build it of the best Utopian materials. But the middle-aged man, his house still far from finished, just wants to get a tarpaper roof on before winter sets in.

political action no longer seem valid that it is necessary, if we are to act, to begin by criticising them in broad terms. I am enough of a Marxist to agree that creative political action must be based on theory, and enough of a Christian to agree that we cannot act for good ends until we have clarified the nature of Good. So another of the paradoxes among which we uncomfortably exist is that we can find a road to action only through philosophical speculations.

If this article has a "point," I should say it is that it criticises the Progressive notion of what is "real" and what is "unreal" in political action. It seems to me that the view of this crucial question which Marx put forward as his major contribution to socialist thought has by now become generally accepted among Progressives of all shades, from Trotskyists to New Dealers. This is that consciousness (and conscience) are less "real" than the material environment, and that the individual is less "real" than society; that is, that the former of these two pairs depend on the latter, are determined by the latter.[9] From this follows the assumption that the only "real" political action is on a mass scale, one involving trade unions, parties, the movements of classes. This means that, politically, one thinks of people in terms of classes or parties instead of in terms of individual human beings; and also that one's own motivation for action springs from identification with a class or a historical process rather than from one's personal sense of what is right and true. In short, the historical, rather than the personal level of action, is thought to be the Real level, and the criterion of Reality in judging a political proposal is how many people it sets in motion. This quantitative standard is typical of our scientized culture.

It is to Marx above all that we owe the present general acceptance of this criterion of Reality. The difficulty today, as I showed in Part I of this article, is that the Marxian notion of historical Reality and

[9] I am aware that Marx constantly denied the direct relationship between the economic base and the ideological superstructure which his followers constantly attributed to him. But insofar as his theories have a specific content, they do tend to reduce consciousness and conscience to functions of the economic base; and his disclaimers were vague and weasel-worded, usually employing the expressions "ultimately" or "in the long run" without defining what *is* the long, as against the short, run.

and the Pax Americana," which Macdonald included in the 1953 edition because it was submitted too late to be printed in the last issue of *politics.*

the Marxian revolutionary values have come into conflict: i.e., that the course of Marx's History seems to be leading us *away* from socialism as Marx conceived of it. This split puts Marxians into one of two untenable positions: either their programs command mass support but don't lead towards socialism (Stalinists, French and Italian Socialists, British labor Party); or else their programs remain faithful to socialist principles but command no significant following (U.S. Socialists, Trotskyists, Britain's Independent Labor Party). In a word, political activity along Marxian lines today is either Real but not Socialist, or Socialist but not Real.

What, then, Is To Be Done? In a 1946 issue of *Pacifica Views,* a reader describes a meeting of the Philadelphia branch of the Committee for Non-Violent Revolution:

". . . we proceeded to get down to the business at hand, the first item of which was an evaluation of the two recent CO demonstrations in Washington and at Byberry. All agreed that they were damn good demonstrations . . . The group displayed the greatest interest in a discussion of Dwight Macdonald's recent article, 'The Root Is Man.' Everyone agreed it is a damn good article and that the world is in a helluva shape. At 9:45 some intemperate person slipped in a question about 'what can we DO?' There was a momentary silence, someone mentioned cooperatives and there was a general agreement that cooperatives were very valuable. This it was 9:50 and time for the meeting to break up. A half hour later, as I leaned against the bar and fondled my glass of beer, the thought occurred to me that the evening's discussions had ended at the same place all the articles I could recall having read in *Pacifica Views* or *politics* had ended."

This is a perfectly natural reaction, and a widespread one. When I first began *politics,* readers used to ask me all the time what they could DO ? (They don't ask so much now . . .) All I could ever think of to suggest was reading, thinking, and writing; but, as several were rude enough to point out, even if these pursuits were granted the honorable status of Action, the answer was helpful only to scholars, journalists — and to the editors. Since then, I must admit that such halfhearted additional suggestions as I made about working in the trade unions or in some group like the Socialist Party or the Michigan Commonwealth Federation (it seems incredible, but I once wrote a

lead article about the MCF as a potential mass-socialist party), that even these appear less and less worth investing time and hope in. On the other hand, some of us late seem to be getting some dim notion at least of the *kind* of political activity worth engaging in. the specific forms of action, and the organizations to carry them out, are yet to be created. We seem to be in early stages of a new concept of revolutionary and socialist politics, where we can hope for the present only to clear the ground, to criticise in a new direction. Anarchism and pacifism provide the best leads for this direction, but only leads; something quite different from either of them, as they have traditionally developed, will probably have to be evolved.

The trouble with mass action today is that the institutions (parties, trade unions) and even the very media of communication one must use for it have become so perverted away from sensible human aims that any attempt to work along that line corrupts one's purposes — or else, if one resists corruption in the sense of sticking by one's principles, one becomes corrupt in a subtler way: one pretends to be speaking to and for millions of workers when one is not even speaking to and for thousands; we are familiar with the revolutionary rodomontade of tiny Marxist parties which address themselves to an "international proletariat" which never pays the slightest attention to them; this is a species of self-deception, at best, and at worst a kind of bluffing game. It is time we called that bluff.

As socialists, our central problem today is what George Lukács calls "reification" ("thingification"), that process which Marx prophetically described in his theory of "alienation": the estrangement of man from his own nature by the social forces he himself generates.

"This crystallization of social activity," write the young Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology,* "this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up to now. And out of this very contradiction between the interest of the individual and that of the community, the latter takes and independent form as THE STATE, divorced from the real interests of individual and community . . . The social power, i.e., the multiplied productive forces . . . appears to these individuals, since their cooperation is not

mid-1950's. Burnham, for example, wanted to declare the American Communist Party illegal and hoped the CCF would back such a policy.. he also testified for the government in an unsuccessful attempt to get his old comrades in Max Shachtman's Workers Party (now called the Independent Socialist League) listed as a subversive organization by the U.S. Department of Justice. Macdonald, however, believed McCarthyism only destroyed what appeal the United States had against the USSR throughout the world. While the USSR took tiny steps in the 1950's to expose Stalinism, it was the James Burnhams of America who wanted to create their own Stalinist state free from internal dissent. Such disputes racked the CCF and the revelation of covert CIA funding to the CCF in the 1960's convinced Macdonald that the debate inside the CCF was secretly manipulated by the CIA for its own objectives. Macdonald also believed the CIA directly blocked his own chance to become editor of the CCF's magazine *Encounter* because of his opposition to McCarthyism. The CIA's covert attempt to rig the CCF was a textbook example of the kind of disguised totalitarianism that Macdonald so feared.

K.C.

A Note on the Text

The text if *The Root Is Man* used in this edition comes from its 1953 republication by Cunningham Press and differs slightly from the original version which appeared in *politics* is 1946. When Cunningham Press proposed reprinting *The Root Is Man,* Macdonald agreed, "on condition that I might add new material commenting on events since 1946 and, especially, indicating the considerable changes in my own thinking since then. I have cut a few passages that now seem to me superfluous or intolerably long-winded (as against tolerably so), perhaps two or three pages in all, but have otherwise not altered the original text. Where I now disagree or think some later event to the point, I have added numerous footnotes. (The footnotes depending from asterisks were in the original version.) I have also added some appendices dealing with matters too lengthy for footnotes." In this edition we have merged the footnotes as endnotes and have deleted an article by *politics* contributor Andrea Caffi called "Mass Politics

Burnham's theories also helped shape the outlook of the post-war Right in favor of global interventionism and away from isolationism. In *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America,* George Nash says: "More than any other single person, Burnham supplied the conservative intellectual movement with the theoretical formulation for victory in the cold war." Best remembered today as an editor at *National Review,* it was James Burnham who recruited William F. Buckley into the CIA. Burnham's own ties to the American intelligence community, however, began shortly after he left the Trotskyist movement. By the mid-1940s Burnham was a consultant to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the predecessor organization to the CIA.

After breaking with Trotskyism, Burnham carried on his war with Stalinism by becoming what he had condemned in his Soviet foe, a theorist of the all-powerful state run by a powerful elite whose decisions would be governed not by Nazi or Bolshevik moonshine but by pragmatic evaluation of the realities of geopolitics. Burnham's theories helped shape the CIA.

Kevin Smant's biography of Burnham (*How Great the Triumph: James Burnham, Anticommunist and the Conservative Movement*) reports that in 1947, "Burnham was recruited into the fledgling United States Central Intelligence Agency by Office of Strategic Services' veteran Kermit Roosevelt. He would serve mainly as a part-time consultant attached to the Office of Policy Coordination (the CIA's covert action wing)."

The OPC was heavily involved in trying to organize anticommunist underground groups in Eastern Europe. Many of their recruits were either ex-Nazis or Nazi collaborators. (Unknown to the OPC, Soviet spy Kim Philby was regularly informing Moscow about its plans.) Burnham became involved in the exile movement and while at *National Review* Burnham regularly reported on meetings of various East Bloc "governments-in-exile" tied to the CIA-backed World Anti-Communist League (WACL). The dependence on pragmatic Realpolitik to justify the hiring of ex-Nazis by the CIA mirrored the tortured rationale used by Communists to justify the Hitler-Stalin Pact.

The tensions between Macdonald and Burnham can be seen in the Congress for Cultural Freedom that both men supported in the

voluntary but coerced, not as their own united power but as an alien force existing outside them, of the origin and end of which they are ignorant, which on the contrary passes through a peculiar series of phases and stages independent of the will and action of men — nay, even the prime governor of these! . . .

"How does it come about that the personal interests continually grow, despite the persons, into class-interests, into common interests which win an independent existence over against the individual persons . . . ? How does it come about that, within this process of the self-assertion of personal interests as class-interests, the personal behavior of the individual must become hard and personal behavior of the individual must become hard and remote, *estranged* from itself . . . ?"[10]

It is not difficult to sketch out the kind of society we need to rescue modern man from his present alienation. It would be one whose only aim, justification and principle would be the full development of each individual, and the removal of all social bars to his complete and immediate satisfaction in his work, his leisure, his sex life and all other aspects of his nature. (To remove all social bars does not, of course, mean to remove all bars; complete happiness and satisfaction is probably impossible in any society, and would be dull even if possible; regardless of the excellence of social institutions, there will always be, for example, persons who are in love with other who aren't in love with them.) This can only be done if each individual understands what he is doing and has the power, within the limitations of his own personality and of our common human imperfection, to act exactly as he thinks best for himself. This in turn depends on

[10] English translation, International Publishers, 1939, pp. 22, 23, 24, and 203. I have put "coerced" instead of this edition's "natural," a change I think justified by its own Note 12, p. 202. These formulations are so wonderfully precise and imaginative as to make one regret all the more that Marx, instead of making his theory of alienation the cornerstone of his intellectual effort, chose to waste years on economic analysis which today has only historical interest. Now was it just a matter of a lost opportunity. The remedy for this alienation of man by his own creations which Marx evolved, misled by his historical-materialist concepts — that is, the class struggle conducted by parties and trade unions directed towards replacing capitalism with collectivism — this has turned out to be simply the 20th century aspect of that alienation which the above passage so admirably describes.

people entering into direct personal relationships with each other, which in turn mean that the political and economic units of society (workshops, exchange of goods, political institutions) are small enough to allow the participant to understand them and to make their individual influence felt. It effective wars cannot be fought by groups the size of New England town meetings, and I take it them cannot, this is one more reason for giving up war (rather than the town meeting). If automobiles cannot be made efficiently by small factories, then let us make them inefficiently. If scientific research would be hampered in a small-unit society, then let us by all means hamper it. Said the young Marx: "For Hegel, the starting-point is the State. In a democracy, the starting-point is man . . . Man in not made for the law, but the law is made for man."

This is all clear enough. What is not so generally understood is that the traditional Progressive approach, taking History as the starting-point and thinking in terms of mass political parties, bases itself on the same alienation of man which it thinks it is combating. It puts the individual into the same powerless, alienated role vis-à-vis the party or the trade union as the manipulators of the modern State do, except that the slogans are different. The current failure of the European masses to get excited about socialist slogans and programs indicates that the masses are, as Rosa Luxemburg constantly and rightly insisted, much smarter and more "advanced" than their intellectual leaders. The brutal fact is that the man in the street everywhere is quite simply *bored* with socialism, as expounded by the Socialist, Stalinist, and Trotskyist epigones of Marx, that he suspects it is just a lot of stale platitudes which either have no particular meaning (Socialists, Trotskyists, British labor Party), or else a sinister one (Stalinists). Above all, he feels that there is no interest in it for *him,* as an individual human being — that he is as powerless and manipulated vis-à-vis his socialist mass-organization as he is towards his capitalistic employers and their social and legal institutions.

Here is observable a curious and unexpected (to Progressives) link between the masses and those dissident intellectuals here and there who are beginning to show a distrust of the old Marxian-Deweyan-Progressive verities and to cast about for some firmer ground. Each

APPENDIX D: HISTORICAL NOTE — BURNHAM AND THE CCF

Dwight Macdonald's turn from active political opposition to both the West and the USSR unwittingly led him into the orbit of the CIA and the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), a group of Western intellectuals, many from the Left, opposed to Soviet totalitarianism. In order to understand Macdonald's encounter with the CIA it is helpful to begin by examining his complex intellectual relationship with James Burnham, whose writing helped shape Macdonald's own analysis of both fascism and creeping forms of totalitarianism in the West.

In 1938 Dwight Macdonald helped finance an American edition of Daniel Guerin's *Fascism and Big Business.* in his introduction to Guerin's book, Macdonald argued that fascism was the logical outcome of capitalism in decline, not some aberration. by 1940, however, Macdonald no longer saw fascism simply as a puppet of big capital. Macdonald now believed that fascism was more a merger of the worst aspects of socialism as well as capitalism into a new form of society rather than the final stage of capital in decline. In Stalin's Soviet Union, Macdonald saw this new society in a more perfected form than in pre-Holocaust Nazi Germany.

Macdonald's contention that Nazi Germany was a form of "black socialism" deeply upset the Workers Party. Macdonald's article in the *New International* stating his thesis was heavily edited, a fact that enraged him and contributed to his leaving the sect.

Macdonald's view of Nazi Germany echoed the thinking of James Burnham who believed that both the USSR and Nazi Germany had developed forms of social organization superior to the anarchic laissez-faire chaos of the West. Although little thought of today, James Burnham has the strange distinction of being both one of the first exposers of the national security state as well as one of its first advocates. No full history of the American intelligence establishment can be written without some examination of Burnham's role.

party, in its own way, has come to find the old slogans and axioms either treacherous or boring — mostly the latter. boring because they give no promise of leading to that which they proclaim, and meanwhile still further alienate man from his true and spontaneous nature.

From all this one thing seems to follow: we must reduce political action to a modest, unpretentious, personal level — one that is real in the sense that it satisfies, here and now, the psychological needs, and the ethical values of the particular persons taking part in it. We must begin way at the bottom again, with small groups of individuals in various countries, grouped around certain principles and feelings they have in common, These should probably not be physically isolated communities as was the case in the 19th century since this shuts one off from the common experience of one's fellowmen. They should probably consist of individuals — *families,* rather — who love and make their living in the everyday world but who come together often enough to form a *psychological* (as against a geographical) community. The purpose of such groups would be twofold. Within itself, the group would exist so that its members could come to know each other as fully as possible as human beings (the difficulty of such knowledge of others in modern society is a chief source of evil), to exchange ideas and discuss as fully as possible what is "on their minds" (not only the atomic bomb but also the perils of child-rearing), and in general to learn the difficult art of living with other people. The group's purpose toward the outside world would be to take certain actions together (as, against Jim Crow in this country, or to further pacifism), to support individuals whether members of the group or not who stand up for the common ideals, and to preach those ideals — or, if you prefer, make propaganda — by word and by deed, in the varied everyday contacts of the group members with their fellow men (as, trade union meetings, parent-teacher associations, committees for "worthy causes," cocktail partied, etc.).[11]

[11] This remark about cocktail parties produced more scornful criticism than anything else in the whole article, and perhaps with reason, since I must confess I have been more assiduous in attending cocktail parties than in making radical propaganda at them. But I don't think what I had in mind in the paragraph as a whole was

The ideas which these groups would advance, by word and deed, would probably run along something like the following lines:

1. The dominance of war and the development of weapons atrocious beyond all past imagination make pacifism, in my opinion, a sine-qua-non of any Radical movement. The first great principle would, therefore, be the killing and hurting others is wrong, always and absolutely, and that no member of the group will use such methods or let himself be drafter to do so.[12]
2. Coercion of the individual, whether by the State or by a revolutionary party, is also wrong in principle, and will be opposed with sabotage, ridicule, evasion, argument, or simple refusal to submit to authority — as circumstances may require. Our model here would be the old I.W.W. rather than then Marxist Internationals.[13]
3. All ideologies which require the sacrifice of the present in favor of the future will be looked on with suspicion. People should

silly. What I was getting at is well put in the Early Christian "Letter to Diognetus" (quoted by *Time* from *The Apostolic Fathers*): "Christians are not different from the rest of men in nationality, speech or customs; they do not live in states of their own, nor do they use a special language, nor adopt a peculiar way of life. Their teaching is not the kind of things that could be discovered by the wisdom or reflection of mere active-minded men . . . They live each in his native land, but as though they were not really at home there. They share in all duties like citizens and suffer all hardships like strangers. Every foreign land is for them a fatherland, and every fatherland a foreign land . . . They dwell on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the laws that men make, but their lives are better than the laws. They love all men, but are persecuted by all . . . In a word, what the soul is to the body, Christians are to the world."

12 Again, I am now more moderate in my absolutism. Under certain extreme circumstance, I would use force, personally and even as a soldier.

13 Though I still hold to the *tendency* expressed here, the actual formulation now seems to me absurdly overstated. Even the Wobblies, after all since they lived in a world of cops and judges, must have submitted to authority far more often than they rebelled against it or evaded it — or else, they would have spent *all* their time in jail (where again, if they consistently flouted authority, they would have spent *all* their time in solitary confinement if not worse). Also, certain kinds of social authority — as, traffic laws, sanitary regulations — are far from even the purest anarchist viewpoint not objectionable and indeed useful. Proudhon drew the line sensibly: he was willing to submit to the State in matters which did not seem to him to importantly affect his interests adversely.

have made his position very difficult. But none of these things happened, and when the *Reichswehr* marched into Poland, what solution was possible? Some of us felt it was our duty as socialists to "oppose the war," i.e., to refuse to fight the Nazis under the flags of existing governments; we also had illusions about the historical possibility of a "third camp" of the common people arising and making it possible to fight the Nazis with clean hands, so to speak. But this alternative, it is now clear, existed only on the ethical and ideological plane; it had no existence on the historical level. The only historically real alternatives in 1939 were to back Hitler's armies, the back the Allies' armies, or to do nothing. But none of these alternatives promised any great benefit for mankind, and the one that finally triumphed has led simply to the replacing of the Nazi threat by the Communist threat, with the whole ghastly newsreel flickering through once more in a second showing.

This is one reason I am less interested in politics than I used to be.

reasoned that, since we can know our own intentions but cannot know completely what will be the consequences of an act, the only guide to action is "the inner state of the mind and heart." We don't in fact know our own hearts so well as he assume, nor are the consequences of most actions so difficult to predict.

Having now stated why I am no longer a pacifist and why I will probably support this country if it comes to war with Soviet Russia, just as I approved of Truman's action in resisting the invasion of South Korea with force, let me now edge back against, not toward pacifism, but toward scepticism and indecision. If it comes to a world war, I think we are done for, all of us. In supporting measures of opposition, including military ones as in Korea, against the Communists, I reason that the best chance of postponing war and perhaps avoiding it altogether is for the West to keep up its military strength and to be prepared to counter force with force. Appeasement didn't work with the Nazis and it won't work with the Communists. I admit that the results of the Korean have been disastrous, especially for the Korean people; if I were a South Korean, I'm not sure I should have not preferred to have just let the North Koreans take over peacefully. Yet perhaps, in terms of world politics, the results of not making a fight to defend the Korean Republic would have been even more disastrous, like the results of letting Hitler absorb the Rhineland, Austria and Czechoslovakia without a fight.

Perhaps there is no solution any longer to these agonizing problems. Certainly the actual workings of history today yield an increasing number of situations in which *all* the real alternatives (as against the theoretically possible ones) seem hopeless. The reason such historical problems are insoluble now is that there have been so many crimes, mistakes, and failures since 1914, and each one making the solution of the next problem that much more difficult, that by now there are no uncorrupted, unshattered forces for good left with which to work. A decent social order in Europe after the first world war, for instance, would have made Hitler's rise impossible; even after he took power, a Loyalist victory in the Spanish Civil War or some radical reforms in France by Leon Blum's *Front Populaire* would

be happy and should satisfy their spontaneous needs here and now.[14] If people don't enjoy what they are doing, they shouldn't do it. (this includes the activities of the group.) This point is a leaning, a *prejudice* rather than a principle; that is, the extent to which it is acted on would be relative to other things.

4. Socialism is primarily an ethical matter. The number of people who want it at any given moment has nothing to do with its validity for the individual who makes it his value. What *he* does,

[14] "To make such a statement," a friend wrote me, "amounts to saying in so many words that one doesn't give a damn about moral ideals. Morality, in fact, is nothing at all if it is not giving up something in the present in favor of something not only of the future but even of the purely 'ideal.' And it isn't even a question of morality: no intelligent activity of any kind would be possible if your statement, and your demand for immediate satisfaction, had to be taken seriously." Even though I qualify this statement as "a leaning rather than a principle," I still must admit it is onesided as put here, and that acting out an ethical ideal may often involve some sacrifice of the present to the future and perhaps also of one's spontaneous, or at least immediate, needs. But the prevailing morality, Christian or Marxian, I think involves far too much of that kind of thing, going to the extremes of the Puritan and of the Communist fanatic. I think pleasure and virtue ought to be re-introduced to each other, and that if there's too much of the sacrificial and not enough of the enjoyable about one's political or ethical behavior, it's a bad sign. Those who have a real vocation for saintliness, like Gandhi, generally strike one as happy to the point of positive gaiety. But too many of us are self-alienated drudges of virtue or work, like Poseidon in Kafka's sketch: "Poseidon sat at his desk, doing figures. The administration of all the waters gave him endless work . . . It cannot be said that he enjoyed his work; he did it only because it had been assigned to him; in fact, he had already filed frequent petitions for — as he put it — more cheerful work, but every time the offer of something different was made to him, it would turn out that nothing suited him quite so well as his present position . . . Actually, a shift of posts was unthinkable for Poseidon — he had been appointed God of the sea in the beginning and that he had to remain. What irritated him most — and it was this that was chiefly responsible for his dissatisfaction with his job — was to hear of the conceptions formed about him: how he was always riding about through the waves with his trident. When all the while he sat here in the depths of the world-ocean, doing figures uninterruptedly, with now and then a trip to Jupiter as the only break in the monotony — a trip, moreover, from which he usually returned in a rage. Thus he had hardly seen the sea . . . and he had never actually travelled around it. He was in the habit of saying that what he was waiting for was the fall of the world. Then, probably, a quiet moment would be granter in which, just before the end and after having checked the last row of figures, he would be able to make a quick little tour."

furthermore, is considered to be just as "real" as what History does.

5. Members of the groups would get into the habit, discouraged by the Progressive frame of mind, of acting here and now, on however tiny a scale, for their beliefs. They would do as the handful of British and American scientists did who just refused, as individuals and without any general support, to make atomic bombs; not as Albert Einstein and other eminent scientists are now doing — raising money for an educational campaign to show the public how horrible The Bomb is, while they continue to cooperate with General Groves in making more and bigger bombs.
6. They will think in human, not class terms. This means they will free themselves from the Marxian fetishism of the masses, preferring to be able to speak modest meaningful truths to a small audience rather than grandiose empty formulae to a big one. This also means, for the moment, turning to the intelligentsia as one's main supporters, collaborators and audience, on the assumption that what we are looking for represents so drastic a break with past traditions of thinking and behaving that at this early stage only a few crackpots and eccentrics (i.e., intellectuals) will understand what we're talking about, or care about it at all. We may console ourselves that all new social movements, including Marxism, have begun this way: with a few intellectuals rather than at the mass level.

11. Five Characteristics of a Radical

While it is still too soon to be definite about what a Radical *does* (beyond the vague suggestions just indicated), it is possible to conclude with a more concrete idea of what he *is.* What are his attitudes toward politics? They may be summed up under five heads:

1. Negativism
2. Unrealism
3. Moderation

so — but still shall do so in all likelihood. Yet what does "support" mean here, really? Can one use such a term of one's relationship to something so beyond his control as a modern war? It's like taking a position toward an earthquake. One thinks of Margaret Fuller's "I accept the universe!" and Carlyle's comment, "Gad, she'd better!"

Besides this general historical dilemma, there were certain curious ethical results of holding pacifist views today which came to bother me more and more as I observed them cropping up in discussions with fellow-pacifists. To summarize them very roughly:

1. Their fear of war causes some pacifists to either remain in deliberate ignorance of the Facts of Life about Communist totalitarianism or else to gloss them over. An example was the absurd and shameful Peace Proposals which the Quakers put forward several years ago, in which, for example, the latter-day descendants of the most intransigent fighters against Negro slavery forgot to say anything about the vast slave-labor camps in the Soviet Union.
2. The Good Samaritan did not pass by on the other side, and it was Cain who asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Yet pacifists often show indifference to the fate of peoples threatened with incorporation into the Soviet empire; some of my friends in the movement weren't especially disturbed by the fact that, if the U.S. Army were to pull out of Berlin in 1948, some two million Berliners would have been rewarded by us for their heroic resistance to totalitarianism by being abandoned to our mutual enemy. If you feel you *are* your brother's keeper, then at the very least a painful dilemma is created when, say, Hitler's armies invade Poland to replace its imperfect republican institutions with the more perfect tyranny of Nazism.
3. When I made the preceding point at a pacifist meeting, several speakers from the floor expressed amazement that I, as a pacifist, should consider the consequences of an action. If the act is god in itself, they argued, then it should be done, regardless of consequences. But it seems to me that it is almost entirely by its consequences, whether immediate or long-range, that we evaluate an action. I think Tolstoy was sophistical when he

War III), offers; then will you not support World War III when and if it comes?

No.

Why not?

Because I agree with Simone Weil that the methods that must be used in fighting a modern war are so atrocious and clash so fundamentally with the ends I favor as to make impossible the achieving of those ends. Specifically, the mass slaughter of the enemy population by atomic bombing and bacteriological warfare, and the destruction of the fabric of Western civilization if not the globe itself.

The usual argument for supporting war today is that if someone comes to burn down your house and kill your family, you have a right to kill him in order to prevent this. But this analogy, so persuasive to the popular mind, is misleading because it leaves out of account the chief difference between such a situation and the wars of our time. If you kill someone to prevent him burning your house and killing your children, the result is that your house is not burned and your children are not killed. But war today seems to bring about just what it is allegedly fought to prevent. After Hitler is defeated, the same evils reappear with the hammer and sickle on their caps instead of the swastika. And the moral and physical destruction employed to defeat Hitler has mounted to a total comparable to the hypothetical damage which the war was fought in order to avoid. A better analogy would be: The proprietor of a china shop battles a gang intent on breaking his china. But the encounter is so furious that most of the china is broken anyway; in fact, the proprietor himself seizes some of the most precious items in his stock to smash over the heads of the attackers.

Then if both violence and non-violence, for different reasons, seem impractical today, you are in a dilemma?

Yes.

So much for my 1948 thinking on the dilemma posed by the Soviet threat on the one hand and the horrors of modern warfare on the other. i would still go along with most of the above, with the important exception that if it comes to war with the Soviet Union, I'll probably support this country, critically, with misgiving, and with the deepest respect for those whose consciences forbid them to do

4. Smallness
5. Self-ishness

1. The Positiveness of Negativism

The first two adjectives which occur to a Progressive when confronted with a Radical attitude are: "negativistic" and "unrealistic." In this section, let us consider the former.

During the late war, those of us who opposed it were told by Progressives who supported it that our position was absurd because we couldn't "do anything" about it; that is, we couldn't stop the war. They felt that they were at least *acting* in accordance with their convictions; that is, they were helping bring about an Allied victory. This criticism, however, reveals as incomprehension of the nature of modern social organization: there is no place in the orderly, bureaucratized workings of a first-class power today for individual emotion, will, choice, or action. As the late Dr. Goebbels well expressed it: "Moods and emotions, the so-called 'morale' of the population, matters little. What matters is that they should preserve their bearing (*Haltung*) . . . Expressions such a patriotism and enthusiasm are quite out of place. The German people simply do their duty, that's all." (*Das Reich,* April 9, 1943.) The Progressive is the victim of an illusion which he could puncture for himself in a moment if, instead of doing what his Draft Board told him to do, he had tried to volunteer for the work he thought he could do best. He would have been told by some harassed bureaucrat: "For God's sake, go home and wait till we call you. Don't some around upsetting our Selective Service system, which is a delicate and complex affair geared to process so many of you patriots in such and such a time for such and such kinds of service." Thus the only difference between those who *submit* to the draft because they are afraid not to and those who *welcome* it because they want their country to win the war, is in the ethical value attached to an identical action. But the Progressive, as a good Deweyan or Marxian, does not believe in values apart from action. The Radical, however, does not submit to the draft; he refuses to do what the State wants him to do; by not acting, he is thus acting

— and in the Deweyan sense that what he does (or rather doesn't) distinguishes him from those with different values. The only way to be positive vis-à-vis the modern State is to be negative, i.e., refuse to do what it wants one to do. The situation might be compared to a group of people being driven in a high-powered automobile along a road that ends in a precipice. They see the Radicals sitting by the side of the road — just sitting. "Yaahh, negativists!" they cry. "Look at us! *We're* really *doing* something!" (There is no space here to develop the relevance of Lao-Tse's principle of "non-acting" — and perhaps it is not necessary.)

2. The Realism of Unrealism

The Progressive insists that one has a duty in every situation to choose between what he calls "real" alternatives, and that it is irresponsible to refuse to make such a choice. By "real" he means an alternative which has a reasonably good chance of success. Thus in World War II, he saw two real alternatives: to support the Allies or to support Hitler. He naturally chose the former. The trouble with his "real" alternatives is that each of them is part of the whole system of war and exploitation, to put an end to which is the very justification of his choice. The Radical believes — and I think logic is on his side — that only an alternative which is antithetical to the existing system can lead one to the abolition of the system. For him, it is unrealistic to hope to secure a peaceful world through war, to hope to defeat the brutality and oppression of Hitler by the brutality and oppression of the American and Russian political systems. Consider the Radical approach to the present situation of France, for example. Today that country lies between two mighty imperialisms: Russian and Anglo-American. The French Progressive wants to create a decent socialist society in France and to avoid the destruction of France in a future war between the two blocs. But in his terms of "real" alternatives, he can only think of aligning France with one or the other of the two powerblocs (with Russia if he is a Communist, with Anglo-America if he is a Socialist) and making France as strong a power as possible. It is not hard to show

years, and has enjoyed a much more complete and intimate control than Hitler did. The very completeness of his control makes it hard to evaluate its effects on the Russian people, since they are deprived of all possible outlets of self-expression. Except the jokes. Perhaps here is a sign of the existence of our fifth column!

In any case, we can say that the political leaders of USA have made no effort to see whether this fifth column exists or not. Their policy is static, unimaginative, niggardly, unfeeling. As their "unconditional surrender" policy plus the saturation bombings forced the German people to stick to Hitler to the end, so they are now solidifying the Russians behind Stalin. Except for the happy inspiration of the Marshall Plan — and even that is no in danger of being superseded by military expenditures — the US Congress and State Department have made no appeal to the imagination of the peoples of Europe and USSR. A nation which refuses to permit more than a token immigration of DP's, and that only under the most humiliating conditions, offers little encouragement to such dissident potentialities as there may be inside USSR today.

What about the chances of the American people adopting, in the face of the Soviet threat, an attitude of non-violent resistance?

Slight. The practice of loving, non-violent resistance towards one's enemies is a difficult discipline which even Gandhi, despite his leadership of a great mass movement, proved to ave been unable to implant in the Indian masses. As he himself — unlike our own pacifist sectarians — recognized in the last year of his life, the communal massacres showed that his life work had been a failure in this respect. The American temperament would seem to be less receptive to non-violence than the Indian, certainly there is no such popular tradition of it as in India. Also, the British authorities were themselves bound by a moral code which had some similarity to that of Gandhi's, whereas the Soviet authorities are not so bound.

If your chief political objective today is the overthrow of Stalinism, and if you do not think either pacifism or socialism can give answers to the specific political issues — such as whether the US army should get out of Berlin or not — which arise in the course of the fight, and if war seems the most likely final upshot of the kind of resistance the West, as now constituted (and you see little hope of a basic change before World

best allies against Stalinism, namely the people of Russia, who are the chief victims of Stalin's system, but whom the fires of war would wed closer to the Kremlin.

Pacifism does assume that not in the leaders but in the ranks of the enemy there is something similar to itself to which it can appeal, whether innate human feelings or an ethical-cultural tradition. that is, love and reason and respect for truth and justice working for us behind the enemy lines. And that this fifth column can be stirred into action if we reveal unmistakably that it has already conquered in our own minds and hearts. Does this fifth column exist in the Russians today? That is a very speculative question.

Let us dismiss, first, the illusion of some of the more innocent pacifists that it exists in comrades Stalin, Molotov, Vishinsky, et al. These gentlemen would interpret any showing of brotherly love by the West as simply a weakness, and would take advantage of a pacifist revolution to occupy Europe and the USA preliminary to instituting a People's Progressive Order. But would the Red Army march/ And, if it would, what prospects are there that its soldiers, and the population back home in Russia, would be won over to our side by pacifist tactics?

Human beings do not respond to love; they do have a feeling for truth and justice; they do dislike authority and repression; they do have prejudices against murder. They also have the reverse of these instincts, of course, but at least *both* tendencies exist, and one can choose which to appeal to. the Stalin regime has done its best to bring out in the Russians the reverse of the feelings listed above. How successful has it been? On the one hand, there is the barbarous behavior of the Red Army in Germany and Eastern Europe; the absence of rebellion inside Russia; the cynicism and apathy shown in the documents on Russian life printed in the last issue. On the other, there is the fact of large-scale desertions from the Red Army, of episodes like the Kosenkina case, of the distaste for the regime also shown in the documents printed last issue. The current defiance of Russian totalitarianism by large numbers of Berliners — quite unexpected by the Western authorities and newspapermen there — may be a sign that twelve years of Nazism have not too profoundly reshaped the German people. But Stalin has been in power for twenty

that a weak power which allies itself to a stronger one does not thereby avert war and does not even escape being sacrificed as a pawn in that coming war; and that, as the examples of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia show us, to build a strong army and munitions industry means to enslave and oppress the people, regardless of the literary charm of the slogans under which the dirty work is done. The Radical Frenchman would begin by himself, personally, refusing cooperation in the above policy, sabotaging it at every chance, and trying to persuade by argument and emotional appeal his fellow men and women to do likewise. The final perspective would be a pacifist-socialist revolution; this would have at least a chance of striking fire in the hearts of other peoples, spurring them to similar action against their oppressors. Success would be problematic, but at least (1) it would not be logically and historically inconceivable (as is the case with the Progressive's armament-and-alliance program), and (2) his end would be congruent with his means, so that he could view the situation with clear eyes and a whole heart, free from the befuddling and stultifying evasions and compromises which the Progressive must resort to in such a situation.[15]

the greatest living theorist of Progressivism, as defined in this article, is John Dewey. It seems not irrelevant to recall that Dewey gave active support to both World War I and II. The contrast between the Progressive and the Radical notions of "realistic" and "positive" action comes out in the contrasting behavior in World War I of Dewey and his brilliant young disciple, Randolph Bourne.

"In 1916," we read in Louis Filler's life of Bourne, "Bourne broke with John Dewey, and a rift opened that was to become wider as both men formulated their stands on the war. The differences between them were to culminate in a statement of principles by Bourne which was to stand as perhaps his supreme literary achievement. Dewey had slowly come around to the conviction that war represented a state of affairs which had to be faced and mastered by men who wished to be effective social agents . . . The justice of the Allied cause was the assumption behind the articles which Dewey contributed to *The New Republic* and *The Dial* in the interim between American

[15] This paragraph now seems nonsensical to me.

isolation and America's entrance into the war. Dewey's role was to provide the theoretical base for armed preparedness.

"Dewey's conclusions followed logically from his philosophy because the essence of pragmatism was action. 'Our culture,' he wrote, 'must be consonant with realistic science and machine industry, instead of a refuge from them.' ('American Education and Culture', *New Republic,* July 1,1916.) If the task of the day was war, then our culture must be 'consonant' with war. Dewey, therefore, called for army training as a form of contemporary education. (*New Republic,* April 22, 1916.)

"The very thought of military regimentation aroused in Bourne the keenest agitation, and out of his desperate denial of the idea came one of his most brilliant essays: 'A Moral Equivalent for Universal Military Service' (*New Republic,* July 1, 1916.) . . . It was persuasive but was it practical> It demonstrated how essentially the poet Bourne was, that the relative value of education and war, and not the question of how he or anyone else could most effectively influence American affairs for the better, seemed to him the immediate question demanding solution . . . Bourne was fighting for a doomed cause."

That Filler shares, on its most Philistine level, Dewey's pragmatic approach only adds to the weight of the above contrast; he evidently considers Bourne and idiot("poet" is the polite term in this country) for being so "impractical" about war. (Who could improve on Filler's incautious formulation of the Deweyan approach: "If the task of the day was war, then our culture must be consonant with war?") Yet Dewey's role in World War I is now an embarrassing episode to be glossed over lightly; while Bourne's development From Deweyan pragmatism to a Radical viewpoint, with anarchist and pacifist overtones, enable him to write during the war his finest articles and to see with a "realism" denied to Dewey the political meaning of the catastrophe: the end of the 19th Century Progressive dream. Bourne's cause was doomed; Dewey got his war; yet whose was the triumph?

APPENDIX C: THE BERLIN CRISIS

I think the point at which I began to stop believing in pacifism as a political doctrine was the Russian blockade of Berlin. In the Summer, 1948, issue of *politics* I asked, and answered, some questions as to my crumbling convictions:

Should the Western powers withdraw their troops from Berlin?

To do this as part of a general pacifist program would be good. But if it is done, it will not be a symbol of a pacifist-socialist revolution but simply a tactical move by militarist-capitalist governments. It would mean just what Munich meant: not peace-in-our-time but appeasement, and would thus strengthen, not weaken, the Stalin regime. Furthermore, such a move would not awaken any reaction in the Russian army or people, and would hand over to the Russians for punishment thousands of Berliners who have so courageously indicated their preference for the West's imperfect democracy against the East's perfect tyranny. This betrayal, aside from its moral aspects, would hardly encourage the rest of Europe to resist the spread of Communism.[1]

Assuming a pacifist revolution in the West, would this not merely insure the world triumph of Russian totalitarianism?

First, let me say to my correspondents above that pacifism to me means to resist Stalinism, not to submit to it. The resistance is nonviolent because I think it is immoral to kill or injure others, and because, on the political level, warfare means killing precisely our

[1] This reply is not very satisfactory, from a pacifist standpoint. The fact is that there is no pacifist (or socialist) answer to the question of Berlin, just as there wasn't to Munich. As a pacifist, I cannot say, Don't Yield, since the consequences might be war — though I think they would not be — and it is irresponsible to support an action without being willing to support its possible consequences. On the other hand, a pacifist for the reasons given above cannot recommend getting out of Berlin either (any more than he could have recommended, though many pacifists mistakenly did, giving Czechoslovakia to Hitler as a step towards either peace or justice). Such situations, and they are increasing, are dilemmas for the pacifists or socialists. They call into doubt, in my mind at least, the political validity of a "Utopian," or ultimatist, position today.

kingdom of the dead." This is my feeling. I prefer an imperfectly living, open society to a perfectly dead, closed society. We may become like Russia, but we may not — the issue is not settled so long as we are independent of Moscow. If Moscow wins, the door is slammed shut, and to open it again would be a more difficult and brutal business than is now required by the measures to keep it open.

3. The Beauties of Moderation

Writing of Homer's constant demonstration of the evanescence of power, Simone Weil observes:

"This retribution . . . was the main subject of Greek thought. It is the soul of the epic. Under the name of Nemesis, it functions as the mainspring of Aeschylus' tragedies. To the Pythagoreans, to Socrates and Plato, it was the jumping-off point of speculation upon the nature of man and the universe. Wherever Hellenism has penetrated, we find the idea of it familiar. In Oriental countries, which are steeped in Buddhism, it is perhaps the Greek idea that has lived on under the name of Kharma. The Occident, however, has lost it, and no longer even has a word to express it in any of its languages: conceptions of limit, measure, equilibrium, which ought to determine the conduct of life are, in the West, restricted to a servile function in the vocabulary of technics. We are only geometricians of matter; the Greeks were, first of all, geometricians in their apprenticeship to virtue."

The best approach, intellectually, to the whole problem of socialism might be, simply, to remember always that man is mortal and imperfect (as Hopkinson Smith put it: "The claw of the sea-puss get us all in the end.") and so we should *not push things too far.* The moderation of the Greeks, as clearsighted and truly scientifically minded a race as this earth has ever seen, showed in their attitude toward scientific knowledge should become our guide again. Despite their clearsightedness (really because of it), the Greeks were surpassed by the intellectually inferior Romans in such "practical" matters as the building of sewers and the articulation of legal systems, much as the ancient Chinese, another scientifically-minded and technologically backward people, discovered printing and gunpowder long before the West did, but had the good sense to use them only for printing love poems and shooting off firecrackers. "Practical" is put in quotes because to the Greeks it seemed much more practical to discuss the nature of the good life than to build better sewers. To the Romans and to our age, the opposite is the case — the British Marxist, John Strachey, is said to have once defined communism as "a movement for better plumbing." The Greeks were wise enough to treat scientific

knowledge as a means, not an end; they never developed a concept of Progress. This wisdom may have been due to their flair for the *human* scale; better than any other people we know of, they were able to create art and a politics scaled to human size. They could do this because they never forgot the tragic limitations of human existence, the Nemesis which turns victory into defeat overnight, the impossibility of perfect knowledge about anything. Contrast, for example, the *moderation* of Socrates, who constantly proclaimed his ignorance, with the pretentions of a 19th century system-builder like Marx. The Greeks would have seen in Marx's assumption that existence can be reduced to scientifically knowable terms, and the bold and confident all-embracing system he evolved on the basis of this assumption — they would have set this down to "hubris," the pride that goeth before a fall. And they would have been right, as we are now painfully discovering. Nor is it just Marx; as the quotations from the other 19th century socialist and anarchist theoreticians show, this scientific "hubris" was dominant in the whole culture of that Age of Progress. But it just won;t do for us. We must learn to live with contradictions, to have faith in scepticism, to advance toward the solution of a problem by admitting as a possibility that it may be insoluble. The religious and the scientific views of the world are both *extreme* views, advancing total, complete solutions. We should reject both (as the Greeks, by the way, did; they were a notably irreligious people, putting their faith neither in the Kingdom of Heaven nor the Cloaca Maxima). Kierkegaard advises us to "keep the wound of the negative open." So it is better to admit ignorance and leave questions open rather than to close them up with some all-answering system which stimulates infection beneath the surface.

4. Against the Fetishism of the Masses

To Marx's "fetishism of commodities" I would counterpoise our modern fetishism — that of the masses. The more Progressive one's thinking, the more one assumes that the test of the goodness of a political program is how wide a popular appeal it makes. I venture to assert, for the present time at least, the contrary: that, as in art

returned from their contact with Europe "infected with bourgeois ideology" — i.e., they had seen how much more free the masses outside Russia are and how much higher their standard of living is — and had to be quarantined in remote districts for a while.[1]

In choosing the West, I must admit that already the effects on our own society of the anti-Communist struggle are bad: Senator McCarthy and his imitators are using lies to create hysteria and moral confusion in the best Nazi-Communist pattern; building a great military machine cannot but extend the power of the Sate and so encroach on freedom. In short, we are becoming to some extent like the totalitarian enemy we are fighting. But (1) being on the road is not the same thing as being there already (though one might think it was from certain Marxist and pacifist statements), and (20 this malign trend can be to some extent resisted.

After all, here and in Western Europe there still exist different political parties, free trade unions and other social groupings independent of the State; varied and competing intellectual and artistic tendencies; and the protection, by law and by tradition, of those individual civil rights on which all the rest depend. Ours is still a living, developing society, open to change and growth, at least compared to its opposite number beyond the Elbe.

When Ulysses made his journey to the Elysian Fields, he saw among the shades his old comrade-in-arms, Achilles, and asked him how are things? Achilles' answer was: "I would rather be the slave of a landless man in the country of the living than the ruler of the

[1] It is too early to tell how much difference Stalin's death has made. Certainly there has been a remarkable "softening" of Soviet policy — above all, in the reversal of the conviction of the doctors framed up as the poisoners of Zhdanov and in the public admission their confessions had been extorted by force, the first time such an admission has been made in Soviet history. This may be merely a maneuver by one faction among Stalin's would-be heirs against another, or it may be a recognition by the whole top leadership, which they only dare now that the dreaded Stalin is dead, of widespread resentment at and disgust with the brutality of Stalin's policies. If the former, then this "softening" will be followed by another purge and another "hardening" once the factional struggle ends in decisive victory. If the latter, then its significance is obviously much greater. But even in that case, it will be a long and crooked path that Soviet society will follow in inching back from the extremism of 1929–1953 policies.

against a totalitarian enemy. Pacifism as a matter on individual conscience, as a *moral* rather than a *political* question, is another thing, and I respect it.

I choose the West because I see the present conflict not as another struggle between basically similar imperialisms as was World War I but as a fight between radically different cultures. In the West, since the Renaissance and the Reformation, we have created a civilization which puts a high value on the individual, which has to some extent replaced dogmatic authority with scientific knowledge, which since the 18th century has progressed from slavery and serfdom to some degree of political liberty, and which has produced a culture which, while not as advanced as that of the ancient Greeks, still has some appealing features. I think Soviet Communism breaks sharply with this evolution, that it is a throwback not to the relatively human Middle Ages but to the great slave societies of Egypt and the Orient.

Nor are the Communists content, or indeed able, to confine this 20th-century slave system to Russia or even to the vast new provinces in Asia and Eastern Europe added since 1945. Like Nazism, Soviet Communism is a young, aggressive, expansive imperialism (as against, for instance, the elderly British imperialism, which since 1945 has permitted India, Egypt, and Iran to escape from its grip). Also like Nazism, it represses its own population so brutally that it must always be "defending" itself against alleged foreign enemies — else its subjects would ask why such enormous sacrifices are needed. The rulers of Soviet Russia will consider they are encircled by threatening invaders so long as a single country in the world is left that is independent of them. A reader asked the Moscow *Bolshevik* recently: "Now that we control a third of the world, can we still speak of capitalist encirclement?" The editors replied: "Capitalist encirclement is a political term. Comrade Stalin has stated that capitalist encirclement cannot be considered a geographic notion." (Thus the existence of a UN army on the Korean peninsula constitutes a *political* encirclement of Communist China.) Furthermore, precisely because the bourgeois West is so obviously superior, in most of the spiritual and material things that people value, to the Communized East, the mere *existence* of a non-Communist country is a danger to Communism. This was shown in 1945–6 when the Red Army troops

and letters, communicability to a large audience is in inverse ratio to the excellence of a political approach. This is not a good thing: as in art, it is a deforming, crippling factor. Nor is it an eternal rule: in the past, the ideas of a tiny minority, sometimes almost reduced to the vanishing point of one individual, have slowly come to take hold on more and more of their fellow men; and we may hope that our own ideas may do likewise. But such, it seems to me, is our situation today, whether we like it or not. To attempt to propagate political ideas on a mass scale today results in either corrupting them or draining them of all emotional force and intellectual meaning. The very media by which one must communicate with a large audience — the radio the popular press, the movies — are infected; the language and symbols of mass communication are infected; if one tries to use these media, one gets something like the newspaper *PM,* and something like the political writings of Max Lerner. Albert Camus, for example, edited the underground Resistance paper, *Combat,* during the German occupation of France. After the liberation, *Combat* quickly won a large audience, and Camus became one of the most widely read and influential political journalists in France. Yet, as he told me, he found that writing about politics in terms of the great parties and for a mass audience made it impossible for him to deal with reality, or to tell the truth. And so he has withdrawn from *Combat,* giving up what in traditional terms would seem to be a supremely fortunate chance for a socially-minded intellectual to propagate his ideas among the masses, in order to be cast about for some better way of communicating. This will be found, I suspect, in talking to fewer people more precisely about "smaller" subjects.

As it is with communication, so it is with political organization. The two traditional Marxian approaches to organization are those of the Second and the Third International. The former puts its faith in mass parties, tied in with great trade unions; the latter, in a disciplined, centralized, closely organized corps of "professional revolutionaries" which will lead the masses in revolutionary situations. Superficially, it would seem that the vast scale of modern society calls for mass parties to master it, while the centralized power of the modern State can be countered only by an equally centralized and closely organized revolutionary party. But the fact seems to be just

the contrary: the State can crush such groups, whether organized as mas parties or as Bolshevik elite corps, the moment they show signs of becoming serious threats, precisely because they fight the State on its own grounds, they *compete* with the State. The totalization of State power today means that only something on a different plane can cope with it, something which fights the State from a vantage point which the State's weapons can reach only with difficulty. Perhaps the most effective means of countering violence, for example, is non-violence, which throws the enemy off balance ("moral jiujitsu" someone has called it) and confuses his human agents, all the more so because it appeals to traitorous elements in their own hearts.[16]

All this means that individual actions, based on moral convictions, have *greater* force today than they had two generations ago. As an English correspondent wrote me recently: "The main reason for Conscientious Objection is undoubtedly that it does make a personal feeling have weight. In the present world, the slightest sign of individual revolt assumes a weight out of all proportion to its real value." Thus in drafting men into that totalitarian society, the U.S. Army, the examiners often reject anyone who stated openly that he did not *want* to enter the Army and felt he would be unhappy there. We may assume this action was not due to sympathy, but rather to the fact that, as practical men, the examiners knew that such a one would "make trouble" and that the smooth running of the vast mechanism could be thrown out by the presence of such a gritty particle precisely because of the machine's delicately-geared hugeness.

Another conclusion is that group action against The Enemy is most effective when it is most spontaneous and loosest in organization. The opposition of the romantic clubs of German youth ("Edelweiss," "Black Pirates") was perhaps more damaging to the Nazis than that of the old parties and unions. So, too, World-over Press reports that a recently discovered secret list of British leaders to be liquidated by the Nazis after the invasion of England gave top priority not to

[16] As of 1953, I admire the ingenuity of this argument almost as much as I deplore its insubstantiality. I fear that I overestimated the fermenting power of the yeast and underestimated the doughiness of the dough.

the truth about USSR, without suppression and without compromise. If there is a chance of avoiding World War III, it must be based on truth and not on lies. And certainly not on The Big Lie.

"I Choose the West"

In the winter of 1952, I debated Norman Mailer at Mt. Holyoke College; my position was summed up in the above title, his was "I Cannot Chose." This is what I said (excising repetitious material):

I choose the West — the U.S. and its allies — and reject the East — the Soviet Union and its ally, China, and its colonial provinces, the nations of Eastern Europe. By "choosing" I mean that I support the political, economic, and military struggle of the West against the East. I support it critically — I'm against the Smith and McCarran Acts, French policy in Indo-China, etc. — but in general I *do* choose, I support Western policies.

During the last war, I did not choose, at first because I was a revolutionary socialist of Trotskyist coloration, later because I was becoming, especially after the atom bomb, a pacifist. Neither of these positions now appear valid to me.

The revolutionary socialist position assumes there is a reasonable chance that some kind of popular revolution, a Third Camp independent of the warring sides and hostile to both, will arise during or after the war, as was the case in Russia in March, 1917. Nothing of the sort happened in the last war, despite even greater destruction and chaos than in 1917–19, because the power vacuum was filled at once by either Soviet or American imperialism. The Third Camp of the masses just doesn't exist anymore, and so Lenin's "revolutionary defeatism" now becomes simply defeatism: it helps the enemy win and that's all.

As for pacifism, it assumes some degree of ethical similarity in the enemy, something in his heart that can be appealed to — or at least something in his traditions. Gandhi found this in the British, so his passive resistance movement could succeed, since there were certain repressive measures, such as executing him and his chief co-workers, which the British were inhibited from using by their traditional moral code, which is that of Western civilization in general. But the Soviet Communists are not so inhibited, nor were the Nazis. So I conclude that pacifism does not have a reasonable chance of being effective

This is the Big Lie which Hitler once amateurishly peddled, but which the Communists are really putting over. It is not just the absence of truth; it is the very reverse of truth. Black is not called Blue or Dark Brown, but White. The political system which has gone far beyond Bismarck or Louis Napoleon in authoritarian repression is proclaimed as the realization of the program laid down in *The Communist Manifesto.* The society in which strikes are outlawed and workers are legally tied to their jobs is presented as the workers' fatherland. The world's most chauvinist and militarist government is sincerely believed by millions of Americans to be striving for world peace against the evil machinations of the State Department and the British Foreign Office. The empire that has added vast new satrapies since 1945, while its two chief rivals have either confined themselves to Pacific atolls or (reluctantly) freed their richest subject domains, is gilded by ideology with the moral splendor of anti-imperialism. Most striking of all, a double standard of international morality has been insinuated into the minds of millions of non-Communist workers and intellectuals. Truman is denounced for his Doctrine, but the more far-reaching interference of the Communists in other nations' affairs is passed over in silence. The American Legion is properly excoriated for its flagwaving jingoism, but the same things in USSR becomes transmuted into People's Patriotism in Defense of the Socialist Fatherland. Much is said, again properly, about the moral infamy of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but not a word about the American proposals for international control of atomic energy, accepted by all the other great powers, and recently, after years of dispute, abandoned because of the opposition of the one nation in the world which cannot afford to permit international inspection of its domestic arrangements: the USSR.

The list could be extended. The point would remain the same: the most militarist, imperialist, anti-democratic, and reactionary nation in the world is precisely the one which millions of Americans and Europeans have fixed their aspirations for world peace, national independence, democracy and human progress. this is a Fact of Life today, and one that must be faced, whether one is a liberal, a Marxian socialist, a conservative, or, as in the case of the present writer, an anarchist and pacifist. The way to face it, in my opinion, is to tell

trade unionists nor to leftwing political leaders but to well-known pacifists.

What seems necessary is thus to encourage attitudes of disrespect, scepticism, ridicule towards the State and all authority, rather than to build up a competing authority. It is the difference between a frontal attack all along the line and swift flanking jabs at points where the Enemy is weakest, between large-scale organized warfare and guerrilla operations. Marxists go in for the former: the Bolsheviks emphasis discipline and unity in order to match that of The Enemy; the reformists try to outweigh The Enemy's power by shepherding great masses of voters and trade unionists into the scales. But the status quo is too powerful to be overthrown by such tactics; and, even worse, they show a disturbing tendency to lead one over to the side of The Enemy.

5. Self-ishness, or The Root Is Man

Granted that individual actions can never overthrow he status quo, and also that even spontaneous mass rebellion will be fruitless unless certain elementary steps of coordination and organization are taken. But today we confront this situation: the masses just do not act towards what most of the readers of this magazine would recognize as some fundamental betterment of society. The only way, at present, of so *acting* (as against just "making the record" for the muse of Marxian history by resolutions and manifestos "against imperialist war," "for the international proletarian revolution," etc.) seems to be through symbolic individual actions, based on one person's insistence on his own values, and through the creation of small fraternal groups which will support such actions, keep alive a sense of our ultimate goals, and both act as a leavening in the dough of mass society and attract more and more of the alienated and frustrated members of that society. These individual stands have two advantages over the activities of those who pretend that mass action is now possible:

(1) They make a dramatic appeal to people, the appeal of the individual who is bold enough and serious enough to stand alone, if

necessary, against the enormous power of The State; this encourages others to resist a little more that they would otherwise in *their* everyday life, and also preserves the living seeds of protest and rebellion from which later on bigger things may grow.

(2) They at least preserve the revolutionary vitality and principles of the few individuals who make such stands, while the mass-actionists become, if they stick by their principles, deadened and corrupted personally by their constant submission in their own personal behavior to the standards of The Enemy — and much more corrupted than the simple bourgeois who feels himself at one with those standards (anyone who has been through the Trotskyist movement, for example, as I have, knows that in respect to decent personal behavior, truthfulness, and respect for dissident opinion, the "comrades" are generally much inferior to the average stockbroker). On the other hand, if they compromise with principles in order to establish contact with the masses, they simply become part of The Enemy's forces, as is the case with the British Labor Party and the French Socialists. Marxists always sneer at the idea of individual action and individual responsibility on the grounds that we are simply interested in "saving our own souls." But what is so terrible about that? Isn't it better to save one's soul than to lose it? (And NOT to "gain the whole world," either!)

The first step towards a new concept of political action (and political morality) is for each person to decide what he thinks is right, what satisfies *him,* what *he* wants. And then to examine with scientific method the environment to figure out how to get it — or, if he can't get it, to see how much he can get without compromising his personal values. Self-ishness must be restored to respectability in our scheme of political values. Not that the individual exists apart from his fellow men, in Max Stirner's sense. I agree with Marx and Proudhon that the individual must define himself partly in his social relations. But the point is to make these real *human* relations and not abstract concepts of class or history. It has often been observed that nations — and, I might add, classes, even the proletariat — have a lower standard of ethical behavior than individuals do. Even if all legal constraints were removed, I take it we can assume that few people would devote themselves exclusively to

that they could tomorrow order all red-heads to be "resettled" in Kamchatka — and they would be obeyed. Culture is more totally debased: in USA, artists writers, and intellectuals with the determination or the cash can ignore the commercial market and produce decent work; in the USSR, there are no loopholes — the artist cannot create independently of the Central Committee's directives since the State controls the art galleries, the orchestras and concert halls, the theatres, and the book and periodical publishers.

There are, further, certain ways in which the USSR is not comparable, even in degree, to USA or to any other civilized country today. Is there any other major nation where slave labor exists on a massive scale? Where all strikes are forbidden by law? Where over half the state budget is raised by the most regressive form of taxation: sales taxes which fall most heavily on those least able to pay? Where colonels get thirty times the pay of privates? Where no figures on national income have been published since 1938 and no price indices since 1931? Whose soldiers, in foreign lands, go crazy at the sight of such luxuries as bicycles, watches, and leather shoes? Whose DP's open their veins rather than return to the motherland? Whose secret police have their own secret courts, which try and sentence without appeal? Where children are officially applauded as patriots for denouncing their parents to the authorities? Where the political authorities instruct writers on prose style, movie directors on montage, and composers on the proper use of polyphony and dissonance? Where citizens may be imprisoned for talking to foreigners? Where emigration is forbidden, and the families of illegal emigrés are punished whether or not they had knowledge of the attempt?

But the differences go deeper. Not only is Reaction, as it was called in the simple old days, carried much further in USSR than in USA. But this is not done there, as here, furtively and apologetically, but rather as a matter of principle, in the name of Socialism, People's Democracy and other high notions. the powerful workings of ideology transmute these ugly realities into their opposite: they become the principles of a New Order which is asserted to be the glorious reverse of the undoubtedly wicked Old Order.

Coming back to the question — where is the main enemy? — let me offer in evidence excerpts from two things I wrote after *The Root Is Man.* This first is from the Spring, 1948, issue of *politics:*

USA v. USSR.

Let us admit at once — let us, indeed, insist on the point — that all the criticisms made of the USSR here and in the following articles could also be made of the USA. Ours, like theirs, is an unjust society, where the few have too much and the many too little. Ours is an imperialist State, like theirs, whose leaders lie like troopers and equivocate like lawyers; a militarist State, like theirs, busily preparing for World War II; a repressive State, like theirs, which is about to draft its youth against their will. The American common people, like their Russian brothers, are kicked around from cradle to grace by their Betters, and are inhibited from leading satisfying lives by a massive structure of ingenious and irrational institutions. Our culture, too, is a debased mass-culture, ruled by commerce as theirs is by the Central Committee. Et cetera, et cetera.

The difference is partly one of degree: in USSR all the above unpleasantnesses are carried a great deal further than they are in USA. The rich are richer and the poor, poorer. Imperialism is more vicious: USA bribes nations with massive capital exports (Marshall Plan), but USSR either absorbs them by force (the Baltic nations) or subjugates them by installing a Communist police state (the rest of Eastern Europe). Militarism more blatantly: USSR spends more of its national income on war preparation than USA, has four or five times as man of its citizens under arms, indoctrinates children more systematically with militarist ideas, and dolls up its generals more resplendently. Repression is much more severe: the American common people have too few civil liberties, the Russians have none at all. Social institutions are not more massively impenetrable to popular pressures: the American school system is run by locally elected bodies, the Russian directed by the State. Political institutions are less democratic: Congress and the President do not truly represent the people, but at least they can be thrown out every two or four years, and at least they exercise power within the limits of written rules and after public debate; the 15 or 17 members of the Central Committee rule so far beyond public knowledge and legal control

murder or would constantly lie to their friends and families; yet the most respected leaders of present societies, the military men and the political chieftains, in their public capacities become specialists in lying and murder. Always, of course, with the largest aims, "for the good of humanity."[17]

A friend put it well in a letter I received several months ago: "So long as morality is all in public places — politics, Utopia, revolutions (nonviolent included), progress — our private mores continue to be a queasy mixture of chivalry and cynicism: all in terms of *angles,* either for or against. We're all against political sin, we all love humanity, but individuals are sort of tough to love, even tougher to hate. Goldenhaired dreams, humanitarian dreams — what's the difference so long as they smell good? Meanwhile, patronize any whore, fight any war, but don't marry the girl and don't fight the boss — too dangerous . . . No. Damn, our only chance is to try to get as small, private, honest, selfish as we can. Don't you agree that one can't have a moral attitude toward Humanity? Too big."

Or to put it more generally. Technological progress, the organization from the top of human life (what Max Weber calls "rationalization"), the overconfidence of the past two centuries in scientific method — these have led us, literally, into a dead end. Their trend is now clear: atomic warfare, bureaucratic collectivism, "the crystallization of social activity into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations . . . " To try to fight this trend, as the Progressives of all shade do, with the same forces that have brought it about appears absurd to me. We must emphasize the emotions, the imagination,

[17] "For God's sake, do not drag me into another war! I am worn down and worn out with crusading and defending Europe and protecting mankind; I *must* think a little of myself. I am sorry for the Spaniards — I am sorry for the Greeks — I deplore the fate of the Jews — the people of the Sandwich Islands are groaning under the most detestable tyranny — Bagdad is oppressed — I do not like the present state of the Delta — Tibet is not comfortable. Am I to fight for all these people? The world is bursting with sin and sorrow. Am I to be champion of the Decalogue and to be eternally raising fleets and armies to make all men good and happy? We have just done saving Europe, and I am afraid the consequence will be that we shall cut each other's throats. No war dear Lady Grey; no eloquence; but apathy, selfishness, common sense, arithmetic." So, Sydney Smith, shortly after the Napoleonic wars.

the moral feelings, the primacy of the individual human being , must restore the balance that has been broken by the hypertrophy of science in the last two centuries. The root is man, here and not there, now and not then.

APPENDIX B: THE MAIN ENEMY IS IN MOSCOW

When Karl Liebknecht, the German socialist who, with Rosa Luxemburg, heroically opposed his own government in World War I, exclaimed "The main enemy is at home!", he gave a watch-word to a generation of revolutionists. We radicals in the thirties continued to repeat it. The appearance of Nazism as the enemy in World War II, however, caused some of us to doubt its validity. And now that Soviet totalitarianism has succeeded Nazism as the enemy, Liebknecht's noble and idealistic slogan seems to me false, and those who still believe it I must regard as either uninformed, sentimental, or the dupes of Soviet propaganda (or, of course, all three together). This is because I believe Soviet Communism to be both far more inhumane and barbarous as a social system than our own, and also to offer a greater threat to the peace and well-being of the world today. I have no doubt that almost everyone who will read this pamphlet will agree with this, but, reader, before you skip what follows, ask yourself whether (1) your agreement is perhaps no a little *too* quick, as one agrees with someone who states some unpleasant idea precisely so he cannot force you to really confront it, really absorb it into one's consciousness (always a painful process), and (2) whether this "fact of life," to which you so readily — perhaps even a little hastily? — assent, whether it has made a real difference in your *actions* (a sentiment or conclusion which leaves one's behavior unchanged cannot be taken seriously). I say this because in discussing with pacifists and radicals this agonizing problem of war and Soviet Communism, I have often observed that they will grant, much too easily, the political evaluation made above and yet will continue to advocate policies which are inconsistent with this evaluation (but consistent with their general approach). Their agreement, in short, is Platonic and Pickwickian. (I know how one performs such mental gymnastics under the influence of an ideology because I have done it myself — see "Ten Propositions on the War," *Partisan Review,* July-August, 1941.)

Appendix

practically, and is simply a way of avoiding the unpleasant reality. The real reality, that is.

When one is indelicate enough to refer to the great mass of evidence by now available on the subject, one is met with indulgent smiles. First of all, the Marxists explain, the trade union bureaucrats and/or the Communists are traitors, *mis*leaders of labor, their policies are anti-working class, and they maintain their control through force and fraud. If one presses the matter and asks why, if the workers have been successfully pulled and coerced for a century, they will be able to assert themselves in the future, one discovers that when a Marxist talks about "working class aims" and "working class consciousness," he means nothing so vulgar as the actual here-and-now behavior of workers but rather what the workers *would* want and *would* do if they knew what their "real" interests were. Since the proletarian rarely does know his "real" interests and constantly tends to identify his interests with those of his exploiters, the result is that his "real" behavior, Marxistically speaking, is usually in conflict with his really real behavior, so that socialism becomes an ideal which the workers are assumed to cherish in their hearts but which they rarely profane by putting into action. (As Alfred Braunthal has put it: "the mystic cult of The Masses, who always feel the right way but always act the wrong way.") A metaphysical distinction between two kinds of reality is involved here. Thus a Marxist exults over the rise of the British Labor Party because it is a labor party (metaphysical reality) and at the same time denounces its entire leadership as traitors to the working class (materialistic reality). This produces a position as theoretically impregnable as it is practically sterile. The rank-and-file — suppressed, passive, coerced — is always judged on the basis not of what it does but of what it is assumed to want to do, while the leadership, which is seen as the active, coercive party, is always judged by what it does. That perhaps the leadership is a true expression of the needs and desires of the ranks, if we look at the matter only from a historical-materialistic standpoint — this idea is much too simple for a Marxist.

I have no objection to basing one's politics on a metaphysical, unprovable value judgment that people *should* want certain things — in fact, that is just what I think one ought to do. But I object to metaphysical assumptions being smuggled into a doctrine which affects to be materialistic. This is confusing both intellectually and

APPENDIX A: ON THE PROLETARIAT AS A REVOLUTIONARY CLASS

The validity of Marxism as a political doctrine stands or falls on its assertion that the proletariat is the historical force which will bring about socialism. The reason political Marxism today is of little interest, save to a few romantic or pedantic sectarians (and of course to the Communists, but in a form so debased and distorted as to bear about the same relation to Marx's teachings as the "Christianity" of the Catholic Church in Franco's Spain bears to the teachings of Christ), the reason is that the proletariat has not been the motive force in either of the two great revolutions of our century, the Bolshevik and the Nazi, but has been as much the passive victim or, at best, accomplice of the organized elites which have made those revolutions, as the bourgeoisie themselves.

The Marxist idea was that just as the bourgeoisie developed inside the feudal system for centuries and finally became strong enough to replace it with capitalism, so the workers are developing their power within capitalism and will finally "burst asunder" the bourgeois integument. Writing a half-century ago, in his crabbed, doctrinaire, original and prophetic *Two Pages from Roman History,* Daniel De Leon put his finger on the peculiar weakness of the proletariat: "The working class, the subject class upon whom depends the overthrow of capitalism and the raising of socialism, differs from all previous subject classes called upon by History to throw down an old and set up a new social system." The difference is that other classes *first* gained "the material means essential to its own economic system" and *then* made the revolution. But the proletariat, by definition, is propertyless. "Holding the economic power, capital, on which the feudal lords had become dependent, the bourgeois was safe under fire . . . Differently with the proletariat. It is a force every atom of which has a stomach to fill, with wives and children with stomachs to fill, and, withal, precarious ability to attend to such needs. Cato

the Elder said in his usual blunt way: 'The belly has no ears.' At times this circumstance may be a force, but it is only a fitful force. Poverty breeds lack of self-reliance. Material insecurity suggests temporary devices. Sops and lures become captivating baits. And the one and the other are in the power of the present ruling-class to maneuver with."

If the American working class were ever going to make a revolution, it would have done so, or at least tried to do so, during the 1929–1933 depression. Instead, it voted in Roosevelt, who proceeded to captivate it with "sops and lures" of reform. One of the most tragicomic documents in our social history is the pamphlet, *Culture and the Crisis,* which the League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford put out in the fall of 1932. It was signed by and extraordinarily wide range of intellectuals, among them Sherwood Anderson, Newton Arvin, Erskine Caldwell, Lewis Corey, Malcolm Cowley, John Dos Passos, Theodor Dreiser, Waldo Frank, Granville Hicks, Sidney Hook, Sidney Howard, Alfred Kreymborg, James Rorty, Frederick L. Schuman, Lincoln Steffens, and Edmund Wilson. "As responsible intellectual workers," they proclaimed, "we have aligned ourselves with the frankly revolutionary Communist Party, the party of the workers." They rejected Roosevelt because his election would result in nothing more than "changes here and there in the machine of government"; They rejected Norman Thomas because the Socialists "do not believe in the overthrow of capitalism" and hence "are the third party of capitalism." Nothing less than the real thing would satisfy these incipient Robes-pierres, nothing less than "the revolutionary struggle against capitalism under the leadership of the Communist Party," which is alleged to stand for "a socialism of deed not words." But when these deeds are named, the heady wine of revolution turns into very small beer indeed. "There is only one issue in the present election — call it hard times, unemployment, the farm problem, the world crisis, or simply hunger." This issue is to be met by the Communist Party's program of "immediate demands," viz: (1) State-financed unemployment and social insurance; (2) no more wage-cuts; (3) emergency farm relief and a debt and mortgage moratorium for farmers; (4) equal rights for Negros; (5) defense of workers' rights against capitalist terror; (6) "a united front against

imperialist war; for the defense of the Chinese people and the Soviet Union." Except for (4), on which little progress was made until the Truman Administration, Roosevelt's New Deal put into effect this entire program (if his recognition of the Soviet Union and his "collective security" crusade against Nazi Germany may be taken as implementing the rather vague sixth point) as well as adding several dozen other similar measures such as TVA, the SEC, and the Federal housing program. What price revolution?

Or compare the aftermath of the Great French Revolution and the 1917 Russian Revolution. Both degenerated from their initial promise of democracy and liberation into the one-man dictatorships of Napoleon and Stalin. This political regression, however, did not mean that the old ruling class regained its economic power. Napoleon did not restore their estates to the nobles but, on the contrary, laid the legal and governmental foundations for the 19th century French capitalism. Stalin did not call in foreign capital or restore private property and the capitalist market, as Trotsky expected him to do, but on the contrary pushed Trotsky's own policy of state-owned industrialization and of farm collectivization ahead at a brutally fast tempo. There is, however, one significant difference: Napoleon did not turn against those in whose name the 1789 revolution had been made, the bourgeoisie, but rather acted as their representative. But Stalin smashed the working class and reduced them to subjection. Napoleon and his generals and officials ruled without disturbing the economic power of the bourgeoisie, but under Stalin the workers lost such slight economic power as they had had, including even the protection of their trade unions, for not they, but the Stalin bureaucracy was the new ruling class put into power by the 1917 Revolution. They were all the more easily subdued since Lenin and Trotsky, in the early years of that revolution, had broken the workers' own instruments of political and economic power: the Soviets and the workers' committees which for a brief time ran the factories. The workers were easily dispossessed by Lenin and Stalin because they had never possessed in the first place.

This chronic impotence of the working class has forced latter-day Marxists into apologetics whose metaphysical nature contrasts amusingly with Marxism's claim to being a materialistic doctrine.