

ANVIL

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a student socialist magazine



Who Rules in America?

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Where Anvil Stands...

ANVIL AND STUDENT PARTISAN wishes to express the ideas, criticisms and proposals of students who believe in democratic socialism. We address ourselves to those who seek the preservation and extension of democratic values to all forms of political and economic life. We firmly contend that this end must be pursued without deference to the status quo of private property interests, social inequality and human oppression which are characteristic of Western capitalism. At the same time, we are fully aware that totalitarian collectivism (Stalinism), which presently dominates much of the eastern world with its new exploitation and oppression, is the very antithesis of the democratic and equalitarian society which we seek.

We further believe that democracy and socialism are inseparable. Guarantees of democratic rights to all people, without restrictions, in a society based upon private ownership of the means of production and human exploitation, are as impossible as achieving socialism in any society where democratic control is absent from nationalized productive facilities. Socialism cannot exist without democracy. Democracy can only flourish when all human needs are satisfied. Furthermore, a socialist society can only be attained through the conscious thoughtful efforts of a majority of the world's peoples. For this reason we see our task today as an educational and propagandistic one. We seek to encourage a socialist choice as a solution to the power struggle which holds the world in continuous fear and anxiety. The socialist choice must reject both the Western and Stalinist blocs, neither one of which offers hope of democracy, peace and security. Consequently, the socialist choice is a third choice which must embody and express the hopes and desires of the world's peoples in order to triumph.

ANVIL AND STUDENT PARTISAN is open to those who desire to critically examine the socialist tradition and to reevaluate those aspects of it which are no longer applicable. But as our name implies, we claim no impartiality on the major social questions of our time, nor the forces behind them. We will defend colonial movements struggling for freedom from foreign domination and at the same time we will extend our hand to those behind the iron curtain who seek to overthrow their oppressive masters. We will seek to create sympathy for the aspirations of working class movements throughout the world. And we will support the struggles of the American labor movement for a larger share in that better life of which socialism is the final consummation.

Dear Reader,

The outlook for socialism is better today than at any time in the past 20 years. In the U.S. the Negro struggle for democracy in the South, and the merger of the AFL and CIO into one united labor movement were the first signs of changing times. And then the crisis in world Stalinism, from the 20th Party Congress to the epoch-making Hungarian Revolution, rekindled the flame of socialism throughout the world.

ANVIL, the *only* American student socialist magazine, is part of this great drive towards freedom and the end of exploitation. We hope it reaches every corner of American society, circulating socialist opinions.

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Our circulation jumped over 1,000 copies the last issue. In the light of the renewed strivings of people throughout the world toward socialist and democratic ideals, all who share these ideals should be encouraged to increase ANVIL's circulation by at least 2,000 with this issue.

Fraternally,

Mel Becker
Faith Walstrom

OUR ARTIST: Paul Cowles has studied art in Chicago and New York and intends to continue his studies in Europe next Spring. Currently he works as a commercial artist for a large New York advertising firm.

Who Rules in America?

I. The Elections

Who rules in America? To this most crucial question, all but a small handful, whether they be social scientists, journalists, or politicians, answer in chorus: "the people." The following three articles offer a dissenting analysis, present the United States as a class-society, ruled by a highly sophisticated capitalist class. The first probes contemporary political processes in this society, and offers certain guides to the coming struggle for power; the second discusses the most important contemporary work about the American ruling class; the third rejects the myth that Franklin Roosevelt in reality changed, or attempted to change, the locus of social power in the United States. In brief, the conservative moment and the recent liberal past are both seen within the confines of the question we began with: Who rules in America?

CONTRARY TO ALL OF THE ENCOMIUMS LAVISHED ON OUR SYSTEM of political democracy, our elections must be considered as somewhat less than a perfect means for expressing the "will of the people." Democracy is frustrated by Constitutionally derived devices of minority checks on popular majorities; by the fact that the means of political communication and persuasion are a social monopoly of wealth; and, above all, by the fact that the two major parties which monopolize the arena are private organizations, rigid in structure and bureaucratic by nature, which are only indirectly subject to the pressure of larger and broader trends. From this derives the symbolic character of our elections, which are conducted primarily as referendums about questions long since settled in reality, or around issues basically irrelevant to those areas of disagreement which ideally should be the subject of democratic debate.

What then do the last elections held within this system, those of 1956, symbolize? Their meaning has been obscured, both before and after Election Day, by partisan interpreters, unwilling to admit their implications. This is particularly true of the liberal and labor adherents to the cause of Stevensonian Democracy, who have long avoided the admission that a party controlled and dominated by Southern reactionaries cannot gain the confidence of the people as that force which can bring into existence "The New America." Nor can it forever run on the coattails of a long-dead Roosevelt. For every tendency which in some way seeks a more progressive political orientation, the present time offers the possibility of taking a new look at how this is to be achieved. The starting point for such a discussion must begin with the current nature of the two major parties.

This can best be approached by examining the difference between Eisenhower's 1952 and 1956 campaigns. Eisenhower began his political career in the fortunate position of never having done anything, and having said very little, which could commit him to a particular program of action. As a consequence he was free to attack indiscriminately any and every

unpopular policy of the New and Fair Deals. Furthermore, consistency of thought not being one of his outstanding characteristics, Eisenhower was able to enunciate a contradictory series of ideas which corresponded to a similar number of widespread sentiments created in opposition to the foreign and domestic policies of the Democratic Party. At one and the same time he could covertly oppose the Korean war and call for the "liberation" of Eastern Europe. He rode the wave of hysteria against Communists in Government (or in schools, or in jobs, or anywhere else) that had been created by the Cold War and the various anti-subversive programs of the Truman administration, and made into a political movement by the junior Senator from Wisconsin.

Modern Republicanism

On the domestic scene, he was able to utilize the high cost of living as the focus of his social program. Promising to cut taxes, always a potent appeal, and implying that the high cost of living somehow could be abolished by eliminating waste and bureaucracy, Eisenhower capitalized on the sentiment that something was wrong and that it was time for a change. Yet despite the social demagoguery of many of his speeches, Eisenhower's main appeal was to every form and variety of conservative sentiment. The conservative, and even reactionary character of his support was made manifest by the outpouring of voters among those ordinarily politically inert layers which frequently are dormant or stay-at-homes: the suburbs, the small towns, the South, and the women. In addition, in the cities, he made heavy inroads among those most conservative of Democratic supporters—the national minorities of Catholic extraction—the Polish, Irish, and Italian voters.

Eisenhower's victory in 1956, while capitalizing upon these same vague feelings of uneasiness and the sentiment that "Ike" somehow provides stability in an unstable world, was in fact far more than a personal triumph as it is usually interpreted. To argue away the realities of the past four years by alluding only to Eisenhower as the universal father-image, is to imply that his reelection was merely a fad of politics, a phenomenon which, its progenitor having suffered another heart attack, is bound to disappear while the ordinary traditional pattern once more reasserts itself. Such a theory fails to recognize the significance of what is new in the Eisenhower phenomenon; it discounts the real change which has occurred in the political image of Eisenhower, and the meaning of the image of "Eisenhower Republicanism."

Once in power, Eisenhower turned out to be far different from the man fondly imagined by his conservative supporters, and hysterically feared by his liberal enemies, who sincerely believed that an Eisenhower victory would take America practically half-way down the road to fascism. After paying off a couple of directly political debts—the tax reduction of 1953 for higher-income groups, and signing the Tidelands Oil bill as a gesture of good will to the Rockefellers—the Eisenhower administration learned that, "unfortunately," nine-tenths of its promises were impossible of fulfillment. "Facts," as Eisen-

hower might have learned by reading Lenin, "are stubborn things." The market place, for all of Adam Smith's "incantations," was revealed as somewhat less than a perfect instrument for achieving 100% parity. Communists in government were harder to find than copies of Marx's work on "The Eastern Question" and after the ill-fated Ladijinsky affair, the search for substitutes in the form of "security risks" was practically abandoned.

Despite his previous commitments, the two most important acts of the Eisenhower Administration were attacks on his right-wing supporters: the demolition of McCarthyism and the reorganization of the Supreme Court with the appointment of Earl Warren. However accomplished, and for whatever reasons, it remains true that it was on the initiative and under the direction of Eisenhower Republicanism that the American people were treated to a television marathon which resulted in McCarthy's political castration. It is equally a political fact that by appointing the most liberal of all prominent Republicans to the Court, Eisenhower not only gave administration sanction for the desegregation decision, but also implicit approval to a series of civil liberties decisions which halted, if they did not reverse, the previous trend of the Court in destroying important parts of the Bill of Rights. Reactionaries within the Republican party found themselves on the defensive when attacking these decisions because it was Warren, the Eisenhower appointee, who was the figure behind them.

The Political Tribute to Eisenhower

Thus, most of the fears evoked by the liberals in 1952 have proved to be, if not groundless, then highly attenuated. It is true, of course, that Eisenhower installed a businessmen's government—and a big businessman's government at that. But despite its attack on the Cadillac Cabinet, the Democratic campaign was unable to portray this administration as starkly reactionary. True, it gave away most of the country's oil reserves to private interests, but the father of the Tidelands Oil Bill was the Democrat Kerr, just as the Natural Gas Bill which Eisenhower so piously vetoed was primarily the work of Southern Democrats. More significant, however, was the failure of the Republican administration to attack any of the social reforms and governmental institution which liberals claim as the historic achievements of the New Deal. The only major exception to this generalization was the assault on Public Power, a policy which undeniably lost the Republicans votes in the Pacific Northwest, but which could not become a national Democratic issue broad enough to lead to a presidential victory. Dixon-Yates established a limit on how far Big Business "liberalism" would go, but in the prosperous America of 1956 it did not raise a question of decisive political importance.

The rise of modern Republicanism, and its endorsement by a plurality of almost ten million, is a political, not a personal tribute to Eisenhower. It marks recognition of the fact that if business is to maintain its direct influence over public policy, it must do so with a program and a leadership which is far different than Old Guard Republicanism, with its narrow, provincial outlook, and its frank advocacy of private selfishness. It cannot pursue an open policy of hostility to labor, ignoring the farmers, or letting the economy go its own merry way towards a depression. In order to preserve its fundamental interests it must assume that degree of political liberalism which represents the basic ideology of the middle classes. And it must do these things not only by making promises, but also in practice. Labor has taken a beating in the administrative agencies but has done remarkably well on the

field of collective bargaining. Farm discontent, if not stifled, was at least mollified by the Soil Bank program. Despite the administration's partiality for large corporations, under the concrete conditions of the last four years this partiality has not resulted in any marked redistribution of income, any increase in poverty, any return to depression, or any violent attack on labor.

The role of prosperity, is, of course, decisive in this connection. The rising level of employment, a rapidly growing national income, the general increase in wages, all were the result of economic factors largely independent of government action. They were based on the continuation of a high level of military spending and an unprecedented expansion of industry seeking to modernize its plant and equipment.

The Potency of Peace

In the field of foreign policy, the Eisenhower Administration continued the basic policy laid down in the seven years of post-war Democratic rule. The major criticism of Republican handling of this policy that the Democrats can find is the impetuous voice of our Secretary of State, enunciating policies seldom intended and almost never carried out. In contrast to bellicose statements about "liberation" and "agonizing reappraisal," American foreign policy has continued the policy of mutual security, the construction of bases in Franco Spain, support to the regimes of Chiang and Rhee, creation of the Baghdad Pact, firm support to the North Atlantic and South-East Asian alliance, and the continuation of foreign aid. But at the same time, the Eisenhower administration was the recipient of an extraordinary piece of political luck: the post-Stalin crisis of Russian society. By reacting to this development through the famous speech on peaceful use of the atom at the UN, through a willingness to go to a Summit Conference, and so on, the Eisenhower Republicans laid the groundwork of their claim to represent a "peace party." Many instinctively understood Walter Lippmann's sophisticated analysis of 1952: that Stevenson's obligation to defend the Truman policies, his vulnerability to right-wing attack on the Communist issue, would have made it impossible, or at least extremely difficult, for him to have liquidated the Korean War; to have refused support to the French in Indochina after Dienbienphu; to have gone to Geneva, and so on. Parallel to this was the widespread real belief that the Democrats represented a war party.

The political potency of this concept is best demonstrated not only by the extensive attempt by Eisenhower and even more Nixon to exploit this sentiment, but by all of the polls and political field-interviews which showed it to be a major factor among women and farmers. It is also shown by the desperate attempt by Stevenson to diminish this hostility by a last minute proclamation in favor of ceasing H-Bomb tests and abolition of the draft. The fact that this tactic boomeranged was a function of Stevenson's own inability to take unequivocal stand on the issues which he raised. In his major television speech defending his H-Bomb proposal, the Democratic candidate was flanked and supported by Sen. Stuart Symington, the major proponent of a strong air force and crash program on intercontinental ballistics missiles, i. e. the chief Democratic advocate of "massive retaliation."

The demagogic and conscienceless exploitation of the peace issue by Nixon cannot diminish its political potency. Nor should it obscure its foundation in fact beyond the sheer coincidence of three wars since 1917, all during Democratic administrations. For while it is true that, with the exception of the now virtually extinct LaFollette-Norris-Nye-Progressive section of the Republican Party, both major parties supported

these wars, it is the Democrat who mainly took responsibility for them, defended their aims and conduct, and justified them in popular propaganda.

But the political identification of the Democratic Party as a war party is not merely the product of Republican exploitation of a historical accident. It is more or less an accurate appraisal of its relative position to Eisenhower Republicanism on questions ranging from defense policy to the desirability of "peaceful coexistence." Granted that the range of difference is narrow; granted that both parties agree on a "bipartisan" support of our foreign policy; granted that neither party calls for any major change in that policy; granted all of this, it remains the public record of Congressional Democrats to have directed their main attack against our defense program on the basis of its insufficiency.

A major theme of the Democratic primary campaign was in terms of which candidate was least subject to the blandishments with which the Russians had seduced the somewhat simple-minded Eisenhower into a policy of appeasement. And, insofar as Stevenson's criticism of the Republican foreign policy took on any substance whatever, it could only be interpreted as favoring a more "active" policy: a concept which, whatever else it may mean, certainly carries the implication of belligerency, intervention in areas such as the Middle East. Toward Suez, Stevenson advocated a policy of greater support or at least less active opposition to England and France than Eisenhower, and in general, a reaffirmation of the NATO policy which has been so strikingly proved bankrupt these last few months. The language, no less than the content of Stevenson's speeches, with its "consciousness of crisis" and necessity to establish America's position of moral leadership" were hardly calculated to reassure that vast body of opinion which has no other interest in foreign affairs other than to avoid war.

Republicanism and Big Business

All of these directly political facts stand against a background of international developments which, far more than any conscious planning, gave to Eisenhower's first administration an aura of popularity, if not striking success, as insubstantial as it may turn out in the long run. The policy of the post-Stalin Russian leadership aimed at a speedy conclusion to such inconclusive military adventures as Korea and Indo-China. However hollow the achievements of the "Geneva Spirit" in terms of achieving either peace or a settlement of the East-West struggle, it did permit Eisenhower to bask in the glory of having helped achieve peace in our time. At the same time it limited his ability to act in the "vigorous" fashion so ardently advocated by Stevenson.

The emergence of "Modern Republicanism" is a measure of both the strength and weakness of the position of Big Business in politics. It has won a vote of confidence, but only on the basis of adopting the positions which have always been in the liberal arsenal. In this fashion it has created an entirely new political situation. Broadly speaking the whole axis of political discussion has shifted. All of the dire warnings about the continued existence of a Republican Old Guard do not negate the fact that as a national leadership for the Party, this Old Guard has been discredited, reduced in power, compromised, and in part genuinely converted to the idea of a "new Republicanism" a la Eisenhower. As the spokesman for local interests, sectional peculiarities, or cracker-barrel prejudices, the Republican right wing may still survive as a powerful Congressional force, acting in concert with Southern Democrats to impede, obstruct and otherwise negate the proposals of the Eisenhower and Democratic "Liberals," but as a national leadership of the Republican Party, much less of the nation,

Old Guard Republicanism is almost as dead as its erstwhile mentor, the recently deceased senior senator from Ohio. Any doubts on this score can be dispelled by conjuring up the idea of a Republican candidate in 1960.

At the same time, this fact points up the Republican Party's own particular crisis: that it contains no national spokesman of "Modern Republicanism" capable of uniting the Party other than Eisenhower. For the President, like that other charismatic leader of a house divided against itself—Roosevelt, has failed to create an organizational instrument for his political majority. Thus, both Democrats and Republicans appeared in 1956 as "unnaturally" unified, and the result was an almost universal muting of the real conflicts which lie behind the two facades of party harmony.

This current dead-center nature of American politics has pointed up the fact which must be a starting point for any consideration of the prospects of the Democratic party nationally: socially, ideologically, and organizationally that party is composed of irreconcilably opposed elements. It is the party of labor and the worst enemies of labor; it is (or *was*, as one of the major features of the elections showed) the party of the Negroes and the white supremacists.

Disintegrating Coalition

This coalition began to break up in Congress as early as 1938, to be replaced by the congressional block between the South and the Republican opposition. From then on it has been sustained for presidential elections by a combination of war, inertia, tradition, and the political timidity of all other elements in the party which consider the South a necessary part of any victorious coalition. As a consequence, however, that party has been tied to the South, identified with its Southern members, and suffered the domination of its Southern wing. Not only because of the predominance of the South in Congress, but also because the South is counted upon to supply a major part of the electoral votes of its presidential candidate.

Let there be no mistake in thinking that the South is a reactionary force only with respect to civil rights. It is not only the bulwark of racism and segregation, but the most vigorous opponent of minimum wages, and the big barrier to unionization of the last refuge of the open shop. It includes the most powerful of all private-interest lobbies, the Oil and Natural Gas Lobby. It is, of course, the enemy of civil rights and every measure which could constitute a threat to segregation. Given the necessity of northern liberals to insist on non-discrimination in every federally-sponsored social welfare proposal such as housing and school aid, the Southern Democrats must also oppose them. And this sharp, irreconcilable conflict between the two wings of the Party must be the basis for analyzing the future potential of the Democrats.

Despite the chortlings of liberal spokesmen, the success of the Democratic Party cannot be taken as an indication of the strengths, actual or potential, which they can expect in 1960. On the contrary, precisely because the Democratic Party is a *disintegrating* coalition, it was able to win on the Congressional level. Congressional elections are decided on the basis of local issues, and each candidate selects those elements of the Party platform and the Presidential candidate's program suitable to his particular needs. In New York and Detroit, the Democratic candidates stand for civil rights; in Mississippi and Alabama they stand for white supremacy. In one district in Brooklyn, the Democratic candidate is a militant defender of civil liberties because his district contains a large minority who formerly voted for the American Labor Party; in an adjacent district, in which a near-McCarthyite atmosphere is present

among the Irish Catholic majority, the Democratic candidate makes one of the major issues of his campaign the failure of the present incumbent GOP Eisenhower administration "to get the Reds" out of the government." In Detroit's working-class districts the candidate comes out for repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act; in more conservative suburban communities on the outskirts of Detroit, the candidate says that he might consider certain judicious modifications in the same law. By this device, the Democratic Party can build a national congressional victory on the basis of the diverse and hostile elements within it. But in a national election it must lose votes.

The nature of this Democratic Party led to the kind of campaign, if it can be graced with that name, which we witnessed in the last two months of the campaign. Aside from declaring that he "could do it better," Stevenson offered no reason why anyone who had voted for Eisenhower in 1952 should switch his vote, no reason why some who voted for him in 1952 should not join the bandwagon and vote for Ike. In brief, Stevenson did not manage to create the impression of a *significant* political difference.

This situation can continue as long as that increasingly powerful force, the labor movement, is content to shovel its support through the traditional instrument of major party politics, the big city machines. These machines form the basic constituent elements of the local and state organizations, and even today are in practically complete control of such party institutions as the National and State Committees. They direct party policy where that is not monopolized by the Southern Democratic Congressmen.

The New Machines

The hand of the labor movement is being increasingly forced by the fact that these machines, with few exceptions, are and have been for some time, in a condition of disintegration, the reasons for which are obvious and evident. The extension of civil service to all areas of public employment deprives the machines of their basic cadres: a membership as extensive as the state bureaucracy, united in a cynical strip-mining of the public treasury in collaboration with a host of business interests ranging from railroads to the racket-controlled laundries. The assimilation of national minorities into the larger community of native Americans loosened the control of the old machines; the rise of organized labor created the basis for a new development.

With the decline of the traditional elements of precinct-level organization, the machine has been replaced in large measure by another kind of machine—the huge electoral funds and careful, grass-roots organization of the trade unions. The extent to which this has occurred can not be quantitatively determined since it is the avowed interest of everyone to pretend the process has not even begun. But it exists to a far greater extent already than anyone acknowledges.

The labor movement, still aligned to the Democratic Party, finds that it must build its own organizations outside of the traditional Party machine in order to begin to fill the vacuum left by the failure of the Party to push labor's demands. Socialists have always opposed the Democratic Party not merely because that party served as the political instrument for the defense of capitalism, but also because it was the ideological and organizational substitute for the socialist movement among the workingclass and the radical intellectuals who constitute the potential elements for the development of a socialist movement, because it acted as a barrier to that "opening to the left" which prepares a more propitious situation for the development of the socialist movement. Given the current half-con-

scious efforts of the labor movement to build "dual institutions" alongside of the Democratic Party, socialists can only welcome every development which demonstrates to the labor movement that at the current stage of development its own politics, not yet socialist, can only be advanced by a clean break with the Democratic Party, at least as presently constituted with the Southern Democracy and the northern machines in the driver's seat. This process can only be brought into being by the growth of the power and meaning of the non-Democratic Party political institutions of labor, by their development into a labor party, or, at minimum, of their capturing of the shell of the Democratic Party shorn of its current leading forces.

The Political Vacuum

A vacuum exists in American politics—a vacuum which will be increasingly demonstrated by the failure of the Congress in the next four years, nominally with a Democratic majority, to advance the interests of the labor movement, the dirt farmers and the Negro people in America. It has been suggested that the Eisenhower Republican Party can fill this vacuum. But merely to pose this possibility is to answer it in the negative.

For one thing, the charismatic symbol of Modern Republicanism, Eisenhower, cannot unify the Party in another national campaign by reason of health and of Constitutional Amendment. But more basically, the Eisenhower wing of the Party is only *relatively* "liberal": relative to the divided Democrats, relative to a period of economic boom, relative to a time of muted Russian aggressiveness on the international scene. At bottom, the driving force of Republicanism remains the power and the interest of big business, of Eastern finance capital, united in an uneasy alliance with the isolationists and small businessmen of the Mid-west. The Eisenhower victory was a political triumph of Modern Republicanism, not simply a personal tribute to the President, yet as the elegant conservative Walter Lippmann mourned, there is no Modern Republican Party. The Republicans, like the Democrats, were at dead center in 1956, but that is a temporary situation. Social forces, decisive issues, and the simple passage of events will smash the bi-partisan me-tooism of the recent campaign.

Neither the Democratic nor the Republican Party can fill the vacuum of American politics. While we may be in for a period, perhaps a decade, of veering and tacking, with a constant realigning of forces going on, the only way out for the American workers, dirt farmers, Negro people, and pressed small middle-class will lie in the creation of their own political organization. This event is on the agenda, if not for today, then for the near tomorrow.

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II. The Powerful

C. WRIGHT MILLS DESCRIBES THE DOMINANT INTELLECTUAL opinion-makers of the present moment as serving a "strangely conservative mood" by presenting images of reality which "are either irrelevant to the facts of power . . . or . . . are simply private fantasies serving more as emotional cushions for small coteries of comfortable writers, paid and unpaid, than as a diagram of all those forces which in our time come to such obvious climax in the American power elite." Mills' own work happily does not fit into this contemporary literature of what he has called elsewhere "the American celebration."

The Power Elite completes Mills' trilogy on American social classes. *New Men of Power* is a study of the potential political and social strength of the American trade unions, in particular their leaders. Mills describes these leaders as caught between their natural tendency to be conservative and the radicalizing and politicizing pushes upon them from the rank-and-file. Caught neither within the anti-labor ideology of the dominant forces in American society, nor the uncritical support of the trade-union bureaucracy which afflicts large sections of official American liberalism, Mills is able to assess the forces which lead toward, and those which lead away, from the entrance of the organized labor movement onto the political scene in an independent move.

White Collar: The American Middle Classes probes the reality of the small entrepreneurs, the salesmen, the intellectuals caught within the various departments of "Brains, Inc.," the engineers, the professionals, the managers, and the office workers. Mills sees them as powerless men and women, the rearguarders in American political life, unable to initiate their own independent program, but up for sale to those groups who are respectable enough and strong enough and who consciously make a bid for them.

The Power Elite is Mills' analysis of those "in command of the major hierarchies and organizations of modern society . . . [who] rule the big corporations . . . run the machinery of the state and claim its prerogatives . . . direct the military establishment . . . [and] occupy the strategic command posts of the power and wealth and the celebrity which they enjoy."

The Right Hand Column

His major center of interest is in the three-headed "elite" that rules in America. First there is the very rich, the American executive, the corporate rich. Balzacian in the honesty and pitilessness of his characterization, Mills does not approach them from a transcendental morality, but from a materialist one centered in the hard and real desires of human existence. He senses the one essential difference between the "very rich" and the rest of the world: to the former "the prices of things are simply irrelevant. They never have to look at the right hand column of a menu; they never have to take orders from anybody, they never have to do really disagreeable things except as a self-imposed task; they never have to face alternatives hedged in by considerations of cost. They never *have* to do anything. They are, according to all appearances, free."

Next to the very rich Mills places the modern warlords who "have gained and have been given increased power to make and to influence decisions of the gravest consequence." In America, the military has been on the ascendency. As Ameri-

can power in the world has increased, and the American military establishment has spread from Pole to Pole and from Paris to Timbuctu, the military men become more and more involved in major policy decisions, more and more able to impose their military definitions upon reality. Their role in the American ruling "elite" has become such that they "have become accepted by other members of the political and economic elite, as well as by broad sectors of the public, as authorities on issues that go well beyond what has historically been considered the proper domain of the military."

The third head of Mills' "elite" is the political. He offers a very useful analysis of the present composition of the fifty-three leading positions in the executive branch of the government in the Eisenhower Administration. In a very direct sense, this administration has fulfilled Marx's characterization of the State as "the executive committee of the bourgeoisie." (It must be remembered that Marx did not mean that this would have to be directly the case, but rather that the State would have to, in the last analysis, perform the bidding of the ruling class.) The great bulk of its membership comes directly from the higher echelons of the corporate and financial world. The key positions are held by "a New York representative of the leading law firm of the country which does international business for Morgan and Rockefeller interests; by a Mid-west corporation executive who was a director of a complex of over thirty corporations; and by the former president of one of the three or four largest corporations and the largest producer of military equipment in the United States," as well as by "two more men from General Motors a leading financier and director of New England's largest bank; and a millionaire publisher."

Combined with probing analysis of who rules in America, fortunately unadorned with the usual liberalesque rhetoric which would convince us that no one *really* rules, is a sincere, and powerful moral indictment of this ruling "elite." Mills attacks the theories of "countervailing power," which as propounded by such as one of Adlai Stevenson's ghost writers, John Kenneth Gailbraith, would have us convinced that the power of the corporation is checked by some classless creature called "the consumer," and the theories of the balance of forces as enunciated by David Riesman. He avoids any apologia for those who rule in America; he strips them bare of all moral pretense in a fashion wonderfully reminiscent of Thorstein Veblen's portrait of the American college president. He ends the volume on a note which deserves quotation here in full, as it provides the keystone for a radical approach to American society, for a radical politics in the United States. Mills writes:

America—a conservative country without any conservative ideology—appears now before the world a naked and arbitrary power, as, in the name of realism, its men of decision enforce their often crackpot definitions upon world reality. The second-rate mind is in command of the ponderously spoken platitude. In the liberal rhetoric, vagueness, and in the conservative mood, irrationality, are raised to principle. Public relations and the official secret, the trivializing campaign and the terrible fact clumsily accomplished, are replacing the reasoned debate of political ideas in the privately incorporated economy, the military ascendancy, and the political vacuum of modern America.

In many ways this book can be used as a basic text for

socialists to give to those who ask them, "Who do you think rules in America?" Mills, however, does more than indict the American "elite"; in fact he *must* do more. He presents, if not a full answer to "What is to be done?" a mood in which to approach the question. And, unfortunately, this mood is a most pessimistic, nihilistic one, a mood which doubts in effect the possibility of destroying the social power of those who rule in America, the possibility of a democratic reconstruction of society. Philip Rief, in a brilliant review of *The Power Elite* in *Partisan Review*, describes Mills (as well as himself?) thus: "It is the misfortune of the socialist critic in our time, equipped with better social psychology than his forebearers, to look into the faces of the mass and see that these too are irremediably blank. Masses are merely the poorer relations of elites."

Mass Society

Mills offers, as it were, a candid camera shot of contemporary American society, which in concentrating on a truthful view of the "elite," overstates the case, distorts the perspective. For the basic thesis of his book becomes a "1984" end-of-history nightmare. The elite rules, irresponsibly and mindlessly, and there is only a "mass" unable to counterpose itself to its rulers. Mills writes: "... the rise of the power elite . . . rests upon, and in some ways is part of, the transformation of the publics of America into a mass society."

Mills argues that the classic postulate of political democracy, the free ebb and flow of discussion, in which a multitude of political publics compete in the market-place of ideas, and in which the individual conscience, after rational discussion, is the ultimate seat of judgment and hence the final court of appeal, no longer is an accurate description of political reality. An enlightened public has been replaced by a mass, thought-manipulated by the means of communication controlled by a few large empires, in a society in which there are both formal and informal pressures to enforce conformity, and in which the centralization and complexity of life limits the opportunity for people to act out their opinions collectively. In this situation, the manipulators of the means of communication impose a concept of reality on the people which saps their will, atomizes them, makes them substitute stereotypes for an awareness of the true meaning and source of their personal troubles—in brief, by preventing them from achieving class-consciousness, turns them into an unconscious, confused mass.

Now, there can be little doubt that the constant pressures of the media of mass communication and their monopolization in few hands has helped create false images of reality in the minds and consciousness of American workers, farmers, and white-collar workers. But this does not demonstrate that the process has come to a final, irremediable conclusion. It is incumbent upon Mills not merely to assert that this has occurred but to demonstrate this. And this he really does not do; all that he really does is to offer us his mood, one of disbelief, of feeling intensely the defeats of the past, and projecting them into the future.

Mills only demonstrates a tendency—and never takes up the counter forces to it that might exist. He admits that his picture of mass society is a model, that in a fully developed sense it does not yet exist within the United States. He at one place offers a caveat to his general thesis, which he then seemingly drops. He writes: "The United States today is not altogether a mass society, and it has never been altogether a community of publics. These phrases are names for extreme types; they point to certain features of reality, but they are themselves constructions; social reality is always some sort of mixture of the two."

If the model that Mills offers were only half-true, there still could be no real politics in America. And yet there is a politics in America: not a socialist politics to be sure, only occasionally radical and tough-minded, but a politics none-the-less. How does Mills' theory of a mass society account for the following facts: the increased consciousness of the Negro people in the United States which has led to a social struggle unparalleled in the unionization drive of the nineteen-thirties; the increasing political consciousness and politicalization of the united American trade-union movement which grows as a force to be reckoned with; the revolt of the farmers against the Eisenhower Administration which may turn into the major political event of the moment?

It is interesting to note that Mills specifically, but weakly, discards the concept of class and of class-relations in a footnote which in nineteen lines discards a vulgar interpretation of class, without indicating that he is obliged to deal with a more adequate, sophisticated analysis than the one he cavalierly rejects. Mills, by the very nature of his subject and his frame of reference, must consciously deal with Marxism, must indicate why he rejects the Marxian tools-of-analysis in favor of his elite-masses one. But except for some off-handed comments about simplistic Marxism, he never does this.

While this is not the occasion for a discussion on how a sophisticated Marxism might be applied to Mills' subject matter, at least one can raise the question: if one utilized such an analysis in terms of the *relations* between classes in society, relations in which there is a constant clash of interests, would it not be necessary to look at the political struggles that do take place, to account for them even if one's conclusion would be the inevitable victory of the ruling class?

Men Without Will

The elite-masses theory that Mills offers leads to a historicism comparable in its totality to that of the Stalinist perversion of Marxism (which, let it be clear, Mills has always vigorously opposed.) It is not that because we know the laws of history that we can make long-term prophecies which make human will and human consciousness irrelevant, but that the means of mass communications have so brain-washed men that they no longer *have* any will. And to demonstrate *such* a thesis, Mills must do better than his single chapter devoted to this.

But Mills has not done this—and I would suspect because this is not really what he means. He is not in reality offering such a grandiose theory and prophesy, but rather describing and analyzing reality as he sees it, and indicating to his readers a certain, most subjective mood. And, if this is so, one is justified in taking the chapter on "The Mass Society" in *The Power Elite* as representing more than some notions, rather than a scientific exposition.

What Mills has done is to give us valuable analysis of the social power of the American ruling class and for this we owe much to him. Given the brilliance of his probing of the power relationships in his three major books, despite their inadequacies, is it fair to expect that Mills will now turn his considerable talents to a major work which will probe deeply the dynamic of the relationships of the social classes that he has so far dissected individually. There is every reason to believe that such a book by C. Wright Mills will be a major contribution to American social analysis, a most important addition to that body of social literature which has helped bring into being social movements aimed at transforming the *status quo*. It is hoped that C. Wright Mills will take up this task with dispatch.

GEORGE RAWICK

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III. The Myth of the New Deal

THE OBITUARY OF THE NEW DEAL WAS OFFICIALLY READ AT the Democratic Party Convention in August. When Stevenson was confronted with a challenge from the Harriman-Truman camp, he and one of his chief supporters, Eleanor Roosevelt, argued that there was no use raising frayed banners and shouting the slogans of the Thirties. New times, they argued, needed new solutions, new problems were facing America. This position was, of course, consistent with a determined effort to stop any serious discussion of a perennial problem suddenly turned "new" by the Supreme Court decision, that of civil rights. But that is not the focus of this article. The thing to be emphasized is that the New Deal is finished.

In one sense, Stevenson and Mrs. Roosevelt were quite right. That strange, unstable coalition which initiated a series of reforms between 1932 and 1938 is indeed finished. For that matter, it was shattered eighteen years ago and did not produce a single piece of major social legislation in the intervening period. But, as Truman understood, the New Deal is still very much alive as a myth; it still has a hold on the popular, and particularly the liberal imagination. Stevenson knew that, too—and that is why Mrs. Roosevelt, "the treasurer of a legacy of greatness," he called her as he paid his homage to the shades, was elected to deliver a panegyric.

And as a myth, the New Deal is still very much worth careful analysis. For when Stevenson says that the New Deal is over, he means that success killed it, that it accomplished its task and is past. And he also means that the present is immune from the kinds of problems which the New Deal faced, and because of the New Deal. The publication of a new book, *The Lion and the Fox* by James MacGregor Burns, offers us a chance to examine that claim. How does the myth hold up?

The New Deal solved the crisis of the Thirties. That is the first part of the myth. What the problem was is plain enough. The bottom had fallen out of world capitalism. Almost fifteen million unemployed walked the streets of America (today, in percentage terms, that would be the equivalent of twenty-two or twenty-three million). The society was shaken to its very roots. Norman Thomas, running on the Socialist Party ticket in 1932, polled nearly a million votes. This was the situation when Franklin Roosevelt intoned his famous phrase, that we have nothing to fear but fear, in his inauguration speech in 1933. According to the myth of the New Deal, Roosevelt met this problem in a variety of ways. He instituted a program of pump-priming and restored the flagging economy. He marshalled the forces of organized labor and gave them unions. He created a strong, dynamic movement which confidently weathered the terrible storms of a tempestuous decade.

Recovery, trade unionism, liberalism, these are the slogans of the myth. But what about the reality?

Between, 1932 and 1935, Roosevelt paid little or no attention to labor. Section 7 (a) of the National Industrial Recovery Act granted the right to bargain, to be sure, but it remained a meaningless statement during the life of the NRA. The actual unionization of the American workingclass did not occur until the late Thirties, and it was not done by reading a section of the law to the owners of the auto, steel and other big industries. But then, in 1935, Roosevelt did come out for the Wagner Act—and that was unquestionably a step forward—*eight days after the bill passed the Senate.*

Thus the "legacy of greatness" on labor. At first Roosevelt was indifferent to the question, and then he jumped on a bandwagon when his support for it was not needed. As Richard Hofstadter has pointed out in his *American Political Traditions*, this gesture was itself politically motivated, the result of the disaffection of unionists and the threat of a radical right represented by Huey Long and Father Charles Coughlan. But even with the Wagner Act, the American workingclass had to organize itself. The law was an aid, to be sure, but the issue was decided in the great strikes of the mid and late Thirties.

But what about pump-priming? This Keynesian technique is, according to the myth, a cardinal principle derived from the experience of the New Deal. Yet, as Burns notes, Roosevelt used it unevenly and in a highly contradictory fashion. At the beginning of his second term, for example, Roosevelt was still committed to balancing the budget! There had been a certain business recovery from 1932 to 1936, and the President was now for cutting back on Government expenditures. Indeed, he began to do so.

Then something happened. You won't find it in the myth of the New Deal because it is too difficult a fact. In 1937 an eighteen-month crisis began. It marked a

more precipitous decline in the economy than the crash of 1929. And the revival was not a function of the intervention of the government, but of the beginning of war orders from Europe and the transition of the economy to an armaments basis. In the midst of this crisis, Roosevelt received a long letter from Keynes giving him advice. According to Burns, he hardly bothered to read it, and turned it over to his Secretary of the Treasury for a perfunctory reply.

And finally, there is the third leading element of the myth: Roosevelt as liberal leader. From 1932, the New Deal turned, now to the right, now to the left. The monopolistic dreams of the business community were granted recognition in the effective structure of the NRA; the aspirations of the workers were given paper backing in Section 7(a). It was not until late in



1935 that the popular-frontish element in the New Deal became dominant, and then the whole process had only some two years to run.

Roosevelt presided over a mass ferment of unprecedented proportions in the United States. Millions of workers and farmers were on the move. And yet, he emerged from this period with the same kind of political party that he had entered it with: a grab-bag coalition of progressive elements from the workingclass and the poor farmers tied in, and subordinated to, the power of Southern reaction. From 1938 on, this reactionary wing, in alliance with the Republicans, ruled the land, and they rule it to this day. Not one single important piece of legislation recommended in the Truman campaign of 1948 was passed—because the Dixie-GOP won the power even though a liberal rhetoric emanated from the White House. In the Democratic Convention this year, the same situation still existed, and Stevenson continued the policy of Roosevelt by subordinating all to unity and victory.

They Still Walked the Streets

All of this is not to say that the New Deal failed in every respect. Given the tumult of the period that would have been impossible. The Tennessee Valley Authority, rural electrification, an occasional gesture to the mass of poor farmers such as the Farm Security Administration, and the Wagner Act itself; these were gains. But the myth does not rest upon them. The myth stands upon a fantastic image of Roosevelt's relation to labor, wishful thinking about his pump-priming, and a peculiar stubborn insensitivity to the facts of his failure as the organizer of a stable liberal coalition.

The proof of all of this is in the last year of the Thirties. By 1939, seven years of the New Deal had passed. Almost ten million still walked the streets unemployed. As Burns summarizes it: "It was a major failure of American democracy that it was not able in the late 1930's to show that a great nation could provide jobs for workers, and food, clothes, houses for the people . . . Halfway through his second term the man who had ousted Hoover on the depression issue knew that eight or nine million people were walking the streets. . . ."

By 1939, the New Deal was indeed dead, and needed no obituaries from Adlai Stevenson or Eleanor Roosevelt. It had failed in the task it set itself, the solution of the problems of the economy. It had dissipated the political capital of a generation of social movement in a political party that was hamstrung by its reactionary wing. It was saved, not by any of the ideological elements which the myth attributes to it, but by the second World War. In 1943, America finally won the battle against unemployment—in the Army and in the war industries.

But this is only part of the New Deal myth. The other part, lurking in Stevenson's approach, was spelled out by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. after the 1952 elections. Writing in a British magazine, Schlesinger noted that Stevenson had lost because the New Deal had succeeded so fantastically that there were no real problems left—there was a general consensus of both parties on the welfare state. That such a consensus does exist has been made obvious by the Eisenhower Administration. But that the problems are permanently solved, that is another matter.

That second part of the myth is a consequence of the first. For if the New Deal of the Thirties solved the problems of the economy, then those problems are gone. But the New Deal, as we have seen, didn't do that. The war economy, rocking along today on the basis of a government intervention into the

economy many times that of the New Deal, did. In 1941, and again in 1950, the tremendous impetus of this armaments production provided a stimulus to business for expansion. Today, the war economy is still there, but no longer as an expanding sector in the economy. And the experience of the Thirties, of the New Deal, hardly leads to a complacency about the permanent nature of our current prosperity.

To be sure, 1929 will not happen again in the same way. Changes have been made. But that is a far cry from saying that the economy is immune from crisis. Take a case in point. Business, it has argued, has learned its lesson. America knows now that all classes must collaborate for their mutual benefit. And yet, the most recent development in labor-management relations, called "Boulwarism" after one of its contemporary practitioners, is for the company to take an intransigent stand, making an offer and refusing to bargain. This approach characterized the long Westinghouse strike; it was attempted by the steel companies in the steel strike this year. How does this fit into the myth that the New Deal has changed everything so utterly that there are hardly any problems left?

Stevenson said that the New Deal was dead. If he was referring to that confused coalition which failed its basic task in the years from 1932 to 1938, it has been dead for eighteen years. But if he was talking about the New Deal myth—the assertion that Roosevelt solved the economic crisis of the Thirties and thereby immunized the nation against depression—then he is wrong. It is very much alive. It has become the ideology of all kinds of liberal spokesmen. And as such, it has a more and more conservative effect, it has lost that air of radicalism which necessarily clung to the actual New Deal of the decade of the depression.

The New Conservatism

As a result, the New Deal myth can even play a conservative role within American liberalism. When Mrs. Roosevelt defined her husband's policies as "moderate," she was also agreeing with Stevenson that the New Deal had been so successful that the main problems which it faced had been solved, that there was therefore no longer any need of radical re-orientation of the economy; in short, that the achievement of the Thirties had made the challenge of the Fifties one of an administrative nature, of a moderate extension, here and there, of basic gains already made. At that time, Truman-Harriman could use the New Deal as a source of leftish demagoguery. That is not too surprising. The thing that must be scored is that the New Deal myth, not the actuality, is now a possible vehicle for complacency and self-satisfaction; that the "Roosevelt Revolution" has become, from the retrospect of a decade or so of prosperity, an act of moderation.

And a reason for our concern is that the New Deal still has a hold over some of the best elements in American politics, particularly over the advanced section of the workingclass. Eventually, it is absolutely necessary that we realize the dangerous inadequacies of the myth, at points its outright falsification of fact. Indeed, before real progressive political action can take place on a broad scale, the myth itself will have to be destroyed.

CHRISTOPHER MARKS

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The Hungarian Revolution

THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION MARKS A DECISIVE TURNING point in world politics. The fact that the forces of Stalinist imperialism crushed the power of the people cannot alter that.

To begin with, these events in Hungary (and in Poland) reveal a tremendous crisis in the Stalinist empire. It was only yesterday that Bulganin announced at the Twentieth Party Congress that the "working people" of the "Popular Democracies" had greeted the Draft Directives of that Congress with "joy and unanimity." That is a lie (one among many) and no one can doubt it now. But more than that, many anti-Stalinists succumbed to the Stalinist image. Totalitarianism, they said, was indeed invincible, not joyous, yet made unanimous by a concentration of power that could not be challenged. Because they argued this way, many went to the position of critical support of the American military response to the challenge of Stalinism. For if the Stalinist social system was internally secure, then only outside force could destroy it.

An entire literature grew up in the matter of a decade to explain the monolithic invincibility of Stalinism. In Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*, the scholarly argument was made; in Orwell's *1984* the fictional picture was drawn. Totalitarianism, they argued, controlled all the means of communication, atomized society, made revolutionary organization impossible. In Arendt's version, social classes were obliterated and masses came to the fore. In the Orwellian image, even the expression of love between two human beings had become impossible, and eventually the opponent of the state was not only crushed but persuaded: he was convinced that Big Brother was actually smiling.

Many liberals and ex-radicals were hypnotized by versions of totalitarianism such as Arendt and Orwell put forward. They would agree with all kinds of criticisms of American capitalism's foreign policy, they would agree that it was "unfortunate" that Franco should belong to the "Free World," yet their ultimate political support for American militarism and imperialism came down to a reverse version of the wave of the future theme used to rationalize fascism in the Thirties. To them, Stalinism was a horrible, invincible, monolithic wave of the future, and there was no alternative method of struggle against it, only the possibility of destroying it from without by armed might. Thus, the impact of Hungary is not simply upon theories; it smashes into the political conclusions which were drawn from these theories, it calls into serious question (in our opinion, it destroys) a whole line of argument in support of American foreign policy.

Stalinism Not Invincible

These theories are no longer tenable. In Hungary, we see that the Stalinist empire is wracked by internal crisis. The very efficiency of the monolith, the acuteness of its terror and exploitation, is itself the basic cause of the crisis. In Hungary, the people were united to a man. Only the secret police supported the regime, and they because they knew that the overthrow of Stalinism meant their certain death. There was indeed unanimity in Hungary, but not the kind of which Bulganin spoke. Stalinism itself had organized the masses by uniting them into a single revolutionary will. There was, to be sure, confusion, many voices, the absence of clearly defined parties and programs. And yet, the revolutionaries acted with a sure instinct. Day after day they rejected each pitiful attempt at compro-

mise; day after day they fought for a simple and basic program.

But then, perhaps, we should not say, masses. That harks back to Hannah Arendt, and her theories are now finished. In East Germany in 1953, in Poland and in Hungary in 1956, it is the *workingclass* which leads in the anti-Stalinist revolution. There is no urban bourgeoisie to take the head of the struggle. The peasantry, except where it is organized in the army and goes over to the side of the workers, backs the revolution, but it is incapable, as a class, of playing the central role in the fight. And when we say this, that the workingclass led, we must realize what a profound fact we are dealing with.

Pre-War Hungary was not a democratic nation. After the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution at the end of the First World War, the country was ruled by reactionaries and fascists. There was a brief period at the end of World War II (1945 to 1948) when free institutions enjoyed a precarious and relative freedom. But we can say that the Hungarian workingclass has not had the democratic right of organization for decades, that three year period excepted. (The same held true for the East German workingclass for the twenty years preceding the June Days of 1953, from the rise of the Nazis in 1933 on.) And yet, it was the workers who came out, who led, who formed the brigades and the revolutionary councils. Each strong point of the revolution was an industrial center under the leadership of the workingclass. And there, with Hungary and with East Germany and Poland, must end the myth of the classless Stalinism. Not only did Stalinism make of the mass of the people, the workers, the peasants, the students, a single will, but the concentrated power and strength of the will was that of the workers.

Students Break the Mold

But even more surprising to some of the theorists of Stalinism was the role played by the students. Harry Schwartz and James Reston marveled in the *New York Times*. Hadn't the students grown up under Stalinism? Hadn't they been indoctrinated, day in and day out? Hadn't the concentrated power of the Stalinist monopoly of communications been turned upon them? Yes . . . but. But it was the students who touched off the revolution in Hungary (and in Poland), the students who formed themselves into brigades, the students who fought tenaciously against Big Brother. Why? In part, the explanation is clear. The students came from the families of workers and peasants and since, contrary to the theorists of Stalinism, social classes and class consciousness had not vanished, they shared the experiences of the oppressed and exploited; they were not bought off by the bureaucracy. But more than that. Day in, day out, the students were confronted with the ideas of Marxism. True, this was done in a perverted Stalinist way, yet the basic genius of Marx, the anti-Stalinism to which his method leads, could not be obscured. It is ironic, but we may well assume that the Stalinists themselves were the unwitting teachers of anti-Stalinism in their use of Marxism.

Finally, there was the peasantry. The fragmentary reports which we now possess do not indicate exactly how this class figured in the Revolution except as soldiers who went over to the struggle. But this again underscores a point made above: that the leading role in Hungary (as in Poland and East Germany) is taken by the workingclass. This is not to say that a victorious revolution would immediately be a socialist revolu-

tion. Hungary makes clear that the peasants, at least, will demand private property in the land. But that is a far call from the restoration of capitalism. In these countries, there is no bourgeoisie (it has been exiled, exterminated, expropriated), the revolution is led by the workingclass and therefore has a socialist content. Indeed, one can say that in East Europe, the way of struggle against Stalinism is the struggle for socialism.

Thus, the end of the myth of totalitarian monolithism. It does not atomize society so that it cannot resist; it does not destroy the workingclass and replace it with a mass; it does not, even with its monopoly of communications, poison the intellectual life of the nation fatally as the Hungarian students demonstrated. And all of these facts are of tremendous importance in how we orient toward the two major power blocs.

We now know that Stalinism is not the invincible monolith pictured by Arendt and Orwell. We now know that Stalinism, at the very least in its Eastern European empire, is wracked by crisis. And here is a clue to understanding the Twentieth Party Congress. One of the causes of the "liberalization" which took place at that Congress is now apparent. Khrushchev and company did not turn toward Titoism and toward promises to the people because they are democrats, crypto-democrats, unwilling democrats, or anything like it. They were responding to the pressure of the masses. Their willingness to attempt a coup d'etat in Poland, their use of imperialist force in Hungary, reveals the theory of Stalinist "democratization" as the lie it is.

The Limits of "Liberalization"

Hungary, one might say, is an insight into the cause, and the limits, of the Twentieth Party Congress. The cause is the hatred of the exploited and oppressed peoples for Stalinism. The limit is that "liberalization" cannot be allowed to result in any real freedom, that the rule of the bureaucratic ruling class will be maintained by brute force. Gomulka understood this the day after the Hungarian Revolution was crushed. He called upon the Polish people to exert an "iron discipline" lest the fate of Hungary be theirs. In other words, terror, force, brute power, is still the main prop of Stalinism, and the Twentieth Party Congress was a call for finesse and intelligence in its use, not for any real let-up. But this very fact goes to the very heart of the crisis of Stalinism.

Threatened from below by the hatred of the people, Stalinism can react in two ways. It can take the line of "liberalism," the line of the Twentieth Party Congress. But then, it is threatened all the more. The masses in Poland and Hungary were not bought off by the concessions, the tactic did not lead to social peace; it led to demands for more and more concessions; in Hungary it led to Revolution. And there, the Stalinists are on the other horn of the dilemma. For they can then turn back to the old method, to the method of naked repression . . . and increase the very hatred and discontent which they seek to disarm. Can anyone think that a Stalinist regime in Hungary is secure now? The Russian troops have captured the mouth of a volcano and placed the native Stalinist there—that is their victory.

But what, then, of America? The Hungarian events have demonstrated, if it needed proving, the incapacity of the West to mount a political struggle against Stalinism. Initially, the revolution was greeted by the attempts of both presidential candidates to claim credit for it. And then, the State Department sank into a mass of legalisms, announced that the Stalinists probably had a "right" to have Russian troops in Hungary under the Warsaw Pact, and exhibited anxiety lest over-

generalized statements on national self-determination and the presence of foreign troops in countries would boomerang, lest an attack on the Warsaw Pact would have implications about . . . NATO. Thus, the United States, the self-styled sworn enemy of Stalinist imperialism at a moment when that imperialism stood revealed in all of its horror: the United States was helpless.

But that was not all. Just in case a wave of anti-Stalinist revulsion would sweep the world because of the imperialist murder in Hungary, the imperialists of England and France (the leader of the latter a disgrace to the "socialism" which he claims to represent) invaded Egypt. Not only did this act completely compromise the claims of the "Free World" to anti-imperialist horror over the Hungarian events, but it may have led to the Stalinist decision to crush the Revolution. Harold Callender asked in the *New York Times*, "Would the Soviet Union have broken its promises by violent aggression against Hungary if the Western alliance had not been split by the French-British decision to invade Egypt?" If the answer to that question is yes, as it well may be, then the blood, not only of the murdered Egyptians, but of the Hungarian people as well, stains the hands of Western imperialism.

But the United States, it may be argued, did split with France and Britain (or rather the Republicans did; Adlai Stevenson and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt were ambiguously pro-imperialist on this count). After going along in Indochina, going along in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, going along in Cyprus, going along in Spain, etc., etc., America broke. This tells us that in the past, America has been the supporter of Western imperialism; yes, the leader, the financier, the organizer, of the imperialist bloc itself. And it indicates clearly what *real* anti-imperialism would mean: the break up of NATO, an end to the imperialist bloc. Indeed, one must say that now is the time to do exactly that. Gomulka and the East German Stalinists, and the rest of the satellite ruling classes, justify the presence of the imperialist troops on the grounds that they are necessary for a defense against NATO and a rearmed Germany. Then end NATO, end a rearmed Germany! Their excuse—that Russian military might is an immediate threat to Western Europe—vanished in the last two weeks, for Russian militarism in Europe has been revealed as an unstable, insecure phenomenon, menaced at its base, unable to count upon its Warsaw Pact troops.

Towards Socialist Freedom

This then is the meaning of Hungary. In the magnificent struggle of the Hungarian people, above all in the valiant fight of the Hungarian workingclass and students, a historical period has ended. Now we know: that Stalinism is an oppressive, exploitative system menaced from within, impaled on the horns of an impossible dilemma, threatened by either repression or concessions; that the West is incapable of struggling against Stalinism politically, that all its talk of "liberation" (Democratic talk, Republican talk, speech number 83A to gull the Polish workers of Hamtramack, Michigan in an election campaign) is claptrap; now we know that the battle against Stalinist imperialism is simultaneously the battle against Western imperialism.

Yesterday, East Germany was put down, but that led to Poland; and Poland stopped half-way on the road to its freedom, but that led to Hungary; and Hungary was crushed, but that will lead to the end of Stalinism, the Stalinism of Stalin's reviler, Khrushchev, the murderer of the Hungarian people. It will lead toward socialism.

THE EDITORS

Imperialism In Egypt

CALLING THINGS BY THEIR RIGHT NAMES IS THE FIRST PREREQUISITE for political understanding. The attack on Egypt by France, Britain and Israel is imperialist aggression. This is the first thing that we have to get straight. The right of Egypt to Suez is incontestable. For socialists and democrats, who hate colonialism and all that it means, there can be no other position than unqualified support of Egypt's right to the Suez Canal. This is true even though we at the same time oppose Nasser's regime as a military dictatorship. Exploitation of Suez by the Egyptian rulers is no step backward compared to its exploitation by French and British bond-holders. Further, it is progressive in its own right because every step on the road to national independence (political and economic) in the colonial world prepares the way for the colonial peoples to settle accounts with their own rulers. That is a task impossible of achievement as long as the greater enemy remains foreign imperialism. An act like the British-French invasion of Suez, far from bringing about a weakening of Nasser, can only strengthen his moral authority and his political position.

For Britain and France this act of aggression is the desperate policy of cynical imperialists fighting to stop the colonial revolution. They are not attacking Nasser because he is a despotic military dictator. (Both countries are presently supporting equally despotic regimes elsewhere in the Middle East.) They are not attacking Egypt because Nasser represents a force which could ever seek world domination. The idea of an industrially backward country, even as the leader of other even more backward nations, constituting a threat to the independence of countries like England and France must be dismissed as the invention of imperialist propaganda. Nor are they attacking Egypt because Nasser's regime has been keeping Israeli ships out of the Suez Canal in violation of Israel's rights. Finally, they are not attacking Egypt because the Egyptian people desperately need domestic reforms, industrialization, and peace.

For Britain and France the issue is wider than Suez. French imperialism understands that the victory of Nasser in nationalizing the Canal does nothing but strengthen the resistance of the Algerian fighters for national freedom, does nothing but work to sever the last remaining French ties with Morocco and Tunisia, indeed inspires the colonial people everywhere—including French West Africa, the Cameroons, Madagascar, Martinique and Tanganyika. British imperialism understands that the victory of Nasser means the reinforcement of anti-British sentiment throughout the Middle East, threatening her billion-dollar yearly profits from oil concessions in that area. And, because it will give courage to the struggles of the Nigerians, the Kenyans, and the peoples of the Gold Coast.

In the same way that Russia has resorted to horrible brutalities against the Hungarian peoples, Britain and France have used naked aggression to try to keep together an old imperialism cracking at the seams. The bitter irony of history is that the Russians, with hands reeking of blood of the Hungarian Revolution pretend to be the protector of national freedom in Egypt—while the French and British imperialists at the moment of their imperialist agony condemn Russian massacres in Hungary.

For Israel, the attack is nothing but a display of the bankruptcy of her reactionary, chauvanist politics. With the unseem-

ing desperation of the spinster willing to embrace the first suitor, no matter how diseased and depraved, Ben Gurion has violated his previous pledge not to start a "preventive war."

Gambling that he could have Britain and France finish off Nasser under the cover of the darkness of the Polish and Hungarian events, the American elections, and the Suez affair, Ben Gurion's government attacked, allowing Israel to become the catspaw of Western imperialism rather than the beacon of democracy and socialism in the Middle East.

Socialists must support unequivocally Israel's right to territorial integrity and security. But they can not support the mystical chauvanism of Ben Gurion's policies.

Israel was brought into being by World War II, accomplishing what forty years of Zionist agitation could not. All the powers turned their backs upon the Jewish people, closing their doors to the Jewish masses of Europe, and condemned six million of them to death. After the war, these same powers herded the remnant of the concentration camps and the crematorium into "DP Camps" and proceeded to let them rot. At that moment, only the Zionist solution was offered to them.

An Open Sore

After having so "accidentally" given birth to Israel, the world's powers proceeded to leave it on the doorstep of the Arab world, continuing to deny parental responsibility. Of course, Israel proceeded to inflame the hostility of the Arab masses by a reactionary anti-Arab policy, which permitted Arab demagogues and dictators such as Nasser successfully to agitate against the very existence of a hostile enclave of the West.

Nine hundred thousand Palestinian Arabs were made homeless, further trampling their human rights, and herded into camps by the governments of Egypt, Iraq and Syria, in order to remain as an open sore keeping alive anti-Israeli feeling. Every effort to solve this problem of the Arab refugees has been turned down by the Israeli government. This government, by rule and practice, has relegated the Arabs remaining within its territory to second-class citizenship, including military rule over most of them. The Israeli government has utilized every slight provocation to raise the ante of blood—for every Israeli killed in border raids, the Israelis have killed several times as many. The current Israeli attack, it goes without saying, has further heightened Arab hostility.

The demands we raised in the last issue of ANVIL remain even more valid today: Israel must give full rights to all of its Arab citizens, it must compensate the Arab peasants for their seized land, it must actively encourage Arab participation in the life of Israel, it must admit 100,000 Arab refugees and accept the principle of repatriation for all legitimate refugees. And above all else, now as never more urgently in the past, Israel must launch a political offensive *against* the Arab rulers and *for* the support of the Arab peoples' struggle for their own national and social emancipation. Israel is in the position to choose this policy because it can show the Arab peoples that its advanced economy and technology represent that path of progress in the Middle East. It is able to choose this path because it is led by a modern, progressive working-class, albeit in an uneasy alliance with a native bourgeoisie backed by American fund-raising organizations.

British, French and Israeli aggression ran into three difficulties of different meanings and different social value: the opposition of the British Labor Party; opposition from the American government, risking a break in the NATO alliance, and opposition from Russia.

The most gratifying event in the entire Middle Eastern crisis has been the opposition of the British Labor Party to the imperialist policy of the Tory government. The BLP was able to mobilize tens of thousands of British workers to demonstrate against this policy. In addition, it led opposition to Eden on the part of large sections of British opinion, reaching even into the Conservative Party itself. The Tory government, knowing that if it were forced to hold a general election at this point it would be voted out of office, was given a convincing internal reason for succumbing to American pressure to withdraw its forces. Although halting and faltering at times, the British Labor Party, unlike the corrupt French Socialist Party of Guy Mollet, rose to the occasion, fulfilling its democratic task.

America opposed British and French intervention—not, to be sure, because it was imperialist. American oil companies are as interested in maintaining joint concessions as the others. American NATO arms arrive every day to be used by French armies in Algeria. State Department opposition was on two grounds. In the first place, Egypt was not for the United States a crucial strategic area. American imperialism did not feel a vital threat in Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal. In a sense, America's position was similar to that of the British and French in Korea, where *their* basic interests were not at stake: "Why run the risk of starting a general conflict?" In the second place, while the United States had to keep British and French support, there was little question that the British and French would pull out of NATO, would give up American arms for use in Cyprus and Algeria, would endanger their anti-Stalinist military alliance. And the United States could, perhaps, win Egyptian support, could gain for its own, independent power in the Middle East.

United States imperialism frequently appears in the guise of anti-imperialism, winning effective military, political, and economic advantages and power by supporting the "moderates," the national bourgeoisie in the colonial revolutions, and thus gaining power in an area, supplanting that of the former European colonial powers. Thus, for example, the State Department supported the "moderate," national bourgeois regime of Diem in Indo-China, as over against the French puppet, Bao Dai, and as a result, American influence and power in Indo-China is great; the United States has taken France's position in many critical ways.

In Egypt, the United States, the powerful arbiter of the Western imperialist bloc, has acted, in the first place, to keep a general war from breaking out over a conflict which does not involve its own basic interests. And, in the second place, it attempted to increase its own power in the Middle East, by appearing as the friend of the colonial revolution.

Russia opposed the imperialist attack, not, it is obvious, because she had any moral concern for violations of Egyptian rights, violations which occurred simultaneously with the rapine and murder by her armies of the Hungarian people. Indeed, the extent of Russia's support for Egypt—"volunteer" armies, stepped-up shipments of arms and jet fighters, active diplomatic intervention—can only be understood as an attempt to throw the spotlight off the butcheries in Hungary and the crisis throughout the crumbling Stalinist empire. And, of course, Russia's role was a consequence of her own, long-term wooing of Nasser's support.

Thus in the Middle East all the imperialist conflicts of the modern world have converged. And in this, one thing is certain: this conflict cannot aid the struggles of the Middle-Eastern masses—Arab and Jewish—for national freedom, peace, security, and the end of illiteracy, starvation, and disease.

November 10, 1956

P. L.

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The 'Dirty War' in Algeria

— *The Role of the Students*

FOR EVERY SEGMENT IN FRENCH SOCIETY, THERE IS MUCH AT stake in North Africa, in different ways. The war in Algeria is a historical watershed, one of the events by which the future of a country is decided for a whole period. Its impact on France will be comparable to that of the defeat in 1871, or to the impact on Spain of its defeat in 1896 by the United States.

Regardless of its outcome, the Algerian war can only mark the end of France as one of the major imperialist powers. As in Indo-China, the French government is utterly unable to prevent Algeria from reaching independence; all it can do is to delay, and to set a higher price. Nobody except a few die-hards in Army circles believes any longer in a military solution: there are at the present time 500,000 French soldiers in Algeria, who have been unable to make a dent on the nationalist guerillas. The latter have answered the "saturation" policy of the government with a "saturation" policy of their own, and are now present in every square inch of the country. According to an estimate by official military experts at a recent meeting in Algiers, no less than 1½ million soldiers would be necessary now to keep the country down. No French government can mobilize that many soldiers for a colonial war.

Moreover, the Algerian war has set in motion an irreversible trend towards independence in the rest of the French colonial empire: a firmer, more unified and more mature nationalist movement is emerging once again in Madagascar, in West Africa, in the Camerons, in the French Caribbean. Algeria is the keystone of the French colonial empire; when it falls, the emancipation of the African territories is half won.

What does this mean on the domestic level? Nothing is certain except that the relations between classes, and also within classes, will have to be thoroughly revised. Without their colonial empire, the French bourgeoisie can no longer govern as it used to; indeed, depending on the international situation, it is not certain that it can continue to govern at all. This "agonizing reappraisal" of social relations can have several outcomes, and different groups have come forward with different solutions. All of these fall into three categories.

One might be termed the "Salazarian" solution: an authoritarian regime of the Right, a Bonapartist dictatorship by a new Pétain, supported by the most reactionary circles of the Army, Church and Business. This is the solution that would allow the social status quo to continue practically undisturbed, by means of drastically lowering the already low living standards of the people and of destroying the labor movement in its present form. Numerous candidates are already in sight for different variations of this solution: Marshall Juin, for several years now; de Gaulle, who is preparing a comeback; the Count of Paris, who has new hopes for a monarchical restoration. The renewed activity of numerous fascist groups, the impertinence of the fascist press which has again found its voice of 1939, the mass movement of Poujadism, are related symptoms.

The second type of proposal is a search for progressive solutions within the framework of capitalism. The programs put forth by the different liberal currents do not differ very much. Technically speaking, there are a limited number of directions one can take, if one's purpose is to streamline a ramshackled and antiquated economic structure. Politically, how-

ever, most liberal solutions are based on one of two assumptions: one could be called a "Kemalist" position of withdrawal; it accepts the loss of the colonial empire but hopes to maintain certain forms of economic domination over the ex-colonies; it hopes to turn France into a model capitalist country, a larger Denmark or Belgium; it would stay away from entangling alliances and would follow a neutralist course in foreign policy. The other plan for readjustment looks to European federation as a substitute for the waning power of the French bourgeoisie. Within a European alliance, it hopes, reforms could be undertaken which this particular section of the liberal public is too weak to undertake now. Such an alliance would also be able to maintain a European condominium over a restive African continent; a task which soon no single colonial power will be strong enough to accomplish.

The Revolutionary Situation

Finally, as against all liberal solutions, there is the alternative of social revolution. "Objectively," no country has ever been more ready for revolution than France today. From a technical point of view—the most efficient economy in the interests of the majority—a socialist revolution is by far the most realistic solution for a deadlock in which no group of bourgeois reformers can claim to have the strength and clarity of purpose to drive the country out of its present muddle.

"Subjectively," however, the labor movement, although strong, is divided and paralyzed. No party exists that is free to follow a policy determined solely by the people's interest; nor does any organization exist, on any level, that could function as a party. The ability of the workers to spontaneously organize mass actions, as the strikes of August 1953 and of September-October 1955, can go a long way, but cannot transcend the local level to impose a revolutionary government. The same is also true for the train-stoppages, a concrete protest against the Algerian war which is still taking place. Nonetheless, a new strike wave, coordinated on the national level by an elected strike committee, could reverse the trend towards authoritarianism and force a "middle of the road" government to take a new course—to begin with, to make peace in Algeria and withdraw the troops from North Africa. A socialist government acting under the pressure and supervision of a strike committee representing the whole working class would have to act much differently from the present "socialist" government, manipulated by the bourgeoisie.

For France, it would not represent a stable or permanent solution, but, by its repercussions in the rest of Europe, it could help create a favorable climate for new workingclass advances in the whole continent.

This is a different situation from the one that was created by the Indo-Chinese war, although obvious similarities exist. Although long and costly, the war in Indo-China never involved as many people: it was carried on only by the professional army, and no government would have dared then to mobilize conscripts for its prosecution. Secondly, although the SP and CP were responsible to a large extent for its outbreak, they remained mostly in opposition while it lasted. It was unthinkable then that an SP government with CP support would carry on the colonial wars of the Right, on behalf of

the Right and against the unanimous opposition of the whole people.

The resulting collapse of the SP as a liberal organization, the increasing number of conscripts mobilized and the grass-roots opposition to their departure, the unprecedented police-measures against minority opposition groups, all these are indications of how deeply the Algerian war affects the French society, and of the enormous pressures straining the whole social system.

Their True Colors

The Algerian war has burst upon a society in crisis as an "hour of truth," in which commitments cannot be hidden any longer behind phraseology, and where the responsibilities of each individual are clearly marked. Very few people, and still fewer organizations, have emerged unscathed from this test. On the contrary: one of the most striking effects of the Algerian war has been to bring out the worst features of all the large, representative bodies of liberal and radical opinion—in a sense, **their true features, since those features alone are what appear in times of stress.** The editor of the *Mendesist Express* has volunteered for the Army with a great patriotic flourish; Raymond Aron has taken time off from defending cultural freedom behind the Iron Curtain to justify "French presence" in North Africa in *Time* magazine, beseeching the American public not to "encourage the extension of disorder in regions vital for the defense of the West" by supporting the nationalist cause. The social-democratic trade-union "Force Ouvrière" has spent the best part of its time fighting the admission of Algerian trade-unions to membership in the ICFTU, and denouncing the admission of the UGTA, which it was unable to prevent, as a "historical mistake."

The record of the two large parties claiming to represent the working class is the worst that can be expected under the circumstances. The spectacle of a socialist chief of the government announcing "pitiless repression" to the applause of the reactionary press, of a socialist minister of finance introducing "soak the poor" taxation to finance a colonial war, of a socialist governor of Algeria carrying out death sentences against nationalist partisans, which no bourgeois government had dared to do—that is something that has not been seen in the socialist movement since the MacDonald government and Noske. The spectacle of the Communist Party supporting all of this in the interests of "sticking to the Socialist Party" on orders from Moscow and theorizing its refusal to support the nationalist movement on the grounds that Algeria is not a "nation" in an ethnic sense (are the Caribbean republics "nations"? is India a "nation"? is Canada a "nation"?)—that too is an all-time low in open cynicism and contempt for ordinary people.

The bourgeois parties, needless to say, all support the Algerian war, but there is no contradiction there between the ostensible aims and the policy followed. A notable exception are the Mendesist liberals who, although supporting the war, have taken a position for a negotiated settlement, and often are in a position to criticize the SP "from the Left."

The mechanism of division, that has been operating in all groups that are not small and tightly knit, is well illustrated by the case of the French students' union, which has been among the organizations most visibly affected by the Algerian war.

Politically, the French students' union (Union Nationale des Etudiants Français, or UNEF) has always suffered from the contradiction inherent in the social position of the student. It arose as a by-product of the Resistance movement, and distinguished itself from the pre-war student movements by a broader, more radical position, and by a new conception of

the student as a "young intellectual worker." In line with this new approach, the UNEF began to function somewhat like a trade union, engaging in "collective bargaining" with the government. One of its principal demands has been a "pre-salary," paid by the government, to students maintaining a certain grade average; this would enable young people to study regardless of their family's material situation. It has also raised other demands, tending towards a thorough reform of the school and university system, in the sense of its democratization. (At the present time, only about 5 per cent of French students are of working class origin—counting white-collar workers, the proportion is about 25 per cent. About a quarter of all male students and a fifth of all female students work part time.)

Although quite advanced in a corporative way, the UNEF has lagged behind on political questions, taking timid and evasive stands on every important issue on the pretext that students should "stay away from politics." In its relations with students from the French colonies, and on colonial questions in general, the UNEF has always been one step behind. As late as April 1955, for instance, it futilely refused to recognize the Tunisian students' union as a "national union," recognizing it instead as a "representative organization of Tunisian students on the internal (French) level."

The organization was first forced to take notice of the Algerian war in October 1955, when a sizable number of students were being drafted for the first time. A minority demanded that the union express its concern over the Algerian situation, that it condemn the conscription in general, and that it ask the government to explain in greater detail for what exact purpose French youth were being called to battle.

French Brutality

Although it was possible to smooth that conflict over, events soon raised the whole issue again in a much sharper form. In the course of November and December, the French political police moved against the Algerian students and their newly formed organization, the "Union Générale des Etudiants Musulmans Algériens" (UGEMA). Several of its members were arrested, its president and secretary-general were questioned and one of its members, Zeddour Belkacem, was killed by the police in the Algiers prison, after having been terribly tortured in Oran. The police attempted to make the body disappear by throwing it into the Mediterranean in a weighted bag, and declared that Belkacem had escaped. Three weeks later the body was washed ashore and found by a passer-by. The case became a public scandal.

On the prompting of the UGEMA a number of student organizations (among others the UNEF, the Federation in France of Students from Tropical Africa, the Catholic Student Union, the Association of North African Students and the SP's Socialist Students) signed a declaration of protest which they submitted to the government, demanding also that the government take a clear position on the crimes committed by its police.

By January, there was still no reply from the government. The UGEMA decided to organize a week of protest, with the cooperation of the French student organizations. January 20 was decided upon as a day on which all students would be called upon to boycott their lectures and go on a hunger-strike. For the evening of January 20, the UGEMA had planned a meeting in Montpellier, a university town in South Western France. Under the leadership of Jean-Marc Mousseron, legal advisor and **honorary president of the UNEF**, the "patriotic" students had organized a counter-demonstration in the morn-

ing, gathering before a monument to the war dead in memory of a student who had been killed a few days before in the Aurès mountains. For fear of a clash, the city authorities refused to permit the UGEMA and the liberal and radical groups to hold an open meeting, so the meeting was held at the hall of the labor unions.

The opening speech was made by a trade unionist but before the meeting had really gotten under way a crowd of about a thousand "patriotic" students, led by Mousseron and reinforced by Poujadist commandos from out of town, surrounded the hall, trapping the liberal and radical students inside. When the latter came out, they were beaten up by the fascist goon squads. The next morning, there were incidents all over the university, usually ending in small fights. This incident, although a logical development of the tensions previously existing in the UNEF, deeply split the organization.

In April, the 45th Congress of the UNEF met. Prominently on its agenda was the Algerian question and the relations with the Algerian students. Right-wing and liberal forces were balanced with almost equal strength on each side, and motions were being passed by extremely small margins. The student union of Algiers arrived on the scene determined to make a row, which was avoided with great difficulty. A moderately right-wing leadership was elected by 48 votes to 47, the candidate of the liberal minority being a Catholic student by the name of Michel de la Fournière.

In May, the students of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, a highly specialized liberal arts university in Paris, went on a 24-hour hunger strike to support a demand for government negotiations with the Algerian nationalists. Also in May, the European students' union in Algiers went on strike against one of the few liberal decisions of Governor-General Lacoste. The latter had issued a decree making it easier for Algerians to enter and to rise within the civil service hierarchy. The European students of Algiers not only called a strike against this decision, but also called for a general mobilization of the Army and for the formation in Algeria of an armed "volunteer corps" of civilians.

"Which Side Are You On?"

The answer of the Algerian students came on May 19, when the Algiers section of the UGEMA decided on an unlimited boycott of courses and exams and called on its members to join the partisans. The strike was practically general, and has remained so to this day. As could be expected, the decision of the Algerian students caused a tremendous commotion in the French student organizations. The UNEF called a special session of its Administration Council for June 3, to decide what attitude to take. In the meantime, the Paris and Montpellier sections had broken off all relations with the UGEMA, in the case of Paris against the opposition of a strong minority, while several liberal student organizations dissociated themselves from the nationalist position of the Algerian students but at the same time asserted their determination to continue to defend the latter's rights as students. In a common release, the Socialist Students of Paris, the Communist Students and the "Rally of the Student Left" (New Left) declared that the statement of the Algerian students was "neither racist nor anti-French" but showed the "difficult choice that is both theirs and ours" and asked the French students to recognize that "national interest demands that a policy of negotiations and cease-fire be followed as soon as possible." Several associations of colonial students came out in strong support of the UGEMA.

The UNEF Administration Council took place in an atmosphere of patriotic hysteria. By a vote of 45 against 36, with 14 delegates absent or abstaining, the Council resolved that "under the circumstances all relations with the UGEMA had become impossible." After this vote, the liberals withdrew their five representatives from the Bureau which became, for the first time in years, a homogenous right-wing and completely unrepresentative body.

After the decision of the UNEF, the situation of the striking Algerian students changed for the worse. In Lyon, nine Algerian students were arrested for distributing a leaflet explaining the reasons for their strike, and were charged with "threatening the security of the State." In Montpellier the university administration prohibited the Algerian students from using the student union cafeteria; elsewhere, too, hostility came into the open against students who were now considered fair game for the police and the "patriotic" vigilantes.

Liberal Students Vacillate

On July 3, a new switch occurred in the position of the UNEF. Perhaps under the impression of the protests from colonial students, perhaps also impressed by the mounting wave of persecution against the Algerian students, a few previously neutral delegates switched their vote to the liberals. By a majority of one vote, the liberal motion on policy was passed. It involved reestablishing contacts with the UGEMA "in order to draft in common an appeal condemning violence on both sides." This time the right-wing delegates walked out in protest, and the remaining delegates, a small majority, elected a homogenous liberal Bureau headed by Michel de la Fournière.

The right wing at once contested the legitimacy of this Bureau, and started organizing an opposition throughout France and, of course, Algeria. The Algiers section, a stronghold of fascist and Poujadist elements, announced its intention to withdraw from the national organization. Other right-wing sections took a similar position, but postponed their decision until the beginning of the Fall semester; in the meantime, they refused to recognize the authority of the new liberal Bureau.

Yet the motion which had been passed by no means reflected a clearcut liberal position—it was a compromise motion, incorporating certain demands of the Right Wing. Thus it asked the Algerian student union to do something it obviously could not be expected to do: disavow the call to arms of its Algerian section. Only such a disavowal, the resolution said, would permit the UNEF "to continue maintaining professional relations in an atmosphere of trust and friendship, without which the building of a Franco-Moslem community is impossible." By incorporating this idea in the resolution, the liberals attempted to meet the attacks of the right wingers who accused them of "caring more for the Moslem students than for their own countrymen in Algiers." If the liberals, the right wingers asked, so strongly condemned the European student union of Algiers for its call to arms, why did they hesitate to do the same when the UGEMA asked its members to join the partisans? There is only one answer to give this kind of argument: "Yes, we support the Algerian students in their struggle because their cause is just, and because the regime our countrymen are maintaining in Algeria is one of oppression which we must oppose. As to our fellow students of European origin in Algiers, they are misled by a crew of irresponsible political gangsters, and we feel under an obligation to oppose anything they do under their present leadership." However, this kind of answer the liberals were not prepared to give, as they were not prepared to assume full responsibility for their ideas and to meet the right-wing attack head-on.

This is the situation at the time of this writing—each side is feverishly organizing its support in the various university towns to give battle in October or November. However, a number of conclusions can be drawn even now. The most important fact to be noted is perhaps that the fascists are conducting their offensive under the cover of defending an “apolitical” attitude. The role of the “apoliticals” is thus once again demonstrated. It has been the common experience of all those politically active, at some point or another, to meet the type of person who advises students, labor, women, minority groups or whoever else may be involved to “stay out of politics.” Invariably, this person is a right-winger, generally covering-up for groups involved in “politics” up to the neck, and what he really means is “stay out of left-wing or liberal politics.” In the case before us, the tie-up between the “apoliticals” and the reactionary students is particularly clear, which is good because it might defeat its purpose.

Secondly, the conflict has brought out the weaknesses of the liberal position. As usual, the liberals have chosen the worst possible ground to fight on, and have given the right wingers enormous advantages from the start. The tactic of the Right Wing has been to arraign the liberals before public opinion as “traitors to the French national community”; to this, the liberals have always answered that this is just a big misunderstanding, and that they were at least as opposed to the Algerian nationalists as the right wingers. To their credit, let it be noted that they did not attempt to outdo the Right Wing in

chauvinism, but a purely defensive position is not enough in this kind of situation. What is needed, is people who will openly and fearlessly side with the Algerian students and their demand for national independence, against students that may be French but who seek to maintain an atmosphere of racism and oppression over Algeria and hope to extend it also over France.

Finally, it is clear that the battle that is being fought now was not joined overnight. The Algerian war merely brought into the open, in the sharpest possible manner, a conflict that existed since 1950, when the Right Wing first came into a position of power within the UNEF. By a timely action, this conflict could have been prevented from taking on major proportions: the majority of the student body is liberal, and groups like the “Comité d’Action Universitaire” of Algiers and the Poujadist goons never would have been able to wield their present influence if the liberal and left-wing students had organized more systematically, more patiently and more thoroughly in previous years. This would have saved the French student union from a situation which has interfered with its professional work and which has endangered its influence with the government and with the political parties, which influence it took years of hard work to build.

A. GIACOMETTI

A. Giacometti is the Paris correspondent of “Labor Action.”

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And a tangent
Hill ..
Paths printing the
Tapestry of forest
Sibilance
No one was with me

The world wet with
Pale remoteness
Not the lemon stain voices
Of leaves or
Tearlessness and not a spirit
Of starries no one
At all
No one with me.

BILL ANDERSON

Balzac: The Romantic-Realist

— A Novelist of the Past and Future

WHO IS BALZAC? He is a writer dominated by his own hugeness; as Chesterton said of Dickens, he is a mob. Because he is so vast, so teeming, he cannot be ignored. Surely one must mention him in any genealogy of the novel. But, at least in America, one doesn't have to read him—for he is so huge. His reputation among us rests largely on one or two novels like *Pere Goriot* and *Eugenie Grandet*, and perhaps upon adolescent memories of *Droll Stories*.

Henry James saw the same kind of a situation at the turn of the century. The figures of a gloomy hugeness abound in his description of Balzac: he spoke of the "great dusky and deserted avenue that leads up to the seated statue of Balzac." And so does the complaint that Balzac is not read: ". . . we have for many a year taken his greatness for granted, but in the graceless and nerveless fashion of those who edge away from a classic or a bore." Today, fifty years later, James' suspicion about Balzac's reception in America would seem to still hold true—he is regarded as an enormous classic, that is, as one of those Frenchmen who wrote so much, a bore.

This first impression of Balzac—the avenue leading to the seated statue with all of the monumental (and boredom) which that image conjures up—is true. But the second impression is a strange one. For Balzac the giant is a maze of paradoxes, contradictions, unresolved tensions. He is not, to be sure, such a lineal ancestor of the modern consciousness as a Stendhal or a Flaubert, but then neither is he simply a sprawling sociologist. Balzac is not one easily definable thing, no single term can deal with him even in a general way, and that is the large paradox about this huge, solid, monumental giant of a writer.

I

Let us begin with one of the most striking paradoxes about Balzac, the great realist: that he was a romantic.

This is part of a larger problem which his work raises—indeed, it is part of *the* problem. Here is how Erich Auerbach puts it. "All his intellectual analyses, although full of isolated observations which are striking and original, come in the end to a fanciful macroscopy which suggests his contemporary Hugo; whereas what is needed to explain his realistic art is a careful separation of the currents which mingle in it." This is the main puzzle; that Balzac's work is so full of contradictions, of contrary methods side by side, of opposing themes. That his romanticism was an integral element in his realism is a case in point.

And to understand this, we have to take Auerbach's advice, and be wary of Balzac on Balzac. In 1835, for example, Felix Davin made a typical Balzacian statement (under Balzac's direct inspiration) on the *Etudes Philosophiques*: "Its unity is that of the world itself; man is but a detail; for it is proposed to paint him in all of the situations of life." "Man is but a detail." This is Balzac's self-image at its extreme, his usual description of his work in sociological terms. And yet, only a few years before, his main concern had been fantasy, mysticism, and this was the developing ground of his realism.

In these fantastic stories, Balzac is a participant in that romantic agony which Mario Praz has described. Here are the strange talismans, as in *La Peau de Chagrin*, the sexual devia-

tions of *La Fille aux Yeux D'or*, the diabolic powers in *Melmoth Réconcilié*. And in one of these tales, *Le Chef d'Oeuvre Inconnu*, there is even an eerie (and accidental) prophecy of surrealist art. In it, Fernhoffer, an artist, is an expressionist monomaniac obsessed with perfection, and his masterpiece is nothing but "confused masses of colors contained by a multitude of bizarre lines." But in a corner of the canvas, there is one recognizable form, a perfectly painted foot.

The summation of this mood is, of course, *La Peau de Chagrin*. Rapheal de Valentin, a young man, acquires a talisman, the skin of an ass, which gives him the power to fulfill every wish, but which shrinks every time it obeys a command and thus shortens its possessor's life. Rapheal progresses through wild orgies and affairs, until finally he seeks seclusion so that he will not wish. At the end of the novel, in attempting to kill his wife, he desires her and dies.

The Romantic Agony and Revolution

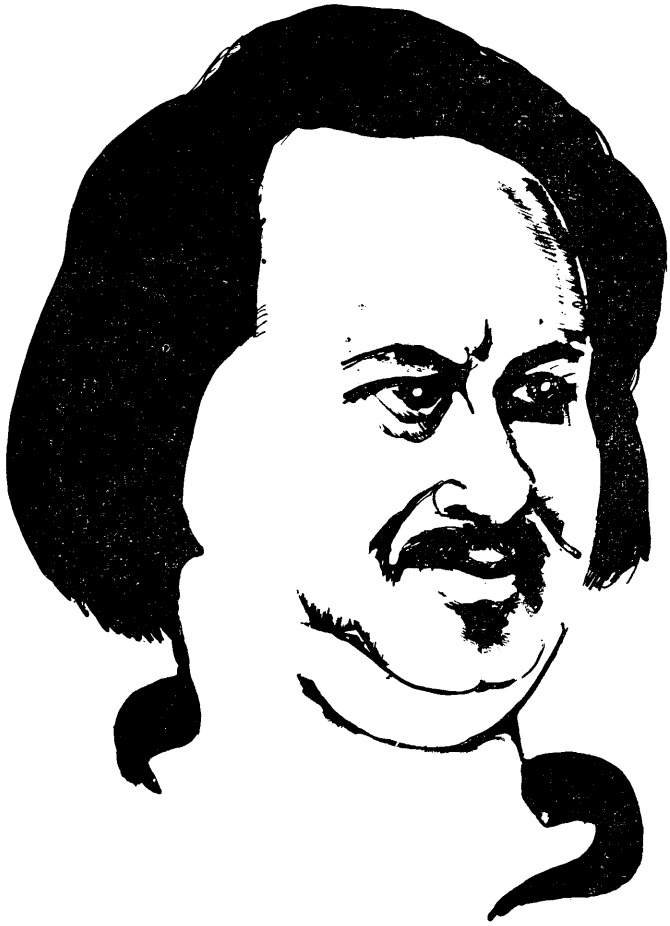
The important thing about *La Peau* is not its simple relation to the romantic agony—that would make it a book among books. It is rather that the fantasy has a social dimension through which one can not only understand Balzac's personal development, but the background of the romantic agony itself. When he wrote *La Peau*, he described it as "the starting point for all my work," and he told the Duchesse de Castries that through dealing with this theme of "egotism" that he would formulate the century as it is.

What was the social basis of this "egotism"? Balzac is fairly explicit. Modern society, like the strange talisman itself, is a terrible power granting incredible wishes to man. Yet it is not subject to man, it broods over him like an occult force, it has replaced both God and throne and become a fate. And therefore, modern society is doomed as Rapheal is doomed, it is consumed by its own power, it leads to the law which Balzac formulated in *Melmoth Réconcilié*: "Supreme power brings nothingness as its dowery."

Here is an insight into the romantic agony itself. Praz insists that this phenomenon is related to the life of the times, but he doesn't make his point explicit. In *La Peau*, Balzac's romantic fantasy provides a brilliant explanation of the agony as a reaction to the new power of bourgeois society, as a case of alienation in the classic sense of the world. The gigantic thrusts of industrialism are projected into the image of strangely powerful, evil men, of occult forces brooding over life. (In his *Historical Inevitability*, Isaiah Berlin makes Marx a participant in this same agony, seeing Marx's vision of the revolution as an attitude of a "Byronic âme damnée," a Vautrin turned social revolutionary.)

But for Balzac himself, this fantastic romanticism was to be much more than a starting point. It was to continue throughout his work, even when he becomes most realistic. There is, for example, that Vautrin who figures in some of the mature novels of *La Comédie*. In *Splendeurs et Misères* (four volumes whose writing stretched from 1838 to 1847), he is the very model of the mysterious, deep-eyed Byronic hero. And, interestingly enough in the light of Praz's analysis of the sexual element in the romantic agony, he is a homosexual.

In *Vautrin*, the relation between Balzac's romanticism and social realism is even clearer than it is in *La Peau*. He is used as a bitter symbol for the stalking of bourgeois society, he is Balzac's most violent expression of his hatred against the new order. Everywhere his function is the same: to stand as a contrast between the polite crimes of high finance and the violence of the underworld, and ultimately to assert the superiority of the pure criminal over the capitalist. Here, for example, is Vautrin telling a woman to use a rich banker,



"... this man is a thief of huge purses, he has no pity on anyone, he has taken the fortunes of the old and of the orphaned, and you will be their vengeance."

In the second volume of *Splendeurs et Misères*, this insight is raised to the level of a Balzacian generalization: "Prostitution and thievery are two living protests, the one female, the other male, of the state of nature against society." Thus, Balzac the romantic is at the very heart of Balzac the social realist, indeed, he is exactly the heartbeat of the realism, its passion. This is true in the chronology of his work, in that he begins with the romantic agony, but it continues throughout, it is there is his most mature bitterness.

But then there is the other part of this paradox: that the fantastic romanticism became realism.

Balzac was a passionate, angry, opinionated writer, and that would be in keeping with his romanticism—but how then account for the fact that one of his greatest triumphs proceeds from a dispassionate objectivity? He was personally a Royalist Catholic, a supporter of feudalism, yet he scrupulously recorded the decadence of royalist Catholicism, and the triumph of bourgeois society over feudalism. In this, he emerges as the most magnificent reactionary who ever lived—he has even been accused of being a crypto-socialist.

In *Une Ténébreuse Affaire*, for example, Balzac mocks the

royalists who live on the illusion that "the Empire was only maintained in power by the army, that the Fact would sooner or later perish before Justice." And in *Les Cabinets Des Antiques*, the fascinating Diane Meaufrigneuse explains to old Esgirgnon, "You wish to remain in the fifteenth century when we are in the nineteenth . . . There isn't a nobility anymore, there is only an aristocracy. The Civil Code of Napoleon has blasted all the parchments just as the cannons have already destroyed feudalism."

It was this incredible objectivity which made Balzac the favorite of Marx and Engels. In a letter to Margaret Harkness, Engels wrote of him: ". . . his sympathies are with the class that is doomed to extinction. But for all that, his satire is never keener, his irony never more bitter, than when he sets in motion the very men and women with whom he sympathizes most deeply—the nobles. That Balzac was thus compelled to go against his own class sympathies and political prejudices, that he saw the necessity of the downfall of his favorite nobles . . . that I consider one of the greatest triumphs of realism."

This quality is most apparent in *Les Paysans*. The action is in the form of a three-cornered struggle between the peasants, the new bourgeoisie, and the big landowners. Here there is no romanticism of the peasantry—they are described as being without morals, because "by the nature of their social function the peasants live an existence which is purely material, almost like the state of savages, they are in a constant union with nature itself." The new bourgeoisie is treated contemptuously, the landowners sympathetically, yet the novel closes with the clear triumph of the former over the latter.

And it is in this novel that Balzac foresees "communism, that irrepressible and living logic of democracy," which will let loose "the Samson of the people," bringing society down upon itself. And a priest, the Abbé Brosette, prays, "My God! If it is your holy will to unchain the poor and make them a torrent to transform all society, then I understand why you have abandoned the rich to their blindness."

Whence comes this triumph of dispassion? Once again, the answer is complex, of many strains. Balzac's hatred of the bourgeoisie is thoroughly in keeping with his bitter, realistic picture of that class. But his consciousness of the hopelessness of his own hopes? That can only be explained by the personal quality of his genius, perhaps modified by the fact that he wrote after the July Revolution, when the fate of royalism had become fairly apparent. But even so, it was a magnificent accomplishment for him to rise over his own beliefs, and it was made possible, in part, through the realism of his aesthetic method.

A Curious Unity

Thus, Balzac the romantic is also Balzac the historical materialist, the dispassionate realist. These two opposing tendencies in his writing find a curious unity; and that is perhaps the strangest thing of all. The setting, the characterization, the sheer mass of physical detail is almost always realist, even in a fantastic novel like *La Peau de chagrin*. But the passion, the moral judgment, is romantic (at worst, melodramatic). Thus a novel like *Cousin Pons* is almost Zolaesque in its treatment of the greed and grinding of a lower middle class and workingclass neighborhood. And yet, it also contains a long eulogy to the power of the occult in which Balzac remarks "Everything is fate in human life . . . The least accident, the most futile happening, is subordinate to this fate. Thus, great things and grand designs, huge thoughts, are necessarily reflected with accuracy in the smallest actions . . ."

Indeed, one is here confronted with the unity of Balzac's mystical fatalism, which proceeds out of his romanticism, and his historical determinism which is a product of his realism. But the final word, at least in a great novel like *Pons*, is romantic, the agony of the death of a poor old man. And this is almost always what separates his masterpieces from the rest of the work: the romantic passion is eventually controlling.

II

But sooner or later one must confront *The Plan*, that huge structure which Balzac created (sometimes retrospectively, by revising novels to make them conform to the larger pattern) and which contains all of his contradictions. This aspect of his work is, of course, a part of his realist, scientific tendencies, yet monolithic as it is in conception ("I am but the secretary to French society" he wrote in the *Avant-Propos* of *La Comedie*), it too is marked by all kinds of contradictions.

Sometimes, as Henry James remarked, the artist is smothered by the historian, and sheer delight in tracing a legal proceeding replaces all aesthetic motivation. And sometimes, the structure is made subordinate to the novelistic intention. These contradictions are not unlike the one which Isaiah Berlin found in Tolstov: there is a war between Balzac, the hedgehog who knows one big thing, French society, and knows it well, and Balzac, the fox, who is fascinating, by the intricacies and uniqueness of personal and social relations. And, as is usual in almost all of Balzac's antinomies, the tension of hedgehog and fox is never really resolved, it persists throughout all of his work.

Take a period of less than three years, from the Fall of 1834 to 1837. *Les Employes*, the first part of *Illusions Perdues*, and *Pere Goriot* all date from this time. It would be hard to imagine three novels which are more different from each other.

At the worst, there is *Les Employes*. The plot—an honest bureaucrat during the Restoration seeks a promotion in order to institute necessary reforms, and is defeated by a rival's superior influence—is a pretext for polemic and not much else. Balzac the royalist is infuriated by the corruption of royalism, by its aimlessness. "Only Napoleon," he writes, "could choose his young men [for the bureaucracy] freely, without taking anything extraneous into consideration. But since the fall of that great will, energy seems to have taken leave of power." This is the one big truth. It is stated early, and once it is known, the action is almost completely predetermined, it is a matter of introducing types and having them seal the fate of the honest bureaucrat.

Les Employes dates from the middle of 1836, the first part of *Illusions Perdues* from 1837, but the difference between them is enormous. *Illusions Perdues* is a novel of the young man from the provinces, "a man of poetry, but not a poet," who comes to make his fortune in Paris. It has its social dimension, to be sure. There is the provincial conflict of new bourgeoisie and old town, the struggle between honest writers and prostituted journalists. Balzac, the hedgehog, is certainly present, and George Lukacs' summary is partly fair: "The theme of the novel is the transformation of literature (and with it every ideology) into a commodity, and the complete 'capitalization' of every sphere of intellectual, literary and artistic activity fits the general tragedy of the post-Napoleonic generation . . ."

(Let me make an aside with this introduction of Lukacs' opinion. He is probably the best of the Stalinist-Marxist critics, but, more to the point, he is a prime example of the range of interpretation which Balzac affords. In an early work of his pre-Stalinist period, *The Theory of the Novel*, Lukacs

found Balzac a symbol of "chaotic, daemonic irrationality." With his political conversion he denounced all his past work as reactionary and saw Balzac as a historical materialist reacting to the rise of capitalism. The strange thing is that he was half-right both times.)

To return to *Illusions Perdues*. The social is present as a very important dimension of the novel, yet it does not dominate it. As Lukacs himself realizes, "The aggregate of social determinants is expressed in an uneven, confused and contradictory pattern, in a labyrinth of personal passions and chance happenings." The labyrinth is the lair of Balzac, the fox. In it, you will find the Young Man (this time he is Lucien, but as Rastignac, Esgrignon and others, he is one of Balzac's most persistent characters). It is his tragedy that "the duties of being in society devour his time, yet time is the only working capital of young men who have no fortune but their intelligence." And this insight does not function as a one big truth; it is rather a pervasive, and often subtle, theme.

Still, the book is uneven. From time to time, the hedgehog is dominant. In the second volume, for instance, Balzac makes the point that journalism under capitalism is a form of prostitution. Then he makes it again, and again, and again. Over and over, he repeats that everything in the world of politics and letters "is corruption, every man is either a corrupter or being corrupted." And here one must part company with Lukacs, for enlightening as this may be in terms of the social history of the period, it is a sermon which throws off the movement of the personal passions.

The Huge Plan

Pere Goriot was published before either *Les Employes* or *Illusions Perdues* (it appeared in 1834), yet it is a masterpiece which towers over the former and goes far beyond the latter. There is, of course, the social conflict of the Maison Vauquer and the beau monde, but it is under the control of the artist, it never becomes an abstraction. The sociology is here—the people are like their houses; person and furniture mingle in every description—but as part of a synthesis. The book's ending—Delphine and Rastignac leaving Goriot's funeral making a toast to the world of Paris, society seen as an anthill—develops out of the social conflict, yet its bitterness makes it transcendent of any sociology. Here, as in almost every one of Balzac's great novels, it is the presence of the agonized romantic at the end which sets it apart from his inferior work.

Thus, even *The Plan* is no one thing. It is so huge because it must be, else it could not contain all these contradictions. In it, there is a struggle between hedgehog and fox, between the sociologist and the novelist, and this tension is never really resolved. This, taken with the mingling of realism and romanticism, is one of the reasons why Balzac presents such a formidable critical problem.

III

All of the mingled contraries, romantic realism and realistic romanticism, an uneven vastness, combine to make one final critical paradox: that everything negative which is said about Balzac is true—or rather, half-true.

Here, for example, is Ramon Fernandez: ". . . generally Balzac composes his characters by combining three sorts of processes; the establishment of a civic and historical certificate which situates the character in time and a definite social group; a psychological deduction which, starting from general conceptions, ends in a few traits constituting his character; a description almost exclusively visual, which includes both his

habitual frame and his habitation as well as his features, body and clothing."

This is a considerable indictment of Balzac as a novelist, it is an image of him tending toward his worst. Yet one must acknowledge its truth, for many of Balzac's characters are precisely this kind of artificial construction. But then, many are not. Vautrin, Eugenie Grandet, all the young men, these escape Fernandez's description because they proceed from that incredible Balzacian synthesis which is not one thing, not sociological realism nor romanticism. Their passions are not an abstraction.

Still Fernandez has hit upon the central question: do all of the mechanics of Balzac's structure, and the mingled contradictions of his theme, finally accomplish an aesthetic effect? Can we value him as a novelist? Fernandez himself saw the answer to this question. In another context he wrote, ". . . Balzac's characters have been ideas thought before being living individuals, and so a question at once raises to our lips: are they individuals? The answer is *that they end by becoming so . . .*" And this is the ultimate fact about Balzac, that contradictions, structure and all, he eventually succeeds in creating literary masterpieces, a Pons, a Bette, a Goriot and so on.

Arnold Hauser saw this point clearly when he remarked how anti-naturalist Balzac's naturalism is, how arbitrary and selective. And yet, he continued, "He awakens the impression of truth to life mainly by the despotism with which he subjects the reader to his own mood and the macrocosmic totality of his fictitious world . . ." You will not find this quality discussed in Balzac's theorizing about himself. It is an organic unity which proceeds out of the very center of all of his contradictions, it is not a form imposed from without. And be-

cause of it, Balzac at his very worst is immediately recognizable as the same writer who is Balzac at his very best; because of it, every work he wrote is stamped with an unmistakable impression.

In this perspective, Balzac is a novelist who could well have been invented by some vulgar-Marxist. He stands at a point of historical and aesthetic transition containing both past and future. His romanticism reacts back toward feudalism and religion, his realism records the victory of bourgeois society. He joins together a mystical fatalism and a social determinism; they intermingle and eventually make a synthesis. It would be ridiculous to say that his times "produced" Balzac, yet the amazing must be realized, that his genius, within the context of the times, expressed almost every one of its currents.

Balzac teems. In him, one cannot find the modern consciousness beginning as clearly as it does in Stendhal, yet still it is there. His bourgeoisie anticipates Flaubert, his lower depths Zola, his aristocracy (so often—melodramatic) Proust. Theme by theme, he did not reach the heights of any one of these, yet the crucial error is to take him theme by theme at all. For Balzac must be seen in all of his sprawling, contradictory genius, as a writer who was great in spite of himself.

This, I think, is what James meant when he wrote of Balzac, ". . . with all his faults of pedantry, ponderosity, pretentiousness, bad taste and charmless form, his spirit has somehow paid for his knowledge."

MICHAEL HARRINGTON

Michael Harrington, an editor of ANVIL, writes regularly for "Commonweal," "Dissent," "Liberation," and other magazines. He is National Chairman of the Young Socialist League.

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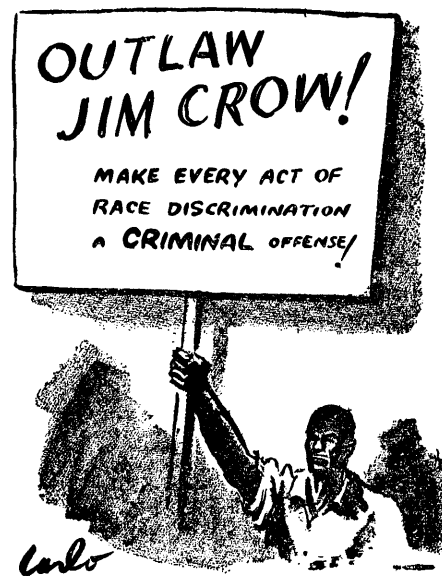
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Three Penny Opera—Three Dollar Seats



A visitor to the Theatre de Lys in Greenwich Village can hardly fail to be impressed by the odd contrast between play and audience, by the sight of well-dressed middle-class folk gratefully applauding a bitter denunciation of bourgeois morality. The production of the Bert Brecht-Kurt Weil *Threepenny Opera* is, it seems to this occasional theatergoer, in every respect admirable—it is pungent, electric, crisply-staged theater. It is also profoundly subversive. (I think this latter characterization is true of both the staged Blitzstein translation and the printed Bentley-Vesey version in Eric Bentley's *The Modern Theater, Volume One*.)

One cannot, of course, disentangle and weigh in absolute proportion all the various elements of a popular success. It would be hard enough to separate out the accidental factors (timing, accessibility, publicity, stars) from those more basic to public acceptance (theme, music, staging, and so on). But it is impossible to forget that *The Threepenny Opera* is a revival; in a sense it is a revival of a revival. First performed in the United States in 1933 during the depth of the depression (when one would indeed have expected it to be a smash hit given enough people with the price of admission), it had crossed the ocean from Berlin, where, with its mixture of jazziness, exoticism and cynicism, it had been a characteristic theater success of that international headquarters for the disillusionment of the Twenties. And of course Brecht had based his play on John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* and the poems of

François Villon, both of which have proved their viability in their own right, over the centuries.

Why should such a play, popular in an era seemingly so different from ours, be so rapturously received in the New York of the Fifties? It is worth bearing in mind that in recent years we have had other revivals of comedies and musicals of other eras by authors ranging from Shakespeare to Wilde which have simply failed to attract a substantial public, despite the fact that money and good taste have (sometimes even in combination) been lavished upon their production.

One should be able to fairly conclude from this that at least a portion of the relative popularity of the Brecht play must be attributed to its theme, its mood, its underlying attitude toward society. Of course one cannot assume that everyone who vociferously applauds this play would join the Peachum family in singing, "There's nothing we can do, For the world is rotten through and through!" any more than one can imagine General Eisenhower holding to the anarchism of Eric Hoffer, even though the press reports him so moved by Hoffer's iconoclastic *The True Believer* that he is presenting copies to the members of his official family. Nonetheless we may infer a correlation between the temper of a play, particularly when it is forthrightly and even brutally expressed, and the temper of its audiences, when they are large and enthusiastic.

It is the view of the Brecht play, mordantly if somewhat

tinnily set forth, that bourgeois life is a swindle; that the crook, the cheat and the hypocrite are the true men of distinction in a world ruled by crookedness, cheating and hypocrisy; and that the only man worth admiring is the picaresque hero who earns his pleasures by pimping, theft and murder, who cheats on his bride and doublecrosses his gang, and who sings "The Ballad of Comfort":

" . . . Poverty makes you wise but it's a curse
And brav'ry brings you fame but it's a chore
And so not to be great's a bloody bore
But being great—my friends—it must be worse—
Here's the solution inescapably:
The life of comfort is the life for me."

Stick to Highway Robbery

But even though Captain MacHeath's sensuality brings him down (his former lady love Jenny tells us in "The Song of Solomon" that "So long as he was rational, And stuck to highway robbery, He was a Great Professional"), and even though he is betrayed by his whores, we are not spared the final irony. A ridiculous messenger enters on horseback bearing the Queen's pardon for Mack the Knife as he stands on the very gallows. What's more, he is raised to the nobility and given a ten thousand pound pension. To make sure that there should be no misunderstanding, Peachum steps forward to explain: "Mounted messengers from the Queen come far too seldom, and if you kick a man he kicks you back again. Therefore never be too ready to oppose injustice."

The play then closes with the words:

"Do not defend the Right with too much boldness
For Wrong is cold: its death is sure though slow
Remember all the darkness and the coldness
The world's a vale of misery and woe."

It is easy to imagine the impact of *The Threepenny Opera* on Germans living in a defeated capitalist state, where, under the shadow of a feeble and anemic democracy, there strutted the same old George Grosz caricatures—the profiteers and bemedalled goosesteppers and all their whores and hangers-on—who had brought their country down in the first place.

But what is the magnetic attraction of the drama's viciously ruthless philosophy for well-meaning and liberal-minded playgoers in a country where, and at a time when, so everyone is constantly being assured, poverty has been all but abolished, discrimination is on the way out, and soon work itself will be a thing of the past in this best of all atomic worlds? One can only speculate on the inner state of mind of the New York audiences who fill the little Theatre de Lys night after night to cheer *The Threepenny Opera*, corrosive as acid as it gnaws its way past the comfortable pleasantries with which theatregoers are usually regaled, the paeans to grey flannel-suited resignation and suburban garden-tending, or the hymns to up-and-at-'em South Pacific liberalism. This play undercuts the platitudes of playwrights and politicians alike. It goes so far underneath that it comes very close to home.

I would submit therefore that no audience which is stirred by *The Threepenny Opera* can be stirred solely by what it reveals of the mentality of Berliners under the Weimar Republic or Londoners of the Eighteenth Century. I would submit further that customers who are well-heeled enough to pay three or four dollars for an evening's entertainment and then discover that the very basis of the society in which they have been earning that money is being called into question are undergoing a genuinely cathartic experience. Certainly it is true that many thousands more spend twice as much for an equivalent evening's entertainment on Broadway; but they do

not come with the expectation of having the very source of their income undermined, so to speak. They do not wish to have their lives disturbed—and they sure as hell are *not* disturbed by what they are fed on Broadway.

The "cool" young intellectual of today, who, as I am given to understand, prides himself on his aloofness from emotional involvement in matters political and cultural, and who apparently feels that there is an important distinction which must be made between commitment and excitement, may have more in common than he suspects with those who are somewhat older and hence still subject to agitation over public questions, whether of engagement or disengagement. For both have reacted in common to the theatrical representation of the loathsomeness of a commercial society in decay, most particularly of the spineless and soulless hypocrisy of its ruling members. It would seem that this reaction is not confined to the young and prematurely disillusioned, or to the older, who one would have thought had mostly made their peace with the world as it is; but how would *The Threepenny Opera* be received by union audiences, say, or by Southern farmers, if they were to encounter it at their local drive-in theater in Detroit or Montgomery?

Never fear. This "non-affirmative" play will not find its way to a really mass public. If anything is certain in this constantly surprising world, it is that *Threepenny Opera* is one musical comedy that will not be translated by Hollywood into a Technicolor Cinemascope production starring Kathryn Grayson as Polly Peachum and Howard Keel as Captain MacHeath. Despite the huzzahs for American national culture now being emitted by those "liberal intellectuals" who have taken to rallying 'round the Flag, there are still things which cannot be said except to the relatively restricted publics of off-Broadway theaters or to the relatively few readers of books. And *The Threepenny Opera* says a good many of those things.

Let it be accounted cause for optimism that this play has found an audience—not a huge, mass audience, but an audience. It is an audience whose very existence had been called into question, bombarded as we have been with depressing accounts (whether favorable or unfavorable) of the mass taste of the middlebrow public. We may justly hope that it could spontaneously foregather if there were offered to it equally well-mounted native works of the theatrical and literary imagination, works which hesitated no more than this remarkable play to slash through the treacly morality of bourgeois society and to reveal yet one more aspect of that inner truth that is the heart and function of all art worthy of the name.

HARVEY SWADOS

Harvey Swados is a critic and novelist who has contributed to ANVIL, "DISSENT," and leading quarterlies of literary criticism. His novel, "Out Went the Candle," was published in 1955.

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What's Wrong with Elvis the Pelvis?

THE DEBATE ON THE EFFECTS OF MUSIC ON THE EMOTIONS IS AN old one. In ancient Greece, the various musical modes were associated with different emotions and were widely believed to have beneficial and detrimental effects on the character. Some modes were thought to cause drunkenness, effeminacy, and inactivity; some were considered riotous, frenzied, and orgiastic. Plato in his *Republic* permitted only two of the nine existing modes. In the Middle Ages, the church repeatedly issued edicts prohibiting the use of "raucous, licentious secular melodies" in the church. An Englishman, Thomas Mace, wrote in 1767 that the new-fangled French violin music favored by Charles II was "rather fit to make a man's ears glow, and fill his brain full of frisks, etc., than to season and sober his mind, or elevate his affection to goodness."

In like vein run the arguments today: rock and roll incites young people to licentious behavior, even to riots; it has an unwholesome moral influence. A noted psychiatrist, Dr. Francis J. Braceland, psychiatrist-in-chief of the Institute for Living, calls it a "communicable disease—a cannibalistic and tribal form of music appealing to adolescent rebellion." *Variety* comments, "Its Svengali grip on the teenagers has produced a staggering wave of juvenile violence and mayhem." A mother in Seattle complains of her children's addiction to rock and roll: "Some of their most popular songs are open invitations to seduction." *Down Beat*, a popular music magazine, regards it as a "degenerate and neurotic music." Elston Brooks, a writer for the Fort Worth, Texas, *Morning Star-Telegram*, describes the effect on a teen-age audience of Elvis Presley

(familiarily known as Elvis the Pelvis), a currently popular rock and roll singer: "Mass hysteria completely gripped the crowd . . . An animalistic roar split the coliseum . . . the girls collapsed on one another, moaning from side to side with closed eyes. They screamed. Tears ran down their faces. They swarmed toward the stage . . . Two [girls] proudly displayed scars on their arms where they had carved the word 'Elvis' with pocket knives."

Riots and other acts of violence have occurred of late at or following rock and roll concerts. These events have been the immediate spur to repeated attempts to ban the music. In Hartford, Conn., eleven teenagers were arrested in April and the city attempted to revoke the license of a theater there following a rock and roll show. The nearby cities of Bridgeport and New Haven had already banned rock and roll. In Des Moines, Iowa, the city council voted unanimously on April 16 to refuse a dime store's request to pipe rock and roll music into the streets. Elvis the Pelvis was banned in Corpus Christi, Texas. But in Oklahoma City, after performing for the city's board of censors, he was allowed to perform after being warned to "tone down his actions." In Asbury Park, N. J., Mayor Roland J. Hines prohibited rock and roll in all city dance halls following a July riot at a rock and roll show in that city's Convention Hall. In California, the city of Santa Cruz banned rock and roll from civic buildings after a riot in San Jose. In San Antonio, Texas, rock and roll was banned from jukeboxes in the city swimming pools because, according to the city council, its "primitive beat attracted 'undesirable elements.'"

As far as we know, no prescriptions of rock and roll have actually taken place on grounds other than fear of teenage violence. There are those who, out of their own personal dislike of the music, would like to see it done away with, but no one has seriously proposed censorship of it on artistic grounds alone.

Censorship and Racism

Another, more serious motive, that of racism, is behind many of the attempts at censorship of rock and roll. This racial motive is frankly and explicitly stated by members of White Citizens Councils in Alabama and elsewhere in the South and Southwest, who are attempting to get all rock and roll records off the jukeboxes. Asa Carter, the notorious executive secretary of one of the councils in Alabama, made the utterly fantastic charge "that the NAACP had 'infiltrated' southern white teenagers with the insidious strains of rock and roll." He said that "even sweet-music records, even if their music and lyrics were by white composers and writers, should be 'purged' if the singers were Negroes." (Wilmington, Del. *News*, April 4, 1956.) At least two Southern newspapers, the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* and the *Wilmington News*, wrote editorials critical of such overt racism. The *News*, however, gave a very revealing justification for its stand: "Music written or performed by Negroes is entirely consistent with southern traditions, and there are conservative business men in the South who get part of their income from distributing it." So that's it! It is perfectly legitimate for white people to be entertained by Negroes, and to profit from their creativity.

What is this music which has brought forth such vicious attacks? Rock and roll is the popularization and commercialization of a music which has for years been an important part of Negro culture but is virtually unknown to the white part of the population. Formerly it was called "race" music or "sepia," and more recently, "rhythm and blues." It is derived from the tradition of Negro blues. The same general framework of harmonic, rhythmic, and verbal structure is used predominantly.

The subject matter is the same—mostly love, unrequited or otherwise, in its infinite variety. The vocal style is in the Negro blues tradition. Joe Turner, who has been performing this music for over thirty years, is the closest to the classic blues style in his singing.

As happened with other Negro music—minstrel and coon songs, ragtime, jazz, and boogie woogie—rhythm and blues was suddenly discovered and promulgated in the popular music market of the population at large. Its great popularity is usually dated from the smashing success of the song "Shake, Rattle, and Roll" a couple of years ago. The term "rock and roll" was first applied to the white variety of rhythm and blues, but the genre quickly became so universally popular that now "rock and roll" encompasses the Negro music as well as the white, although some Negroes still refer to "rhythm and blues." Most of the Negro artists are unknown to the white audience, with the exception of Joe Turner, Fats Domino, The Clovers, and a few others. The majority of the nationally popular rock and roll performers are white—not a few white Southerners, such as Elvis Presley, among them.

Devitalization

A spokesman for *Down Beat* magazine claims that rock and roll is derived from white hillbilly music and only indirectly from Negro jazz. It is true that hill people have always loved Negro music whenever they have heard it, and have taken many of its characteristics into their own music. But although no serious musical study either of rock and roll or of the vast unexplored territory of the interrelationships of Negro and hillbilly music exists, it seems absurd to deny the virtual identity of rock and roll with rhythm and blues.

In spite of the great similarities between rhythm and blues and rock and roll, however, they are not identical. As in previous cases where Negro music has been borrowed and popularized in the commercial white market, rock and roll has been devitalized, has lost many of the Negro characteristics, has lost much of its freshness and spontaneity to the advantages of slick sophistication. And, as in all popular music, a gimmick which proves successful is exploited to the bitter end, giving rise to a cliché-ridden music.

This watering-down of the Negro music is most easily observed in the great increase of sentimental lyrics in rock and roll as compared with rhythm and blues. Green-shuttered white cottages and heaven-sent bliss are becoming more and more the order of the day. In Negro popular music, however, there has been traditionally a lack of sentimental treatment of love. Although there have been several sentimental rhythm and blues songs, such as "Crying in the Chapel" or "Shake a Hand," the prevailing tone of the lyrics has been a matter-of-fact, down-to-earth and even cynical treatment of love. For example, "Money Honey," the gist of which is, "Ya gotta have money, honey, if ya wanna get along with me." Or another, "Hound Dog," which I must quote in full:

You ain't nothin' but a hound dog,
Quit snooping round my door.
You ain't nothin' but a hound dog,
Quit snooping round my door.
You can wag your tail,
But I ain't gonna feed you no more.
Well you said that you was high-class,
But I can see through that,
Well you said that you was high-class,
But I can see through that,
And daddy I know,
You ain't no real real cool cat.

In spite of the increased slickness, sentimentality and repetitiveness in rock and roll, it still has a tremendously fresh and robust spirit as compared with ordinary popular music. This may be one reason for its great popularity with teenagers. Burl Ives, who became an enthusiastic devotee of rock and roll the first time he heard it, says, "I feel that rock and roll's popularity is a protest against perfection. Popular music was too perfect—the vocalists were always right on pitch, the orchestra hit every note perfectly, there was never a mistake. Well, this may be fine but it results in impersonal music." Another reason for the popularity of rock and roll is undoubtedly the fact that—like the many past importations of Negro music into the commercial popular field—rock and roll fulfills a need for greater spontaneity and rhythmic vitality than humdrum Tin Pan Alley is able to provide.

Significant also in rock and roll's popularity among teenagers is the idea that it is a *protest*—and *unconscious* protest, against authority and the monotony of every-day life. It thus appeals to the "rebellious adolescents" about whom we hear so much from educators, psychologists, and parents. The unrestrained enthusiasm shown by teenagers at rock and roll shows—the shouting, handclapping, and jumping—is not an unheard-of phenomenon. Audience participation is traditional in jazz, popular music, and folk music. A youth wrote to the Richmond, Virginia *Times-Dispatch*, "Why, I can't see how they expect us teenagers to be such angels at such an event [rock and roll concert]. Just to sit there in our seats and look on just as lifeless, motionless people while up front our greatest jitterbug music is being played in person." He is absolutely correct. Carnegie Hall audience behavior is definitely out of question here. Rock and roll provides a legitimate and acceptable outlet for youthful energy.

Scapegoat for Delinquency

Teenagers, in their rebellion, are at the same time great conformists. Such behavior, as that of the girls at an Elvis Presley appearance, described above, is a means of expressing both the defiance of authority and the desire for conformity. Much of the apparently strange behavior of adolescent hero-worshippers, whether in the era of Valentino, Sinatra, or Presley, can be attributed to this desire for conformity.

Psychiatrists, educators, government officials, and parents have cited rock and roll as the primary cause of juvenile delinquency. They point to the coincidence of rock and roll's popularity with a staggering rise in the incidence of teenage violence, and to the disruptive behavior of a few of the teenagers at rock and roll concerts. They claim that rock and roll is a phenomenon to be lumped with "zoot suits and duck-tail haircuts"—as the phrase goes—as signs of youth's callow indifference to what is traditional and respectable. They attribute to the "primitive, driving, sensuous rhythm" and the "suggestive, indecent and immoral" lyrics of rock and roll all juvenile delinquency.

How could juvenile delinquency be caused by a music? These "indecent" words, if that is what they are, are no more so than the words of ordinary popular songs. And, unlike the classic Negro blues, where the words as poetry are equally as important as the music, in rock and roll the words are of secondary importance, are part of the general sound, and in fact are often not words at all but merely meaningless syllables as vehicles of vocal expression.

Those who have attacked rock and roll as a cause of juvenile delinquency are all too willing to use it as a scapegoat to avoid their own responsibilities in the matter. It is interesting to note that behind the Iron Curtain, guardians of Communist youth are similarly unwilling to admit that the causes of juve-

nile delinquency lie far deeper than any type of music. The appeal of rock and roll extends to the youth in East Berlin, who, according to a story in the New York *World Telegram and Sun*, May 22, are enthusiastic fans. They tune in on two U. S. stations in West Berlin, and they have formed undercover record clubs which the state authorities have sought to ban. The regime has, of course, consistently attempted to proscribe American jazz and all its offspring, such as rock and roll, as a "decadent export" from the United States, inciting youth to crimes and "hooliganism."

Civil Liberties Issue

Perhaps the most serious aspect of the rock and roll phenomenon is that of civil liberties. In El Monte, Calif., a hearing was held on whether to refuse a promoter a permit to hold a rock and roll concert. In granting the injunction, the judge emphasized the fact that the music appeared to "attract a rowdy element." The Southern California branch of the American Civil Liberties Union expressed concern, according to an account in *Variety*, that the objection to the music also "may be based upon the fact that it is largely the product of Negro bands."

The ACLU presents a cogent argument against this type of denial of free expression. A. L. Wirin, ACLU representative, stated: "The American Civil Liberties Union is interested because what we have here is a clear case of a board attempting to exercise some form of censorship over art. I am not interested in getting into a debate on the merits of the music. The fact remains that the ban under discussion is based on nothing but the content of the music. It is, therefore, an attempt to restrict free expression, the product of the human mind and skill. And no agency has the right to exercise such control.

"If some law is being violated, then under criminal statutes, the violators should be arrested and the issue tried before a judge and jury. No board can act as a censor in matters of this kind."

In spite of attempts at censorship, in spite of the petty moral rationalizations of bureaucrats, both in the United States and in East Berlin, rock and roll will survive. If it does not survive in its present form, it will emerge with another shape. The tremendous popularity of Negro-derived music now and in the past testifies to the rhythmical weakness of the music of Tin Pan Alley and the European musical tradition on which it is based. A highly rhythmical music fulfills an important need in our culture, and such music in one form or another is irrepressible.

MARTHA CURTI

Martha Curti is a recent graduate of Oberlin College. She studied violin at the Oberlin Conservatory.

Res

Looking over the cattails of fragility
through the four square glass
Of the windows of my house and mind
Which greet the houses of my
Neighbors
Observing the sycamore pods elegating
With the goldfinches
Who are my neighbors also
In their small residences
I consider
What do I know
Apart from this wet wriggling spring
And the birds pantomime silkily
Nothing.

BILL ANDERSON

Sociology and Marxism

SNEERS AT SOCIOLOGY seem, of late, to have become a requirement for intellectual tone. No self-respecting person will now acknowledge that he sees any value in, or hope for, the discipline which produces such mountains of minutely-studied trivia—multitudinous but isolated fragments of research having no apparent orientation or integration.

The current disrepute of American sociology is, to be sure, much deserved. Given its origin in the parsonage and the settlement house, there should be no surprise at its tardiness to develop problems beyond those posed by the immigrant slum neighborhood—and the latter, while of some interest in themselves perhaps, are not those most likely to reveal to the researcher the key features of the age. The very process, moreover, by which sociology overcame its early moralizing tone was at the same time a part of the process of its establishment in the academic world. “Establishment” signifies a graded hierarchy of academic jobs—jobs for which competence is proved by scientific prolificacy, i.e., by the extent of the published research. This orientation, of course, can only damage the quality of the research. It means that topics are chosen less for their crucial theoretical relevance—or even for their own intrinsic interest—than for the speed, ease and economy with which they may be turned into journal articles. Lack of relevance in research is perhaps a problem in any academic discipline, but sociology lacks even any clear *criteria* of relevance. There is neither a generally accepted theory, nor any important and clearly drawn theoretical controversy, which may function to guide research into fruitful channels. Add to this the effort to maintain a scientific reputation by cloaking its ignorance in jargon, and sociology presents a sorry sight.

Neglect European School

Yet as a picture of the state of sociology as a whole, this is misleading—however satisfying it may be to those who believe human affairs not amenable to scientific analysis, or to those who hold social science impossible under “bourgeois” auspices. For however many the ills from which sociology suffers, a complacent unanimity is not among them.

There exists a variety of sociological tendencies, having significant differences of approach and chosen subject matters. While American sociology stemmed in part from the concerns of social workers, it also derived in part—and this was the predominant case in Europe—from the effort to make a science out of the philosophy of history. This latter tradition furnishes most of the figures who occupy the histories of sociology—Compte, Spencer, Tonnies, etc. Such men were closely concerned with wide-ranging theories of social evolution and with the major historic types of social organization. True, their approach to the study of society had definite, often crippling flaws of its own. They were generally adherents of a view which held evolution to be unilinear and more or less steadily progressive—a view the tenability of which has been shattered by consideration of those divergent non-Western societies whose world presence can no longer be ignored, and by the crises of the twentieth century. They also showed a certain “flexibility” in the handling of fact. Historical “items” were used in a merely illustrative way and often taken quite out of context in order to bolster theories spun out of the air. Their systems all failed in one degree or another. But with all this, they were concerned with broad and basic issues, and were

alien to that penchant for the picayune which characterizes so much of today's sociology.

Most contemporary sociologists have managed to slough off this portion of their tradition—justifying themselves, when challenged, by a too easy reference to the factual defects which that tradition displayed. The “great names” are now granted a thumb-nail sketch in a course in the history of social theory, and then promptly forgotten. Even such more recent, and more scientific figures as Weber, Durkheim and Simmel are given only a rapid run-through. It is well to reject the older systems on theoretical and methodological grounds. But such rejection currently serves as an excuse to reject also the strategic issues to which this tradition addressed itself.

Toward Issues of Broad Import

There are, however, although today in a definite minority, sociologists who retain these issues, while seeking to examine them with a sounder methodology and a theory grown out of something other than pure speculation. The best current statement of such a standpoint is provided by *Character and Personality*, the recent and noteworthy volume by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills.* While designed as a text in social psychology, it differs markedly from other texts in that field in its problems and orientation. The direction of their concern toward issues of broad import for men is well described in the authors' preface:

Intellectually, social psychology has become the main area of contact between the decisive intellectual traditions of our time; politically, this field is crucial, because now, when profound crises shake mankind, our urgent interest in the larger problems of man and society requires that we understand man as an historical actor.

The structural and historical features of modern society must be connected with the most intimate features of man's self. That is what social psychology is all about. And that, we think, cannot be done by dealing only in microscopic observations. If ever there was a field needing above all else imaginative theory, that field is American social psychology today. Only by such work, rather than by delving into unrelated specialities, can we at once avail ourselves of our intellectual opportunities and avoid slivering our image of man.

Seeking to lay out a general and systematic framework (“model”) which may serve to integrate a variety of subject matters, they distinguish two major streams of thought which must now be fused:

... *Freud*, on the side of character structure, and *Marx*, including the early Marx of the 1840's, on the side of social structure.

Freud and Marx, and their counterparts G. H. Mead and Max Weber, are major sources drawn upon because they sought to achieve an understanding of the whole—whether of the whole man or the whole society—rather than deal with isolated facets of their subject matters. An integration of such streams of thought promises a view of individual character in its chief interrelations with the particular social context in which the individual exists and carries out historic acts.

A social psychology of this sort, an effort to synthesize the most provocative views on social structure and individual character, is required if we are to get a thorough understanding of problems important in man's history or destiny.

“Applied sociology” seeks to eliminate “social dishar-

*Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills. *Character and Social Structure*. Harcourt, Brace and Co. New York, \$4.75.

monies." Here again—especially in these particular circles of sociology—there is no adequate conception of the structure or operation of society as a whole. Only bits and pieces are seen, only localized or partial conflicts which are to be attacked with the "small group analysis," "communication techniques" and sweet reasonableness practiced by "human engineering." There is no hint of a whole society with grave internal disharmonies which, just possibly, spring from its basic structure.

Apart from the "applied" schools, most social science lacks political availability. This lack is not particularly due to its not being oriented to the formulation of programs; rather it is due to the fact that few social scientists address themselves to questions of the breadth or scope required by a significant politics.

Social science research, of course, varies in quality, in scope, in degree of relevance, and in the scholarly thoroughness and intellectual honesty with which it is carried through. A very considerable part of the research produced by social scientists is politically usable, some of it rather directly. But by far the greater part must be put into its context by the political intellectual—as regards its political relevance it is left in a very raw state by the academic social scientist.

It is perhaps too much to ask that academic social scientists devote themselves unanimously to producing a comprehensive and scientifically grounded political program for radical democrats. But it is not asking too much to demand that their research have political significance. For political significance as we use it here means merely to have a bearing upon the structure and dynamics of society as a whole—and this is also the highest *scholarly* goal of social science, which should seek to understand the broadest and most fundamental features of a whole in the process of change. As one crucial facet of society is its power structure, thorough scholarship will treat of power, and will thus be political in a yet further (and more commonly understood) sense. But the basic meaning of politics, upon which we here rely, is that noted above—the conflict-laden mobilizations of social power in the process of man's collective self-control.

For social science, hence, it is true in a very significant sense that the best scholarship is also the most political.

Need for "Scientific" Politics

Unity of theory and practice—in the sense of an effort to achieve a mastery of man's fate based upon a thorough and penetrating understanding of the requirements and key features of an age—has become a more urgent necessity in our crisis-ridden times. A multitude of factors has contributed to the contemporary crisis of radical democracy, but among them the lack of theoretical orientation is by no means insignificant. Attempts to muddle through, relying solely upon virtue and goodwill rather than also upon a grasp of the strategic factors in the political situation, are everywhere meeting defeat. A "scientific politics" is now among the first requisites for democratic movements.

There is nothing comparable to Marxism among the various approaches to "scientific politics." The discussions under the same name in political science are for the most part merely another "applied social science," suffering from the same sorts of defects as the applied psychology and sociology noted above. These discussions are concerned with application of science to rather petty details within the going order, largely in such a way as to render more systematic and rational the basic irrationalities and inhumanities of that order. For the rest, the discussions proceed at so excessively abstract a level, so little related to concrete particularities of an age or a social

order, as to be formal and empty.

Marxism remains superior to all other ideologies having an impact in the field of politics and social movements because of its "theoretical" approach, its effort rationally to comprehend the world which forms the context of politics and to base its program upon that comprehension. Yet the superiority of Marxist social science—the tool by which this understanding is sought—rests more on its standpoint and perspective than on its detailed elaboration and technical conceptual tools.

On one score even the worst routinizer among social scientists surpasses the Marxist: in explicitness. One fundamental characteristic of science is its public availability. However difficult the theoretical content of a science may become, every effort is bent to make it as clear as possible. Definite rules of method are laid down to minimize reliance upon an intuitive "feel for the facts." Above all, propositions are clearly stated and the kinds of evidence which would be accepted as proving or disproving them are set forth.

Such a procedure obviously handicaps literary style. Moreover in a discipline such as sociology, which is scientific more in orientation and hope than in accomplishment, the pursuit of explicitness often produces quite painful results—as in the prevalent pompous statement of truistic "hypotheses."

Marxism's Lack of System

But even with this, contrast the condition of Marxism. In what source is a model of Marxist sociology—a statement of the basic concepts and the relations among them—clearly set forth? To gain an understanding of historical materialism one must search through provocative bits and widely scattered snatches. This almost makes of historical materialism a learned esoteric cult rather than a publicly available science. Historical materialism is quite a useful "frame of mind." In the hands of a well-versed and insightful practitioner it can be extremely fruitful. But its lack of systematization—and the clarity that goes with system—renders it inordinately flexible. One can, if learned, "find a quotation" in Marx to support a marvelous variety of by no means harmonious positions.

There is also, to be sure, the *inflexible*, "vulgar" variant of Marxism—a variant seldom given its due. While the "sophisticated" may shudder at "economic determinism" (both the label and the position), they do not recognize that it is a natural counterpart of their own failure at systematic exposition. "Economic determinism" at least means something clear, definite and testable. The alternative position is shifting and amorphous.

"Sophisticated Marxism" varies among individuals and from time to time; it is always blurred and indefinite. Quoting of letters by Engels, or illustrative examples of times when Marx considered non-economic causes, is no substitute for an explicit and systematic statement of causal relations in history.

Such example-citing and formal but empty recognition of other factors serves, in intellectual circles, a status-function: it absolves the individual of suspicions of cohabitation with the vulgar and lends a sophisticated tone. But embarrassingly for the sophisticated, it is usually a great deal easier to say what Marxism is not, than to say, save in excessively vague and general terms, what it is, hardly a healthy condition for a "science."

Marx himself never actually developed an adequate set of technical working concepts for sociological materials. And the later Marxists have produced no elaboration and revision of historical materialism comparable to the developments that have taken place in academic ("bourgeois") social science. one example, a question important both for the history of the labor movement and for the pattern of American society is:

why is there no socialism in the United States? An answer to this requires, of course, reference to objective factors: to the lack of a feudal starting point, the presence of rich resources, market conditions, etc., which allowed American capitalism to expand so vigorously; and to the cultural diversity and rapid migration from farm to city which impeded labor organization. But reference only to these and other such objective conditions will not provide a sufficient answer. For we must say, with Engels, that "everything which sets men in motion must go through their minds." To understand the importance of cultural diversity within the working class—or even the significance of capitalist prosperity—one must have conceptual tools which enable the explanation of the psychological reactions of men to these facts outside themselves. Any clinching argument must deal with psychological processes and their linkages to social structure. Knowledge of objective "cause" and of end result is insufficient unless supplemented by understanding of the psychological mediating processes.

Engineers in the Academy

It is important to emphasize, however, that such a linkage of psychic and social is something quite different from that "psychologism" which holds that social facts are produced by the individual psyche—or even by the "psyche of Man," an unchangeable human nature. One variety of psychologism now extremely common assumes that whenever a number of men undertake or approve the same act, they do so out of the same motivation. Gerth and Mills make no concessions to such viewpoints.

The exploratory framework provided by Gerth and Mills is an integrated set of categories for the observation and analysis of social reality. It is not, in itself, a theory. But the volume does contain much theory, even though it contains no *general* theory, no "system." The authors may be assumed to concur with those who believe the development of sociology not yet sufficient to create a theory which will deduce from a single set of postulates the whole range of social and psychological phenomena. What *can* be done at present is to build up theories for significant, but not all-encompassing problems, and to do so with an eye to their more general context—and this task the authors do indeed undertake.

Such an orientation, and the appearance of this volume in particular seems actually embarrassing to spokesmen for the dominant sociological concerns. The general tone of the reviews has been such that, lip-service once paid to the value of addressing problems of broad relevance, the sociological community is reassured in its present concerns and its neglect of such problems.

The reviewers seem to have felt impelled—perhaps by their intellectual consciences—to grant the importance of the approach and the general high level on which Gerth and Mills carry it through. But at the same time they critically nibble at partial elements sufficiently so as to cushion the impact of the whole. The reviewers quickly get down to what sociologists as a whole are wont to do: treating the work as a mere compendium of information and views on a variety of separate subjects. In chapter-by-chapter comments the chaff is separated from the wheat, and there is, of course, some of both when the volume is approached in this way. Yet, given these criticisms of separate elements, they should not be allowed to obscure the true significance of the volume. Its greatest merit is precisely its construction as a whole; it is the product of an integrative effort which seeks to transcend the usual sociological compartmentalizing.

The judgment of one reviewer, in stating that Gerth and Mills carry out their exposition "in the grand style," implicitly

assimilates the work to the rejected tradition of the speculative sociologists. It is an imputation of a certain arrogance to the authors, of an undue self-confidence in believing that they can handle important issues. This stems from the common social science belief that the structure of a science is built up in much the same manner as is a deposit of guano. By a curious perversion of scientific humility, this view holds that one should not attack a large and important problem lest he botch it, but should satisfy himself with working up one minute fact which, together with a mass of other minute facts, will one day make a science.

It would be fruitless to argue as to which of the various sociological traditions is the "true" one, or which orientation the most scientific. Both major tendencies have authentic sociological pedigrees and both can produce scientific work. Choice between them is based, rather, upon direction of interest, upon what is regarded as "significant."

If, however, science is viewed as functioning to help man master his world, rather than as a mere exercise in the cumulation of facts and their explanations, then "significance" increases as the problems are of more generalized scope and the factors are of more strategic influence in the affairs of men. This is the point of view from which Gerth and Mills write, as well as that from which proceed most outside criticisms of sociology. It is also an essentially political point of view, if by "politics" is meant not merely maneuvering within a given social order to win the benefits of office, but that large field of action comprising the conflicting efforts of men to shape their destinies collectively by use of the state power, efforts which utilize many resources of power beyond the state itself.

No Concession to Psychologism

This conception of politics, and the linkage between such politics and social science, is in practice (whatever may be its "original" sources) a contribution made to the modern world by Marxism. Marxism says: the point is not merely to understand the world, but to change it. This distinguishes it from other philosophies or purely academic disciplines. But at the same time it differs from other political ideologies precisely by its greater emphasis on understanding as a tool for effecting change. Where the academic social scientist seeks to understand the world; the politician of a status quo to "keep it under control"; the historical materialist seeks to *grasp* or *master* the world, in the full double meaning of those verbs.

Such a unity of theory and practice is essentially alien to academic social science—which is one of the meanings of the "ivory tower" gibe. By far the worst tendencies, however, are the very ones which make some effort toward the unity of theory and practice as it is customarily conceived in academic circles—i.e., "applied science." These tendencies are infused with a manipulative outlook and a spirit of service to the ruling powers—a spirit and outlook not only repulsive in themselves, but also providing a poor vantage point for a comprehensive and penetrating view of social affairs. Most of "applied psychology" is devoted to "adjustment of the individual to his society." This "society" is generally not adequately conceived—it is insufficient both in articulated detail and in breadth of perspective. Just because of this it is therefore less likely to display weakness and defects. Social context hazily conceived and taken as given, the individual is restructured to fit the utilitarian or "engineering" demands of his immediate milieu. The approach provides insufficient understanding even for effective buttressing of the status quo.

The politics of socialism has been revised (though not so much, perhaps, or in the way we might wish) more than has its science. Marxism just is not up to the scientific level that

could be attained by the use of some of the conceptual tools now available. These tools are not *anti-Marxist*, but are often so regarded merely because they have not been incorporated into the perspective by any "Marxist of repute"—and of course this repute would be endangered by the very act of incorporating modern concepts from a non-Marxist source.

To Bridge the Gap

One of the oft-noted major defects of Marxism as a device for understanding the world is its poverty of intellectual tools for dealing with its subjective aspects. (It should be stressed, however, that this is also a defect of such other pre-eminent social thinkers as Max Weber.) Marx, for example, held class position to be so overwhelming a factor in a person's experiential world that it would, in time, overcome all other experiential factors and lead men to act in terms of their class interest. This is unsatisfying even on the abstract intellectual plane. It neglects the details, the dynamic process of the "overcoming" and the conflicts among experiential factors which are felt psychologically.

Politically it is gravely defective, for we are immersed in the details of these intermediate processes. The crisis of radical democracy has been seen as a lag of subjective awareness behind objective possibilities or requirements. People at present do not understand and act upon their "objective" class interests. The democrat's problem is to help bridge the gap between understanding and interest, to help create conditions which will do so. But this is a psychological problem, and for understanding of these areas one needs concepts adequate to deal with them—role, reference group, etc.—which Marxism does not provide.

Because of its lack of technical elaboration, historical materialism often promises more than it delivers. One may be convinced that it often provides the general way (i.e., by "dialectics") in which something must be understood, and that such a theory must be quite penetrating. But upon examination, the understanding of some particular thing proves deficient: to be composed more of hints and intimations than of a coherent and rounded argument. Either some important facets are neglected (because Marx left no working method for dealing with them), or the concepts used are insufficiently precise as to be productive as the general standpoint would admit. (For such reasons Marxism often shines more brightly when injected into critical reviews of the work of other schools of thought, than when used in positive exposition of its own account.)

The intellectual power and appeal of historical materialism cannot be denied, but its present dilapidated state makes it of far more clinical than scientific use. It lacks rules of procedure. That is, like Freudianism, it offers a frame of mind and a generalized approach which in the hands of a perceptive practitioner can lead to plausible and often quite provocative explanations of individual (psychological or historical) cases. But the explanation is confined to that particular case. No general theory is produced which may serve as a guide for those whose intuition is less reliable; and this, of course, is the purpose of theory. A clinical approach is, in fact, intellectually irresponsible, in that it is not centrally concerned with the achievement of theoretical consistency. The explanations of different cases may be quite inconsistent with one another, i.e. different sorts of relations posited between the basic concepts, because the clinician is satisfied with the case-explanation itself and does not seek to use it as a jumping-off point for a general theory.

The dearth of that kind of scholarship which can feed into broad political decisions is apparent. Historical materialism, the standpoint from which such scholarship has been most effectively promoted, no longer fulfills its large promise. Its fundamental orientation and postulates remain the best basis upon which to rear an effective "political scholarship." But unless an extensive renovation is now carried through (and historical materialism has shown little capacity for self-renewal) we must look elsewhere for the sources of such work.

Historical materialism retains its significance despite its faults because there is no other political social science worthy of the name. Its traditional rivals, the academic social sciences, in part never had a driving political interest, and in part have perverted that interest in the hope of becoming tinkering technologists for the status quo.

The Mastery of Man's World

No claim is made here that *only* research with a political bearing has any justification or merit. "Science solely for understanding's sake" can be held as a self-sufficient interest. Indeed, a part of the appeal of historical materialism itself lies in its "pure theory" aspect, its ability to elucidate phenomena often far afield from contemporary political problems. Yet even the more remote applications of historical materialism—to the Roman Empire, to early Christianity, or even to prehistory—have an immediacy and relevance which stem from a political orientation. They seek to understand our present by tracing its historic evolution, or to throw light upon factors which still operate in our times. Theoretical comprehension may be held as a value in itself, but "science for the sake of the mastery of man's world" is felt by most of us to be a higher value, and one, moreover, which interferes but little with the "disinterested" pursuit of pure theory.

Neither do we assert that the whole of a complex conceptual apparatus must be brought to bear upon each and every political decision. Many political decisions can be worked out by common sense. And we must often make do, given the limitations on both our knowledge and our current understanding, with more or less intuitive intellectual operations. Yet for those broad strategic questions on which radical democracy now shows such disorientation, every significant advance in our theoretical comprehension, even if it does not "solve" a specific political question, at least offers more clarity, more background and context, by which to further the effective exploitation of our intuition.

It is from such considerations that the significance of *Character and Social Structure* emerges. Here we have a work which resumes the concern with strategic human issues, yet does so in a manner closely bound to the detail of reality. It provides a conceptual framework which is at the same time sufficiently integrated to direct attention to problems of the whole, and sufficiently differentiated to allow detailed articulation of that whole. It is a solid contribution to a social science which understands that broad political relevance is one of the criteria for the value of social science itself. By that very fact, this volume can be of material aid in that heightened awareness and comprehension which must be carried into the making of political strategy and program.

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