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# SPANNER

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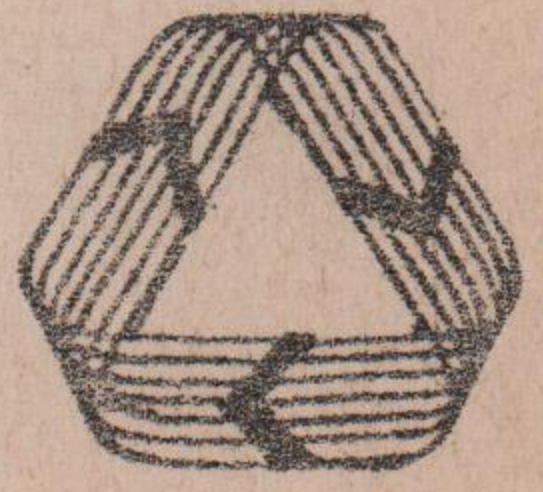
DEFINITION



CRACY

A NEW JOURNAL FOR NEW THINKING

- WITNESS TO TERROR - THATCHER'S LAW
- ON CRISIS IDEOLOGY - DEBATE FORUM
- ECONOMISM - THE PRACTICE OF CAPITALISM
- WORKERS CO-OPS? - HUMAN AGREEMENT





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The Last American Tourist in Beijing Part 1

[I was in Beijing from June 3-12, 1989. I saw many of the events that took place in Beijing during that time, and I was witness to the changes that occurred as a result of the now infamous massacre in Tiananmen Square. This is the first of two articles on my experiences in Beijing. With the exception of the Washington Post journalist Daniel Southerland and his colleague and photographer Dudley M. Brooks, I have changed the names of the people I knew in Beijing to protect them from government retaliation.] by Daniel Nardini

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What do you call a government which rebukes those who break its laws yet ignores the law itself? LAURENS OTTER delves into the murky details of official hypocrisy

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We publish here an article from the Guardian newspaper (Sept 1989) written by KEITH JEFFERIS, a lecturer in economics, formerly at Kingston Polytechnic. In the "Debate Forum" in the previous issue of Spanner, reference was made to the subject of co-ops in an article on "The Road to Socialism". It would be useful to read that article in conjunction with this and consider, in particular, the point made about the effect of an expanding socialist movement on the viability of co-ops within a still predominately capitalist economy. Our thanks to the Guardian and Keith Jefferis for allowing us to publish this article.

## DISCLAIMER

The articles published in Spanner do not necessarily reflect the views of the Spanner production team

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Anarcho-capitalist, DAVID MCDONAGH, claims the market economy is the wave of the future and events in East Europe confirm this. Anarcho-socialist, ROBIN COX, begs to differ.

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A liberated society entails more than just the exercise of our rational faculties, argues FRANK STURT. It requires also an unlocking of the unconscious mind, the stuff that dreams are made of.

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A trenchant re-assessment of revolutionary theory by INTERROGATIONS (c/o I.S., B.P. 243, F-75564 Paris Cedex 12, FRANCE)

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In Part Two of this series, ROBIN COX offers a critique of Marxist economism, the tendency among Marxists to separate out the economic factor from society as a whole, and invest with primary causal significance. From this stems a millenarian view of social revolution. Capitalism, being subject to its own immanent economic laws, cannot be eroded from within by changes in the social superstructure which are more determined than determining. But how sound are the assumptions underlying this view of revolution?

## PROBLEMS OF HUMAN AGREEMENT

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Differences between people are beneficial as far as society is concerned, argues GEOFF WATSON. The more differences there are, the more likely are we to find a suitable response to the challenges confronting us. But because people are different, they tend also to disagree even though the very problems they face demand unity and a common purpose.



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# INTRODUCTION

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The events in Eastern Europe are a cause for rejoicing. But they also call for vigilance. As the capitals of the once "communist" world succumb to a rash of MacDonalds restaurants and advertiser's hoardings, we might wonder what kind of world is emerging in its place.

While the monolithic structures of state capitalism have finally cracked under relentless pressures, both internal and external, this does not mean the momentum of change must now grind to a halt. Notwithstanding the fashionable thesis prophesying the "end of history" with the eclipse of political dictatorships, history moves on. The promised land turns out to be not quite what was promised. In Poland, for example, there has been growing opposition to the turncoat Solidarnosc government which has condemned workers for going on strike and threatened to restrict their ability to do so in the future. In that respect, at least, there is not much difference between the present government and the previous one or, indeed, between either of them and Thatcherism.

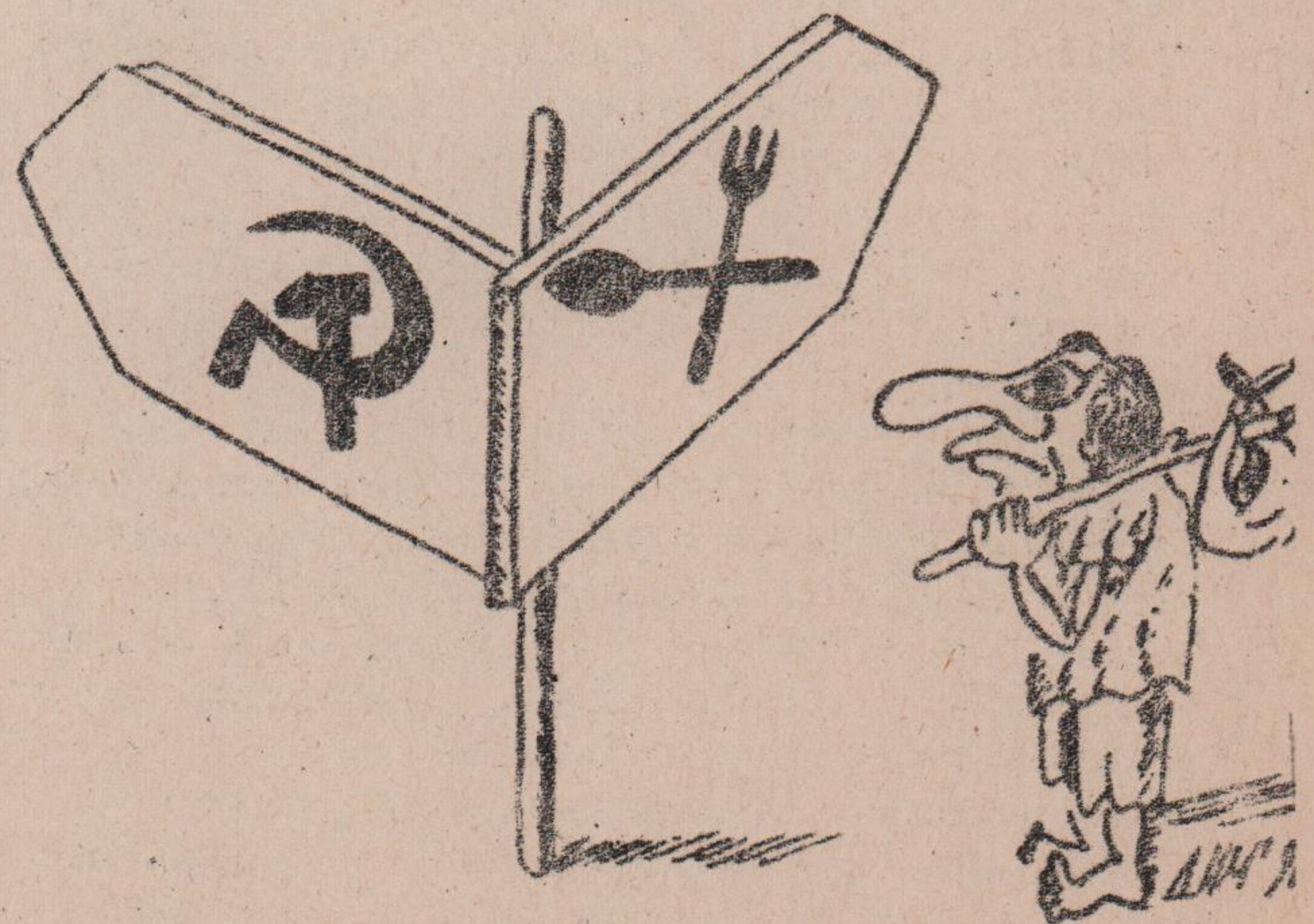
Yet ironically it was strike action in the shipyards of Gdansk which initiated the train of events leading to democratic reform - and the government of Mazowiecki. There is surely a lesson to be learnt here: democracy is not something that we can expect to have handed down to us by our rulers. It has to be fought for by working people and our ability to do so depends on our willingness to unite for this purpose. Divided we are ruled all the more easily.

But to get back to the point: what will a less regulated market economy hold in store for democracy? The relationship between democratic freedoms and the market is problematic. On the one hand, a heavily policed state imposes considerable costs on the indigenous capitalist class who have to compete against other capitalists in the world's markets. This can become intolerable unless offset by the benefits of a cheaper work-force. Arguably, this was the case with old fashioned Apartheid (at least as far as the primary sector was concerned) which is now also under threat. If such cash benefits are not to be had, however, competitive pressures

of the market compel the state (which depends upon its local capitalists for revenue) to reduce its costs of policing and, ceteris paribus, its capability to stamp out opposition. Furthermore, these same pressures tend to raise the productivity of workers which makes for a better educated and more sophisticated workforce, increasingly able to organise resistance.

On the other hand, the tendency of the market is also to work against the democratic impulse. It does so in a rather subtle and insidious fashion, creating tensions which pit the individual against his fellow human beings - paradoxically, in the face of increasing interdependence.

This paradox is grounded in relationships which deny our humanity by transmuting us into economic objects - commodities. It is not as human beings that the market brings us together but as cogs in an impersonal machine. Hence our feelings of alienation. We sense that we are the victims or, perhaps, unwilling agents of decisions made elsewhere, decisions carried out at the behest of blind economic forces. According to the dogma, it is through the "invisible hand of the market" that the pursuit of self interest will incidentally benefit the community. But the community qua community is not itself expected to act in the common interest.



From Nachalo weekly



Nothing could be more anti-democratic. Democracy is not simply the absence of political dictatorship. More positively, it concerns the capacity to control our own lives. Insofar as the fates of all of us are intertwined this must involve a collective capacity - not simply the individual capacity to do as we please regardless which some call freedom. For we cannot choose to do what we want without at some point affecting others by our actions as we are affected by theirs. It would thus be more useful to see freedom and democracy as partners rather than opposites. But to maximise the scope of both, both need to be brought into a balanced relationship.

And there is a further point to consider. The materialistic ethos of the market which makes objects of people at the same time enjoins people to chase after objects in the hope of filling the emptiness in their lives. Such a way of life can never really satisfy. It seeks continually, as it must, to induce a sense of deprivation as a spur to production - not simply as a perceived lack of material things but, more profoundly, in the sense of one's personal worth. We are judged by the objects we accumulate and conspicuously consume.

How will this affect working people in the Eastern bloc where the unshackling of market forces has precipitated a revolution in expectations? Many have experienced a sharp fall in their living standards (by 30 per cent in the case of Poland) while unemployment and prices have rocketed. Maybe things will improve in the long run but expectations are such that many are not prepared to wait.

Therein lies a grave risk. Already we see evidence of extreme right-wing movements on the march, of xenophobic chauvinism and rampant racism. The collapse of Leninist ideology has left a kind of vacuum which freeing the market cannot fill. For the market cannot help to enhance one's sense of security; rather, by atomising society, it undermines it. In these uncertain and economically straightened times this could be the spur to a revamped totalitarianism, this time shorn of the trappings of "communism", but no less totalitarian.

We need to be clear, then, about what democracy is and is not. It is more than simply the right to vote for the party of one's choice. Democracy, in fact, entails an attitude of mind and a way of behaving that is open, tolerant and - perhaps most important of all - participatory. It needs to impress itself upon the structures of decision-making in every sphere of life - not just the political, but the economic and social too.

In our class-based economy where ownership of the means of production - and the media - is monopolised by a few, the power of decision-making is enormously skewed in their favour to the disadvantage of the majority. Their freedom is, in effect, our prison. They have the means to use us as exploitable objects for their own enrichment where we have little more than our working abilities to depend upon. The relationship between democracy and freedom is thus thrown out of balance which can only be restored on the basis of social equality.

But we can fight back. The human spirit will not be crushed into submission by the market anymore than it was by the Leninist state. Daily and in countless little ways it flows around it and pushes against it. We need to build on this. We need to roll back the market along with its ugly sister, the state, wherever we can. In short, we need to transcend the economic system of both East and West and assume control over our own lives in a truly democratic and free manner.

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The John  Ball Press

Wealth/Health/Ecology.

FREE IS CHEAPER by Ken Smith

It takes longer today for a carpenter or bricklayer to earn the price of a pound of meat or a housebrick than it did five centuries ago. Where has the money gone? The rich are still rich but not as rich as they were, so they haven't got it. The poor are not so much better off as to account for the loss. The answer says Ken Smith in Free is Cheaper lies in our economic system.

From small beginnings at the end of the Middle Ages, the Market Economy has come to dominate life in every corner of the world. But it has brought with it increasingly unacceptable costs. The crime industry, war preparation, bureaucracy the "sales effort", these and other non-productive activities absorb about nine-tenths of the working population and are growing faster than productivity itself. The only answer to such profligate, environmentally-destructive and impoverishing waste, argues Ken Smith, is production for need not for sale, the extension of this principle from those sectors of the economy - like health care and street lighting - already supplied on the basis of need, to the entire economy itself.

Ken Smith has been newsboy, dental-technician, railway clerk, demolition-contractor, supermarket operator and land developer. This is a book for disaffected Rightists, disillusioned Leftists, disenchanted Centrists, Believers seeking rationality, Atheists seeking spiritual fulfilment, the environmentally worried and the politically perplexed.

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# WITNESS TO TERROR

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Witness to Terror:

The Last American Tourist in Beijing

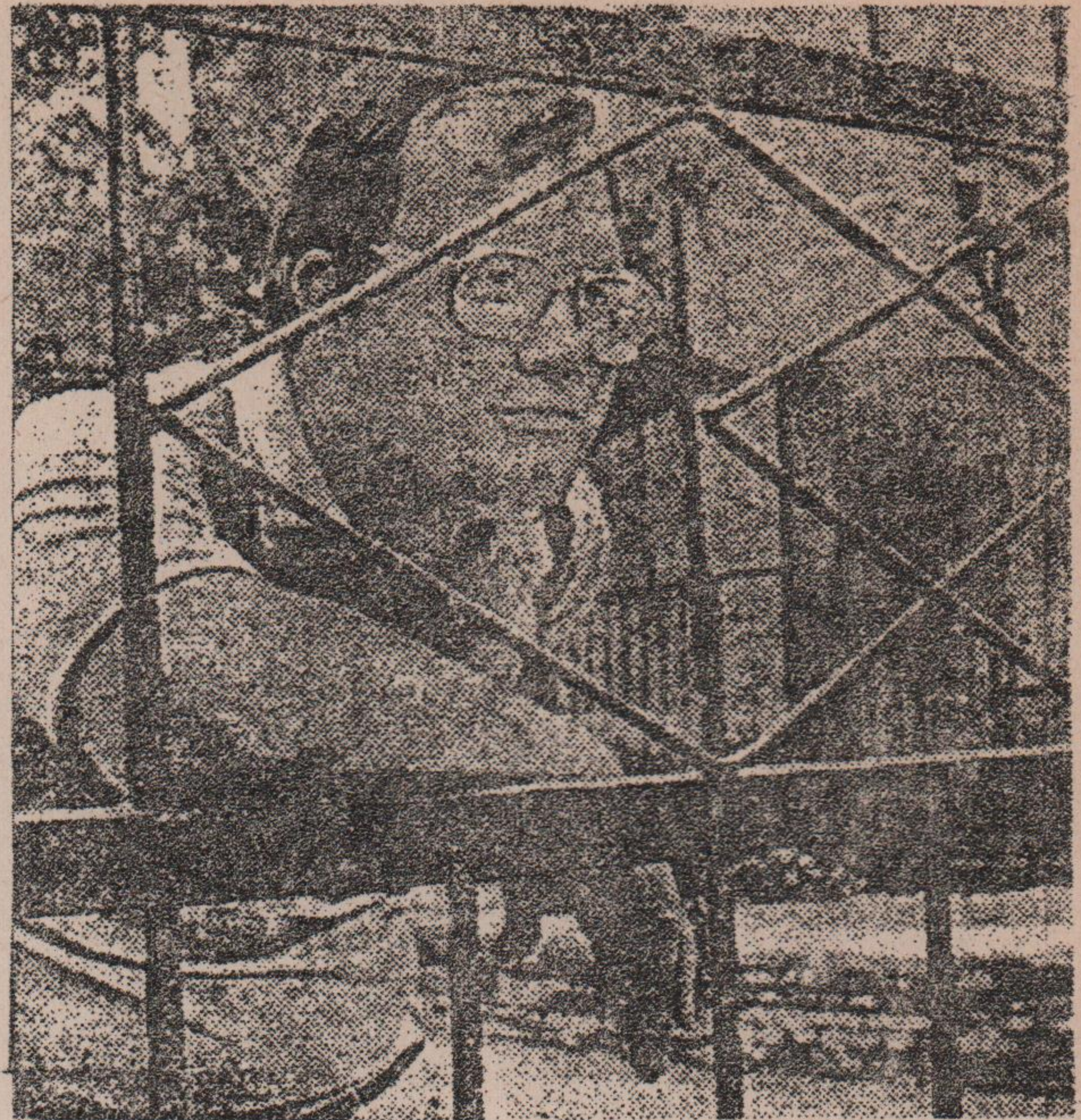
Part 1

by Daniel Nardini

[I was in Beijing from June 3-12, 1989. I saw many of the events that took place in Beijing during that time, and I was witness to the changes that occurred as a result of the now infamous massacre in Tiananmen Square. This is the first of two articles on my experiences in Beijing. With the exception of the Washington Post journalist Daniel Southerland and his colleague and photographer Dudley M. Brooks, I have changed the names of the people I knew in Beijing to protect them from government retaliation.]

I arrived in Beijing by express train from Shanghai at 1:00 in the afternoon on June 3, 1989. I knew that the situation in Beijing had been tense from watching the English version of Shanghai's TV news. Over the last week, though, things started to improve as the students, one million of whom had occupied Tiananmen Square and parts of Beijing in their demonstration in late May, began to gradually leave the city. The night I left Shanghai I heard that there were between ten and twenty thousand students left in Beijing and it looked as though martial law which had been imposed in late May would soon be lifted. With all this in mind, friends of mine invited me to come to Beijing, confident that the worse was over and that the situation would soon return to normality.

As the train pulled into the station I saw soldiers encamped alongside the rails eating, playing mahjong, or resting. I also saw guards watching over train cars. I



NARDINI IN BEIJING

and a friend of mine named Rick, a student from Great Britain studying in China who had accompanied me on the trip from Shanghai, wondered what was happening as we got off the train. We saw more soldiers as we went through the station, and when we got to the the exit the soldiers blocked the doors checking people's train tickets. Outside we came across yet more soldiers standing around or marching in formation. When we left Shanghai the newsmedia had said that the army was poised outside the city limits, but now there were even some soldiers in the downtown area itself. We knew something was wrong. Rick and I waited for my friend Gao Xia to pick me up. When Gao came he told us that the army had tried to peacefully enter the city the night before but were turned back by the students and residents of Beijing. This was a most foreboding sign to us. What would happen next? We could only guess. Rick and I parted company as he went back to the university and I went with Gao.





We went on the Beijing metro and then tried to get a public bus. However, the students had blocked the streets, and we were forced to look for a cab instead. But in fact every form of automotive traffic had been stopped, including cabs. Only traffic in the bicycle lanes was moving so Gao sought, and managed to get, a man with a tri-cycle, usually used to haul crates, to take us to our destination. We arrived at a residential building six kilometers from Tiananmen Square and only several blocks from the main routes leading to Tiananmen. Gao and I went into the building to see his friend, Mang Feng, the man whom I was to stay with while in Beijing. This whole arrangement had been made before I left Shanghai. However, when we got to Mang Feng's apartment he was not there. We waited for an hour and he still did not show up. He knew we were coming, so why wasn't he there to meet us? Gao went to the apartment next door and asked if they knew Mang Feng's whereabouts. They did not know. We waited for another three hours and he still did not show up. One of the neighbours, Chen Zhangzhong, knew English. "I had not seen Mang for the entire day. He could be at his girl-friend's house", Chen suggested. But that did not sound very plausible. Finally in desperation Gao broke the window of the apartment door and we were able to get in. We waited for another four hours, but Mang never did show up that day. Gao had to leave to try and catch the last bus home, a risky business in view of the transportation problems we had had getting through Beijing. "I will try to come back tomorrow to see

how you are", he said as he left. So there I was pretty much alone with not even a host. The electricity had been blown out in the neighbourhood, and so when night fell it got pitch dark inside the building. In the circumstances, there was not much I could do.

At about 10:15 p.m. there was a lot of commotion outside and I went into the hallway. I saw Chen put on some shoes and I knew he meant to go out. "What is going on?" I asked. "The soldiers are coming back into the city," he said. I enquired if I might come with him. "It would be better for you to stay inside - the soldiers might take your presence as a provocation", he said as he left. I went back into the apartment and lay down. Just then I heard some gun fire. At first it was only a little, but then it grew in intensity. Soon it started to sound like a full scale battle with rounds being fired every second. I then heard screams, shouting and crying, some of it close by. I instantly knew what was happening. The army had re-entered the city and this time they were shooting their way in. I could hear the screams of people dying. It all became one horrible orgy of killing of the people by the so-called People's Liberation Army. Then it died down, and remained quiet for a while. I checked my watch again in what little light there was and saw that it was 12:30 a.m. The whole thing had started at about 10.30 p.m., so it lasted for almost two hours. I was completely exhausted from my train trip coupled with all that had happened in Beijing and so fell asleep. When I woke up again I heard more gun fire and much more



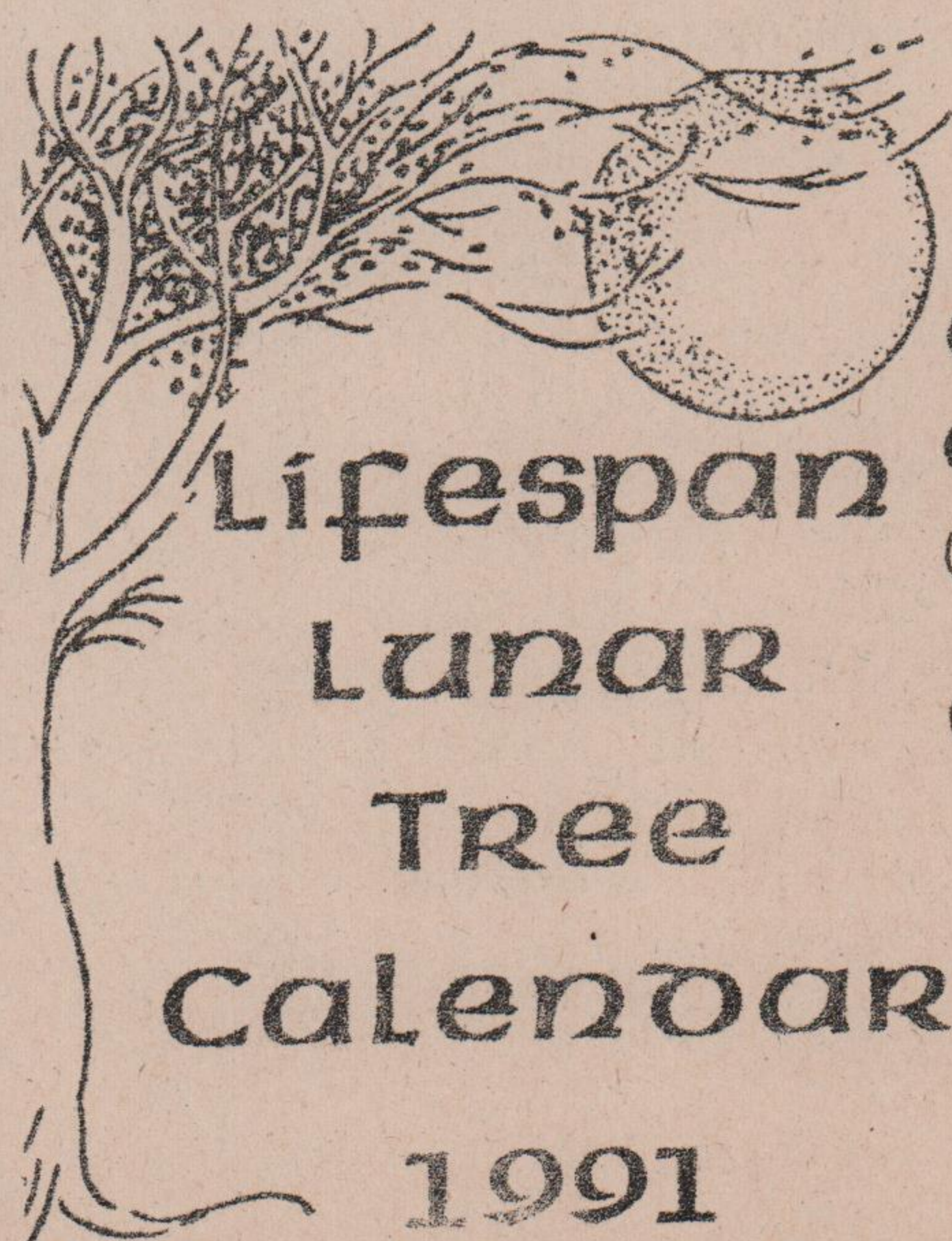
screaming and shouting although this was from a distance. There was an explosion coming from the direction of Tiananmen square. I checked my watch again and it read 4:14 a.m. The army was carrying out a massacre of the students and I listened to that for....I lost track of all time. I fell asleep again and woke up to a bright and sunny day. Everything was peaceful. I looked out and saw few people in the streets. Amid all this silence had occurred a horrible event and the sounds of the screams of the people being slaughtered still resounded in my mind.

Late in the morning of June 4, Mang Feng came back. He had been in Tiananmen Square when the army came in and had barely escaped with his life. Over the next few days in this highly charged atmosphere we became acquainted, witnessing the events that followed. We would talk about the reasons why the whole student movement broke out and what was taking place now. But no matter what we talked about we were still stunned over what happened in Tiananmen Square. It seemed like the end of an era, or as my friend said to me, "the dream is over".

The dream he referred to was the aspirations and hope of the Chinese people in their government and the system to give them a better life. What was shattered forever was the ideal of the revolution and the so called communist system which claimed to have the best interests of the people in mind. After forty years the government and the system had hardly advanced the lives of the people compared to every other country in Asia, and the plans of the Communist Party to liberalise their economic policies created and worsened social conditions as China started to institute a growing divide between the poor and the new rich elite of the Communist Party. Under these economic changes the Party had enriched itself at the expense of the people and in turn corruption permeated every part of society and the system. Vast sums of money and the country's resources, already quite limited by the immense size of the population, had been wasted by all this corruption which all too evident in even the highest echelons of the Communist Party. And of course the Party did not want to change the political system

which guaranteed them absolute power. Under these pressures, the students - the country's future heirs - cracked, demonstrating for political and economic changes which did away with inequality, special privileges and corruption. The students wanted freedom of the press, freedom to travel, and freedom to simply disagree with their government without being jailed or threatened. All the students wanted was what was supposedly guaranteed to them in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. They did not want an end to their government or the Communist Party. For this they were shot, and the constitutional rights promised them were shelved as those in the highest echelons of the Communist Party wanted nothing to interfere with their absolute power. I too believed in their revolution and the system itself. I too believed in the dream. Now like the students our dreams were dust. The dream was over, but for me the nightmare was only beginning.

I was trapped in a neighbourhood only six kilometers from the seat of government, and near the bulk of the army which now controlled and patrolled that area and the outlying streets all through Beijing. I was not registered with the authorities in Beijing which was a grave offence, and I was not registered with the U.S. Embassy so they did not know where I was. I was in a very grim mess.



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# THATCHERS LAW

## LAW & HYPOCRISY

It cannot have escaped the notice of even the least political that we have a government whose watch-words are law & order. That when workers strike they are harangued about ignoring the law, (often a law conveniently just passed, for the very purpose of crippling industrial organizations, & it is interesting that when - as in the current example of the N.U.R. - the union observes the law so made, and appears to be winning, a howl goes up amongst government supporters for the law to be yet further changed.) The same tones of judicial superiority have been used against Grenham women and their protestors, though punctuated by lapses into vulgar and hysterical hectoring.

Most will have noted that while the former Lord Chancellor used to declaim melodramatically that the Wilson's government's use of ministerial fiat, the parliamentary guillotine, & elevations to the House of Lords were taking us to an "elective dictatorship", he failed to notice anything dictatorial about the far more frequent use of such means by the government of which until recently he was a member. That he has only felt a need to protest when uncharacteristically, his successor in that government, decided to limit the perks of those who having eaten the requisite number of dinners at the Inn of Court, are duly qualified to decide matters of law.

It has equally not escaped the attention of many - though unfortunately not yet of all - that considering this vocal adherence to the system of Law & Order, the government is quite remarkably loath to resort to what has been for a long time a central factor in that law and order, in our much over-praised unwritten constitution. For years it has been normal, whenever the least measure of scandal is alleged about government ministers, or governments as a whole to appoint judicial investigations. More often than not these have served to cover up for the government of the day, but occasionally when abuses have been too blatant, it has

been seen that the Establishment is best served by exposure & the forced resignation of the occasional minister.

Far be it from anarchists to advocate such judicial inquiries; but it is surely fair for us to ask why those who profess to believe in the norms of constitutional behaviour should suddenly refuse to play it by the rules. Can this not - to use their jargon - be regarded as *prima facie* evidence that they know there is too much scandal for any judicial commission to suppress. That even the most venal & bigotedly Tory judge would have to allow evidence to be presented that once recorded fully would totally discredit the government; & that it would be seen that the government has very little evidence to produce in its own behalf?

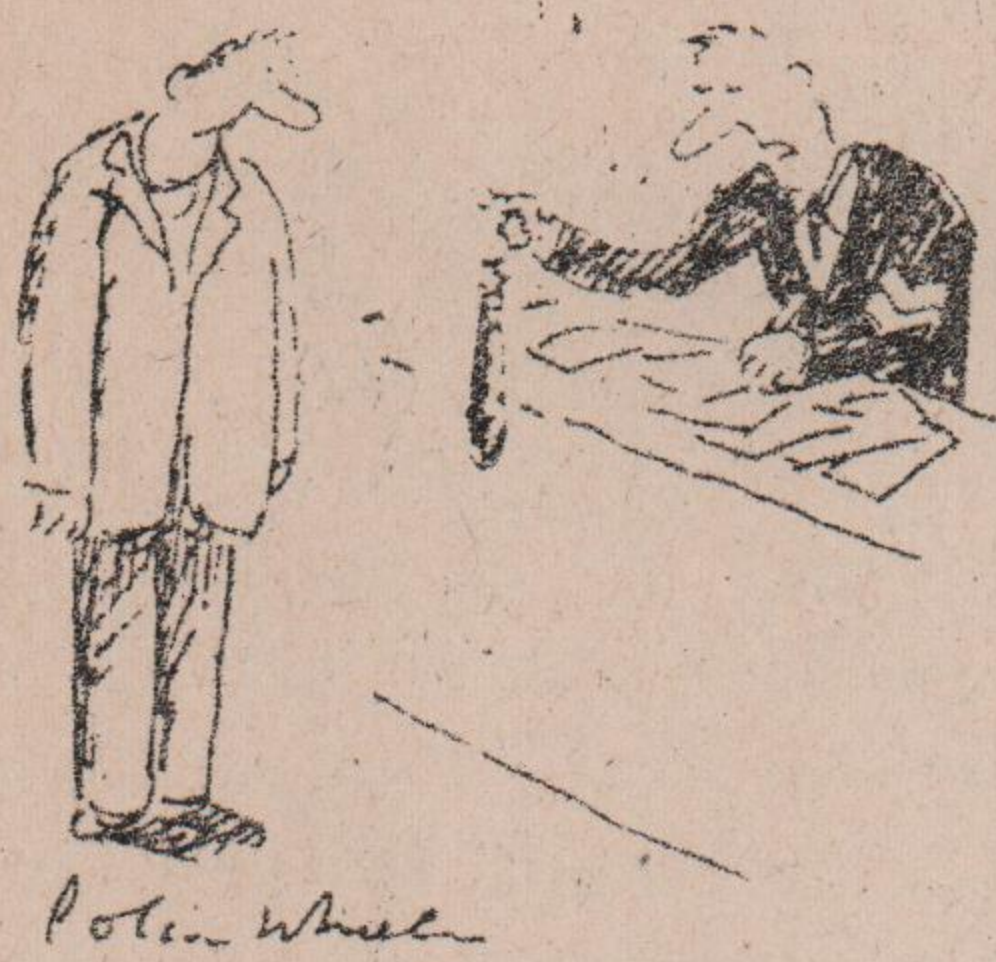
For the various accusations that have been made, most of which under virtually any previous government since Stuart times would have been thought to have merited judicial inquiry, have not been lightly made. Nor are they made purely by those whom governments traditionally dismiss as anarchist trouble-makers, cranks, madmen or subversives in the pay of foreign governments. To give just nine of the accusations commonly made:

Starting at the beginning of Thatcher's rise to power; we have now been told by at least four former members of the Security Services, as well as at least two acknowledged experts that within these services there was a plot during the Wilson Government, a deliberate attempt by the secret servicemen to destabilize the Government. That secrets were leaked. That stories were falsified and leaked as if they were secrets. That government money was given to opponents of the government. That the telephones and houses of government Ministers and their supporters were illegally bugged (& probably burgled) & evidence was forged to suggest that such Ministers were corrupt or engaged in treasonable communication with foreign powers.



Though - as yet - there is only evidence that this was done under the Wilson Government, enough things have been said to imply that they were also done under Callaghan (although he was personally close to the security services) & even possibly Heath. It is certain that Airey Neave who was to be the campaign manager for the Thatcher faction against Heath was privy to these happenings. In British law, to know of treasonable acts and not report these is to be complicit in treason. That would be particularly the case for someone who like Airey Neave had been a responsible member of the security services and was then a member of Parliament, well known to the Shadow Cabinet.

JUST GIVE YOURSELF  
A CRACK FOR  
RESISTING ARREST



Thatcherism being primarily a movement for crushing trade union organization, it is not surprising that Bristol port-workers were denounced for refusing to load armaments & helicopters on a ship bound for the Argentine; or refit a warship for that country; they were undemocratic and unpatriotic for refusing, & were losing Britain valuable trade. A month or so later the Argentines invaded the Falklands and Thatcher who had until then praised this fellow monetarist regime and denied that it was dictatorial, suddenly discovered that it was "fascist", & so denounced anyone who did not want to dash to war for fascist sympathies.

The United Nations Organization was preparing to intervene, but that would have prevented her taking the glory, so she vetoed the settlement, & ignored the offer of an U.N. force. Then other South American countries had negotiated & had persuaded the Argentines to agree to withdraw. That could not be allowed & so the Belgrano

was sunk. As far as can be ascertained it was 150 miles from the exclusion zone and sailing away from it, the Belgrano was nevertheless portrayed as a threat to British shipping; deliberate lies about its position being told in the House of Commons. When Civil Servants drew attention to this breach of parliamentary democracy it was they that were denounced & indeed prosecuted as undemocratic.

In June 1983 there was a major fire at the Donnington Ordnance depot, asbestos of which the roof of an hangar was made burnt with the contents of the hangar, the flames were visible for miles and the smoke covered everything, the fire fighters were kept in the dark (because it was an official secret) what was in the hangar and consequently needlessly risked life and limb and may have been slower than they would otherwise have been; and the remains (asbestos ash flakes up to four or five inches square in many cases) were scattered over the surrounding towns and countryside; on that occasion covering, fairly densely, an area eight miles in length & up to two miles across. (The base did generously offer compensation to local farmers who had live stock, but those with standing crops were not given anything, so the farmers harvested and sold oats, barley, soft fruit & green vegetables, all affected by asbestos.)

The base produced the usual public reasons; - someone had been smoking (unlikely, in order to ensure against this the base gives its workers very generous breaks outside their place when they want to smoke, so much so that non-smokers feel discriminated against and are apt to pretend to be smokers so as to be able to go for an occasional stroll in the boss's time,) there had been an electrical fault (again unlikely only a fortnight before expert electricians had checked the whole system and replaced anything slightly suspect,) & (of course) there were rumours of a strange long-haired girl being seen in the area, (no doubt having previously seduced guards at two or three gates to gain entry!) - there were Ministry of Defence investigators sent down, and their presence was publicised to the locals, but base workers say that they had left by the beginning of September.

Despite requests for a public inquiry that was all, until four years later when extracts of an internal report were published. It was said that there recommendations to make the hangar safer for the future. Just after this, the base announced triumphantly that it was



opening a new hangar. That, by a curious coincidence, it had planned to build this before the fire & that it had from the beginning intended to site the new hangar where the old burnt down one had been. (So the fire had been very convenient.) Private Eye incidentally published an allegation that arms had been illegally sold overseas, (there was a trial for this,) had come from Donnington, being sold to the dealers by base staff.

About six months after this new hangar was built another hangar burnt down. It emerged that none of the safety measures that the Inquiry had recommended had been implemented, the reason for which the base said was that it had intended to pull this one down; for it appeared by another extraordinary coincidence that the base had been planning for some time to replace this hangar too by one of the new model hangars. (Given that the hangars were at the opposite sides of a large base, at least a mile apart, the element of coincidence is even greater.) Fortunately for those of us who live in the area, this time the ash did not fall so densely, (it had rained the first time) but fell over a far wider area, stretching the forty miles to the Welsh border & to the South Shropshire hills.

Once again there was no public inquiry. This time there were all sorts of allegations that they knew that it was sabotage. The Media was also told that it was sub-judice and that it was therefore illegal for the radio to broadcast or the papers to print letters from the public, or the resolutions of the many local societies that demanded a public inquiry. So we are left to wait until they next decide to install an ultra modern hangar, knowing that if any ordinary citizen twice had the coincidence of a building (s)he intended to pull down & replace on his/her land, burning down by coincidence, & either the lives of firemen were endangered or property was damaged, that citizen would certainly be prosecuted as a common nuisance and would probably be suspected of arson.

The next year there was a large inquiry before the building of a new nuclear power station. Thatcherism had (indeed has) a considerable ideological investment in nuclear power. To start with you cannot have Uranium and Plutonium (used for the fission stage of nuclear weaponry) in large quantities, unless you have nuclear power stations, & cold warrior attitudes are central

to Tory Right Wing attitudes. But equally important was the fact that the Government was about to launch a major struggle against the miners' union (the initial plan for which figured in the Tory Party conference document of 1978, a plan so vicious that like Mein Kampf no one believed it was serious and people were surprised that one after the other its clauses were put into effect.) Nor was the government the only body with an interest in ensuring that the Sizewell Inquiry did not produce a condemnation of the nuclear power industry. Westinghouse, the firm that made that particular model power station, was in trouble after accidents in the USA; no one there was interested in buying its products.

Just who did what, - or who "retained" whom, - it is hard to say, what is certain is that both M.I.5 & Westinghouse put out to private contractors the job of keeping a watch on protestors. Some, possibly all, the firms retained by M.I.5 were - as such firms go - highly reputable; but just as M.I.5 hires private firms to do its dirty work, so those private firms sub-contract to smaller ones the work they don't wish to own. So they & Westinghouse called in some not so reputable firms, most of which were run by people who had occasionally broken the law in their line of business; (there was moreover at least one firm involved whose principal had a criminal record not connected with detective or other surveillance work.)



It was obvious that such sub-contracting firms would cut corners. It was obvious that many had records of using violence. It was obvious that since they were being asked to watch protestors, they would be likely to tap 'phones or bug houses in illegal ways. All the evidence is that neither M.I.5, nor Westinghouse, nor the principal surveying agencies, thought it necessary to exercise any controls, to put limits on the degree to which the law was transgressed.



The government may or may not have believed its own pet libels - that all nuclear protestors are in the pay of sinister foreign powers, not motivated at all by genuine dislike of the bomb, but merely trying to handicap the West's competitive efforts. (It is arguable that if the Tories actually believed this nonsense they would be more dangerous than if they do it because lying comes naturally. A crook would draw back from world destroying nuclear war, a mad[wo]man mightn't.) Whatever they did or did not believe, they did not merely wish to watch, for there was nothing worth watching. The main point of the exercise was to frighten protestors. So the fact that some of their agents were likely to use rough stuff was all to the good.

It is this and only this that makes sense of Hilda Murrell's murder & Penny Goodman's disappearance. The police story is so absurd, has so many contradictions and flat inaccuracies, & is backed by such care to suppress news, which - if they believed their own story - they'd be only too glad to publish, that that can be ignored. But if someone in M.I.5 had really believed that two elderly peaceniks in the Welsh borderlands were a threat to the security of the state, they could no doubt have arranged realistic seeming accidents. Not only do people die every day on the streets, but people fall over cliffs such as the one at the quarry near Hilda's cottage at Llanymynech.

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The author Geoff Watson has been a counsellor, psychologist, sex therapist, teacher, social worker and businessman; at present he is a consultant to the Open University.

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But the fact is that the state was not embarrassed that there was something obviously fishy about Hilda Murrell's murder. It was not embarrassed that everyone knew that there were large numbers of people who had volunteered as witnesses but had not been interviewed. It didn't mind denying the police authority the right to see the internal police report on the case, (a thing which did not even happen in the Stalker case,) because it was quite glad that people were speculating about a state murder. That served its purpose - as did every new suspicious circumstance and evidence published - in that it all helped to frighten other potential protestors.

The Government does, certainly, seem to have tried a little black propaganda, on the occasion, seeing that Hilda Murrell's nephew was digging into the matter, noting the coincidence that before he left the navy he would have known much about the Belgrano's sinking, & having Tam Dalyell breathing down their necks, & trying to unearth the dirt about the Falklands, they got someone to inform Dalyell that the murder was to prevent a leak from Rob Green, (Hilda's nephew, a former naval Commander). Had the latter fallen into the trap of then revealing military secrets, it would have been easy to discredit both him & Dalyell in popular opinion.

The Stalker case, which is the next on the list, is perhaps more crude & yet puzzling. The forces in Northern Ireland, laid a trap, killed some apparently innocent Catholic youth, but were caught by their own trap, since enough was tape-recorded to prove that the youth were unarmed & probably unaware of the fact that they were near an IRA arms' cache. The only remarkable thing (to anyone who knows anything of Northern Ireland since 1922) is that anyone objected to it being hushed up. There were enough doubts expressed that it was thought that the usual whitewash was inadequate and that they wanted a seemingly fair investigation before consigning the matter to oblivion. Amazingly they appointed a catholic to do the investigation which immediately alerted the Ulster Constabulary who set about obstructing the investigation at all levels & in all ways.

When the investigator refused to be intimidated or obstructed, it was necessary to use stronger tactics. They set about discrediting the investigator on his home ground. Ironically the worst thing that they could find



was that he was very friendly with the local Tory Party chairman. For obvious reasons they couldn't actually say that this alone was enough evidence to suggest dishonesty, but as they didn't really bother to produce any other evidence one might well gather it from what they said. The Tory Chairman in question has not been prosecuted for any offence, though he has to bring libel action after Press reports that seemed to suggest that he was known to be corrupt. If he had been known to the police as dishonest, then others beside Stalker had imprudently been associated with him.

It is a government, as we have said, that pays fulsome lip service to governmental propriety. When civil servants, disgusted by misdeeds, have dared publish them, there have been long lectures (& court cases) about the duty of confidentiality. When sources near the government have allowed papers to reach the Media, the lectures have read out that the Media are undemocratic & unpatriotic in publishing the material. But when a squabble in the Cabinet blew up about the future ownership of a major company with considerable military connections; (whether the disagreement was motivated primarily by differing views as to which international allies we ought to have or whether the real reason was purely the financial interests of the contending parties hardly matters;) the actions of the Prime Minister's entourage were very different. Learning that the Attorney General had given an opinion on one side - the side that the Prime Minister happened to endorse - even though this opinion was a legal one that it was improper to use for political purposes, it was leaked by the Prime Minister's personal staff in order to discredit her "errant" Cabinet Colleague.

Though there was a clear leak this vigorous opponent of leaks did not see it necessary on this occasion to sack (let alone prosecute) the leaker. Though there was a clear breach of constitutional custom there was no attempt to hold an inquiry into what had happened.

One day the police detaining three men for something quite different found they had forged police warrant cards. Further investigation and raids at their homes revealed that they had several hundred secret official documents, some genuine, some forged. Moreover it was found that they had been involved in a bombing incident aimed at the Anti-Apartheid movement, that they had

probably taken part in some arson and bombing attempts, that they were connected with the people who had invaded the Seychelles, and all the while they had been involved in acts of petit dishonesty. A fairly large series of criminal acts, & indeed the police were rumoured to have had to make a selection from over a 1,000 indictments to bring before the magistrates.

Naturally Anti-Apartheid and others awaited the court case with some interest & were somewhat astonished when authorities stepped in first causing the case to be adjourned for no apparent good reason, and then suddenly deporting the three in a way that meant they did not have to stand trial. The Home Secretary - with amazing effrontery - pretended that he thought that those who objected to this interference with the courts were supporters of the three and he said he could not imagine why they objected to these people being expelled from the country. Though he must have known as well as anyone else that the objections were to the suppression of facts by preventing a court case.

When the news that three IRA activists had been shot in Gibraltar was first broadcast in Britain, a little while after the actual event, there were two additional reports. There were eye-witness accounts by people whom BBC Radio reporters had easily located, which made it quite clear that the shootings were sudden, without warning, & without any evidence that those shots had made any gesture suggesting they were armed and likely to use guns. There was also a flat report, repeated several times over the next few broadcasts, given by the relevant government minister that the IRA people were armed, that they had a car-bomb with them, that they had started to fire.

The Radio which initially gave the eye-witness accounts, then omitted these for a time. The ministerial account was repeated ad nauseam, while the Minister coupled this with allegations that those who gave any other account were thereby trying to prejudice the judicial process of the Inquest. When television carried a report on the case, much of the British Press was fed a series of lies about witnesses. (One witness, it is true, did change his evidence.) It was claimed that these witnesses - including a retired English officer - were motivated solely by Spanish nationalistic dislike of British rule in Gibraltar. The Inquest Coroner was similarly defamed in the British Press.



Naturally there was no judicial inquiry, while British Ministers claimed, where there statements were too demonstrably false that they had merely been misled, there was a continued effort to denounce anyone who gave a story that conflicted with the Ministerial accounts, and to pretend that these latter wished to pervert the course of justice.



I am not attempting here to examine all the crimes of the Government, the injustice of the Poll Tax, the damage to the National Health, the easing of already too lax rules against the destruction of the environment; or the similar lessening of safety regulations in industry or commerce, (the latter leading to disasters at Zeebrugge, Kings Cross, Clapham Junction & elsewhere;) these are outside my present terms of reference. So it might be thought ridiculous that I mention in the same breath as the murder of Hilda Murrell the intra-business shenanigans over the control of an helicopter firm. But Toryism being by definition linked to big business, the Westland scandal was an interesting revelation of the way Thatcherism has taken the Tory Party.

Similarly the Harrods scandal. No one could possibly pretend that Lonrho, & Tiny Rowland are anything but well known big capitalist business, (so much so that Heath described the firm as the unacceptable face of capitalism). But it is a form of big business that trades primarily with former colonial countries in Africa, & needs to maintain good relations with the government of these, a necessity that means that from a specifically British capitalist viewpoint it sometimes steps out of line, and so is suspect in the Tory Party.

That the Monopolies' Commission refused to allow Lonrho to buy Harrods (probably a matter of concern only to very wealthy shoppers,) may well have been to the good. But certainly it is true that the government ministry that referred that attempted purchase to the Commission then failed to observe the same diligence when new buyers came on the scene. An internal governmental report (which the Minister concerned has not merely not released, but acted to suppress publication of a leaked copy) has since shown (in the words of the Minister himself,) that there were clearly criminal acts in the take-over of Harrods. But though it has been several years, no criminal proceedings have been started, &, though roughly every two months, government official sources allow themselves to be quoted (off the record,) that publication of this report is imminent, regularly the two months pass & there is another such quote but no publication.

No anarchist would suggest that this covert illegal action is unprecedented in the annals of government. What is new is the brazen way that government flatly denies that anyone has the right to question its acts or demand an inquiry. Equally no anarchist would suggest that such an Inquiry, whether parliamentary or judicial, is all that is needed. (The Law exists to maintain a class system & both judges and parliamentarians are beneficiaries of the system; so that even the most leftist Labour parliamentarian acts to retain injustices.)

Nevertheless it has to be of interest to workers when governments treat their normal procedures with disdain. Thatcher, when speaking in France, claimed that it was not the French Revolution but the English one, that introduced democracy to the world. Yet, though the alleged gains, (whether of Cromwell or William of Orange,) are always



described in official constitutional history, as the introduction of respect for the rule of law, and the limitation of governmental powers; she has persistently & flagrantly flouted the law, & identified the interests of the state with those of the governing party.

No doubt this belief in the rule of law has always been a myth; history is full of occasions when it has been flouted, but until now there has always been an attempt to ensure that the pretence is kept up. We need to know why government is prepared to dispense with these essentials of the democratic myth. The answer lies in the economic interests the government serves.

This government periodically claims to have rolled back the frontiers of socialism, & since the Labour Party occasionally pays lip service to socialism, & wouldn't like to admit that it has never moved in that direction, no one points out that there were never any such frontiers to roll back. The government is also said, both by friends and foes, to be a reversion to early nineteenth century capitalism; but that capitalism while rightly described as "production for profit not need" did still depend on production; and the then governments served definite productive needs. This does not.

Finance in our day has turned to asset-stripping. Because every big industry needs to be cushioned against hard times, most have possessions that are not listed in the accounts, on which share-owning is based. It follows that it is possible for groups of raiding financiers, with no interest in the survival of the industry, to buy up the business, resell the declared property & keep the undeclared parts. (Stripping the assets.) Thatcherism is this process reproduced at the state level; since the business is the state that cannot be sold off again, but its subsidiaries (& even things such as the T.S.B. which never belonged to the state,) can be sold off, the bulk going to financier friends, & the payments used to reduce the taxes of those same wealthy people.

Productive business makes its profit by paying workers less than their work produces, it is therefore quite literally parasitic on those workers; but asset-stripping makes its money by robbing those established businesses that were so parasitic. However asset-strippers need to know the business secrets of their potential victims, so the highly respectable & reputed financiers need to turn to industrial espionage & other similar semi-criminal acts. They do not, of

course, do it themselves, they find people to do it under contract, & since - as everyone knows - the acts involved are criminal; the employers are careful not to know what is being done, so that they can disown it, if it comes out. The government made in their image acts in the same way.

## NEWS OF SPANNER

After a lot of blood, sweat and tears, the first issue of SPANNER came out at the end of 1989. It has now virtually sold out and will clearly have to be re-printed. We have about 110 people on the books, some with multiple subscriptions. Sales via bookshops have been particularly encouraging, one large retailer in London remarking on how quickly they disappeared from the shelves. We found ourselves in the rather frustrating situation of having run out of supplies to restock outlets.

There is clearly a gap in the "radical market" for a journal such as SPANNER. While the print run for the first issue was relatively small, it has to be said that we have barely scratched the surface in getting SPANNER more widely known. The potential for substantial growth is clearly there and anyone who would like to help achieve this is more than welcome.

We can also report that the first issue of Spanner was reviewed in a number of journals. We have not yet received copies of reviews from all those journals involved

The next issue of Spanner will be a special one on ecology though by no means exclusively so. Readers who would like to submit articles on this and other subjects are more than welcome to do so by December 1990. If possible they should consider how their article could be made relevant to the general focus of Spanner and its critique of the market economy. Contributions to the "Debate Forum" and the Letters Page are also welcomed.



# WORKER CO-OPS?

## DEBATE FORUM

DEBATE FORUM

IS THE WHEEL TURNING FULL  
CIRCLE FOR WORKER CO-OPS?

We publish here an article from the Guardian newspaper (Sept 1989) written by KEITH JEFFERIS, a lecturer in economics, formerly at Kingston Polytechnic. In the "Debate Forum" in the previous issue of Spanner, reference was made to the subject of co-ops in an article on "The Road to Socialism". It would be useful to read that article in conjunction with this and consider, in particular, the point made about the effect of an expanding socialist movement on the viability of co-ops within a still predominately capitalist economy. Our thanks to the Guardian and Keith Jefferis for allowing us to publish this article.

One of the more interesting developments on the industrial scene over the last decade has been the formation of large numbers of worker co-operatives. By 1986, there were around 1,000, compared with less than 50 ten years earlier.

These new ventures found support - most unusually - throughout the political spec-

trum, with the more optimistic commentators hoping that they would form the basis of a "third sector" of the British economy, between the private (capitalist) sector and the public (nationalised and municipal) sector.

However, such optimism appeared to ignore the history of worker co-ops in Britain, which has been characterized by periods of boom and subsequent decline. Indeed, as the end of the decade approaches, some of the dreams appear to have evaporated.

Co-ops are no longer in fashion; funding has been cut back, the national Co-operative Development Agency is to be abolished, and a recent survey in the Financial Times on employee ownership omitted all mention of co-ops, for the first time in several years.

Now all the talk is of ESOPs, employee shareholding and profit sharing, schemes which are much less radical than co-ops in their attempt to change the terms of which production takes place.

The factors stimulating the formation and growth of co-ops between 1980 and 1986 have now begun to disappear. Unemployment remains high, but is falling rather than rising. Local authorities are much less influential: the largest having been abolished and those remaining are tied down by rate-capping and restrictions on the use of funds.

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DEBATE FORUM



Loan funds which were so important in easing the crippling financial problems faced by new co-ops are likely to dry up gradually and co-ops will be forced to approach banks, which are frequently unsympathetic or suspicious, and the limited specialist sources, such as that provided by Industrial Common Ownership Finance.

Recent research at the Open University's Co-operatives Research Unit suggests that, while the number of co-ops is still rising, the increase has slowed and comes nowhere near the rapid growth of the early 1980s. Indeed, this raises the possibility that as co-ops from the boom days begin to collapse - as some inevitably will - the number of closures could exceed formations and the stock of trading co-ops would then fall.

The achievements of co-ops over this period can be divided into the separate - but obviously related - areas of economic performance and the nature of work in co-ops itself.

The most basic indicator of economic performance - survival rates - is difficult to determine accurately. But research indicates that the survival rate of co-ops is broadly comparable with that of small businesses, with co-ops being most vulnerable at around three years of age, compared with 1-2 years

for conventional small firms.

This probably reflects the extensive support given to new co-ops by CDAs. Earlier claims that co-ops survive much better than small firms are not borne out but not do co-ops appear to fare much worse.

There has been little work comparing the performance of co-ops and small firms. My research on printing, clothing and wholefood co-ops - three of the largest areas of co-op activity - suggests that, in general, co-ops have performed less well, paying lower wages, generating less value added per worker and a smaller reinvestible surplus.

This is partly because co-ops are on average much younger than small firms and hence their comparative performance has improved as they have aged. If they survive the first three years, co-ops are likely to perform as well as or better than their capitalist rivals.

A crucial element of this early period is poor availability of finance and, while many established co-ops benefitted from local authority or CDA loans, more recent pressure to compete in conventional banking and finance markets does not augur well.

In the face of financial difficulties, many co-ops survive only by intense exploitation of their workers - something they were set up to avoid - extracting long hours of work





for low wages. This is perhaps acceptable for idealist graduates working in wholefood co-ops who always have other options but is less acceptable for the many women workers in clothing co-ops who earn less than the average in what is anyway a badly paid industry.

There are major differences between industries, but even equalling the performance of capitalist firms frequently leaves co-ops stuck in a vulnerable, marginal position in the economic periphery.

Some co-ops have grown but most remain tiny - a median average of four workers; they remain permanently handicapped in the competitive struggle by their inability to grow through merger and take-over. This, rather than internal growth, has led to larger and more stable capitalist firms.

There may be compensations for low wages. Some time ago in the Guardian, a co-op worker said that "working in a co-operative is not the way to make a fortune, but it can lead to a more satisfying way of life."

In theory, the ability to make decisions over the organisation of work and perhaps carrying out jobs in a different way to the monotony of much employment in capitalist firms can suggest how work could be made more stimulating. All too often, however, such potential is constrained by economic realities. Participating in crucial decisions can be a great strain, rather than a source of satisfaction, when the co-op is permanently on the edge of bankruptcy. Even with worker control, decisions are taken within the rigid constraints imposed by the need to compete and survive in the market.

Certainly there have been individual co-op success stories which have achieved commercial success and improvements in the nature of work, but these are the exception rather than the rule.

It is no coincidence that those areas where co-ops have performed better are those where, in one way or another, they have been partially protected from intense competition with capitalist firms.

While organisations such as the Greater London Council were prepared to intervene in the market to promote co-ops - or other politically desirable objectives - the general move away from intervention and increased reliance on market forces will contribute to making life even more difficult for co-operatives.

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## TOADS

WHY should I let the toad work  
Squat on my life?

Can't I use my wit as a pitchfork  
And drive the brute off?

Six days of the week it soils  
With its sickening poison -  
Just for paying a few bills!  
That's out of proportion.

Lots of folk live on their wits:  
Lecturers, lispers  
Losels, loblolly-men, louts -  
They don't end as paupers;

Lots of folk live up lanes  
With fires in a bucket,  
Eat windfalls and tinned sardines -  
They seem to like it.

Their nippers have got bare feet,  
Their unspeakable wives  
Are skinny as whippets - and yet  
No one actually starves.

Ah, were I courageous enough  
To shout stuff your pension!  
But I know, all too well, that's the stuff  
That dreams are made on:

For something sufficiently toad-like  
Squats in me, too;  
Its hunkers are heavy as hard luck,  
And cold as snow,

And will never allow me to blamey  
My way to getting  
The fame and the girl and the money  
All at one sitting.

I don't say, one bodies the other  
One's spiritual truth;  
But I do say it's hard to lose either,  
When you have both.

Philip Larkin

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Dr Keith Jefferis is lecturer in economics at Kingston Polytechnic and was formerly with the Open University's Co-operatives Research Unit.





David McDonagh

Chris Harman of the SWP has written an article in Socialist Review (January 1990) under the heading "Revolt against Capital" (p.10). In it, he has sought to maintain the SWP line that there is a working class with an objective economic interest in socialism and, in the long run, communism, even though it may well be ignorant of such an interest. This is at once problematic, for while people may well overlook their economic interests on occasions, like not taking a given job or moving into a better house and regretting it later on, Harman, in common with Marx, is not talking about such chance opportunities but of an ongoing kind of "economic interest". They could act now and would never be too late, for the chance would still be there. So why don't they?

Are the workers somehow blind to this interest or is it a myth? Well, it seems obvious that the latter is the case and that Chris Harman is no further than the workers in discovering this objective interest - though he has been keeping a keen eye out for it since the 1960s. In the Marxist sense of the term, the working class is a mere myth, as is the class struggle. If we pick up The Making of the English Working Class (1963) by E P Thompson, we will see example after example that all fall far short of class action such as the author intends to portray. We need read no other book, for the author shows us a bankrupt thesis. But most of his readers, and most certainly myself when I first read it, have the idea of the working class as a fixed dogma and so do not notice that the book has failed to demonstrate what its title implies.

Harman wants to say that the events in Eastern Europe are not anti-socialist but against capital. As it is a system of state capitalism in the East, then opposition to it, claims Harman, is ipso facto opposition to capital, even if the workers may be ignorant of this. My own opinion is that capitalism is as much a myth as is communism and that Marx was clearly wrong about it even in 1867.

As with Christianity, Marxism is not just wrong for one or two recondite reasons but for all reasons. But opponents of Marxism, like those of Christianity, were too apathetic to take the creed seriously enough to discuss it. Christians often take themselves to know more about the Bible for the excellent reason that this is usually true. The Bible bores atheists. Similarly, Marxists know more about their creed than do their opponents, and they use this knowledge to build up a hubris which seems to enable them to overlook that there is exactly no evidence for their ideas. The SWP, like a Christian sect, prides itself in explaining the progress of history, but its byzantine theory is far more elaborate than are the facts. The use of Occam's Razor is long overdue but any use of it may well result in suicide for the theory. Razors, after all, are occasionally prone to cutting throats.

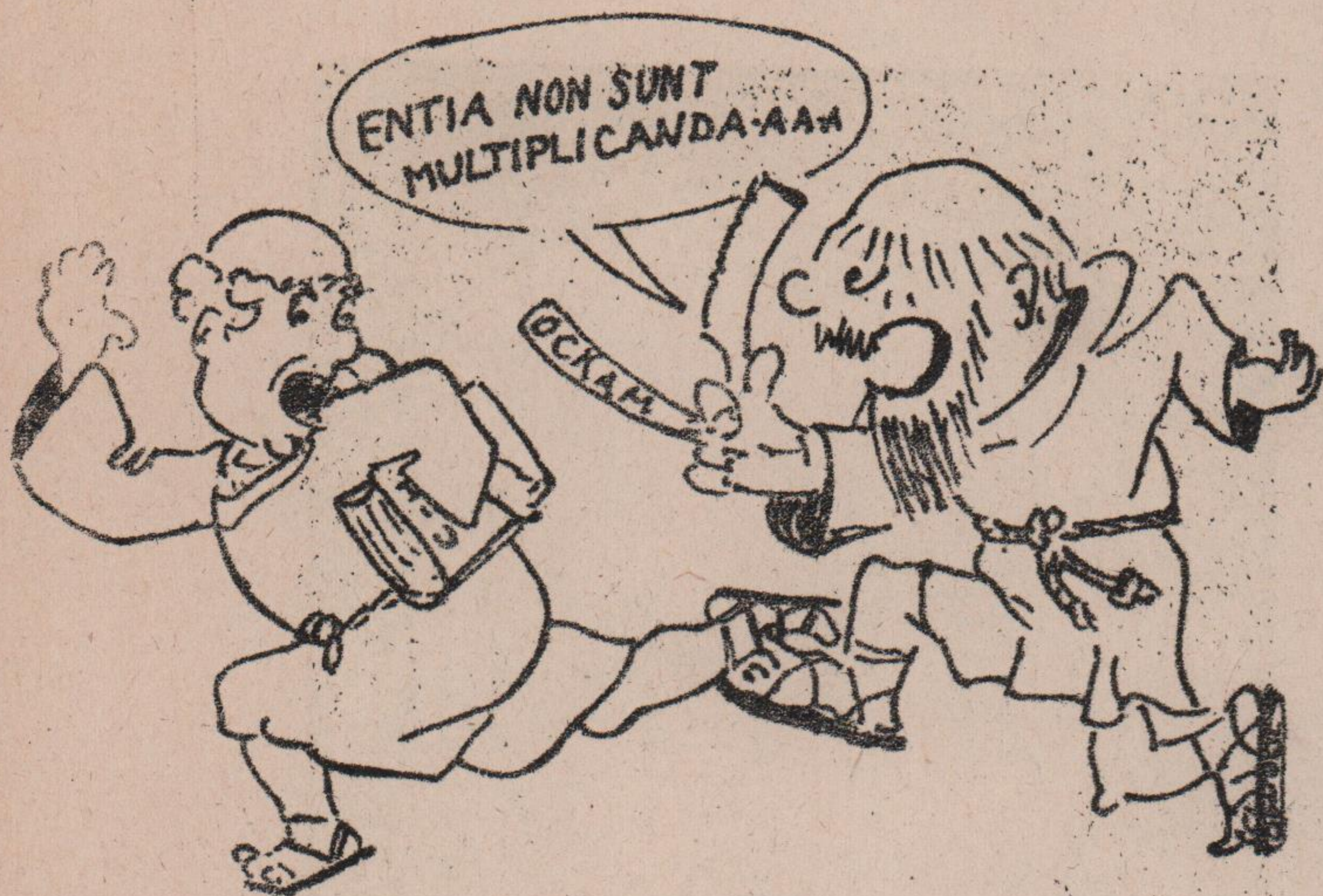
We don't have a class struggle. What we do have is a debate between Tories and Liberals, as J S Mill said in the opening pages of On Liberty (1859), a debate between those who want government regulation and those who want little or no government. Karl Marx was basically a Tory in the English sense of the term. Socialism, in fact, is the word used by Robert Owen to label old Tory ideas. The Fabian Society, and others, sold these ideas with new labels as





# EVER KNOWNLY OPPOSE CAPITAL

being to the left of classical liberalism and free trade. That is why today the free market is held to be right wing. But the labels of "left" and "right" are, in any case, used as an excuse to relapse from reasonable discussion into quasi-tribalism and thus provide an excellent defence mechanism. In short, its a way of dodging the facts.



Abel Aganbegyan in Moving the Mountain (1989) gives us a far more realistic account of Soviet history than does Chris Harman. But he and Gorbachev have yet to give up the socialist label and are still on the look out for a new form of socialism, much like Kerensky was in 1917 (yes, Kerensky was a socialist, not a liberal) and like Kerensky then, they have yet to realise that there is nothing to be found. Aganbegyan looks back and sees that famine eased with the NEP in the 1920s and with Khrushchev in the 1950s but tended to advance at all other times in the USSR's history. Having spent days with Milton and Rose Friedman, he still could not accept their limited role for the state, despite approving of more liberalisation.

Harman's ideas by comparison are less cogent. For Harman, state

capital is the most concentrated form of capital there is. This is an idea based on the myth that competition leads to monopoly, an idea that Harold Perkins evidently endorses in his latest book, The Rise of Professional Society (1989) though he forgets to compare today's concentration with that of the 18th or 19th centuries. Had he done so he would have discovered there was little difference. His assertions that it is rapidly moving forward to monopoly are clearly false for he looks only at the mergers taking place, not the new firms that begin nor the old ones that die off.

Harman feels that this form of capitalism - state capitalism - despite being an advanced form, has now had its day due to the growth of multinational corporations. In his view, economic forces had caused the earlier fashion for nationalisation and now back the liberal fashion for privatisation. This reminds one of the old Tory idea that reality is awfully complex and consequently, one needs an elite to sort things out.

The truth is that the elementary facts of economics are fairly simple and they don't change. Free trade will always beat state trade even though religious people, who hate selfishness and greed, will prefer law and order under lots of state rule. They tell lies against greed because they know greed has few defenders. Max Stirner and Nietzsche are perhaps the most prominent of these, though they tended to accept the bogey of greed causing all the problems while embracing it rather than questioning whether greed has the effect religion claims for it. There is also the odd comment from people like Bertrand Russell that if we were all egoists we would not have had World War I - which is true insofar as war depends on self-sacrifice. But that is about





the extent of it. Well, never mind. It's not as if the case against greed is, in any way, solid. It is nationalism that causes wars and governments that cause economic slumps, not individual greed or selfishness. No doubt we can debate these things in future issues of Spanner.

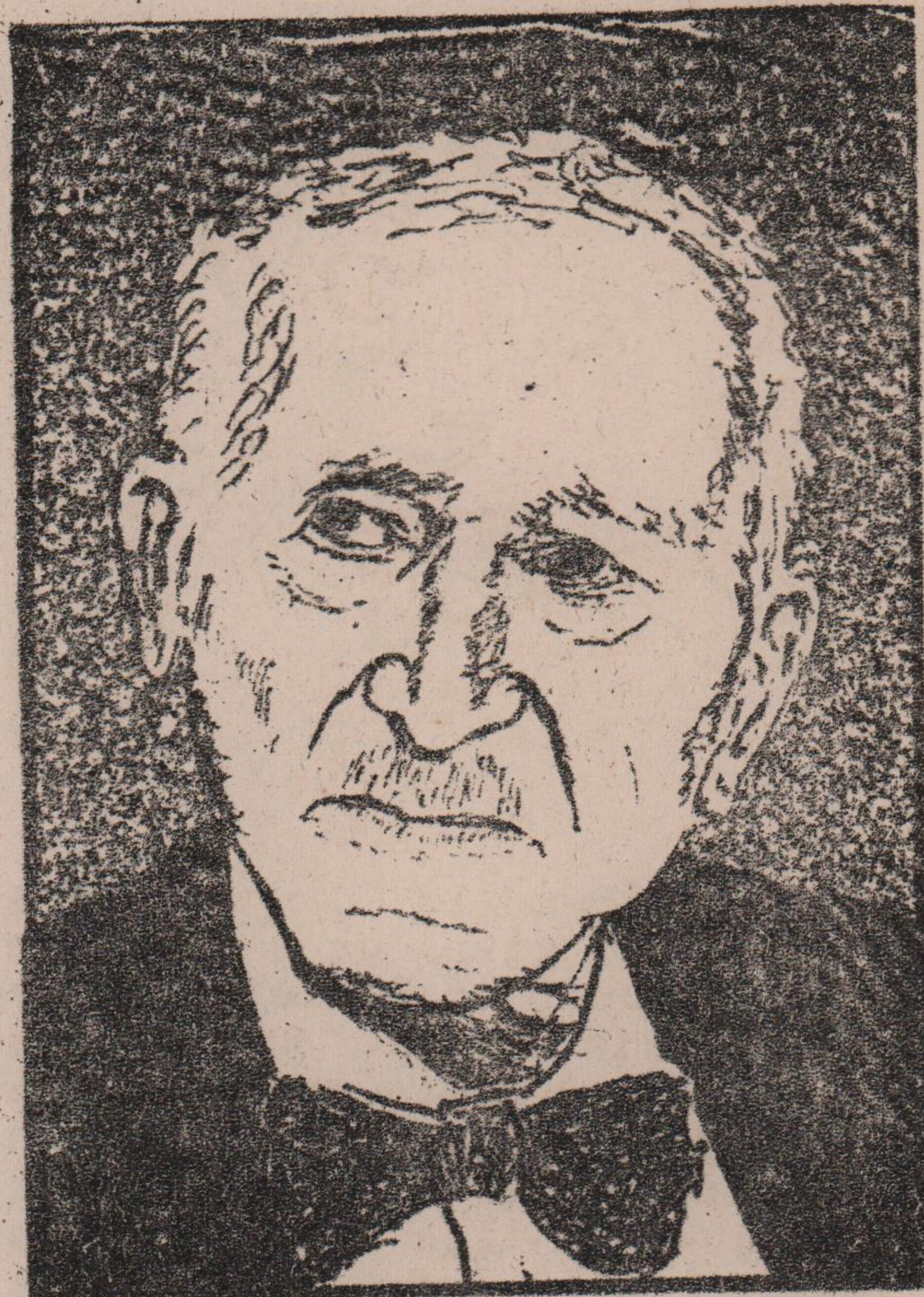
Marxism itself, however, can't explain nations. If workers have no country then neither do the capitalists. Had profit been the main aim of society we would have had world government and no nations, long ago. For only this would give proper scope for profits. War can't help profits - it only destroys them - but dogmatists try to blame the arms race on profits. Ironically, this is an unwitting denial that governments are the "executive committee" of the capitalist class. At no time has profits from weapons formed more than a fraction of total profits and it is clearly wasteful for the capitalists as a class. It is worth noting in passing that many of the points socialists want to make depend on caste, not class. For example, we can have a caste monopoly but hardly a "class monopoly" which is an oxymoron, or an absurdity.

Now, this is not to deny that, from a logical point of view, we can classify people as we wish. Nor is it even to deny many sociological definitions of class, like Basil Bernstein's theories of restricted and elaborated codes. When I say that the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is a myth, I mean there is no objective economic class interests opposed to that of others in society. On the market, our interests are mutual, not opposed.

We may use John Von Neuman's game theory to explain the laws of war, trade and politics. In the 17th century Hobbes showed that in all war both sides lose, for even the victor cannot escape damage. This is a negative-sum game. The opposite of war is trade, for in all transactions both sides gain from trade. The buyer values the goods more than the money and the seller values the money more than the goods, so prices do not give an exact value of the goods, as Marx held to be the case in theory, if not quite in practice. But to work,

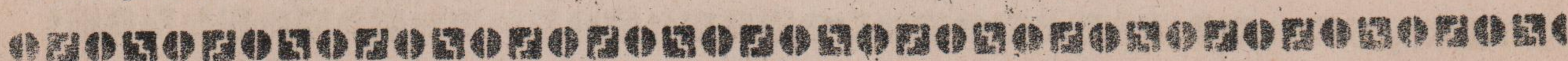
prices need to fall between the subjective values of the traders. This is therefore a positive sum game.

Politics can be a zero-sum game, as are most games like chess or darts, but it is often negative sum. Zero-sum is where one side only gains if the other loses out, and to a great extent politics is like this. Clausewitz said that war was politics taken onto the battlefield which is very true. But a better insight would be that all politics is cold war, for in war we may also get sum zero-sum transactions too but the majority are negative-sum. War and politics are mere errors arising from ignorance and confusion. As Spinoza says, to understand all is to forgive all.



F.A. HAYEK

War, of course, needs a hinterland of peace to exist at all. Thus, to say the history consists mainly in war, as many historians do, is to indulge in hyperbole. War is exactly the opposite of economy. Trade is the acme of economy and the sole basis of civilisation. This is the liberal message. It is Cobden, not Marx, who will be in fashion in the future.





Only trade is civilised. Not all trade is done by money though. Most face-to-face trade needs no cash nexus. We only need cash to trade with those we do not know. Much of what we call charity is, in fact, non-monetary trade. We are social because we like it. Both sides gain. This is the left wing message of the 19th century and it is called left in the USSR of the 1990s too. Liberals wanted freedom, not state domination, in the past and the idea is far from dead today, especially in the USSR. But Cobden is now out of print. That is a loss to literature as well as morality. And men like Harman call themselves left wing!

Harman feels that in the 1940s the state was very efficient at accumulating capital and that it will still be useful for this in the future. Only he seems to think that in the 1940s such efficiency

was at the expense of certain classes.

This is hopelessly muddled and unrealistic. If Sociology were a proper science like Astronomy, rather than a superstitious fad like Astrology, we might be able to formulate something like the Cosmological Constant concerning the universe being uniform. This Sociological Constant would be that "all societies function in the interests of all their members"

Harman maintains that dissidence, struggle and the like, are helpful in society but this is mere superstition. Debates and arguments are good in philosophy and science, for in this context they can do no harm and, indeed, are productive of new insights. But that is not the case with rows and strikes in society. These can only be a wasteful folly as Owen saw. Marx's

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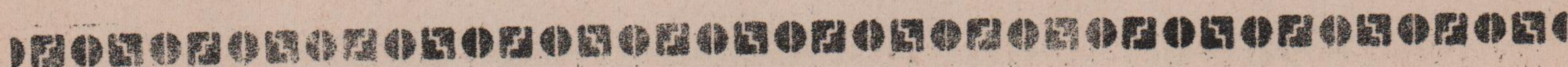
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argument against Weston in Value Price and Profit is as insubstantial as any of the Pauline letters; it can only impress someone not at all interested in the mundane facts, who prefers instead to indulge his dogmatic creed. As Owen saw, trade unions do not help most workers and nor could they. Not that his idea of a grand general union was any better.

The more capital we have the better things will be economically for one and all. The rich parts of the world are only rich owing to capital accumulation. If the Eastern bloc really could have achieved the rate of growth Harman believes it did in the 1940s then the West Germans would be going East, not vice versa. In his Byzantine thought Harman seems to have forgotten what capital is. It could even be that that he never knew in the first place for it is mere dogma to say that workers would somehow lose out in capital accumulation.

Given that capital makes us all better off, would knowledgeable workers ever revolt against it? We all hate the market system as producers or workers, but we love it as consumers. As Dick Donnelly of the SPGB once said, "if work was enjoyable, we'd have to pay the capitalists for doing it". What we like, we have to pay for. But Dick Donnelly is as wrong on most things as is Chris Harman. The capitalists (savers) no more dominate society than do the workers. The government attempts to dominate its domain but fails to do so entirely, though it comes nearer to it than any other institution. The market, on the other hand, is anarchic - as Marx himself pointed out. Consumer sovereignty is a myth as the consumers are diffuse, even though they still exercise choice.

What's happening in the East is that they are coming nearer to the liberal ideal. But they are not doctrinaire liberals and, indeed, many of them are nationalists. The nation is, after all, far more realistic than the bogus concept of class. Harman feels that the dream of the Friedmanites is not going to happen but he even underestimates the impact Friedman has already had on men like Abanbegyan or Gorbachev.

The idea of community is something of a myth that provides an excuse for wasteful politics. If socialists get the people interested in politics it will not be long before they begin to see lots of reasons for hating them. All they have to offer is a negative-sum or, at best, zero-sum solution when we could enjoy the positive benefits of trade.

The free market is most certainly the organisatiuon of the future and this means little or no government as well as an end to that most celebrated ideal of the Eastern revolt and that of the 20th century in general i.e. the ideal of democracy. This is a long way off now, but when people get thinking, it won't take them long to question this fashionable sacred cow.

The dogmas of the so called left can only last if people do not give them serious consideration. When the masses really do cease to be apathetic, the leninist groups will look as silly to them as they really are. Then we will have free trade. Anything less than this is a waste of human potential.

## ANOTHER VIEW

"The fall of the Berlin Wall and the throwing over of communism by the people of Eastern Europe only confirms my view that liberal democracy is the only legitimate ideology left in the world. Iraq's challenge is not that of a higher idea: indeed it is not based on an idea at all, but simply reflects the age-old impulse of grabbing someone else's land and money.

In the past generation there have been two developments of truly world historical significance. The first is the emergence of liberal democracy as the only universalistic ideology left in the world; and the second is the victory of market principles of economic organisation. These two revolutions are closely connected with each other, and represent a larger, secular pattern of evolution..."

Francis Fukuyama, author of the controversial essay, "The End of History", writing in The Guardian (September 7 1990)





REPLY TO DAVID MCDONAGH

David McDonagh makes a number of points, not all of which can be answered here. I would like to respond to the more important of these.

Let us begin with the question of war. How do we account for this phenomenon? Consider the stereotypical Marxist explanation for war. According to this, war is the outcome of a competitive struggle over markets, trade routes and raw materials. It is a phenomenon that springs from the "material basis" of society, from its economic relationships centred upon the private, including state, ownership of the means of wealth production.

However, such an explanation has been contested by some critics of Marxism. For them, it tends to disregard the creative role of ideas in history (despite paying occasional lip service to it), ideas such as nationalism. Such ideas, it is argued, cannot simply be dismissed as a mere epiphenomenon, a manifestation of false consciousness which screens the true nature of social reality. Rather, they make up that reality.

In stressing the importance of nationalism ("it is nationalism that causes war"), David appears to side with these idealist critics of Marxism. In my view, however, it is regrettable that this debate should degenerate into a sterile polarisation in which materialist and idealist explanations for war are starkly counterposed.

Take, for example, the claim that "war depends on self-sacrifice" and that had we all been egoists, "we would not have had World War I". How true is this? Well, certainly, a willingness to run the risk of being "sacrificed" would appear to be an indispensable psychological precondition of war but this is not quite the same as saying that war depends on a willingness to sacrifice oneself. The prospect of being killed must surely occur to nearly every combatant in the field and induce in each, varying degrees of fear; only a pathological fool

would willingly embrace such a prospect without any trace of fear. But even then, in the case of the religious fanatic, it is a moot point whether this can be described without qualification as "self-sacrifice" if the object of the exercise is to be rewarded in the afterlife. True, it is "self-sacrifice" from the perspective of the unbeliever but then we are talking here about the human motivations behind war, including those of the religious fanatic. This cannot be considered irrelevant unless one takes the view that human beings are merely machines that operate at the behest of impersonal forces.

For those not so inclined to

## SOCIALISM

"Socialism" has been defined in many ways. As far as Spanner is concerned it may be defined as a system of society in which the means of wealth production - the factories, farms, offices etc - are owned and democratically controlled by the community. The wealth produced would be made freely available (without charge) for appropriation according to self determined needs while the production of that wealth would depend on labour inputs provided on an entirely unpaid or voluntary basis.

This means that any social arrangement organised on the basis of a buying and selling economy cannot be described as "socialist". This applies to Western capitalist societies but also those "state capitalist" societies where the state plays a major role in regulating (not as some believe, substituting for) market transactions. This does not mean that Spanner has any monopolistic claim to the "correct definition" of socialism. The meaning of words constantly changes. We have chosen to conform to one particular usage for the simple reason that the particular outlook or political tradition with which it is associated most closely reflects the outlook and pre-occupations of Spanner itself.





welcome their own demise on the battlefield, their willingness to engage in war depends among other things on their capacity to psyche themselves into the conviction that they will actually survive a war rather than perish in it. That is how they cope with their fear, by a kind of rationalisation. Military success tends to boost morale and, in turn, the eagerness to fight but only because the chances of survival are deemed to be greater if one appears to be on the "winning side".

In any case, to say that war depends on self-sacrifice can hardly suffice to explain why wars happen. After all, self-sacrifice entails the negation of self-interest. On the face of it, this can be most easily accomplished by simply succumbing to the enemy without putting up a struggle - for what would be the point of such a struggle? But then one has still to account for the actions of the presumed enemy itself. How could its actions be construed as self-sacrifice?

What this boils down to is that wars are fought over something and that certain interests are implicated in this on both sides. It may not be self-interest in the purely egoistic sense but then self-interest can also be promoted by combining with others in pursuit of a common interest. Ironically, the ideology of the free market which David espouses itself denies any fundamental dichotomy between the interests of the individual and society and holds that the harmony of individual interests is articulated through the "invisible hand of the market".

Whether this common interest which nationalism asserts is an illusory one as Marxists claim - for them, it is sectional interests of one group of national capitalists which workers are duped into supporting against the rival interest of another group of national capitalists - is a separate issue. What matters is that workers believe their interests are tied up with a collective entity called the nation which transcends class. They therefore believe that they have a definite interest in fighting war and this hardly squares with the notion of "self-sacrifice".

Incidentally, it is pertinent here to raise an important question that, heretical though it may seem, Marxists perhaps need to seriously address: is nationalism wholly reducible to class society and, if not, ought it not to be wrested from the clutches of the state which manipulates it in the interest of the national capitalists. Is a sense of territorial and cultural identity or exclusivity inherent in the human condition - indeed, a basic social need to belong to something? If it is then Marxists, in their wholesale repudiation of nationalism, may be throwing the baby out with bathwater and frustrating their own progress into the bargain.

For let us not confuse the nation with the nation-state. David may have a valid point when he asserts that "Marxism can't explain nations". If so, the reason may lie with its failure to really appreciate this vital distinction. If as Marxists claim, socialism will allow greater cultural variation which, if we are to call a spade a spade, amounts to an invigoration of national differences, then on what grounds is nationalism so wholeheartedly opposed? After all, it is capitalism that tends to insidiously undermine such differences through the penetration of its commercial values even as it cynically exploits nationalism for its own ends. That being so, it is a tragic irony that Marxism should appear to lend itself to this purpose.

But to return to David's argument, one can find in it a basic flaw which he shares with the Marxists. He draws attention to the Hobbesian view of war as a "negative-sum game" but acknowledges that "in war we may also get zero-sum transactions" even if the majority are "negative sum". This, in itself is a revealing admission. It amounts to saying that it is indeed possible for one side in a war to gain material advantages that more than offset its losses and that consequently economic interests could well be involved. In short, nationalism is not necessarily the only "cause of war". This of course does not include cases where a nation-state expects to gain a net benefit from prosecuting a war but



fails to do so. In such cases, economic interests could likewise be involved according to David's own logic.

But the real weakness in this approach is more deep seated. It was alluded to by Sartre in his brilliant little masterpiece Search for a Method. In this work, Sartre attacked the kind of teleological thinking to which Marxists so often succumbed in defining the "historical enterprise" to be studied by the end results to which it leads. Unfortunately, David falls into precisely the same trap when he deduces that since war is (mostly) a negative sum game, it cannot possibly be fuelled by the competing economic interests which Marxists stress. Therefore, he reasons, it must be nationalism that it is to blame. If it is not rational to engage in something from which one stands to lose it must be some irrational factor that makes one do so.

It seems not to have occurred to him

that there might be a kind of irrationality embedded in the system of economic competition itself. He asserts that "wars can't help profits" and that "weapons are clearly wasteful for the capitalists as a class". But this is a hypostatized and abstract view of capitalism which overlooks its inner dynamics. Capitalists do not act as a unified class. If we grant that wars cannot help profits it is still the case that different groups of capitalists have conflicting interests and are consequently caught up in a situation which they cannot collectively control. In such a situation war may appear to be the only option left to ensure control of vital economic resources from which future profits may be generated. Better to lose something than to lose everything. Clausewitz may be correct in asserting that war was politics taken onto the battlefield. However, that begs the question as to what politics are about. While politics may not be wholly deducible to the economy to suggest that there is no interaction between them, seems to be unnecessarily dogmatic.

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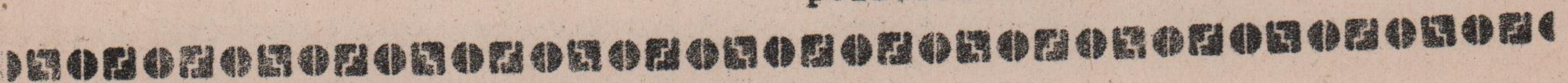
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What this suggests is that social reality is more complex than David allows for and that materialist and idealist explanations of it are more complementary than opposed than is often claimed. To dismiss this complexity as "an old Tory idea" that justifies the need for an elite to "sort things out", is somewhat fatuous. Actually, the opposite is the case. It is the recognition of the very complexity of reality that makes an elitist approach to the solution of social problems less, not more appropriate. A good example of this is in the field of development economics in which increasing emphasis is being given to the views of Third World peasants and the need to involve them in working out solutions to their problems rather than rely so heavily on Western expertise, as used to be the case, in the specifications of development projects. It was the persistent failures of an unduly top-down approach that prompted this shift. Another example is, of course, the current interest in Green issues and the widely held belief that such issues are too important - and complex - to be left to the politicians to sort out.





David's view on class is another bone of contention as far as I am concerned. He is critical of Chris Harman's attempt to demonstrate that workers have an "objective interest" in achieving socialism and indeed, asserts that the working class is a "mere myth, as is the the class struggle". While I do not accept the latter, I do have some sympathy for the former remark.

In the realm of social affairs, reference to "objective interests" is an inappropriate transposition of a kind of natural science approach to the study of society whereas society is governed by a logic that is neither, strictly speaking, objective nor subjective (cf my article The Tyranny of Economics in this issue). To talk of "objective interests" is, in a sense, to separate human beings from history and to interpret the latter in a priori terms.

Nevertheless, one feels compelled to ask on what grounds David sees fit to so decisively repudiate the notion of class and class struggle. He gives no evidence to support his claim. The question must be put: is there or is there not a section of society which effectively owns and controls the means of wealth production and another section which, in consequence, must sell its working abilities to the former for a wage or salary? Further, is it or is it not the case that the latter produce a value which exceeds the value of the wages/salaries it receives and that, consequently, there is bound to be an element of conflict between these two sections of society? It seems obvious that these are, to quote David, the "elementary facts of economics". He may put a different construction upon these facts, he may claim that they do not constitute sufficient grounds for asserting that workers have an "objective interest" in establishing socialism but he can hardly deny them.

If "from a logical point of view, we can classify people as we wish", then why can we not classify these different sections of society as classes in the Marxist sense? David asserts that "we don't have a class struggle. What we have is a debate between...those who want government regulation and those who want

little or no government". But on what grounds is this debate accorded a reality which is denied to strikes etc as indications of the class struggle. One might say with David that "strikes and rows" are a "wasteful folly" but that does not make them any the less real. Afterall, government regulation according to him, must also be a wasteful folly.

Further, one is at a loss to know what he has in mind in dismissing "class monopoly" as an "oxymoron". To say that there is a class division in society in the Marxist sense, determined by the differing relations to the means of production, is not to suggest that this division is watertight. Ownership and control (in a sense these are synonyms) of the means of production is not absolute. It manifests itself as a spectrum in terms of which economic functions are hierarchically differentiated. In the natural world, for example, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether a particular organism is a plant or an animal. How we classify it depends on its particular array of attributes and the significance of each for the purposes of our taxonomy. Some organisms possess a particular array of attributes that make them recognisably animal. Others are recognisably plant species but some are not recognisably either since they possess attributes of both plants and animals. Likewise, a class analysis of society from a Marxist perspective does not preclude the possibility of a considerable "grey area" between the major classes in society. Whether as a result of a class analysis of society one is led to believe in the inevitability of socialism as the product of an objective process is another matter. One can still subscribe to such an analysis without holding that socialism is likely or even possible.

Whether socialism (or communism) is a "mere myth" in this sense is yet another matter. However, the "anarcho-capitalist" view is that socialism itself is an inherently impossible proposition, irrespective of whether the preconditions for its establishment - mass democratic support for it - can ever be achieved. It makes this





claim on two grounds. Firstly, the impossibility of operating a totally centrally planned economy and, secondly, the problem of economic calculation.

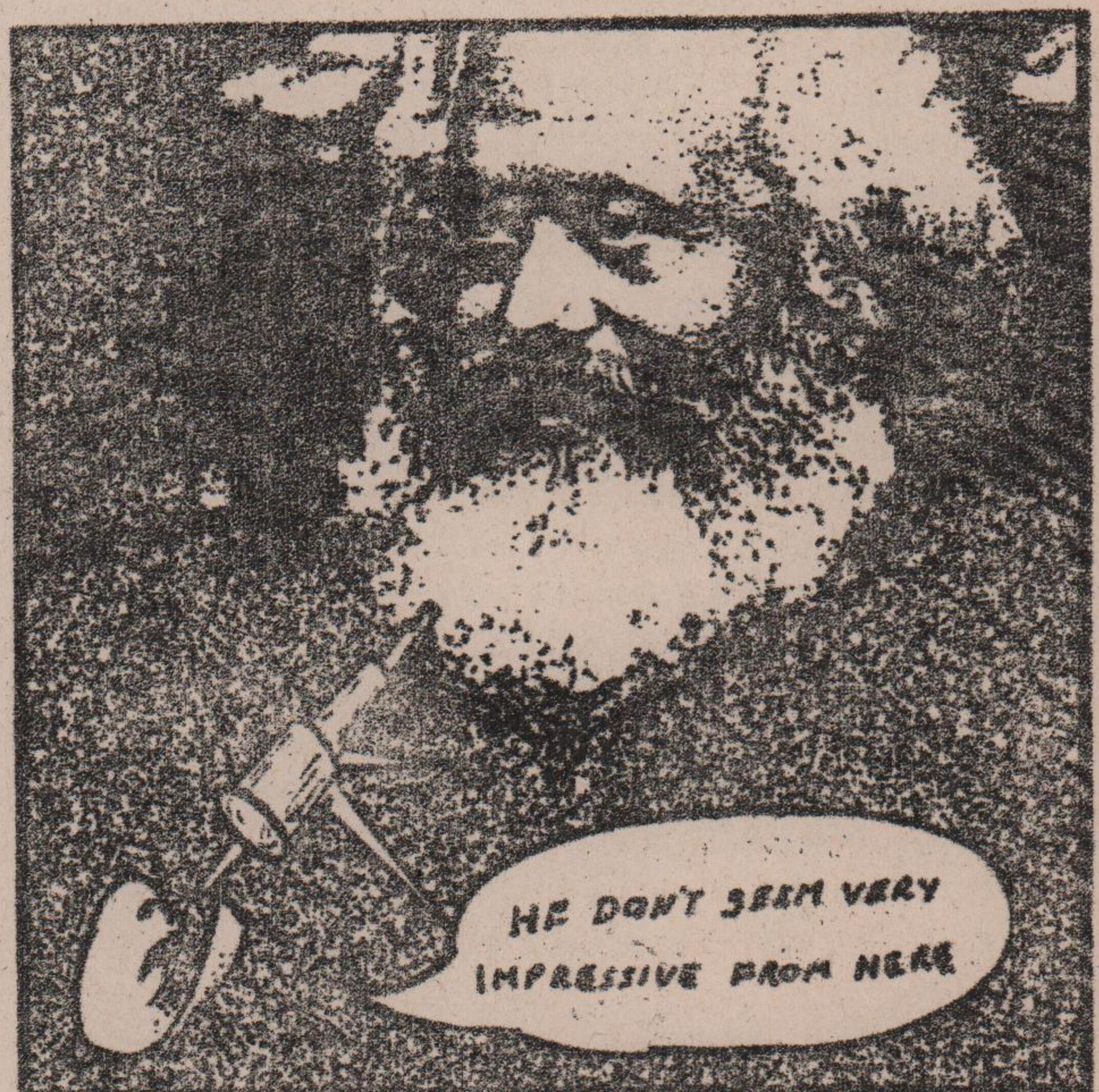
The first objection is not a particularly serious one. It is certainly serious - fatally so - were one to subscribe to the notion of a world economy ordered according a single plan. It is the sheer logistics of the exercise that would rule it out of the question. The inflexibility of the plan would make it quite incapable of adjusting to changing circumstances on the ground without constant readjustments that would turn it into a planner's nightmare and on a scale that dwarf anything to be found in even the most centralised economy today.

It is true that some revolutionaries in the past, like the 19th century anarchist Bakunin, advocated just such an idea. I have no idea of the extent of support it commands today, if any, among revolutionaries. However, I don't propose to spend much time in defending a total caricature of the socialist alternative when it would be far more productive to focus on the proposition of a self regulating system of stock control for which there is demonstrable support among modern-day revolutionaries.

The second objection is rather more to the point. In the absence of a market economy and the signals it generates thorough prices, it is claimed that a socialist society would be unable to efficiently allocate its resources. The misallocation of resources would result in considerable wastage and the ultimate impoverishment of society. Lack of space prevents me from exploring in detail the assumptions upon which this claim is based - in particular, the fact that it overlooks the huge proportion of social labour (in excess of half the total number employed in a country like Britain) currently channelled into "unproductive" activities connected essentially with functioning of modern capitalism - from banking to battleships. This wasted social labour would be redirected towards socially useful production in a society in which market forces no longer operated.

As far as the "economic calculation" argument is concerned, two (complementary) aspects of a non-market economy permit us to see that this does not pose the insurmountable obstacle it is held to be. The first is the self-regulating system of stock control referred to earlier. The second is calculation-in-kind. By this is meant a rejection of the need for a universal equivalent (like money) for the purpose of economic calculation. Thus, for example, where a particular kind of good becomes increasingly scarce, for whatever reason, it becomes possible to economise on the use of that good in those diverse areas where it is used. Stock control provides the mechanism whereby relative scarcities of particular goods are brought to the attention of both producers and consumers, enabling them to turn to substitutes that are more readily available. The fact that labour and resources are already committed to other lines of production and cannot be so easily diverted to the production of goods that are becoming increasingly scarce, provides a kind of economic discipline or constraint the effects of which are felt throughout the economy as a whole.

This is certainly an important issue for socialists, and though we might disagree heartily with our anarcho-capitalist friends, their contribution to the development of socialist thought should not be overlooked.



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# THE PRACTICE OF

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A liberated society entails more than just the exercise of our rational faculties, argues FRANK STURT. It requires also an unlocking of the unconscious mind, the stuff that dreams are made of.

What prevents the establishment of a non-market society based on production for use? Many Marxists and Socialists have answered this question by referring to the economic base and superstructures that are the predominant features of capitalism. It is common for them to view the slow rate of conscious socialistic growth among the world's population as a result of certain economical, political, nationalist, religious and other ideological, forces.

It is my contention that whether we are talking about the impact on workers of having access to satellite TVs, "Eastenders" twice a week or the mind-numbing Sun, we are concerning ourselves with the many and varied consumption patterns of individual workers. I am not suggesting here that all forms of media consumption are having a negative effect on the cohesiveness of the human race. In fact, I would argue that, for example, watching programmes beamed across the world has at least the effect of providing a common culture which cuts across national boundaries. Even if this "culture" is in the main a passive consumer activity, with all the dangers of subtle persuasion. I am thinking here of show-biz monopolised news aimed at "entertaining", rather than informing, as channels compete for advertising and sponsors. Now the Weather is brought to us by Powergen, will "News at Ten" be financed by Weetabix?

Some assume the choices an individual makes are largely the

product of conscious brain/mind activity. The brain donor who buys the Sun does so, it is said, because he or she shares the sexist or racist views of the owner. But is this true? Is most human activity in the realm of consciously experienced thoughts and emotions? I want to argue that much of that which is experienced as "inner-" or "outer world", conscious processes are the masking face of hidden strivings and desires, that is the realm of the unconscious. The unconscious represents the hidden side of the human mind, the stuff that dreams are made of. The universal strivings and desires that constitute the unconscious, are, in my view, largely incompatible with the day-to-day functioning of working people in capitalist society.

Socialists and psychoanalysts have at various times been interested in human inner reality or psyche. In The German Ideology, Marx refers to the "repression" of ordinary natural desires (1). Indeed, his whole theory of alienation hinges upon such "natural desires". Rosa Luxemburg went further and argued that the "unconscious comes before the conscious" (2). Luxemburg was saying before 1914 that the unconscious forms a historical inheritance, one that pre-figures subjective conscious experience, the latter being determined by the former. It has to be said that both Marx and Freud made use of the word "unconscious". However, whereas Freud was concerned with the biological needs of human beings, Marx and most marxists today are pre-occupied with the social and economic spheres of human existence. Apart from sharing a common understanding of the subject man or woman possessing universal traits, biological or economic in



# CAPITALISM

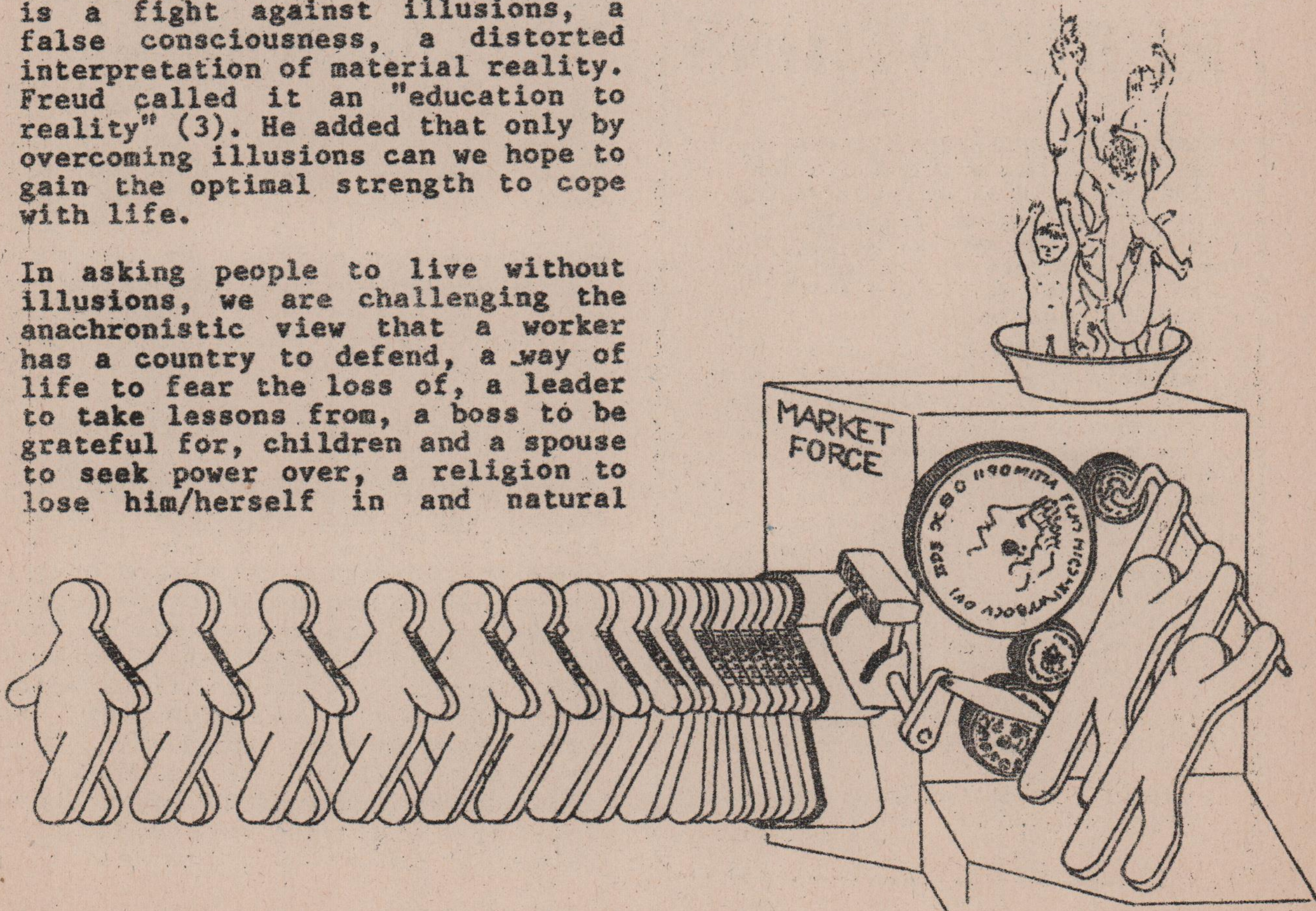
origin - which is a humanistic creed - there have been few attempts to form a science based on both economic and psychological theories of human behaviour. An important exception was, of course, the Frankfurt School, a group of psychotherapists, which included Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse, originating in pre-Nazi Germany.

It is my view that an understanding of human behaviour, particularly unconscious motivations, based on a universal Marxist and psychoanalytical approach, is essential to forming a new non-market alternative discourse that can appeal to the vast majority of wage earners today. I believe the answer to the problem of how to foster the more rapid growth of socialist consciousness, is to be found in unlocking the unconscious mind. It is a fight against illusions, a false consciousness, a distorted interpretation of material reality. Freud called it an "education to reality" (3). He added that only by overcoming illusions can we hope to gain the optimal strength to cope with life.

In asking people to live without illusions, we are challenging the anachronistic view that a worker has a country to defend, a way of life to fear the loss of, a leader to take lessons from, a boss to be grateful for, children and a spouse to seek power over, a religion to lose him/herself in and natural

emotions to deny the existence of. Marx summarised what this depression process entails for human beings: "The call to abandon their illusions about their condition is a call to abandon a condition which requires illusions" (4). Here, Marx is referring to organised religion but it could equally apply to any of the other illusions mentioned above.

One could expand on this by saying that such illusions or repressions help form a state of mind that makes the daily ritual of wage slavery, of prostituting our creative energies, seem natural, necessary and inevitable. Fromm called this condition that needs illusions, the "practice of life" (5). An oppressive, profit-oriented society needs servile workers who follow the social patterns of capitalism without reflecting upon, still less questioning, what has been ordained for them. It would not be in the interest of the capitalist or, in a sense, even the worker himself, if upon awakening every day, the latter were to question the legitimacy of having to sell his physical and mental energies for a packet of peanuts





called a wage. The need to actively participate in this process means, as Fromm puts it, that workers are "wanting to act as they have to act" (6). Conscious questioning becomes seemingly pointless and frustrating or even risky for a worker who needs to be servile to patronising managers, who has to be punctual at work and who is obliged to put up with monotonous and soul destroying tasks.

Thus we see how such a necessity for structural repression, for the efficient functioning of the productive process as a precondition of profitability, is transformed into an "inner drive"(7). The unconscious acceptance of the practice of capitalism provides for a one-dimensional mode of thought whereby ideas largely conform to a "common-sense" logic structured in such a way as to fit in with the functional requirements of capitalist society. In other words, these thoughts and forms of behaviour are held to be conducive to the efficiency and well being of workers as they act out their necessary roles. The predominately unconscious practice of living,



being distorted by illusions, is thus subordinated to a condition that requires illusions: the market economy itself.

For a particularly vivid example of the power of the unconsciousness one might refer to the phenomenon of "subliminal advertising". In 1956 The Sunday Times reported on the effect of so called "sub-threshold" or subliminal techniques used in cinema commercials (8). In one case in New Jersey, an image of an ice cream was flashed across the screen for a mere split second resulting in an "unaccountable" increase in sales of the cinema's ice cream. This experiment was carried out over several weeks with the same result. The point is that the message was too short in duration to be apprehended by the conscious mind. This has disturbing implications to which the above report drew attention - namely, the possibility of using such techniques for political purposes.

Vance Packard in his book, The Hidden Persuaders (9) cites another example of a man who, under hypnosis, admitted to always buying the same car and was able to repeat word for word an advertisement that he had read twenty years before! One thinks of political slogans that have have a similar effect, like the one from the 1950s, "You have never had it so good" which induced thousands of adults to vote Tory where others were lulled by Labour's "And Now Win The Peace!"

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS

**SYNDICALIST BULLETIN:** After a spell in the doldrums with publication difficulties, Hull Syndicalists have resumed publishing "Syndicalist Bulletin", and are aiming for monthly production. Available from Hull Syndicalists, P O Box 102, Hull, Humberside.

**ANARCHIST ARGUMENTS:** A series of pamphlets arguing an anarchist case with a syndicalist strategy. Also published by Wrekin Syndicalists: "The Arrogance of Uncontested Power" (an account of Hilda Murrell's murder, put into the context of other recent abuses of power), "Law and Hypocrisy" (an edited version of which appears in this issue of Spanner, copies available for free distribution). Write to : College Farm House, Mill Lane, Wellington, Salop TF1 1PR.

**HISTORY AS CREATION** A pamphlet by Paul Cardan (Castoriadis) published by SOLIDARITY PUBLICATIONS, c/o 123 LATHOM ROAD, LONDON E6



If the unconscious largely pre-determines the conscious thoughts and feelings then does it make sense to solely aim socialist propaganda at the reasoning conscious level of human beings? If not, then what should we also be appealing to as serious non-market socialists? I am not denying our reasoning potential. I accept reason as a common universal trait. But it is a mistake to treat people as wholly rational subjects when clearly none of us is. It is known that the Nazis were protective and affectionate towards their own families yet behaved barbarically towards others. One thinks also of Stalin who understood perfectly well that communism would be a wageless society based upon free access (10). The reality of the Stalin regime, however, was something altogether different. We fail to understand the gap between theory and practice if we do not take into account also the kind of irrational factors that may have contributed to it - such as the "cult of personality".

Some writers have touched upon the possible existence of a dark side to the unconscious, namely Carl Jung's primitive "collective unconscious" (11) of myths and symbols or Eric Berne's "Demons" (12). I do not wish to enter a debate about "dark forces" at this stage. Suffice to say that whether or not there is a hereditary destructive content to the mind, it is necessary, as far as is possible, for our irrational desires to become conscious if we are to understand the many obstacles that militate against building a socialist consciousness.

It makes sense, therefore, to appeal to the human being as a complex totality embracing both rational and irrational sides to his or her personality. Indeed, our political activity should be primarily, though not wholly, concerned with de-repression, with shedding our illusions by making what is unconscious, conscious. Of course, I am not suggesting it necessary to open up all our hidden secrets before becoming a socialist. I am talking of a gradual growth of socialistic consciousness and an gradual corresponding process of giving up illusions,

whether political, economic or (organised) religious, which deny our unconscious.

In addressing the whole wo/man, conscious and unconscious, we are bringing ourselves in touch with those fears, concerning change, that we all share: the fear of chaos, of annihilation of Self, of losing power over others in the family, of isolation and ostracism from workmates, and, above all perhaps, the fear of insanity. We live in an anti-cathartic society in which emotions such as fear and anger are culturally suppressed. A child up to the age of about 6 can express, to a great degree, his fears by trembling or his anger by stamping his feet, but were an adult to express such feelings he would be labelled schizophrenic or "mad". In the USA for example, there are thousands of Blacks locked up in a cells and left to rot because their angry behaviour is seen as subversive.

We are appealing to angry, frightened, grieving, loving as well as reasoning, human beings. We are appealing to their co-operative and pro-productive (creative) tendencies. If socialists are to be taken seriously and not dismissed as naive impossibilists then we need





to relate practically to the human desire to express ourselves as manifested in individuals as well as those co-operative bodies which are the expression of our innate sociability.

There are numerous examples of such bodies ranging from voluntary neighbourhood organisations, conservation societies, civic volunteer groups, workers co-operatives, communes, right through to therapeutic self-help groups e.g. co-counselling. All of these offer possibilities for individuals to share emotions and experiences that will, as this productive sector grows, foster the growth of in socialist consciousness. That requires that a programme for a non-market, co-operative society encompasses active support for these organisations based on the non-profit principle.

A socialist programme founded upon the gradual unfolding of human potential, on a sense of cooperation and belonging, and, most importantly, on an awareness of the unconscious in all of us, could lead to the confident acceptance by workers that socialism is necessary. For socialism is the ending of illusions and the acceptance of ourselves. "When we accept ourselves we are not frightened by freedom" (13).

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# ON

## Interrogations for the Human Community

### On crisis ideology

Whether it appears in its classic form (economic contradictions fatal to capitalism) or in its modern form (restructuring which rules out the very possibility of accumulation), crisis ideology always makes certain assumptions:

- the development of productive forces will enter into contradiction with the relations of production and this will be the beginning of a revolutionary phase;

- "revolutionaries" should therefore devise a strategy appropriate to the contradiction they anticipate...and the variations it could bring;

- this objective situation will cause the "masses" to follow the movement, not according to individual responses, but according to what they are objectively(!) obliged to do.

In what follows we will try to clarify our position regarding this ideology.

Capitalism is a set of social relations, and also a set of relations of production. In order to assure that these relations of production serve as a cohesive element in global social relations, new productive forces are introduced, developed, restructured. Even when some part of these forces is destroyed, which today happens constantly, global cohesion is strengthened. What is remarkable about the widespread destruction of World War II and the reconstruction that followed is not so much the policy of huge enterprises which the bombings facilitated, but rather the introduction of more elaborate forms of submission, including the elimination of structures which restrained even minimal links with tradition, the imposition of a new scale of value, the restructuring of everyday life... Appropriate new forms of production and consumption evolved which expressed this new mode of life and which required submission to it.

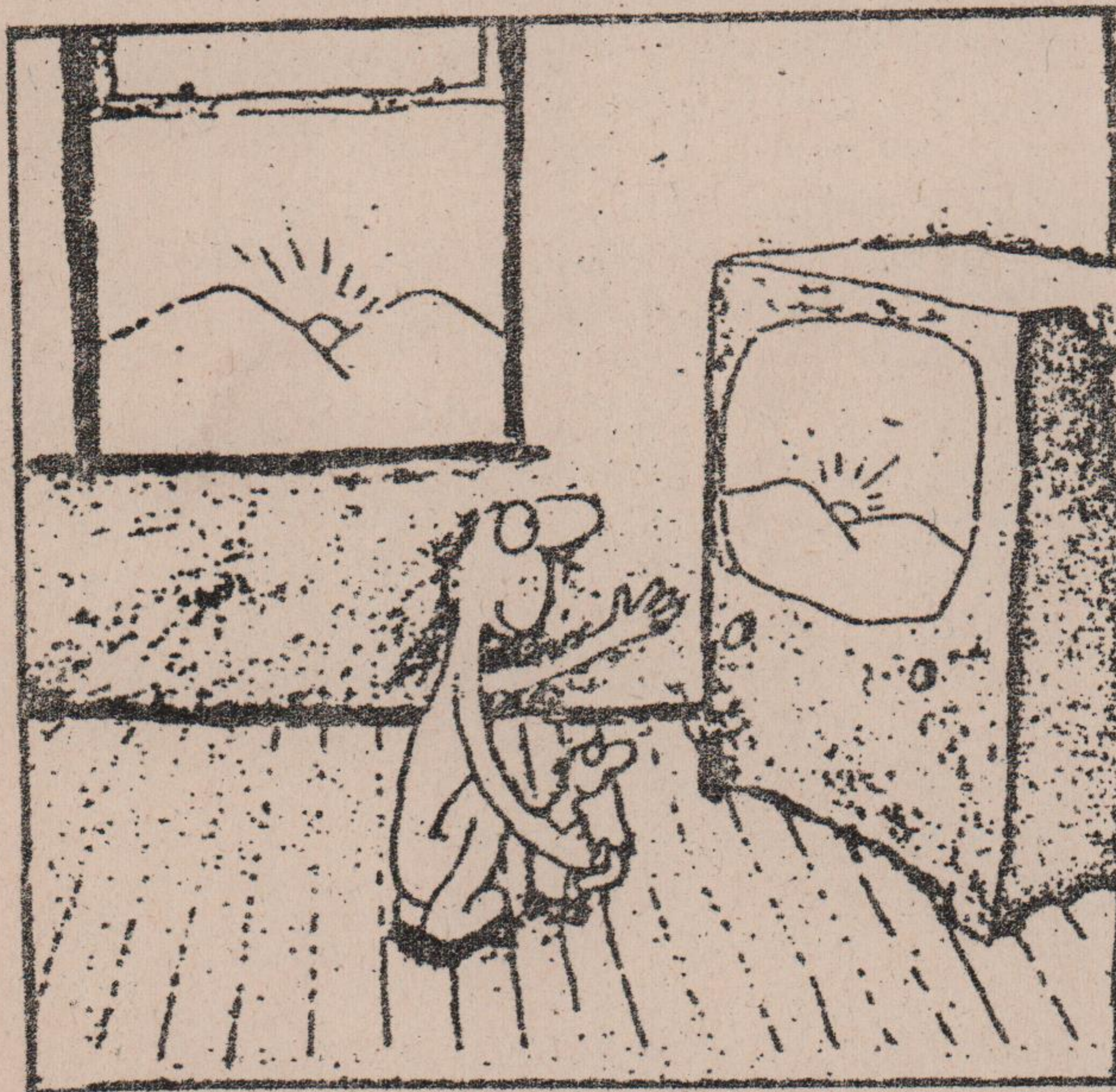


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# CRISIS IDEOLOGY

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Theories which focus on the Marxist thesis about the contradiction between the development of productive forces and the fetters of the productive relations distort capitalism's development of productive forces in the image of its relations of production. Although capitalism experiences crises of overproduction and of restructuring, these crises do not offer any "objective" possibility of transcending the system for the good of humanity, but are merely an integral part in the normal functioning of contemporary capitalism against humanity. There is no reason to welcome a "revolution" which liberates productive forces from restrictive relations of production. In the logic which foresees the development of productive forces culminating in a classless society, the proletarians are to appropriate the "wealth" which the exploiters currently grab for themselves, and communism will be an extension of capitalism. In contrast to this view, we do not see this wealth as human wealth, but as wealth for capital.



This thesis sees in the development of productive forces the emergence of neutral - namely beneficial - forces which humanity can use for its liberation; and its anti-human

bias is obvious when one examines what is included in the term "productive forces": natural resources, capital, the power of machine tools, human forces. What enormous esteem for nature to consider itself as a mere resource. What enormous esteem for humans to see themselves as just another "force" alongside the dynamic fundamental ones of the robot and money. If a one-sided development of certain muscles or a neurosis makes an individual more productive (more efficient on a job), his or her deformity or illness is a productive force. When the monotony of a job makes him or her more efficient in carrying out this job, monotony is a productive force, etc. In productivist logic, there is no human being but only a force to create wealth, a force on the same level as other productive forces, equivalent to the machine, to the robot. Considering humans to be a productive force necessarily implies that relations of production have transformed them into things. This reduction is all too obvious in the evolution which, from factory to machine industry, from automation to computerization, turns humans into accessories, reduces them to a collection of predetermined motions over which they have no control, and can even make simple relations between them superfluous since they are too busy watching over incomprehensible processes. Such development cannot possibly lead to community, a world without domination the self-determination of human beings; such developments can produce nothing but commodities and alienation.

Projects or activities which base - or justify - themselves on the economic contradictions of capitalism display a complete incomprehension of the nature of modern capitalism, and they are often accompanied by a politician's logic. They conform to the system's rules of the game and define their tactics accordingly. Our critique should focus on the roots of capitalism itself, on the historic conditions which engender and reproduce it, on the practices which reinforce alienation, namely, on mass production,



work, the state. In modern conditions of commodity production and consumption, the true social crisis is the poverty of existence, where consumption (of objects, images...) is an essential element. A perspective which aims to overcome this poverty has nothing in common with the voluntarism and the mystique of the "historically inevitable" revolution.

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# THE TYRA

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In Part Two of this series, ROBIN COX offers a critique of Marxist economism, the tendency among Marxists to separate out the economic factor from society as a whole, and invest with primary causal significance. From this stems a millenarian view of social revolution. Capitalism, being subject to its own immanent economic laws, cannot be eroded from within by changes in the social superstructure which are more determined than determining. But how sound are the assumptions underlying this view of revolution?

### 1. Levels of Mediation

The debt that Karl Marx owed to the classical economists was considerable. It was they who "(turned) the spotlight from the merely objective form of wealth to the human subject creating it", and thus provided Marx with the germ of his labour theory of value (1). In developing this theory, however, Marx was to transcend the paradigm of classical political economy by formulating a new model of the economy which served to buttress his materialist conception of history.

Central to this view of history is the role of productive activity. This for Marx constituted the fundamental form of mediation through which the "unity of man with nature is established" (2). The idea of "mediation" is crucial in Marx's ontology and is to be contrasted as Arthur suggests with "immediacy". To posit "man in immediate unity with nature" is to imply he is nothing more than a part of nature, wholly subject to natural laws. On the other hand, to assert that he is "immediately opposed to nature" is to adopt a kind of dualistic position prevalent in much Western thinking which sees humankind as qualitatively separate from nature.



# ANNALS OF ECONOMICS

Marx rejected both these attitudes. "Man", for him, was a part of nature insofar as "he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die". Yet, at the same time, he is not passively dependant on nature but objectifies himself through his productive activity and in the process transforms nature. As Marx put it in his 1844 Manuscripts, "nature appears as his work and his reality..and he can contemplate himself in a world that he himself created".

The emergence of private property greatly complicated matters. It signified the introduction of what Meszaros calls a "set of second-order mediations.. i.e. a historically specific mediation of the ontologically fundamental self-mediation of man with nature" (2). In the process of objectification the producer is separated or alienated from his object (product) and hence his own activity. Productive activity is redefined as alienated labour out of which, and a result of the increasing division of labour itself, the institution of private property evolved (rather than vice versa which would be to "naturalise" what is a social institution).

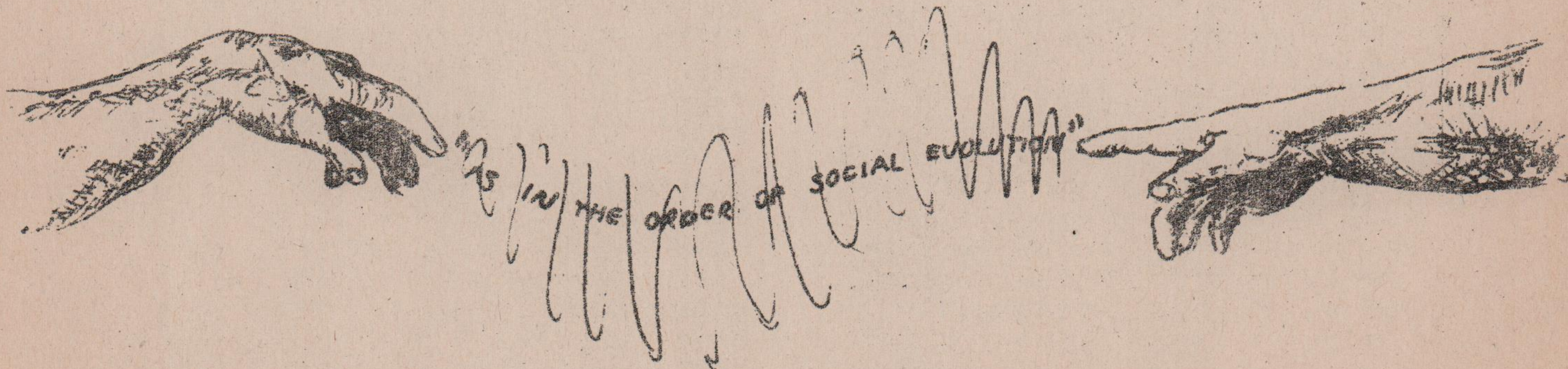
What are the implications that flow from these different kinds of "mediation" in Marx's thought? At the level of first-order mediation,

"man" and "nature" constitute the two poles of a fundamental relation within which both are reciprocally transformed through the mediation of productive activity. As a result a dynamic synthesis is achieved.

This is not the case with second order mediations which find their most potent expression in modern capitalist society:

Private property in its developed state of contradiction is characterised by the simultaneous identity and exclusion of two poles, labour and capital. Hence there can be no harmonious synthesis, only a drive towards dissolution. This important feature of the dialectic of second-order mediation (private property and exchange) distinguishes it markedly from that of the first-order mediation. (3)

What is meant by this simultaneous identity and exclusion of the two poles, labour and capital? It amounts to this, that labour as the "subjective essence of private property" represents also the "exclusion of property". To put it differently, the worker is compelled to work for the capitalist precisely because he lacks capital. Yet, since his labour is the creative source of the capitalist's capital, this means that he must, of economic necessity, be largely





excluded from capital so that capital might reproduce itself. Hence, conversely, capital as "objective labour" represents at the same time the "exclusion of (living) labour".

In short, this contradictory unity of labour and capital - whereby each presupposes the other and yet also negates it - precludes a "mutually supportive interpenetration" of these two poles. No matter, how "highly mediated the relationship of private property becomes, at bottom labour and capital remain untransformed extremes" (5). The tension between these two "untransformed extremes" cannot be resolved within the private property relationship in which they are grounded. It can only be resolved by transcending this relationship, by reinstating the fundamental "self-mediation of man with nature" in an unmediated form.

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### THE MOSQUITO KNOWS

The mosquito knows full well,  
small as he is  
he's a beast of prey.

But after all  
he only takes his bellyful,  
he doesn't put my blood in the bank

D.H. Lawrence

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Therein, for Marx, lay the historical necessity of communism. But how did he, and not the classical economists, come to this conclusion, when both began from the same premiss? How did it happen, in Marx's words, that "political economy starts out from labour as the soul of production and yet gives nothing to labour and everything to property"?

In Frederick Engels' preface to Wage Labour and Capital there is the hint of an answer to this question. The classical economists, asserted Engels, having discovered that "the value of a commodity is determined by the labour contained in it, requisite for its production", contented themselves with this explanation. Yet this same "labour" was, according to them, itself a commodity. Thus, as soon as they "applied this determination of value by labour to the commodity 'labour', they fell into one contradiction after another". For how was the value of labour to be determined when labour itself determines the value of a commodity? How, in short, could something be the measure of itself? The formulation of the classical economists, remarked Engels,



"brings us not a hair's breadth nearer the goal; we keep on moving in a circle"

More to the point, it failed to explain how the capitalist came by his profit. This Marx traced to the difference in value between what the worker was paid and what he produced. Insofar as the worker's labour was the source of all value, it could not be for his "labour" that he was paid for that would leave nothing for the capitalist let alone account for the immense disparity in wealth between them. Rather he was paid for his "labour power" or working abilities, his wages being the monetary expression of the value embodied in the production and reproduction of this commodity.

This surplus value which the capitalist appropriated signified the systematic exploitation of the workers he hired. From it he derived capital for reinvestment, thus reproducing the cycle of exploitation. Competition with other capitalists compelled him to accumulate capital without limit by increasing the mass of surplus value for transformation into capital - for example, through increased productivity or cutting costs - to undercut rivals. Thus, this whole dynamic which was predicated on the worker's relative poverty and hence the need to sell his working abilities to the capitalist, ensured its own existence by reproducing this poverty, by imposing a continual downward pressure on wages and concentrating capital into fewer hands.

Technically, then, the failure of the classical economists to have reached the same conclusions as Marx, hinged upon their failure to appreciate the vital distinction Marx introduced between "labour" and "labour power". This however is too simple an explanation. It would be to overlook the entire social and ideological milieu in which they moved. At a time when manufacturing was still small scale, the processes to which Marx later drew attention, were not immediately apparent. That awaited the development of modern industry and its counterpart - the proletariat. Moreover, the intellectual orientation of the classical

economists, as of the Enlightenment generally, was largely conditioned by an agenda still pervaded by the vested interests of the old order. Against the claims of such reactionary interests, they advanced the case for capitalism as an economic system grounded in nature. As Arthur puts it, "when Smith traces wealth to labour he traces the bourgeois form of wealth to its origins in value-producing labour. The first order mediations are grasped through the prism of the estranging second-order mediation (private property)." (6)

In other words, the latter is conflated with the former and thereby "naturalised". Just as the categories "man" and "nature" interpenetrate through the mediation of productive activity, so labour and capital in bourgeois thought achieve a kind of synthesis analogous to that found at the level of first-order mediation. They are thereby rendered unproblematic and timeless. As Marx wryly noted in his Poverty of Philosophy, that as a corollary of this view, bourgeois thinkers considered that feudal relations of production are artificial, though these preceded bourgeois society

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itself which nevertheless the "economists wish to present as natural and therefore eternal".

The "eternal" essence of bourgeois society was attributable to the fact that fundamental conflict that might subvert this "natural order" was systemetically precluded by the invisible hand of the market. Not that the classical economists did not acknowledge the possibility of some conflict or failed to see that the interests of buyers and sellers need not coincide. However, unlike the Mercantilists before them, they argued that by the very nature of things, both parties in a transaction necessarily benefited from it. Consequently, the conflict of interest between buyer and seller was essentially superficial and easily offset by the resultant increase in the nation's wealth. It was only when the phenomenon of periodical commercial crises began to make itself felt from the early 19th century onwards, that the optimistic assumptions underlying this view were seriously questioned - one of the first to do so being the Swiss economist, Sismonde de Sismondi.

Indeed, it was the glaring evidence of the capitalist trade cycle that

lent increasing weight to the Marxist model of the economy, and with it, an underlying "zero sum" view of market transactions. According to this, the apparent benefits that accruing to both parties in a transaction obscured the basic cleavage of class interests at the heart of capitalism. At this level, it was apparent that one class could only gain at the expense of the other - or as Marx put it, "capital's share (of the product) rises in the same proportion as labour's share, wages, falls, and vice versa" (Wage Labour and Capital). Yet, whatever labour might gain at the expense of capital, it could only do so within the parameters of a system that ultimately worked in the interests of the capitalists and against those of the workers. To put it differently, the advances that workers could achieve were objectively limited by the the need to realize profit as a functional requirement of capital accumulation.

It was precisely in this connection that the phenomenon of commercial crises took on considerable significance in Marx's thought. It served to bring to the surface, to make manifest, capitalism's inner contradictions. And this was not all. For beyond this, Marx perceived in capitalism, a tendency for each successive crisis to become more pronounced than the one preceding it, to put on trial "each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeois society" (7). The increasing misery that each such crisis occasioned, would, he believed, intensify the class struggle and give it a clearer direction and, hence, undermine the claim that bourgeois society was something preordained by nature.

Here we see how Marx's economic analysis of capitalism shades into his materialist conception of history. There is no perceptible break between them. For Marx was not content simply to throw light upon the workings of the capitalist economy as a complex mechanism but to demonstrate through his analysis that capitalism was no more than a historical phase doomed by its inner contradictions to give way to communism, as the outcome of a broad social dialectic. Indeed,

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according to G D H Cole, "it is now generally recognised that the materialist conception of history is the clue to the marxian system and that Marx's other doctrines grouped themselves in his mind around this organising principle of thought" (8).

The immanent process within capitalism whereby "private property drives itself in its economic movement towards its own dissolution", a process made transparent through economic crisis, centres upon, as we have seen, the sharpening conflict between wage labour and capital. However, this conflict cannot be contained within the "economic movement" of private property. It takes on as well a political form.

The political domain thus constitutes for Marx a kind of third order mediation through which structural conflict at the level of second order mediations (private property and exchange) is itself mediated. This third order mediation manifests itself in the institutional form of the state. Just as it is mistaken to posit private property as the cause of human alienation so is it wrong to suppose that it is upon the state that private property depends for its existence. It is a "political superstition" Marx observes, which believes that "civil life must be held together by the state when in reality the state is upheld by civil life".(9)

In short, the state represents an organic outgrowth of the economic domain, a reflection of the class antagonisms in civil society. Having emerged from the division of society into classes it constitutes a vital tool of the ruling class; it is through the state that conflict in a class society is mediated and managed in such a way as to secure the hegemony of that class. The state thus becomes a focal point of revolutionary struggle attending the birth of each new social order.

Marx can thus be credited with reinstating, albeit in a new form, the close ties between the political and economic domains that had been asserted in the mercantilist era and largely severed by the classical economists. Thus, Dumont:

My study was originally limited to the genesis of economic thought from the seventeenth century through the Physiocrats to Adam Smith (and Ricardo), that is to say, the emergence by disentanglement or disembedding of the new viewpoint. Then I noticed that Marx's approach had been precisely the reverse: he had reintergrated the same viewpoint, this time in a dominant position within the general configuration (10).

## 2. Base and Superstructure

Within this "general configuration" the relationship between (economic) base and the (political) superstructure reveals to us the nature and direction of causality in history. This was trenchantly spelt out by Marx in his famous Preface to Critique of Political Economy:



J-P SARTRE

In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society - the real foundation, on which legal and political



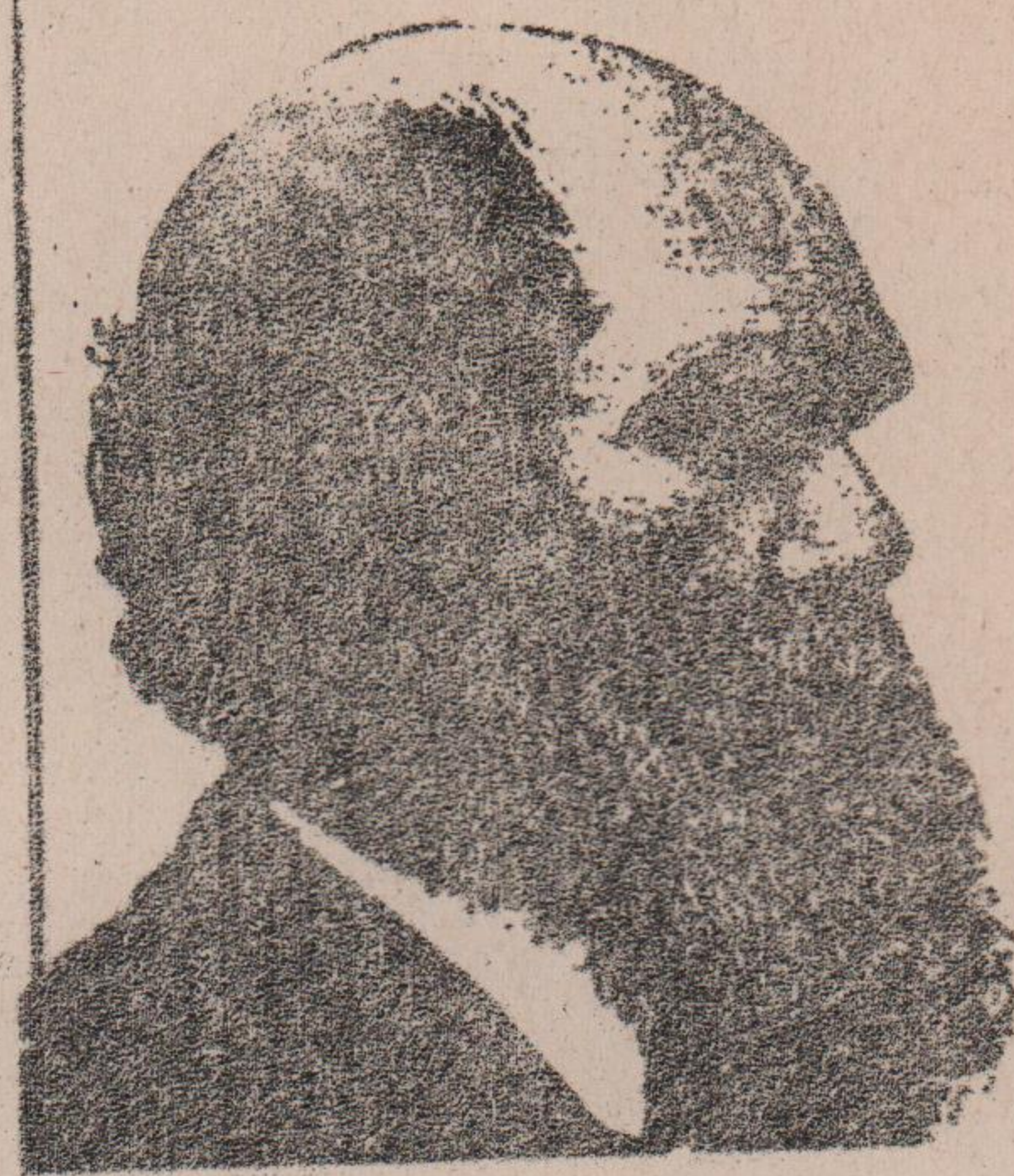
superstructures arise and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that what is being presented here is a kind of supra-historical perspective, a birds eye view of history. Whereas in past ages, as we saw in Part One, individuals might conceptually organise their world in terms of religion or politics, Marxism claims to have captured the objective meaning of history hitherto hidden from others by ideological obfuscation. It does not occur to the Marxist that by investing the economy with ultimate explanatory power, Marxism itself manifests only a particular form of historical, and not a supra-historical, consciousness which may have little relevance or validity outside the historical context in which it is grounded.

More fundamentally, Marx's statement must be considered questionable on epistemological grounds. To posit a deterministic relationship between being and consciousness, between objective and subjective, presupposes their separation as cause and effect. We can certainly perceive in the case of two billiard balls, such a cause and effect relationship. By causing one to impact on the other, this has the observable effect of propelling the latter forward. But the relationship between being and consciousness is hardly analogous. We cannot step outside of "consciousness" to observe the effect of "being" upon it - even, as we shall see, when observing other people. Rather, as the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre points out, the subjective and the objective constitute different moments of a moving unity: the "interiorisation of the exterior" and the "exteriorisation of the interior".

This is not to suggest one cannot find in the writings of Marx and Engels, evidence of such a dialect-

ical view affirming the interpenetration of subjective and objective. But despite such counter-examples, what characterises Marxist materialism is its objectivism, an objectivism unquestionably embedded in Marx's preface to his Critique of Political Economy. I want to argue that in its deliberate negation of the constitutive role of consciousness in order to bolster its claims to scientificity Marxism profoundly errs. I want to examine firstly how it arrived at this standpoint and then to turn to the crippling implications this holds for its theory of revolution as perceived by some modern-day Marxists.



C. DARWIN

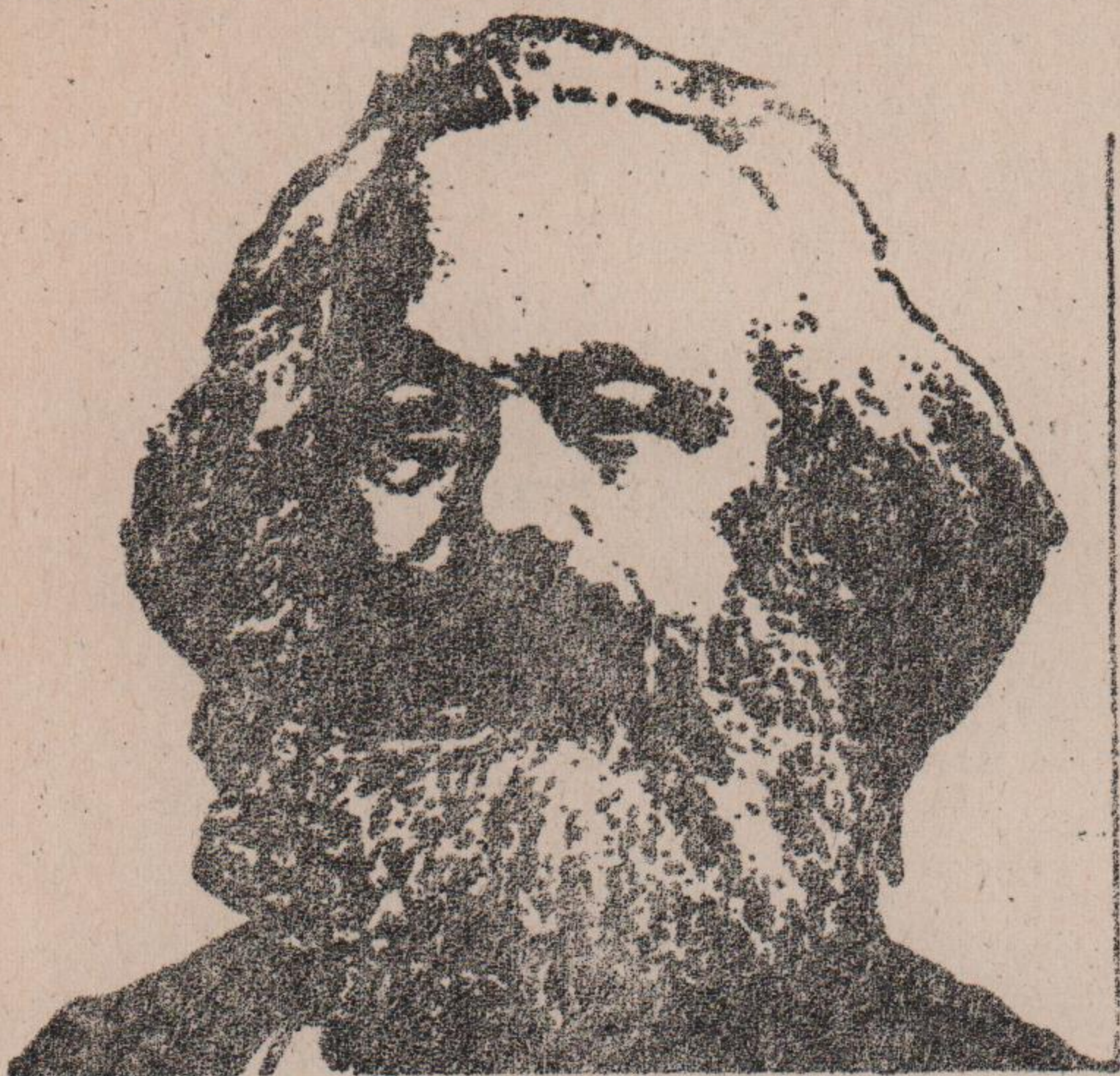
But let us be clear about what is at issue here. In the German Ideology, Marx comments:

We must begin by stating the first presupposition of all human existence, and therefore all history, namely, that men must be in a position to live in order to "make history". But life involves before everything else, eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself.

That human beings have pressing material needs cannot be denied. That the satisfaction of these needs exerts powerful constraints upon human activity is equally undeniable. Yet this far from tells us everything. It does not tell us, for example, how they organise themselves to satisfy those needs or, indeed, what suffices as a level of satisfaction.



The difficulty arises when one attempts to read off from the transcendent fact of material needs, a transcendent mechanism which propels humanity through successive stages of history like the uncoiling of a gigantic spring. History according to this view, presents itself as a predetermined sequence of effects which manifest themselves at different points in time as the ripening conditions (similarly predetermined) dictate, and thus attest to the transcendental character of the mechanism in which they originate.



K. MARX

### 3. A Marxist Teleology?

To be fair to Marx, this does not do justice to the complexity of his own views - though it might fairly describe the position of some of his latter-day followers. There is, for example, evidence to suggest that while his earlier works, as well as Capital itself, retain an "essential kernel of evolutionism" (that is, the assumption of an "intrinsically necessary development through preordained stages"), from 1870, according to Teodor Shanin, Marx began to depart from this "arch-model of the time" (11). In Shanin's view this is evidenced firstly by his moving beyond a "picture of capitalism as straightforwardly progressive towards a more realistic grasp of the complexities and contradictions of what we would nowadays call dependent development". Secondly, during this period Marx began to envisage, according to Shanin, a "multiplicity of roads of social transformation within a global framework of mutual and

differential impact" (ibid p.66). This entailed a "corresponding re-evaluation of the social struggles in peripheral formations" which, inter alia, led Marx to change his view on the role of peasants.

Sayer and Corrigan in the above article go even further, calling into question whether Marx ever really did subscribe to the full-blown evolutionism Shanin has in mind. Their main reason for asserting this hinges upon Marx's apparent rejection of all teleology. Thus he welcomed Darwin's Origin of Species for having dealt a "death blow to teleology in the natural sciences" - the point being that the essence of Darwin's theory was random mutation rather than any supposed necessary development through preordained stages. They cite examples dating before 1870 of Marx's departure from unilinear evolutionism such as his "untroubled acceptance in his 1857 General Introduction of the sui generis character of a society like pre-Columbian Peru, in which the highest forms of economy e.g. co-operation, a developed division of labour etc., are found, even though there is no kind of money" (ibid p.67). Such examples suggest there is no necessary correspondence between certain features of the economy and the level of development of the productive forces. As such, they seem to amount to at least a partial retreat from a hardline economic determinism.

In their view, the "hoary parallel between a Hegelianised Marx and a Lamarkianised Darwin originated with Engels and remains the staple diet of Soviet Marxology to this day" (ibid p.66). Despite this, it is questionable whether one can truly disassociate Marx's view from the "powerful legacy of received wisdom" from Engels onwards, as Sayer and Corrigan suggest. For while Marx's position was essentially grounded in an economic determinism - which despite the counter-examples that might be cited, was indeed the case - then it is difficult to see how it could ever really escape the influence of evolutionism. The one necessarily presupposes the other, as I hope in due course to demonstrate. That being so, Marx's departures from an evolutionist model, like his



departures from economic determinism, cannot be considered as anything other than anomalous.

To suggest that Marx was not always consistent is not to detract from his greatness as a thinker. On the contrary. The ability to transcend one's own paradigm, to apply a kind of lateral thinking to the solving of problems, is not to be dismissed as a weakness. Rather, it is the ossification of one's thinking, the self-induced rigidification of the boundaries of one's paradigm, that denotes weakness.

It is this that characterises to a regrettable extent, subsequent generations of Marxists. For though one may with reason doubt Marx's wholehearted commitment to evolutionism, for these latter, the "order of social evolution" is no mere figure of speech. It entails nothing less than a thoroughgoing teleology which enjoins upon the working class its "historic mission" to accomplish what history had ordained.

This deterministic reading of history is vindicated in the eyes of a mechanistic Marxism by positing the "production of material life" as the "first historical act" from which all else follows. Here the example of the billiard balls is most apt. In short, it is the alleged historical priority of material production vis-a-vis the elements comprising the marxist superstructure which permit the latter to be understood as the epiphenomenal effects of the former.

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# PROBLEMS

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## Problems of human agreement

Differences between people are beneficial as far as society is concerned, argues GEOFF WATSON. The more differences there are, the more likely are we to find a suitable response to the challenges confronting us. But because people are different, they tend also to disagree even though the very problems they face demand unity and a common purpose.

The pedlar and the parson in the pulpit were for many the sole bearers of news in the sixteenth century. How different today is our splendid media: the newsheet, the radio, the box, the channels, the cables, leaflets, magazines and books. Books alone spew out 60,000 new titles a year. How easy it is to spread our ideas and solve the problems of the world!

Or is it easy? Don't we in fact have a problem? Of all this vast output, 99.9% or more is of no abiding worth. It may be devoted to trivia, to facile entertainment which vanishes in a moment; it may consist of the biased opinionating of the tabloids; it may be straight advertising of products we usually do not want; or it may be the falsities and half-truths of fundamentalism. Despite this enormous cascade of words, if you yourself have something worthwhile to say you have the greatest difficulty in edging into the maelstrom.

But it is not impossible. Spanner is a witness to that. There are grains of truth to be found. Many of us apply a filter to our intellectual input so that we select our reading and find material which has sense and balance. You yourself have done so in that you are reading Spanner at, this moment. Journals like this will have an effect even though circulation is small.



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# F HUMAN AGREEMENT

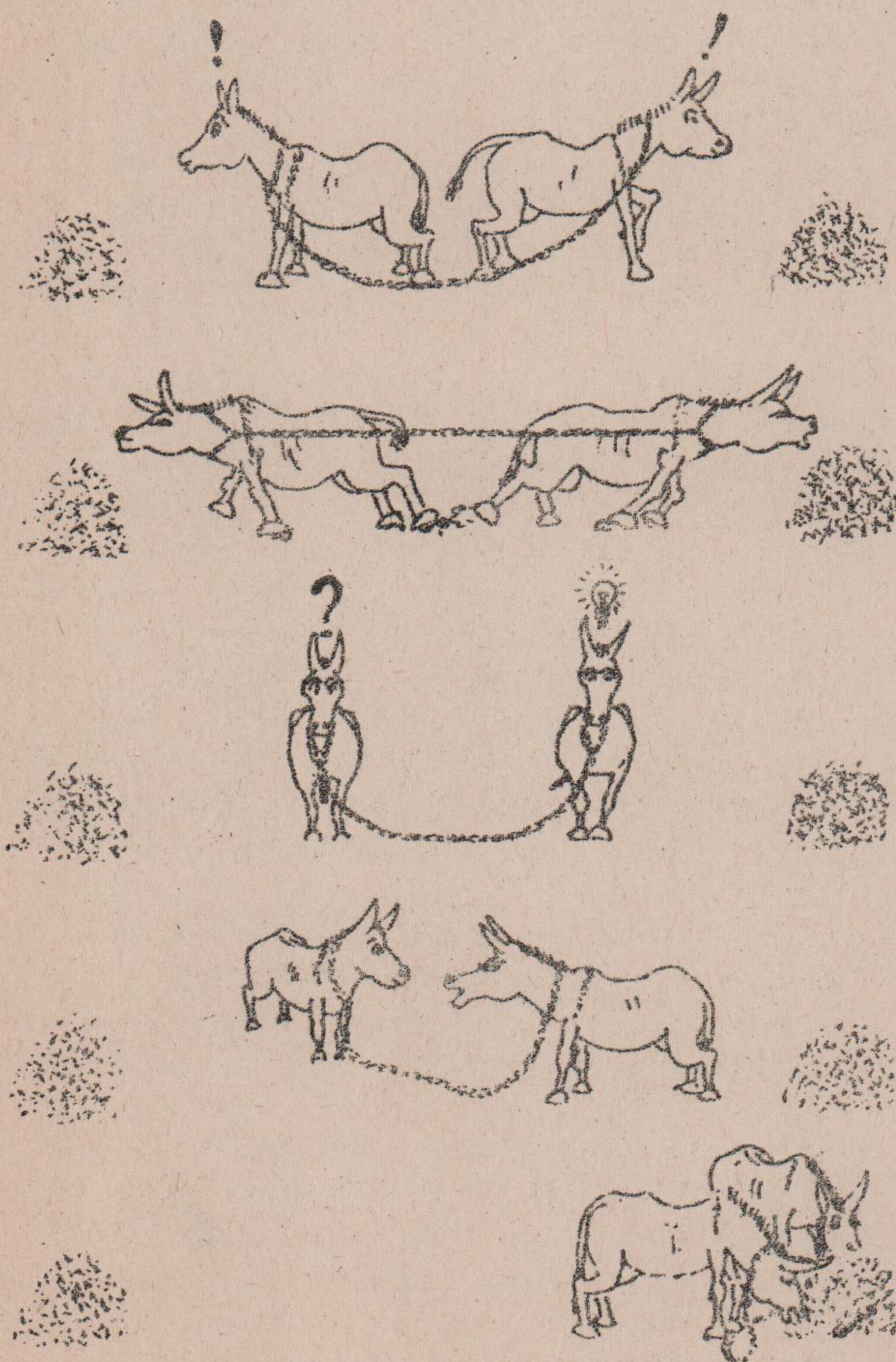
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But even within the intellectual climate of Spanner, there is a further problem. People - that is you and I - still have difficulty in agreeing on a "save the world" programme, or indeed on any programme. Why should that be? I will describe two out of many reasons.

Why do people disagree?

## 1. Prejudice

The first reason for disagreement is that we are all influenced to some extent by bias which is built into our upbringing. I call it prejudice. During childhood we absorb many ideas, opinions and other people's prejudices. Some of



MAKE HIM AN OFFER HE CANT REFUSE

it is emotional: "I hate those reds" (or blues or blacks). Some of it is false information: "people with purple skins are lazy" (or stupid or violent or dishonest). Some of it we may even read in a newspaper (and hence it is true, of course!).

The problem is that all this is unconscious. We do not realise what a biased person we have grown up to be. But while we have these chains we are not free. To become free we first have to wake up; we have to learn to know ourselves and unblinker our eyes. It takes time and honesty. Many people never do it.

Why do people disagree?

## 2. Their Personality

I use the word "personality" here in the simple psychological sense to indicate that we are all different. Just as each of us has a unique finger-print, so each of us has a unique personality. This difference is good. In fact it is essential. When new challenges arise in the world there is someone who is best suited to meet them. If only we would ensure that people do those things for which they are best suited!

One difference between people is that some are "Trad" and some are "Rad". I have devised some simple tests to measure whether you are a Trad or a Rad. Briefly a Trad lays stress on qualities such as honesty, loyalty, justice, order, courage and integrity. I call them Roman virtues. The Rad values creativeness, knowledge, research, art and literature, political literature, resourcefulness and adaptation. I call them Greek values. Note that there is no question of right or wrong. Each group has positive values. Each



believes in ideas which society needs from time to time. We need them both.

Many people will score in between the two groups. but there are plenty of us who are clearly either Trad or Rad. In general, the Trad form a conservative party such as the Conservatives or the Republicans. (But not entirely: the Labour Party is 85 years old and must contain many of Trad disposition who are loyal to the party.) Meanwhile it is the Rads who form the centre and left parties.

Trads and Rads do not always divide equally at elections. There are other interests which distort election results, such as particular propaganda, particular loyalties or sheer self-interest (a ten pound bonus at Christmas?). But within any group you are likely to find both Trad and Rad and the tensions between them. Changes are likely to be proposed by Rads and opposed by Trad. Roughly one can say that if there is something wrong in society the Trad sees traditional ways of dealing with it - the well-tryed answers. The Rad looks for new solutions.

So far so good. But note now what happens. The Trad form a conservative party with a relatively simple philosophy, a consistent appeal which ensures that even if they lose office they will come back to power in time.

But the Rads, what do they do? Ah, there's the rub. By their nature, Rads can see where things are wrong. By their nature too, they are original, imaginative and resourceful. They have many excellent and good ideas for change, but they are DIFFERENT ideas. Even so, they may form a party with a programme, such as the Labour Party or the Socialist Party of Great Britain. And so far, so good. But within the annual, or even daily, need to reformulate policy details, the Rads constantly come up with new and original ideas (and they may even form an opposition to the more "Trad" wing of their party). They create wings within the party; they organise a split. They break off and form a new party (although ultimate aims may be the same). Eventually we find a host of centre and left

parties - and these cannot hope to form an effective opposition to the unity of the main Trad party.

Meanwhile, there are very strong stresses within any conservative party, but they usually manage to contain their members by an appeal to party loyalty. That is not to say they have no disagreements. They too have left and right wings. They have members who feel that the party is not Trad enough. Others accept various forms of change. Indeed, in our modern society Trad realise that change is thrust upon us, and they are prepared to accept change at a slow rate. One example is the Conservative group who are working for proportional representation.

In a party such as the Labour Party loyalty is not lacking, but the Rad differences make it much more difficult to hold the party together. The Rads create as many different solutions to our problems as there are people.

What is the answer?

Politically PR is one answer, although only up to a point. What we have to develop is the art of coalition and cooperation.

We could, of course, set up a dictator - a Rad dictator who would carry everything through for us. If we could trust him! (or her!). In the past, in real emergencies, we have done just that. We have set up temporary dictators in the Roman sense, such as Lloyd George and Winston Churchill. (incidentally these were both outstanding Rads. There's no space here to elaborate about Churchill but write to me). Outside wartime, L.G. knew the art of statecraft. He once had eggs thrown at him by suffragettes because he would not support them. Yet he believed in their cause. What he knew was that he had to put through his "Rad" legislation one peice at a time. He had to gain overall support for first one item and then another (and hence for a while put off the suffragettes). He succeeded - at any rate in beginning his programme - and we still benefit from it. But how do we now go forward?

The task is to join with others in devising common policies which can



be achieved one at a time. Rads have to narrow their focus instead of ever-widening it. We might have one big Rad party, within which we would have any number of differing factions. Yet the groups would agree on policy which was "the next step". In effect this would be similar to a left-wing coalition. The danger, of course, is that a term such as "socialism" becomes watered down to mean welfare and handouts.

However, today I am only stating the problem, not offering solutions. That is where you come in. Can you offer an answer? Can we have an open forum?

What I remain certain about is that there are an enormous number of valuable ideas "blowing in the wind". This is good. We must all continue to express opinions, write letters and belong to political parties. Meanwhile because people are different, they disagree. It is for people with different ideas to learn to come together and accept a common platform.

Geoff Watson has written In Tune - A Guide to Everything £5.70, from the author, 49 Woodfield Drive, Winchester, SO22 5PY - ISBN 0-9514713-0-9

## NOTICE BOARD

The Spanner welcomes articles from readers on any subject that might be considered in any way relevant to its purpose. It would be helpful if readers intending to submit an article contacted us first at BM SPANNER, LONDON WC1N 3XX, stating subject of article and proposed length. It might not always be possible to fit an article in the next issue but it is desirable to build up a stock of articles for subsequent issues. Also, we would be happy to give any support if this required - for example, through our newspaper cuttings service.

Also, readers who wish to submit criticism of anything published in Spanner are most welcome to do so - in our DEBATE PLATFORM column - for the longer, more theoretical type of article - or the LETTERS PAGE if they only intend to make a few points

Please send your contributions in urgently in order to be on time for issue no. 2

## MONEY-MADNESS

Money is our madness, our vast collective madness.

And of course, if the multitude is mad the individual carries his own grain of insanity around with him.

I doubt if any man living hands out a pound note without a pang; and a real tremor, if he hands out a ten pound note.

We quail, money makes us quail. If it has got us down, we grovel before it in strange terror. And no wonder, for money has a fearful cruel power among men.

But it is not money we are so terrified of, it is the collective money-madness of mankind. For mankind says with one voice: How much is he worth? Has he no money?

Then let him eat dirt and go cold - And if I have no money, they will give me a little bread, so I do not die, but they will make me eat dirt with it.

I shall have to eat dirt, I shall have to eat dirt if I have no money.

It is that that I am afraid of. And that fear can become a delirium. It is fear of my money-mad fellow-men.

We must have some money to save us from eating dirt.

And this is all wrong.

Bread should be free, shelter should be free, fire should be free to all and anybody, all and anybody all over the world.

We must regain our sanity about money before we start killing one another about it.

It's one thing or the other.

D. H. Lawrence





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