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Marxist Writings on History & Philosophy

George Novack

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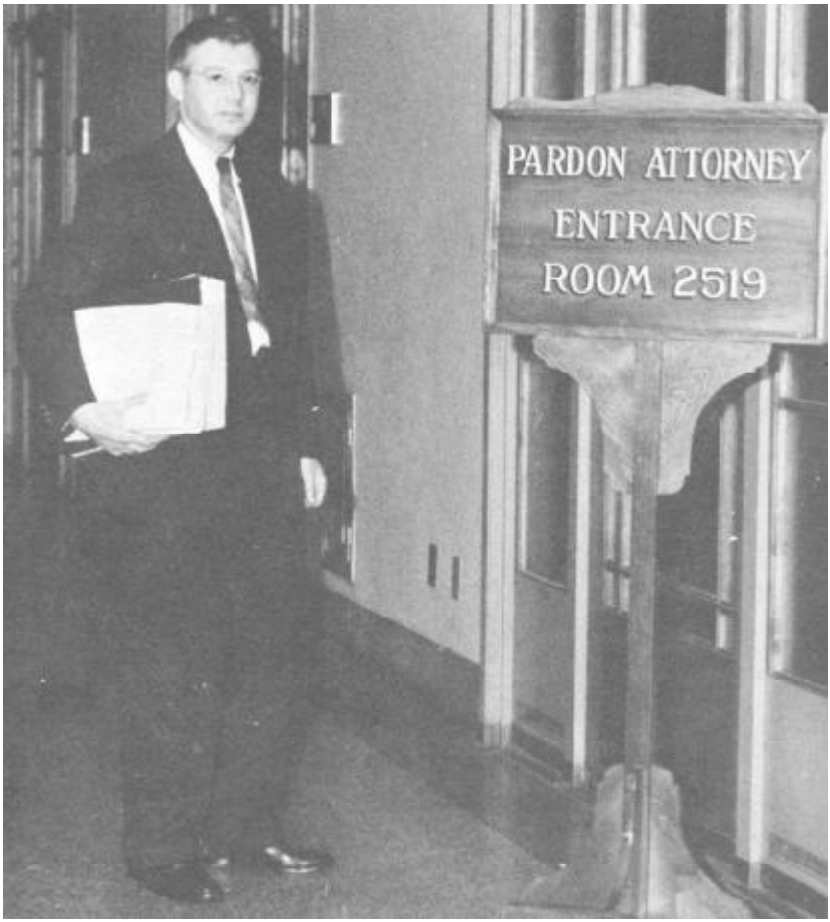

George Novack, secretary of the Civil Rights Defence Committee, in Washington on April 2, 1944 to present pardon applications for Minneapolis prisoners.

About the author

George Novack was born in Boston in 1905 to Jewish immigrant parents from Eastern Europe.

Radicalised by the 1929 economic crash, he moved toward Marxism. In 1933 he joined the Trotskyist Communist League of America, the organisation founded by veteran revolutionary James P. Cannon after his break with the Stalinised Communist Party in 1928. Novack remained active in the Trotskyist movement — first the CLA and then its successor organisations, most notably the Socialist Workers Party — until his death in 1992.

Novack early developed an interest in philosophy. In the 1930s he belonged to a broad layer of radical New York intellectuals who were attracted to Marxism. However, while the small US Trotskyist movement in this period attracted a significant milieu of fellow-travelling intellectuals, very few actually joined the movement and became revolutionary activists. Some — like Felix Morrow and James Burnham — did so but either did not fully make the transition or did not stay the distance.

George Novack stands out as one of the handful of radical intellectuals of the Depression years who remained true to his early convictions. As he wrote in an autobiographical memoir in 1976:

> I had to watch most of my generation fall by the wayside and conclude a separate peace with the ruling powers in the universities, the publishing fields, the professional and business worlds. Today, at the age of 70, I am one of a very few: a radical intellectual of 1930s vintage who remains active as an unrepentant Marxist and fulltime professional in the revolutionary movement.[1]

Novack had a long involvement in civil rights defence campaigns. In 1932 he became active in the CP-aligned National Committee for the Defence of Political Prisoners. In 1937-40 Novack served as the secretary of the American Committee for the Defence of Leon Trotsky. This body initiated the celebrated 1937 Dewey Commission of Inquiry into the charges made against Trotsky in the Moscow show trials and whose verdict pronounced them a complete frame-up. In 1941-50 Novack was secretary of the Civil

Rights Defence Committee. It was through this body that the SWP organised support for the 18 party leaders and members indicted and jailed in the wartime Minneapolis sedition trial.

In 1940 Novack was elected to the SWP National Committee and served on it until 1973. From 1965 to 1974 he was an associate editor of the *International Socialist Review*, the SWP's monthly journal. Most of the articles in this selection first appeared in the *ISR* (many under the name William F. Warde, the pseudonym he frequently used in his party work).

Apart from the example of a life of steadfast commitment and activity in the revolutionary socialist movement, Novack's greatest contribution to socialism consists of his Marxist historical and philosophical writings. Over the years he wrote numerous articles for the theoretical journals of the US Trotskyist movement (successively *New International*, *Fourth International* and then *International Socialist Review*) as well as a number of books.

Many of his writings are historical studies of the development of US capitalism through two great revolutions (the War of Independence and the Civil War), the question of slavery, the destruction of native American society, and of resistance to the new bourgeois plutocracy. A number of his historical contributions appear in the collection he edited, *America's Radical Heritage* (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1976).

However, Novack will be most remembered as an outstanding exponent and populariser of Marxist philosophy and theory. He produced a number of books on various aspects of this question: *An Introduction to the Logic of Marxism* (Pioneer Publishers: New York, 1942), *The Origins of Materialism* (Merit Publishers: New York, 1968), *Empiricism and Its Evolution* (Merit, 1968), *Democracy and Revolution* (Pathfinder, 1971), *Understanding History* (Pathfinder, 1972), *Humanism and Socialism* (Pathfinder, 1973), *Pragmatism Versus Marxism* (Pathfinder, 1975), *Polemics in Marxist Philosophy* (Pathfinder, 1978).

Although ignored by bourgeois academia, Novack had an undoubted impact on generations of activists in the revolutionary socialist movement, not only in the United States but also in Australia (which he toured for the Democratic Socialist Party and Resistance in 1973, speaking to large campus and city meetings). The publishers hope that this selection of George Novack's writings will help equip new generations of fighters for socialism with the Marxist education which is so essential for the struggle.

Dave Holmes
January 2002

George Novack (1905-92)

The Long View of History

Foreword

These two talks were originally given at the West Coast school and camp held near Los Angeles, California, in September 1955. They offer a popularised account of the main line of evolution from fish to mankind, from savagery to civilisation, and from Indian life to contemporary capitalism in the United States. This is an extremely simplified outline of the immense and complex range of that evolutionary process. The facts set forth are well enough known — but their interpretation here differs from that taught in the schools and universities of capitalist America.

These talks were designed as an introduction to a study of the march of mankind from the viewpoint of scientific socialism.

It is especially directed toward newly awakened minds, concerned about the fundamental problems of life in our time and seeking enlightenment on the main issues of the social and political struggle.

Its arguments are aimed against two prevailing notions which tend to reinforce antisocialist prejudices and uphold belief in the sanctity of the existing system. One is the general idea that it is impossible, undesirable or somehow unscientific to seek out the central course of development in history, above all in the history of society; to link together its successive stages and place them in proper sequence; to distinguish the lower form from the higher; and indicate the nature of the next steps.

The second prejudice is more specific, although it is supported by the first. This is the assumption that the established capitalist regime in the United States embodies the highest attainable mode of life and an unsurpassable type of social organisation.

These propositions, I hope to show, are wrong in theory and thoroughly reactionary in their practical consequences. Socialist theory has the merit of explaining how and why the growing discontent with the existing setup among the working people and their strivings for a better way of life are reasonable, realistic, and founded on sound scientific premises. The instinctive drive of the workers toward a fundamental

reorganisation of the capitalist social and political structure accords with the main line of human progress.

These conclusions are already taken for granted in many parts of the globe which are usually regarded as backward by the American people. However, it must be said that although our country is the most modernised in many respects, from superhighways to colour television, it is most backward in recognising — and acting upon — the elementary truths of evolutionary science and revolutionary socialism.

I hope this little pamphlet will help some fellow countrymen and women to catch up with the thinking of the more progressive sections of mankind by clearing away capitalist-fostered prejudices, which obscure the real meaning of American history and block the road to the next stage of American civilisation.

October 1956

1. How Humanity Climbed to Civilisation

I propose first to trace the main line of human development, from our remote animal ancestors to the present, when humanity has become lord of the earth but not yet master of its own creations, not to mention its own social system. After that, I will deal with the central course of evolution in that specific segment of society that occupies the bulk of North America and represents the most developed form of capitalist society.

I will try to show not only how our national history is related to world development but also how we, collectively and individually, fit into the picture. This is a broad and bold undertaking, a sort of jet-propelled journey through the stratosphere of world history. It is forced upon us by the urge to grasp the whole vast spread of events and to understand our specific place within them, as well as by the very dynamic of scientific theory in sociology, which has its highest expression in Marxism. The movement based upon scientific socialism, which prepares most energetically for the future, likewise must probe most deeply into the past.

* * *

I shall start from the political case history of an individual. In January 1935 a book appeared which set the style for a series of reflective reports on the trends of our times. It had considerable influence upon radicalised intellectuals here until the outbreak of the Second World War. That book, *Personal History*, was written by Vincent Sheean. This autobiography was a serious effort to find out what the history of his generation was leading to and what his attitude should be toward its mainstream and its cross currents.

Sheean told how he started as an ignorant student at the University of Chicago at the close of the First World War. He knew as little about the fundamental forces at work in the world then as millions like him today who are encased in a similar provincialism. As he remarked:

> The bourgeois system insulated all its children as much as possible from a knowledge of

> the processes of human development, and in my case succeeded admirably in its purpose. Few Hottentots or South Sea Islanders could have been less prepared for life in the great world than I was at 21.

This innocent American went abroad as a newspaperman and learned from the great events of the twenties. He observed the effects of the First World War and the Russian revolution; he witnessed the stirrings in the Near East, in Morocco and Palestine — precursors of the vaster colonial disturbances after the Second World War. He was also a spectator and played an incidental role in the defeated second Chinese revolution of 1926. His experiences were topped by the economic collapse of capitalism after 1929 and the spread of fascism in Europe.

These upheavals jolted Sheean from his doze, opened his eyes, and propelled him toward Marxism and the revolutionary socialist movement. He was swept along in the swirling torrent of that first stage in the crack-up of capitalist civilisation — and began to recognise it as such. Great social, economic, and political events exposed the bankruptcy of the ideas about the world he had acquired through his middle-class education in the Midwest and impelled him to cast them off.

Sheean found in Marxism the most convincing explanation of the processes of social development and the causes of the decisive events of his own age. He was inspired by its ability to answer the question that besets every thinking person: What relation does my own life have to those who have preceded me on this earth, all my contemporaries, and the incalculable generations who will come later?

Scientific, political, and moral considerations combined to attract him to the science of the socialist movement. Sheean admired Marxism, he emphasised, because it took "the long view". This is not a phrase he coined, but one he borrowed from a participant in the struggle. Marxists, he noted, were or should be guided not by partial views and episodic considerations but by the most comprehensive outlook over the expanse of biological evolution and human achievement.

The all-embracing synthesis of history offered by Marxism contrasted sharply with the worm's-eye view he had had in the Midwest. The interior of the United States had the most up-to-date gadgets, but it was dominated by extremely old-fashioned ideas about social evolution.

Sheean had caught on to one of the outstanding features of that system of thought that bears the name of its creator, Karl Marx. Scientific socialism does provide the most consistent, many-sided, and far-reaching of all the doctrines of evolution — and revolution. "The long view" it presents is the march of mankind seen in its full scope, its current reality, and its ultimate consequences, so far as that is possible under present limitations.

* * *

What was this long view that attracted Vincent Sheean and so many millions before him and since? What can a review of the process of evolution, analysed by Marxist methods, teach us about the way things change in this world?

We can single out four critical turning points in the timetable of evolution. The first was the origin of our planet about three or four billion years ago. The second was the emergence of life in the form of simple one-celled sea organisms about two and a half billion years ago. (These are only approximate but commonly accepted dates at the present time.) Third was the appearance of the first backboned animals about four to five hundred million years ago. Last was the creation of mankind, within the past million years or so.

Let us begin with the third great chapter in this historical panorama — the first fish species. The American Museum of Natural History has prepared a chart that portrays the principal stages in organic evolution from the first fish up to ourselves, the highest form of mammalian creatures. The backbone introduced by the fish was one of the basic structures for subsequent higher evolution.

Astraspis, as one of the first vertebrate specimens is called, lived in the Paleozoic era near Cannon City, Colorado, where its plates were found in delta deposits. This native American of four to five hundred million years ago was very revolutionary for its day. Here is what a popular authority, Brian Curtis, says about this development in *The Life Story of the Fish*:

> An animal with a backbone does not seem strange to us today. But at the time that the first fish appeared upon earth, which we know from geological records to have been roughly five hundred million years ago, he must have seemed a miraculous thing. He was the very latest model in animal design, a radical, one might almost say a reckless experiment of that force which we find it convenient to personify as Mother Nature.

What did its "radicalism" consist of?

> For up to that time no creature had ever been made with the hard parts inside instead of outside … Nature might be said to have had a brainstorm, abandoned all the earlier methods and turned out overnight something absolutely new and unheard of.

Although the fish retained some of the old external armour, what was decisive from the standpoint of evolution was its acquisition of the backbone. This converted the fish into a creature basically different from anything living before. Thus, the new backboned type both *grew out of* the old and *outgrew* it. But that is not all. It then went on to conquer new realms of existence and activity. The most revolutionary feature of the fish was the fact that it became the starting point for the entire hierarchy of backboned

creatures that has culminated in ourselves.

These first vertebrates subsequently advanced from the fish through the amphibians (which lived both in water and on land), through the reptiles, and finally branched off into the warmblooded creatures: birds and mammals. Mankind is the culminating point of mammalian development. This much of animal evolution is accepted by all scientific authorities.

But these ideas and facts, so commonplace today, were the subversive thoughts of yesterday. We readily adopt this scientific view of organic evolution without realising that this very act of acceptance is part of a reversal in human thinking about the world and the creatures in it, which has taken place on a mass scale only during the past century. Recall, for example, the prevalence of the Biblical myth of creation in the Western world up to a few generations ago.

Two aspects of the facts about the vertebrates deserve special discussion. First, the transfer of the bony parts of the fish from the outside to the inside embodied a qualitatively new form of organic structure, a break in the continuity of development up to that time, a jump onto a higher level of life. Every biologist acknowledges this fact. But this fact has a more profound significance, which tells us much about the methods of evolutionary change in general. It demonstrates how, at the critical point in the accumulation of changes outside and inside an organism, the conflicting elements that compose it break up the old form of its existence, and the progressive formation passes over, by way of a leap, to a qualitatively new and historically higher state of development. This is true not only of organic species but of social formations and systems of thought as well.

This radical overturn is undeniable in the case of the birth and evolution of the fish and its ultimate surpassing by higher species. But it is much harder for many people to accept such a conclusion when it comes to the transformation of a lower social organisation into a higher social organisation. This reluctance to apply the teachings of evolution consistently to all things, and above all to the social system in which we live, is rooted in the determination to defend powerful but obsolete and narrow class interests against opposing forces and rival ideas that aim to create a genuinely new order of things.

The second point to be stressed is the fact that the fish, as the first vertebrate, occupies a specific place in the sequence of the evolution of organisms. It is one link in a chain of the manifestations of life extending from one-celled protozoa to the most complex organisms. This first creature with a backbone came out of and after a host of creatures which never had such a skeletal structure and in turn gave rise to superior orders which had that and much more.

Contradictory as it is, many scholars and scientists who take the order of evolution of organic species for granted, stubbornly resist the extension of the same lawfulness to the changing species of social organisations. They will not admit that there has been, or can be, any definite and discernible sequence in the social development of mankind analogous to the steps in the progress from the invertebrates to the fish, through the reptile and mammalian creatures, up to the advent of mankind.

This scepticism in sociology is especially pronounced in the present century, and in our own country and its colleges. Thinkers of this type, of course, know that there have been many changes in history, that many diverse formations are found in the fields of anthropology, archaeology, history, sociology, and politics.

What they deny is that these typical manifestations of social life can — or even should — be arranged in any determinate order of historical development in which each has its given place from the beginning to the end, from the lower to the higher. They teach that all the various forms of culture and ways of life are merely dissimilar to one another and that it is impossible or unnecessary to try to discover any regular sequence or lawful affiliation in their emergence into social reality.

This view and method is thoroughly anti-evolutionary, antiscientific, and essentially reactionary. But it is explainable. The denial of the possibility of finding out the order of advancement in social structures springs — if you will permit the analogy — from the resistance by today's invertebrates to the oncoming vertebrates who represent a superior form of organisation and are destined to supplant them in the struggle for social survival.

The evolutionary record itself, starting with the upward climb of the fish, most effectively refutes this tenacious conservatism. The first vertebrate was followed by six further progressive types of fish in the next hundred million years. The most advanced was a freshwater, medium-sized carnivorous species whose fossils have been found in Canada. Although this specimen spent much of its life in the water, it had acquired many of the functions required for living on land. Fish, as you know, are customarily at home in water, breathe through gills, and have fins. It was unbecoming to established fish-nature for the first amphibians to get up out of the water and crawl onto land, breathe through lungs, and move about on legs.

Let us imagine a fish (if you will go along with the fancy) who looked backward rather than forward, as some fish do. This backward-looking fish could exclaim to the forward-moving amphibians: "We fish, the oldest inhabitants, have never before done such things; they can't be done; they shouldn't be done!" And, when the amphibians persisted, could shriek: "These things mustn't be done; it's subversive of the good old order to do them!" However, the resistance of inertia did not prevent

some water dwellers from turning into land animals.

Animal life continued to move forward as species were modified and transmuted in response to decisive changes in their genetic constitutions and natural habitats. Amphibians turned into reptiles, which had better developed brains, were rib-breathing, egg-laying, had limbs for locomotion, and well-developed eyes. The reptile kingdom evolved gradually toward the mammal, with transitional types that had features belonging to both, until once again a full-fledged new order stepped into the world.

About 135 million years ago, the animal prototype that gave rise to our own tree-living ancestor emerged. This was a rodentlike creature which took another big leap in evolutionary adaptation and activity by quitting the land for the trees. Arboreal existence over six hundred thousand years so altered our animal ancestors from head to toe, from grasping functions to teeth changes, that they elevated themselves to monkey and ape forms. The kinship of the latter with our own kind is so close that it is difficult to distinguish an embryo of the highest apes from that of a human.

The natural conditions had at last been created for the emergence of mankind. It seems likely that changes in climate and geographical conditions connected with the first Ice Age drove certain species of primates down from the trees, out of the forests and onto the plains. A series of important anatomical developments paved the way for the making of the human race. The shortening of the pelvic bone made it possible for the primate to stand erect, to differentiate forelimbs from hindlimbs and emancipate the hands. The brain became enlarged. Binocular vision and vocal organs made human sight and speech possible.

The central biological organ for the making of mankind was the hand. The hands became opposed to the legs, and the thumb became opposed to the four fingers. This opposition between the thumb and the other fingers has been one of the most fruitful and dynamic of all the unions of opposites in the evolution of humanity. The thumb's ability to counterpose itself to each of the other fingers gave the hand exceptional powers of grasping and manipulating objects and endowed it with extreme flexibility and sensitivity. This acquisition made possible the biological combination of hand-eye-brain. Combined with the prolonged period of care by the mother for her offspring, the natural prerequisites for social life were at hand.

* * *

At this point something should be said about the most common argument against socialism: "You can't change human nature!" How much substance is there to this contention?

Once the record of organic evolution is accepted, one proposition, at least, inevitably

flows from it: *Fish nature can be changed!* It has been changed into amphibian, reptile, bird, mammalian, and, ultimately, into human natures. The salt in our bodies is one reminder, among many, of our descent from great-grandfather fish in the oceans of ages ago.

This poses the following pertinent questions to the resisters to social change: If fish can change, or be changed so much, on what grounds can narrow restrictions be imposed upon the changeability of mankind? Did our species lose its plasticity, its potentialities for radical alteration somewhere along the line from the transition of the primate to the human?

The contrary is the case. In the passage to humanity, our species not only retained all the capacities for progressive change inherent in animality but multiplied them to an infinitely higher degree, lifting them onto an entirely new dimension by creating previously unknown ways and means of evolutionary progress.

It required four to five hundred million years to create the biological conditions necessary for the generation of the first subhumans. This was not brought about through anyone's forethought or foresight, or in accord with any plan, or with the aim of realising some preconceived goal. It happened, we may say, as the lawful outcome of a series of blind and accidental developments in the forms of natural life, spurred forward in the struggle for survival, which eventually culminated in the production of a special kind of primate equipped with the capacities for acquiring more than animal powers.

At this juncture, about a million or so years ago, the most radical of all the transmutations of life on this planet took place. The emergence of mankind embodied something totally different which became the root of a unique line of development. What was this? It was the passage from animal separatism to human collectivism, from purely biological modes of behaviour to the use of acquired social powers.

Where did these added artificial powers come from that have marked off emerging mankind from all other animal species, elevated our species above the other primates, and made mankind into the dominant order of life? Our dominance is indisputable because we command the power to destroy ourselves and all other forms of life, not to speak of changing them.

The fundamentally new powers mankind acquired were the powers of production, of securing the means of sustenance through the use of tools and joint labour, and sharing the results with one another. I can do no more than single out four of the most important factors in this process.

The first was associated activities in getting food and dividing it. The second was the use, and later the manufacture, of implements for that purpose. The third was the

development of speech and of reasoning, which arose from and was promoted by living and working together. The fourth was the use, the domestication, and the production of fire. Fire was the first natural force, the first chemical process, put to socially productive use by ascending humanity.

Thanks to these new powers, emerging mankind enormously speeded up the changes in our own species and later in the world around us. The record of history for the past million years is essentially one of the formation of humanity and its continual transformation. This in turn has promoted the transformation of the world around us.

What has enabled mankind to effect such colossal changes in himself and his environment? All the biological changes in our stock over the past million years, taken together, have not been a prominent factor in the advancement of the human species. Yet during that time humanity has taken the raw material inherited from our animal past, socialised it, humanised it, and partially, though not completely, civilised it. The axis of human development, contrasted to animality, revolves around these social rather than biological processes.

The mainspring of this progress comes from the improvement of the powers of production, acquired along the way and expanded in accordance with man's growing needs. By discovering and utilising the diverse properties and resources of the world around him, man has gradually added to his abilities of producing the means of life. As these have developed, all his other social powers — the power of speech, of thought, of art, and of science, etc. — have been enhanced.

The decisive difference between the highest animals and ourselves is to be found in our development of the means and forces of production and destruction (two aspects of one and the same phenomenon). This accounts not only for the qualitative difference between man and the other animals but also for the specific differences between one level of human development and another. What demarcates the peoples of the Stone Age from those of the Iron Age, and savage life from civilised societies, is the difference in the total powers of production at their disposal.

What happens when two different levels of productive and destructive power measure strength was dramatically illustrated when the Spanish conquerors invaded the Western Hemisphere. The Indians were armed with bows and arrows and slings; the newcomers had muskets and gunpowder. The Indians had canoes and paddles; the Spaniards had big sailing ships. The Indians wore leather or padded jackets for protection in warfare; the Spaniards had steel armour. The Indians had no domesticated draught animals but went on foot; the Spaniards rode horses. Their superior equipment inspired terror and enabled the conquistadores to defeat their antagonists with inferior

manpower.

This basic proposition of historical materialism should be easier for us to grasp because we are privileged to witness the first stage of a technological revolution comparable in importance to the taming of fire a half million years ago. That is the acquisition of control over the processes of nuclear fission and fusion. This new source of power has already revolutionised the relations among governments and the art of warfare; it is about to transform industry, agriculture, medicine, and many other departments of social activity.[a]

What brought this technological revolution about? Mankind underwent no biological changes in the preceding period. Nor were there any sudden alterations in human modes of thinking, in their sentiments, or their moral ideas. This incalculably powerful force of production and destruction issued from the entire previous development of society's productive forces and all the scientific knowledge and instruments connected with them. Atomic power is the latest link in the chain of acquired powers that can be traced back to the earliest elements of social production: associated labour in securing the necessities of life, tool using and making, speech, thought, and fire. Atomic energy is the latest fruit of the seeds planted back in ancient society, which have been cultivated and improved by humanity in its upward climb.

* * *

Let us come back to that remarkable organ of ours, the hand. The hand, which among the primates originally conveyed food to the mouth, was converted by humanity into an organ for grasping and guiding the materials used and then shaped for tools. The hand is the biological prototype of the tool and the handle; it is the prerequisite and parent of labouring activity. The passage from the hand to the tool coincides with the creation of society and the progressive development of mankind and its latent powers.

The connection between the most rudimentary tools and the complex material instruments of production in today's industrial system has been graphically illustrated in a chart prepared for the Do-All Corporation, of Des Plaines, Illinois, sponsor of a travelling exhibit on "How Basic Tools Created Civilisation". This exhibit, which claims to be "the first attempt ever made to assemble the complete history of man's tools", documents the stages in the progress of technology.

[a] The reader should bear in mind that these comments about nuclear power were made in 1955. Since then, the life-threatening hazards of the nuclear industry have become appallingly clear. I concur with the growing worldwide antinuclear movement that because of the dangers inherent in disposing nuclear wastes as well as in mining and processing nuclear fuels the entire nuclear industry should be dismantled. [*Note by George Novack, 1979*]

The first known tools formed by man, called eoliths, date back, some scientists say, to one and a half million years ago. These were sections of broken stone with edges useful for cutting meat, scraping hides, or digging for roots. They were little more than simple extensions of the hand. They were not designed for specific functions but were adaptable for pounding, throwing, scraping, drilling, cutting, etc.

In the next stage, tools underwent improvement along two main lines: their cutting edges were made more efficient; and they became fashioned for special purposes. Men learned to chip stone to a predetermined shape, thereby producing a sharper cutting edge. A wider variety of working tools, such as axes, sharp-pointed drills, thin-edged blades, chisels, and other forerunners of today's hand tools, came into existence.

These tools reduced the time needed to produce sustenance and shelter, thereby raising the social level of production and improving living conditions. Moreover, these new productive activities enhanced man's mental capacities. The complexity of special-purpose tools indicates the development of a mentality capable of understanding the necessity of producing the *means* before the *end* could be attained. Mental concepts of specific use preceded both the design and construction of these special-purpose tools.

Each of the subsequent steps in the improvement of tool using and tool making likewise resulted in the economising of labour time, an increased productivity of labour, better living conditions, and the growth of man's intellectual abilities. The motive force of human history comes from the greater productivity of labour made possible by decisive advances in the techniques and tools of production.

This can be seen in the development of hunting. At first, mankind could as a rule capture only small and slow animals. Regular consumption of big game was made possible by the invention of such hunting weapons as the thrusting spear, the throwing spear, the spear-thrower, and the bow and arrow. The latter was the first device capable of storing energy for release when desired. These implements increased the range and striking force of primitive hunters and enabled them to slaughter the largest and fleetest animals.

All the basic hand tools in use today — the axe, adze, knife, drill, scraper, chisel, saw — were invented during the Stone Age. The first metal, bronze, did not replace stone as the preferred material for tool making until about 3500 years ago. Metal not only imparted a far more efficient and durable cutting edge to tools but enabled them to be resharpened instead of thrown away after becoming dulled.

During the period when bronze tools were the chief implements of production, means and standards of measurements were devised; mathematics and surveying were developed; a calendar was calculated; and great advances were made in sculpturing. Such basic inventions as the potter's wheel, the balance scale, the keystone arch, sailing

vessels, and glass bottles were created.

About 2500 years ago, iron, the most durable, plentiful and cheap metal, began to displace bronze in tool making. The introduction of iron tools tremendously advanced productivity and skills in agriculture and craftsmanship. They enabled more food to be grown and better clothing and shelter to be made with less expenditure of time and energy; they gave rise to many comforts and conveniences. Iron tools made possible many of the achievements of Greece and Rome, from the Acropolis of Athens to the tunnels, bridges, sewers, and buildings of Rome.

The energy for all these earlier means and modes of production was supplied exclusively by human muscles, which, after the domestication of herds, was supplemented to some extent by animal muscle power. The Industrial Revolution of the 18th century was based upon the utilisation of energy from other sources, from fossil fuels such as coal. The combination of mechanical power generated by steam engines, machine tools, improved implements, and production machinery, plus the increased use of iron and steel, have multiplied society's powers of production to their present point. Nowadays, machines and tools operated by mechanical and electrical power are the principal material organs of our industry and agriculture alike.

The most up-to-date machine tools have been developed out of simple hand tools. While using hand tools, men began to understand and employ the advantages of the lever, the pulley, the inclined plane, the wheel and axle, and the screw to multiply their strength. These physical principles were later combined and applied in the making of machine tools.

This entire development of technology is organically associated with and primarily responsible for the development of mankind's intellectual abilities. This is pointed out in the following explanatory paragraph from the Do-All Corporation exhibit:

> Machine tools perform in complicated ways the same basic functions and operations as hand tools. These basic functions were established by hand-held stone tools shaped by primitive man. It was through devising and using hand-wrought stone tools that mankind developed powers of mental and bodily coordination … and this in turn accelerated the increase in men's mental capabilities.

Such ideas about the influence of technology upon thought, taken from the publication of a respectable capitalist corporation, resemble those to be found in the writings of Marx and Engels. The thought-controllers may try to drive historical materialism out of the socialist door, but here it sneaks back in through a capitalist window.

* * *

The Do-All exhibit demonstrates that the evolution of tools can be arranged in a

chronological series and ascending order, from wood and stone hand tools through metal hand tools to power-driven machine tools. Is it likewise possible to mark off corresponding successive stages in social organisation?

Historical materialism answers this question affirmatively. On the broadest basis — and every big division of history can be broken down for special purposes into lesser ones — three main stages can be distinguished in man's rise from animality to the atomic age: savagery, barbarism, and civilisation.[a]

Napoleon said that an army marches on its stomach. This has been true of the forward march of the army of humanity. The acquisition of food has been the overriding aim of social production at all times, for men cannot survive, let alone progress, without regularly satisfying their hunger.

The principal epochs in the advancement of humanity can therefore be divided according to the decisive improvements effected in securing food supplies. Savagery, the infancy of humanity, constitutes that period when people depend for food upon what nature provides ready-made. Their food may come from plants, such as fruit or roots, from insects, birds or animals, or from seashore or sea life. At this stage, men forage for their food much like beasts of prey or grub for it like other animals — with these all-important differences: they cooperate with one another, and they employ crude tools along with other means and powers of production to assist them in "appropriating" the means of subsistence for their collective use.

The chief economic activities at this stage are foraging for food, hunting, and fishing; and they were developed in that sequence. The club and spear enable the savage to capture the raw materials for his meals, clothing, and shelter — all of which are embodied in animals on the hoof. The net catches fish and the fire prepares it for consumption. The Indians of southern California were at this stage when the first white settlers arrived two centuries ago.

Barbarism is the second stage of social organisation. It was based upon the domestication of animals and the cultivation of plants. Food is now not merely *collected*

[a] It should be stressed that these terms are not judgements on the moral values of the given society but refer to their objective stage of historical development. In the history of the Marxist movement this terminology itself has a history. The great utopian socialist Charles Fourier (1772-1837) used a similar categorisation, as did the pioneer anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-81) on whom Frederick Engels drew so heavily in his *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. In this great work of historical materialism, Engels enthusiastically contrasts the communal democracy and social solidarity of the economically more primitive stages of "savagery" and "barbarism" with the class oppression and exploitation which characterises technologically-developed bourgeois "civilisation". — *Ed.*

but *produced*. The domestication of cattle, sheep, pigs, and other animals provided reserves of meat as well as food in the form of milk from goats and cows. The planting and growing of crops made regular and plentiful food supplies available.

This food-producing revolution, which started in Asia from six to ten thousand years ago, relieved mankind from subjection to external nature for the first time. Up to that point humanity had to rely upon what the natural environment contained to take care of its needs and had been dependent for survival upon completely external and uncontrollable natural conditions. Entire stocks and cultures of people arose, flourished, and then succumbed, like plant or animal species, in response to the beneficence or hostility of nature around them.

For example, about twenty to thirty thousand years ago, there arose a society centred around southern France called the Reindeer Culture. These people thrived by hunting huge reindeer and other herds that browsed upon the lush vegetation there. The drawings they made, which have been discovered in caves over the past 75 years, testify to the keenness of their eyes and minds and the trained sensitivity of their hands and place them among the most superb artists that have ever appeared on earth. However, when changed climatic and botanic conditions caused the reindeer herds to vanish, their entire culture, and very likely the people as well, died out.

The early hunters had no assured control over their mobile sources of food. The insecurity of savage life was largely overcome, or at least considerably reduced, with the advent of stock breeding, and especially with the development of agricultural techniques. For the first time, methods were instituted for obtaining extensive and expanding supplies of food products and fibres by systematic and sustained activities of working groups. These branches of economic activity made much larger and more compact populations possible.

These activities and their increased output provided the elements for the higher culture of barbarism. Farming and stock raising led to the development of such handicrafts as smelting and pottery, as accumulated food supplies generated the need to store and transport articles for the first time. Men became more stationary; denser populations aggregated; permanent dwellings were built; and village life sprang into existence.

In their further and final development, the economic activities under barbarism created the prerequisites for the coming of civilisation. The material foundation for civilisation was the capacity acquired by the most advanced peoples for the regular production of far more food and goods than were required for the physical maintenance of their members. These surpluses had two results. They permitted specific sections of the communities to engage in diversified activities other than the direct acquisition

and production of the basic means of life. Such specialists as priests, nobles, kings, officials, smiths, potters, traders, builders, and other craftsmen made their appearance.

With the growth of specialisation and the extension of trade, the top layers of these groups moved into strategic positions that enabled the more fortunate and powerful to appropriate large personal shares of the surplus of wealth. The drive to increase personal wealth flowing from the growing social division of labour and exchange of goods, led in time to the development of private property, the family, slavery, class divisions, commodity production on a large scale, trade, money, the city, and the territorial state with its army, police, courts, and other relations and institutions characteristic of civilisation.

* * *

In its evolution to our own century, civilised society can be divided into three main epochs: slavery, feudalism, and capitalism. Each of these is marked off by the special way in which the ruling propertied class at the head of the social setup manages to extract the surplus wealth upon which it lives from the labouring mass who directly create it. This entire period covers little more than the past five to six thousand years.

Civilisation was ushered in and raised upon direct slavery. The very economic factors that broke up barbarism and made civilised life possible likewise provided the material preconditions for the use of slave labour. The division of labour based upon tending herds, raising crops, mining metals, and fashioning goods for sale enabled the most advanced societies to produce more than the actual labourers required for their maintenance. This made slavery both possible and profitable for the first time. It gave the most powerful stimulus to the predatory appetites of individual possessors of the means of production who strove to acquire and increase their surpluses of wealth. Slave production and ownership became the economic foundation of a new type of social organisation, the source of supreme power, prestige, and privileges. And it eventually reshaped the whole structure of civilised life.

Chattel slavery was an extremely significant human contrivance — and it is distinctively human. Animals may feed upon carcasses of other animals, but they do not live upon the surpluses they create. Although we rightly recoil against any manifestations of servitude today and burn to abolish its last vestiges, it should be recognised that in its heyday slavery had imperative reasons for existence and persistence.

Science demands that every phenomenon be approached, analysed, and appraised with objectivity, setting aside personal reactions of admiration or abhorrence. Historical materialism has to explain why slavery came to be adopted by the most advanced

contingents of mankind. The principal reason was that, along with the private ownership of the means of production and the widening exchange of its products, slave labour increased the forces of production, multiplied wealth, comforts and culture — although only for the lucky few — and, on the whole, spurred mankind forward for an entire historical period. Without the extension of slave labour, there would not have been incentives unremitting enough to pile up wealth on a sizable scale that could then be applied to further the productive processes.

The historical necessity for slavery can be illustrated along two lines. The peoples who failed to adopt slave labour likewise did not proceed to civilisation, however excellent their other qualities and deeds. They remained below that level because their economy lacked the inner drive of the force of greed and the dynamic propulsion arising from the slaveholder's need to exploit the slave to augment his wealth. That is a negative demonstration.

But there is more positive proof. Those states based on some form of servitude, such as the most brilliant cultures of antiquity from Babylon and Egypt to Greece and Rome, also contributed the most to the civilising processes, from wheeled carts and the plough to writing and philosophy. These societies stood in the main line of social progress.

But if slavery had sufficient reasons for becoming the beginning and basis of ancient civilisation, in turn and in time it generated the conditions and forces which would undermine and overthrow it. Once slavery became the predominant form of production either in industry, as in Greece, or in agriculture, as in Rome, it no longer furthered the development of agricultural techniques, craftsmanship, trade, or navigation. The slave empires of antiquity stagnated and disintegrated until after a lapse of centuries they were replaced by two main types of feudal organisation: Asiatic and West European.

Both of these new forms of production and social organisation were superior to slavery, but the West European turned out to be far more productive and dynamic. Under feudalism the labourers got more of their produce than did the slaves; they even had access to the land and other means of production. Serfs and peasants had greater freedom of activity and could acquire more culture.

As the result of a long list of technological and other social advances, merging with a sequence of exceptional historical circumstances, feudalised Europe became the nursery for the next great stage of class society, capitalism. How and why did capitalism originate?

Once money had arisen from the extension of trading several thousand years ago, its use as capital became possible. Merchants could add to their wealth by buying

goods cheap and selling them dear; moneylenders and mortgage holders could gain interest on sums advanced on the security of land or other collateral. These practices were common in both slave and feudal societies.

But if money could be used in precapitalist times to return more than the original investment, other conditions had to be fulfilled before capitalism could become established as a separate and definite world economic system. The central condition was a special kind of transaction regularly repeated on a growing scale. Large numbers of propertyless workers had to hire themselves to the possessors of money and the other means of production in order to earn a livelihood.

Hiring and firing seem to us a normal way of carrying on production. But such peoples as the Indians never knew it. Before the Europeans came, no Indian ever worked for a boss (the word itself was imported by the Dutch), because they possessed their own means of livelihood. The slave may have been purchased, but he belonged to and worked for the master his whole life long. The feudal serf or tenant was likewise bound for life to the lord and his land.

The epoch-making innovation upon which capitalism rested was the institution of working for wages as the dominant relation of production. Most of you have gone into the labour market, to an employment agency or personnel office, to get a buyer for your labour power. The employer buys this power at prevailing wage rates by the hour, day, or week and then applies it under his supervision to produce commodities that his company subsequently sells at a profit. That profit is derived from the fact that wage workers produce more value than the capitalist pays for their labour.

Up to the 20th century, this mechanism for pumping surplus labour out of the working masses and transferring the surpluses of wealth they create to the personal credit of the capitalist was the mightiest accelerator of the productive forces and the expansion of civilisation. As a distinct economic system, capitalism is only about 450 years old; it has conquered the world and journeyed from dawn to twilight in that time. This is a short life span compared to savagery, which stretched over a million years or more, or to barbarism, which prevailed for four thousand to five thousand years. Obviously, the processes of social transformation have been considerably speeded up in modern times.

This speeding up in social progress is due in large measure to the very nature of capitalism, which continually revolutionises its techniques of production and the entire range of social relations issuing from them. Since its birth, world capitalism has passed through three such phases of internal transformation. In its formative period, the merchants were the dominant class of capitalists because trade was the main source of wealth accumulation. Under commercial capitalism, industry and agriculture, the pillars

of production, were not usually carried on by wage labour but by means of small handicrafts, peasant farming, slave or serf labour.

The industrial age was launched around the beginning of the 19th century with the application of steam power to the first mechanised processes, concentrating large numbers of wage workers into factories. The capitalist captains of this large-scale industry became masters of the field of production and later of entire countries and continents as their riches, their legions of wage labourers, social and political power, swelled to majestic proportions.

This vigorous, expanding, progressive, confident, competitive stage of industrial capitalism dominated the 19th century. It passed over into the monopoly-ridden capitalism of the 20th century, which has carried all the basic tendencies of capitalism, and especially its most reactionary features, to extremes in economic, political, cultural, and international relations. While the processes of production have become more centralised, more rationalised, more socialised, the means of production and the wealth of the world have become concentrated in giant financial and industrial combines. So far as the capitalist sectors of society are involved, this process has been brought to the point where the capitalist monopolies of a single country, the US, dictate to all the rest.

* * *

The most important question to be asked at this point is: What is the destiny of the development of civilisation in its capitalist form? Disregarding in-between views, which at bottom evade the answer, two irreconcilable viewpoints assert themselves, corresponding to the world outlooks of two opposing classes. The spokesmen for capitalism say that nothing more remains to be done except to perfect their system as it stands, and it can roll on and on and on. The Do-All Corporation, for example, which published so instructive a chart on the evolution of tools, declares that more and better machine tools, which they hope will be bought at substantial profit from their company, will guarantee continued progress and prosperity for capitalist America — without the least change in existing class relations.

Socialists give a completely different answer based upon an incomparably more penetrating, correct, and comprehensive analysis of the movement of history, the structure of capitalism, and the struggles presently agitating the world around us. The historical function of capitalism is not to perpetuate itself indefinitely but to create the conditions and prepare the forces that will bring about its own replacement by a more efficient form of material production and a higher type of social organisation. Just as capitalism supplanted feudalism and slavery, and civilisation swept aside savagery and

barbarism, so the time has come for capitalism itself to be superseded. How and by whom is this revolutionary transformation to be effected?

In the last century, Marx made a scientific analysis of the workings of the capitalist system which explained how its inner contradictions would bring about its downfall. The revolutions of our own century since 1917 are demonstrating in real life that capitalism is due to be relegated to the museum of antiquities. It is worthwhile to understand the inexorable underlying causes of these developments, which appear so inexplicable and abhorrent to the upholders of the capitalist system.

Capitalism has produced many things, good and bad, in the course of its evolution. But the most vital and valuable of all the social forces it has created is the industrial working class. The capitalist class has brought into existence a vast army of wage labourers, centralised and disciplined, and set it into motion for its own purposes, to make and operate the machines, factories, and all the other production and transportation facilities from which its profits emanate.

The exploitation and abuses, inherent and inescapable in the capitalist organisation of economic life, provoke the workers time and again to organise themselves and undertake militant action to defend their elementary interests. The struggle between these conflicting social classes is today the dominant and driving force of world and American history, just as the conflict between the bourgeois-led forces against the precapitalist elements was the motivating force of history in the immediately preceding centuries.

The current struggle, which has been gathering momentum and expanding its scope for a hundred years, has entered its decisive phase on a world scale. Except for Cuba, the preliminary battles between the procapitalist and the anticapitalist forces have so far been waged to a conclusion in countries outside the Western Hemisphere. Sooner or later, however, they are bound to break out and be fought to a finish within this country, which is not only the stronghold of capitalist power but also the home of the best-organised and technically most proficient working class on this globe.

The main line of development in America, no less than the course of world history, points to such a conclusion. Why is this so?■

2. The Main Course of American History & Its Next Stage

We have reviewed the course by which humanity climbed out of the animal state, and we have marked the successive steps in that climb. Mankind had to crawl through savagery for a million years or more, walk through barbarism, and then, with shoulders hunched and head bowed, enter the iron gates of class society. There, for thousands of years, mankind endured a harsh schooling under the rod and rule of private property, which began with slavery and reached its highest form in capitalist civilisation. Now our own age stands, or rather struggles, at the entrance to socialism.

Let us now pass from the historical progress of mankind, viewed as a whole, to inspect one of its parts, the United States of North America. Because US imperialism is the mainstay of the international capitalist system, the role of the American people is crucial in deciding how quickly and how well humanity crosses the great divide between the class society of the past and the reorganisation and reinvigoration of the world along socialist lines.

I shall try to give brief answers to the following four questions: What has been the course of American history in its essentials? What are its connections with the march of the rest of humankind? What has been the outcome to date? Finally, where do we fit into the picture?

* * *

American history breaks sharply into two fundamentally different epochs. One belongs to the aboriginal inhabitants, the Indians; the other starts with the coming of white Europeans to America at the end of the 15th century. The beginnings of human activity in the Western Hemisphere are still obscure. But it is surmised that from 20 to 30 thousand years ago, early Stone Age Asiatics, thanks to favourable climatic conditions which united that part of Alaska with Siberia, crossed over the Bering Strait and slowly made their way throughout North, Central, and South America. Later streams of migration may have brought the practices of gardening with them. It is upon these

bequests that the Indians fashioned their type of existence.

Whoever regards the Indians as insignificant or incompetent has defective historical judgment. Humanity has been raised to its present estate by four branches of productive activity. The first is food gathering, which includes grubbing for roots and berries as well as hunting and fishing. The second is stock raising. The third is agriculture. The fourth is craftsmanship, graduating into large-scale industry.

The Indians were extremely adept at hunting, fishing, and other ways of food gathering. They were ingenious craftsmen whose work in some fields has never been excelled. The Incas, for example, made textiles which were extremely fine in texture, colouring, and design. They invented and used more different techniques of weaving on their hand looms than any other people in history.

However, the Indians showed the greatest talent in their development of agriculture. They may even have independently invented soil cultivation. In any case they brought it to diversified perfection. We are indebted to the Indians for most of the vegetables that today come from the fields and through the kitchens onto our tables. Most important are corn, potatoes, and beans, but there is in addition a considerable list including tomatoes, chilli, pineapples, peanuts, avocados, and for after dinner purposes, tobacco. They knew and used the properties of 400 separate species of plants. No plant cultivated by the American Indians was known to Asia, Europe, or Africa prior to the white invasion of America.

Much is heard about all that white men brought over to the Indians, but little about what the Indians gave the European whites. The introduction of the food plants taken from the Indians more than doubled the available food supply of the older continent after the 15th century and became an important factor in the expansion of capitalist civilisation. Over half of the agricultural produce raised in the world today comes from plants domesticated by the Indians!

From the first to the 15th centuries, the Indians themselves created magnificent, even astounding cultures on the basis of their achievements in agriculture. Agriculture enabled some of the scattered and roving hunting tribes of Indians to aggregate in small but permanent settlements where they supported themselves by growing corn, beans, and other vegetables. They also raised and wove cotton, made pottery, and developed other handicrafts.

The Incas of the Andes, the Mayans of Guatemala and Yucatan, and the Aztecs of central Mexico, unaffected by European civilisation and having developed independently, constituted the most advanced of the Indian societies. Their cultures embodied the utmost the Indians were able to accomplish within the 25,000 years or so allotted them by history. In fact, the Mayans had made mathematical and

astronomical calculations more complex and advanced than those of the European invaders. They had independently invented the zero for use in their number system — something even the Greeks and Romans had lacked.

Indians progressed as far as the middle stage of barbarism and were stopped there. Whether or not, given unlimited time and no interference from more powerful and productive peoples, they would have mounted all the way to civilisation must remain unanswered. This much can be stated: they had formidable obstacles to overcome along such a path. The Indians did not have such important domesticated animals as the horse, cow, pig, sheep, or water buffalo that had pulled the Asians and Europeans along toward civilisation. They had only the dog, turkey, guinea pig, and, in the Andean highlands, llamas, alpacas, and, in some places, bees. Moreover, they did not use the wheel, except for toys, did not know the use of iron or firearms, and did not have other prerequisites for civilising themselves.

However, history in the other part of the globe settled this question without further appeal. For, while the most advanced Indians had been moving up from wandering hunters' lives to those of settlers in barbaric communities, the Europeans, themselves an offspring of Asiatic culture, had not only entered class society but had become highly civilised. Their most progressive segments along the Atlantic seaboard were passing over from feudalism to capitalism.

This uneven development of society in the Old World and the New provided the historical setting for the second great turning point in American history. What was the essential meaning of the upheaval initiated by the west European crossing of the Atlantic? It represented the transition from the Stone Age to the Iron Age in America, from barbaric to civilised modes of life, from tribal organisation based upon collectivist practices to a society rooted in private property, production for exchange, the family, the state, and so forth.

Few spectacles in history are more dramatic and instructive than the confrontation and conflict between the Indian representatives of communal Stone Age life and the armed agents of class civilisation. Science fiction tells about visitations to this planet by Martians in flying saucers. To the Indians, the first visitations of the white men were no less startling and incomprehensible.

To the Indians, these white men had completely alien customs, standards, and ways of life. They were strange in appearance and behaviour. In fact, the differences between the two were so profound as to be irreconcilable. What was the root cause of the enduring and deadly clash between them? They represented two utterly incompatible levels of social organisation that had grown out of and were based upon dissimilar conditions and were heading toward entirely different goals.

Even at its height, Indian life was based upon tribal collectivism and its crude technology. Indian psychology was fashioned by such social institutions. The Indians not only did not have the wheel, iron, or the alphabet — they also lacked the institutions, ideas, feelings, and aims of civilised peoples who had been moulded by the technology and culture of an acquisitive society. These conditions had stamped out a very special kind of human being as the peculiar product of civilisation based upon private ownership.

The most highly developed Indians subsisted on agriculture. But their agriculture was not of the same economic mode as that of the newcomers. The major means of producing food by soil cultivation belonged to the entire tribe and nothing in its production or distribution could be exclusively claimed by individual owners. This was true of the principal means of production, the land itself. When the Europeans arrived at these shores, all the way from the Atlantic to the Pacific there was not a single foot of ground that a person could stand on and assert: "This belongs to my solitary private self, or to my little family — all others keep off and stay out." The land belonged to the whole people.

It was quite otherwise with the white men, the bearers of the new and higher type of society. To them it appeared natural and necessary, as it still does to most citizens of this country, that almost everything on earth should pass into someone's private ownership. Clothes, houses, weapons of war, tools, ships, even human beings themselves, could be bought and sold.

It was in the shiny embodiment of precious metals that private property became not only the cornerstone of worldly existence but even opened up the gates of heaven, Columbus wrote to Queen Isabella as follows: "Gold constitutes treasure and he who possesses it has all he needs in this world as also the means of rescuing souls from purgatory and restoring them to the enjoyment of paradise." This was literally true at that time because rich Catholics could buy indulgences for their sins from the Pope. Cortez is said to have told some natives of Mexico: "We Spaniards are troubled with a disease of the heart for which we find gold, and gold only, a specific remedy."

The doctrine of the European whites was that everything must have its price, whether it pertains to present happiness or future salvation. This idea remains the guideline for the plutocratic rulers of our own day, who in their campaigns to dominate the world not only buy up individuals but even whole governments. In their quest for gold and lust for gain, Columbus and the conquistadores enslaved and killed thousands of West Indians in the islands they discovered. And that was only the beginning.

Viewed from the heights of world history, this turning point in America was characterised by the conjuncture of two revolutionary processes. The first was the

shift of maritime Europe from a feudal to a bourgeois basis. Part of this revolutionising of Western Europe was a push outward as the capitalist traders extended their operations throughout the globe. Their exploring, marketing, pirating expeditions brought the emissaries of the budding bourgeois society in Europe across the ocean and into collision with the Indians. The rape of the ancient cultures of the Aztecs and Incas, the enslavement and extermination of the natives by the Spanish conquerors and others, was a collateral offensive of this European revolution on our own continent.

Through the extension of the revolutionary process, the peoples of the Stone Age here were overcome and supplanted by the most advanced representatives of class civilisation. This was not the only continent on which such a process took place. What happened from the 15th to the 19th centuries in the New World had taken place much earlier in western Europe itself; and it was to reach into the most remote sectors of the world, as capitalism has spread over the earth from that time to our own.

The contest between the Stone Age peoples and the representatives of the bourgeois epoch was fiercely fought. Their wars stretched over four centuries and ended in the disintegration, dispossession, or destruction of the prehistoric cultures and the unchallenged supremacy of class society.

With the advent of the white Europeans (as well as the enslaved coloured Africans who were transported here by them), American history was switched onto an entirely different set of rails, a new course marked out by the needs of a young, expanding world capitalism.

We come now to a most crucial question: What has been the main line of American growth since 1492? Various answers are given — the growth of national independence, the spread of democracy, the coming into his own of the common man, or the expansion of industry. Each of these familiar formulas taught in the schools does record some aspect of the process, but none goes to the heart of the matter.

The correct answer to the question is that despite detours en route, the main line of American history has consisted in the construction and consolidation of capitalist civilisation, which has been carried to its ultimate in our own day. Any attempt to explain the development of American society since the 16th century will be brought up against this fact. The discovery, exploration, settlement, cultivation, exploitation, democratisation, and industrialisation of this continent must all be seen as successive steps in promoting the building of bourgeois society. This is the only interpretation of the decisive events in the past 450 years in North America that makes sense, gives continuity and coherence to our complex history, distinguishes the mainstream from tributaries, and is validated by the development of American society. Everything in our national history has to be referred to, and linked up with, the process of establishing

the capitalist way of life in its most pronounced and, today, its most pernicious form.

This is commonly called "The American Way of Life". A more realistic and honest characterisation would be the capitalist way of life because, as I shall indicate, this is destined to be only a historically limited and passing expression of civilised life in America.

The central importance of the formation and transformation of bourgeois society can be demonstrated in another way. What is the most outstanding peculiarity of American history since the coming of the Europeans? There have been many peculiarities in the history of this country; in some ways this is a very peculiar country. But what marks off American life from the development of the other great nations of the world is that the growth and construction of American society falls entirely within the epoch of the expansion of capitalism on a global scale. That is the key to understanding American history, whether you deal with colonial history, 19th-century history, or 20th-century history.

It is not true of other leading countries such as England, Germany, Russia, India, Japan, or China. These countries passed through prolonged periods of slave or feudal civilisation that left their stamp upon them to this very day. Look at MacArthur's preservation of that feudal relic, the emperor of Japan, or that Sunday supplement delight, the monarchy of England.

America, on the other hand, leaped from savagery and barbarism to capitalism, tipping its hat along the way to slavery and feudalism, which held no more than subordinate places in building the bourgeois system. In a couple of centuries, the American people hurried through stages of social development that took the rest of mankind many thousands of years. But there was close interconnection between these two processes. If the rest of mankind had not already made these acquisitions, we Americans would not have been able to rush ahead so far and so fast. The tasks of pioneers are invariably harder and take far longer to accomplish.

The fusion of the antifeudal revolution in Europe with the wars of extermination against the Indians ushered in the bourgeois epoch of American history. This period has stretched over 450 years. It falls into three distinct phases, each marked off by revolutionary changes in American life.

* * *

The first period is that of colonial America, which extended from 1500 to the passage of the US Constitution in 1788-89. If we analyse the social forms and economic forces of American life during these three centuries, colonial America, the formative period of our civilisation, stands out as an exceptional blending of precapitalist agencies with

the oncoming capitalist forms and forces of production. The tribal collectivism of the Indians was being transformed, pushed back, annihilated; remnants of feudalism were imported from Europe and transplanted here. The ranchos of southern California in the early 19th century had been preceded by colonial baronies; entire colonies such as Maryland and Pennsylvania were owned by landed proprietors who had been given title to them by the English monarchy. Big planters exploited white indentured servants and coloured chattel slaves who in many places provided the main labour forces.

Alongside them were hundreds of thousands of small farmers, hunters, trappers, artisans, traders, merchants, and others associated with the new forms of ownership and economic activity and animated by customs, feelings, and ideas stemming from the capitalism which was advancing in Europe and now beginning to flourish on this side of the Atlantic.

The fundamental question posed by this development was — which would prevail, the precapitalist or the capitalist forces? This was the axis of the social struggles within the colonies and even of the incessant wars for possession of the New World among the European nations, which characterised the colonial period. The showdown on this front came in the years between 1763 and 1789, the period of the preparation, outbreak, waging, and conclusion of the first American revolution. This was the first stage of the bourgeois-democratic revolution on this continent.

It assumed the form of a war between the rulers and supporters of Great Britain and the colonial masses led by representatives of the Northern merchants, bankers, manufacturers, and planters of the Southern slave system, which was an appendage of growing native capitalism. The outcome of the contest determined the next stage in the destiny of American capitalism. If Great Britain's domination had persisted, that may have stunted and perverted the further development of bourgeois society here as it did in India and Africa.

The first American revolution and its war for independence was a genuine people's movement. Such movements destroy much that has become rotten and is ready for burial. But, above all, they are socially creative, bringing to birth institutions that provide the ways and means for the next surge forward. That was certainly true of our first national revolution, which is permanently embedded in the American and international consciousness. So powerful and persistent are its traditions that they are today a source of embarrassment to the capitalist rulers of this country in their dealings with the colonial movements for emancipation.

What were the notable achievements of this first stage of the North American bourgeois-democratic revolution? It overthrew the reactionary rule of the 10,000

merchants, bankers, landowners, and manufacturers of Great Britain, who, after helping to spur the American colonies forward, had become the biggest block to their further advance. It gave independence to the colonies, unified them, and cleared away such feudal vestiges as the crown lands which the monarchy held. It democratised the states and gave them a republican form of government. It cleared the ground for a swift expansion of civilisation in its native capitalist forms from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The revolution had international repercussions. It inspired and protected similar movements during the next century in the Latin American colonies and even radiated back to the Old Continent. Read the diary of Gouverneur Morris, a financial leader of the Patriot Party, who became one of the early US ambassadors to France. He was in Paris selling American properties to aristocrats who were threatened with exile by the French revolution. These clients complained to the sympathetic Morris that if only his countrymen had refrained from revolution, the French people would never have had the notion or courage to follow suit.

But even the most thoroughgoing revolution cannot do more than historical possibilities permit. Two serious shortcomings in the work of this first upheaval manifested themselves in the next decades. One was the fact that the revolution did not and could not eliminate the soil in which the institution of slavery was rooted. Many leaders of the time, among them Thomas Jefferson, hoped that slavery would wither away because of unfavourable economic conditions.

The second shortcoming was that although the revolt gave Americans political independence, it could not give thoroughgoing independence to the US in a capitalist sense. This was true in two ways: at home the Northern capitalists had to share power with the Southern slaveowners, with whom they had waged the revolutionary war for independence and set up the new government; on the international market they remained in economic subordination to the more advanced industrial and financial structure of England.

The leaders of the revolution were aware of these deficiencies. The same Gouverneur Morris wrote to President George Washington from Paris on September 30, 1791:

> We shall … make great and rapid progress in useful manufactures.
>
> This alone is wanting to complete our independence. We shall then be as it were a world by ourselves, and far from the jars and wars of Europe, their various revolutions will serve merely to instruct and amuse. Like the roaring of a tempestuous sea, which at a certain distance becomes a pleasing sound.

However, a historical freak came along, which upset this pleasant prospect. This freak was the result of a double revolution in technology, one which took place in Europe,

especially in English industry, and the other in American agriculture. The establishment of factories with steam-driven machinery in English industry, notably in textiles, its most important branch, created the demand for large supplies of cotton. The invention of the cotton gin enabled the Southern planters to supply that demand.

Consequently, slavery, which had been withering on the vine, acquired a new lease on life. This economic combination invested the nobles of the Southern cotton kingdom with tremendous wealth and power. A study of American history in the first half of the 19th century shows that its national and political life was dominated and directed by the struggle for supremacy waged by the forces centred around the Southern slaveholders on one side and those of the antislavery elements on the other. The crucial social issue before the nation was not always stated bluntly. But when every other conflict was traced to its roots, it was found to be connected with the question: What are we Americans going to do about slavery?

(A similar situation exists today in relation to capitalism. No matter what dispute agitates the political-economic life of this country, it sooner or later brings up the great social-economic question: What are we Americans going to do about capitalism?)

For the first 50 years of the 19th century, the cotton aristocrats of the South undeniably held centre stage. They became very cocky about their power and privileges, which they thought would last indefinitely. Then, around 1850, conditions began to change quite rapidly. A new combination of social forces appeared that was to prove strong enough not only to challenge the slave power but to meet it in civil war, conquer and eliminate it.

It is highly instructive to study the mentality and outlook of the American people in 1848. That was a year of revolutions in the principal countries of western Europe. The people in the United States, including its governing groups, viewed these outbursts in an isolationist spirit.

The European revolutions even pleased certain sections of the ruling classes in the United States because they were directed mainly against monarchies. There were no monarchies here to overthrow, although there was a slave aristocracy rooted in the South. Although most of the common people in the United States sympathised with the European revolutions, they looked upon them as no more than a catching up with what had already been achieved in this country. The Americans said to themselves: "We've already had our revolution and don't need any more here. The quota of revolutions assigned to us by history is exhausted."

They did not see even 15 years into their own future. The bourgeois-democratic revolution still had considerable unfinished business. During the 1850s, it became plainer that the Southern slaveholders were not only tightening their autocracy in the

Southern states but were trying to make slaves of the entire population of the United States. This small set of rich men arrogated to themselves the right to tell the people what they could and could not do, where the country should expand, and how the affairs of America should and should not be managed.

So a second revolution proved necessary to complete those tasks left unsettled in the late 18th century and to dispose of the main problems that had confronted the American people in the meantime. There had to be 13 years of preparatory struggles, four and a half years of civil war, 12 years of Reconstruction — about 30 years in all, in this intense and inescapable revolutionary upheaval.

What is most important for us now are the net results of that travail. Every schoolchild knows that the slave power was abolished and the Negro population unshackled from chattel slavery. But the principal achievement of this revolution from the standpoint of American and world development was that the last of the internal impediments to the march of American capitalism were levelled, and the way cleared for the consolidation of capitalist rule.

That period saw the conclusion of the contest that had been going on since 1492 between the procapitalist and precapitalist forces on this continent. See what had happened to the peoples representing the diverse precapitalist ways of life. The Indians, who embodied savagery and barbarism, had either been exterminated, dispossessed, or herded into reservations. England, which had upheld feudalism and colonial subjugation, had been swept aside and American industrial capital had attained not only political supremacy but economic independence. The Southern plantation owners, who were the final formidable precapitalist force to be pushed out of the road, had been smashed and expropriated by the Civil War and Reconstruction.

The capitalist rulers of the industrial system were then like the Count of Monte Cristo when he burst from prison and exclaimed, with so much wealth and newly gained liberty at his command: "The world is mine!" And they have been acting on that premise ever since.

* * *

I would like now to make several observations on the economic and political development of American society from 1492 to the triumph of the capitalist class. As has already been pointed out, private property in the means of production was virtually nonexistent on this continent until the 15th century. Thereafter, as the white settlers spread, the dominant trend was for all the means of production to pass into private hands and be exploited along such lines. The land, for example, which had been tribally held, was cut up and appropriated by individuals or corporations from one

end of the country to the other.

After the victory of the Northern bankers, merchants, and manufacturers in the middle of the 19th century, this process moved on to a still higher plane. The means of production under private ownership became more and more concentrated in corporate hands. Today an individual might be able to build a single auto or airplane, but without many, many millions of dollars he would not be able to compete in the market with General Motors or Ford or Lockheed or Douglas. Even so big a magnate as Henry J. Kaiser found that out in auto.

Today there is hardly an acre of land without its title deed. In fact, the Civil War promoted this process through the Homestead Act, which gave 160 acres to private individuals, and through other acts of Congress that handed over millions of acres to railroad corporations. Insofar as the land was distributed to small farmers, this was progressive because it was the only way to hasten the development of agriculture under the given conditions.

It is impossible to detail here the settlement and building of the Midwest and the West, but certain consequences of capitalist expansion deserve mention. First, as a result of this capitalist expansion, the minds of average Americans, unlike those of the Indians, have been so moulded by the institutions of private property that its standards can be thrown off only with difficulty. The Europeans penetrated the America of the Indians; and their descendants are venturing into outer space. One extreme, absurd, but for that very reason most instructive, illustration of the effects of capitalist expansion on American consciousness appeared in a press dispatch from Illinois with the headline: "Who Is the Owner of Outer-Space; Chicagoan Insists that He Is." This news item followed:

> With plans for launching man-made earth satellites now in motion, the question was inevitable [inevitable, that is, to Americans believing in the sacredness of private ownership]: Who owns outer space?
>
> Most experts agreed that the question was over their heads. The rocket scientists said it was a problem for the international law experts. The lawyers said they had no precedents to go by. Only James T. Mangan, a fast-thinking Chicago press agent, has a firm answer to the question of space sovereignty. Mangan declares he owns outer space. To back up his claim, he has a deed filed with the Cook County (Chicago) Recorder. The deed, accepted after the state's attorney's office solemnly upheld the claim in a four-page legal opinion, seized "all space in all directions from the earth at midnight", December 20, 1948.
>
> Mangan declared that the statute of limitations for challenging the deed expires December 20, 1955, and added: 'The government has no legal right to space without

my permission."

If this be madness, yet there is method in it. That method is the mainspring of the capitalist way of life. This gentleman, Mangan, is only logically extending to the exploration of outer space the same acquisitive creed which guided our founding fathers in taking over the American continent. This particular fanatic of private property thinks the same law is going to apply no matter how far into space we fly and no matter how far we go into the future. He differs from other exponents of capitalism only in the boldness and consistency of his private-property logic.

The second point I want to deal with is the interconnection between evolution and revolution. These two phases of social development are often opposed to each other as unconnected opposites, irreconcilable alternatives. What does American history teach us about them? The American people have already passed through two revolutionary periods in their national history, each the culmination of lengthy periods of social progress on the basis of previous achievements.

During the interval between revolutions, relatively small changes gradually occurred in people's lives. They consequently took the given framework of their lives for granted, viewed it as fixed and final, and found it hard to imagine a different way. The idea of revolutionary change in their own lives and lifetimes seemed fantastic or at least irrelevant. Yet it was during those very periods of evolutionary progress that often unnoticed accumulations of changes prepared more drastic change.

The new class interests, which grew powerful but remained unsatisfied, the social and political conflicts, which recurred but remained unresolved, the shifts in the relations of antagonistic social forces kept asserting themselves in a series of disturbances until they reached an acute stage. The people of this country were not reckless. They made every attempt to find reasonable compromises between the contending forces, and often arrived at them. But after a while, these truces turned out to be ineffectual and short-lived. The irrepressible conflict of social forces broke out at higher stages until the breaking point was reached.

Look at the American colonists of 1763. They had just emerged — side-by-side with mother England — from a successful war against the French and the Indians. They did not anticipate that within 10 years they would be fighting for their own freedom against England and alongside the very French monarchy they had fought in 1763. That would have been considered fantastic. Yet it happened only a little more than a decade later. Dr. Benjamin Rush, one of Pennsylvania's signers of the Declaration of Independence, observed in his *Autobiography* that:

> Not one man in a thousand contemplated or wished for the independence of our country in 1774, and but few of those who assented to it, foresaw the immense

> influence it would soon have upon the national and individual characters of the Americans.

So, too, the majority of Northerners, who enjoyed the economic boom in America from 1851 to 1857 — the biggest boom in the 19th century preceding the Civil War — little reckoned that as the result of domestic processes accelerated by that very prosperity, the country was going to be split on the slave question four years after the depression of 1857. Instead, they reasoned: Hadn't there been a compromise with the slaveholders in 1850 and couldn't others be arrived at? Indeed, there were attempts at compromise up to the very outbreak of the Civil War, and even afterwards.

Of course, the Abolitionists at one extreme and the Southern "Fire-Eaters" at the other prophesied a different course of development and, in their own ways, prepared for the coming revolution. But these radical voices on the left and the right were few and far between.

These crucial episodes in American history demonstrate that, under conditions of class society, periods of gradual social *evolution* prepare forces for the *revolutionary* solution of the accumulated and unfinished problems of peoples and nations. This revolutionary cleanup in turn creates the premises for a new and higher stage of evolutionary progress. This alternation is demonstrated with exceptional clarity by American history in the 18th and 19th centuries.

It is important to note, as a third point in dealing with the consequences of capitalist development in the United States, that our national revolutions stemmed directly from native conditions. Neither was imported by "outside agitators", although some, like Tom Paine, played important roles. They came from the ripening of conflicts between internal social forces. But this is only one side of the matter. The domestic struggles in turn were connected with, conditioned, and determined by world economic and social development.

We pointed out earlier that the impetus for the overseas migration that changed the face of America came from the antifeudal bourgeois revolutions, which were transforming Europe; the conquest of our continent was an offshoot of those revolutions. The first American revolution occurred during the era of commercial capitalism, which was the first stage in world capitalist development. Historically, it forms part of the series of bourgeois-democratic revolutions by which the capitalist class came to power on an international scale. The first American revolution must be considered a child of the English bourgeois revolution of the mid-17th century and a parent of sorts to the French bourgeois-democratic revolution of the late 18th century.

Trade in this era, not simply American but world trade, produced a powerful merchant class in the North, which was backed up by maritime workers and artisans

in the coastal cities and by free farmers in the countryside. These became the shock troops of the Sons of Liberty. It is no accident that the bustling seaport of Boston, populated by rich merchants who wanted to get out from under the thumb of Great Britain and by robust waterfront workers, longshoremen, and sailors, stood in the forefront of the fight against Great Britain and that the revolutionary war itself was detonated by the British efforts to gag and strangle Boston.

The second American revolution took place at the time of the greatest expansion of industrial capitalism on both sides of the Atlantic. The years from 1848 to 1871 were punctuated by wars and revolutions. These conflicts did not mark the disintegration of world capital, as they do in the present century, but finally gave the capitalist class unmitigated supremacy in America and a series of countries in Europe.

The second stage of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the United States, the Civil War, placed the Northern industrialists in the saddle. It was the outstanding revolutionary event of the entire period from 1848 to 1871, which began with the abortive French and German revolutions of 1848 and ended with the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune of 1871. The decisive event of that period in world history was the US capitalists' victory in this country, which heralded their ascent to world power.

* * *

With these lessons in mind, let us now look at the march of American society from the close of the Civil War period until today. Having reaped the fruits of two successful revolutions, the capitalists began to enjoy them. For them, revolution in America was a thing of the past; the United States would advance by small slow steps. Indeed, there has been a significant evolution of capitalist society on the foundation of the achievements of its previous revolutions. But in the dialectic of our national development, it is the very extraordinary expansion of the capitalist forces of production that has been preparing the elements for another, and this time a final, showdown between class forces that belong to different stages of economic and social evolution.

Since 1878, there have been two major trends in operation in this country. The predominant one to date has been the growing concentration of economic, political, and cultural power in the hands of the monopolists. They have occasionally been challenged but never dislodged. Today they are open and insolent in the exercise of power. As Mr. Wilson of the biggest monopoly and the Defence Department has said: "What's good for General Motors is good for the country."

This echoes the assertion by an earlier absolute monarch, Louis XIV: "I am the state." The old regime of France had its funeral in 1789. Everything in this world — and

this is especially true of political regimes and social systems under class society — includes within itself its own opposition, its own fatal opposition. This is certainly true of the power of capitalism which breeds its own nemesis in the productive — and political — capacities of wage labour.

The irony is that the greater the wealth of the capitalists, the stronger becomes the social position of the exploited workers from whom this wealth is derived. The United States has witnessed, side-by-side with the rise of monopoly capitalism, the emergence of an ever more strongly organised, centralised, and unified labour movement. Ever since the capitalists and wage workers came into existence together, there have been differences, friction, outbursts of conflict, strikes, lockouts, between sections of these two classes. They arise from the very nature of their relations, which are antagonistic.

By and large, up to now, these conflicts have never gone beyond the bounds of the basic political and economic structure laid down by the Civil War. They have been subdued, reconciled, or smoothed over. Despite all disturbances, the monopolist rulers have entrenched themselves more firmly in their paramount positions. However, a closer scrutiny of the development discloses that the working class occupies an increasingly influential, though still subordinate, place in our national life.

The question presents itself with renewed force: Will this situation of class stalemate — with the workers in a secondary position — continue indefinitely? The capitalists naturally answer that it can and must be so. Furthermore, they do everything from teaching in school the perpetual existence of the established class structure to passing antilabour laws to insure the continuance of the status quo. The union officialdom, for their part, go along with this general proposition.

Neither the capitalist spokesmen nor the AFL-CIO officialdom will find any precedent in American history to reinforce their expectations of an indefinite maintenance of the status quo. That is one lesson from our national past that the "long view" of socialism emphasises. For many years, despite occasional tiffs, the American colonists got along with their mother country and even cherished the tie. Then came a very rapid and radical reversal in relations, a duel to the end. The same held true of the long coexistence of the Northern free states and Southern slavery. For 60 years, the Northerners had to play second fiddle to the Southern slave autocracy until the majority of people in the country came to believe that this situation would endure indefinitely. The slaveowners, like the capitalists of today, taught that their "American way of life" was the crown of civilisation. But once the new combination of progressive forces was obliged to assert itself, the maturing differences broke out in a civil war which disposed of the old order. The political collaborators of yesterday turned into irreconcilable foes on the morrow.

The upholders of the status quo in this country can find still less support from the main trends of world history in our own time. In 1848, at a time when the capitalist classes on both sides of the Atlantic were toppling monarchies and feudal aristocracies, the pioneer communists first publicly proclaimed their ideas and started the movement of scientific socialism, which has become the guide of the world working class in its struggle for emancipation. In 1917, 69 years later, the first working-class state was set up in the Soviet Union. There was no other established for almost three decades.

Then came the Second World War, which extended the domain of collectivised property throughout Eastern Europe, and afterwards the victory of the Chinese revolution, which overturned capitalism in that major power in the East.

All this is tantamount to a colossal advance of world history. The essence of the new stage is that the movement for the advancement of capitalism, which had dominated world history from the 16th to the 19th centuries, has been succeeded on a world scale in the 20th century by the anticapitalist movement of the socialist working class and its colonial allies.

Of course it is not only the hope but the policy of the present capitalist holders of power that the achievements, ideas, and purposes of this revolutionary movement of the workers and colonial peoples can be contained in other parts of the world and crushed there. At any rate, the witch-hunters make every effort to keep its influences from these shores. Just as the British tyrants and the Southern slaveholders, each in their day, mustered all their resources to hold back the oncoming revolutionary forces in this land, so do the agents of the American plutocracy today. Will the monopolists succeed where their forerunners failed? Let us consider this question.

The high point of a revolutionary process consists in the transfer of supreme power from one class to another. What are the prevailing relationships of power in the United States? All basic decisions on foreign and domestic policy are made by the top capitalist circles to forward their aims and interests. Labour may be able to modify this or that decision or policy, but its influence does no more than curb the political power exercised by the monopolists.

However, there is a remarkable anomaly in such a relationship of forces. The now united union movement has about 17 million members. With their families, followers, and friends, this movement can muster enough votes to give the political representatives of organised labour majority power in the cities, in the states, and in Washington. This means that the capitalists continue to exercise their sway by virtue of default, that is, a continued default of independent political action and organisation by labour, or more precisely by its present leaders. They are failing to use one-thousandth of the power their movement presently and potentially possesses on behalf of the working people.

Organised labour has within its own grasp enough political strength, not to speak of its economic and social capacities, to be the sovereign force in this country. That is why any movement toward the formation of an independent party of labour based on the trade unions would have such highly revolutionising implications upon the existing setup, regardless of the intentions or announced program of its organisers. Any such move on a massive scale would portend a shift in the power of supreme decision in the United States from capitalist to labour circles, just as the coming to Washington of the Republican Party in 1860 signified the shift of power away from the slaveholders to the Northern industrialists.

The Republican leaders of 1861 did not have revolutionary intentions. They headed a reformist party. They wanted to restrict the power of the slaveholders. But to do this involved upsetting the established balance of class forces. The slaveholders recognised the threat to their supremacy far more clearly and felt it more keenly than did the Northern Republican leaders themselves. That is why they initiated a counterrevolutionary assault in order to retrieve the power they had previously possessed.

The parallel with any national assumption of political power by the labour movement, even in a reformist way, is plain to see. Is such a shift possible? A succession of crucial shifts of power has marked the onward movement of the American people: from Britain to the colonial merchants and planters in the 18th century; and from the Southern slavocracy to the industrial capitalists in the 19th century. The thrust in the present period of our national history is toward another such colossal shift, this time from the ruling plutocracy to the rising working class and its allies among the oppressed minorities.

The whole course of economic, social, and political development in this country and in this century points to such a shift in power. Of course, the working class is far from predominant yet, and even less conscious of its historical mission. But, from the standpoint of the long view, it is most important to note the different rates of growth in the economic, social, and political potentialities of the respective contenders for supreme power. Reviewing this country's history from 1876 to 1957, together with the rate of growth of the working-class movement on a world scale, the balance of forces has been steadily shifting, despite all oscillations, toward the side of working-class power. Nothing whatsoever, including imperialist war, the Taft-Hartley Act, and McCarthyism, has been able to stop the momentum of the US labour movement.

The supreme merit of scientific socialism is that it enables us to participate in this process by understanding it, by striving to influence it through all its stages, by giving it proper direction and speeding it up so that its great aims can be achieved most

economically and efficiently. This job can be done in an organised fashion only through a revolutionary leadership and a Marxist party that understands its indispensable educational and organisational functions in the process.

* * *

Let us now return to Vincent Sheean, who popularised the phrase "the long view of history" and was the point of departure for these remarks.

Sad to say, this writer held the long view for a very short time. Uplifted by the revolutionary events of the 1920s, and transformed by the widespread radicalism of the 1930s, he had become a well-wisher of the socialist transformation of society, in his own way a partisan of the anti-imperialist cause, and even a sympathiser of Leninism. But, as the backward sweep in the tide of events and of political thought gained strength in this country with the approach of the Second World War, Sheean joined the intellectuals in retreat. He slid from the socialist science of Marx and Lenin to the mysticism of Mahatma Gandhi. Let us leave him dozing and dreaming at the spinning wheel about the virtues of passive resistance to evil so long as he doesn't catch hold of any of us and try to pull us back with him.

It was a decisive step in the process of evolution, we pointed out, when the first creature acquired a backbone. There have been many relapses in the movement of history, especially in the world-shaking struggles of our own generation. Many people became frightened by the immensity of the tasks or crushed by adversity to the point of losing their moral and intellectual backbones and of losing sight of the direction of social evolution. This has happened in recent years to many more than Vincent Sheean in both labour and intellectual circles.

This "lost generation" has forgotten, if they ever learned, the supreme lesson of both world history and American history. This is that the forces making for the advancement of mankind have overcome the most formidable obstacles and have won out in the end. Otherwise, we should not be here to tell the tale or to help in making its next chapter.

Our animal ancestors progressed from the fish to the ape; our human ancestors have climbed upward from the ape to Republican President Eisenhower of the United States and conservative President Meany of the AFL-CIO. Along the way, they disposed of recalcitrant master classes, who, like the monopolists, refused to believe their sovereignty would ever end. Is it rational to think that men of their stripe are the ultimate representatives of the American nation and its labour movement or enduring shapers of the world's destiny, or that their reactionary policies and shortsighted outlook will prevail for decades?

The American people will bring forward in the future, as they have at critical times in the past, more audacious men and women with a vision of a new world in the making. These fighting leaders and leading fighters, guided by "the long view" of Marxism, will prove in practice that the socialist prospects of humanity, and of the American nation, are not so distant as they now appear.■

From Lenin to Castro

The Importance of the Individual in History-Making

I

In the third chapter of *The Prophet Outcast*, the final volume of his biography of Trotsky, where he treats of "The Revolutionary as Historian", Isaac Deutscher discusses the role of personality in the determination of social events in a highly instructive context. The problem is raised in connection with Trotsky's appraisal of Lenin's place in the Russian Revolution.

Deutscher holds that Trotsky shuttled between two discordant positions. In the *History of the Russian Revolution*, a letter to Preobrazhensky in 1928, and in his *Diary in Exile* Trotsky maintained that Lenin was absolutely indispensable to the victory of October. It would not have been achieved without him. Elsewhere, in *The Revolution Betrayed*, says Deutscher, Trotsky reverted to the orthodox view of historical materialism which subordinates the quality of the leadership to the more objective factors in the making of history. Is this a wavering on Trotsky's part?

Marxism does teach that no individual, however talented, strong-willed or strategically situated, can alter the main course of historical development, which is shaped by supra-individual circumstances and forces. Therefore, reasons Deutscher, the revolution would have triumphed in 1917 with other leaders even if Lenin had been removed from the arena by some accident. Trotsky himself, or a team of other Bolshevik chiefs, might have filled his place.

Deutscher divines that Trotsky's lapse into a subjectivism bordering on "the cult of the individual" in regard to Lenin was motivated by a psychological need to exaggerate the role of individual leadership as a counterweight to Stalin's autocracy in his mortal political combat with him. He seeks to correct Trotsky by reference to the ideas expressed in Plekhanov's classical essay on *The Role of the Individual in History*. This

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was a polemic against the Narodnik school of subjective sociology which exalted the hero as an autonomous creator of history at the expense of the masses and other objective determinants of the class struggle. Arguing against the thesis that the collective demand for leadership could be supplied by only one remarkable individual, Plekhanov pointed out that the person hoisted into supreme authority bars the way of others who might have shouldered and carried through the same tasks, though in a different style. The eclipse of alternate candidates creates the optical illusion of the sole irreplaceable personality. If the objective prerequisites are ripe and the historical demand forceful enough, a range of men can fulfil the indicated functions of command.

The Chinese and Yugoslav examples, writes Deutscher, demonstrate how rising revolutions can utilise men of smaller stature than a Lenin or Trotsky to take power. The class struggle can press into service whatever human material is available to fulfil its objectives.

This theme has an importance surpassing Trotsky's judgment on Lenin's significance for the Russian Revolution or Deutscher's criticism of Trotsky's alleged inconsistencies on the matter. The reciprocal action of the objective and subjective factors in the historical process is one of the key problems of social science. It is no less a key to revolutionary practice in our own time.

Historical materialism unequivocally gives primacy, as Deutscher emphasises, to such objective factors as the level of the productive forces and the state of class relations in the making of history. But there is more to the matter than this.

In the first place, the social phenomena divided into opposing categories are only relatively objective or subjective. Their status changes according to the relevant connections. If the world environment is objective to the nation which is part of it, the nation in turn is objective to the classes which constitute its social structure. The ruling class is objective to the working class. The party is subjective to the class whose interests it represents and aims it promotes while groups, tendencies, factions and their combinations are subjective to the movement or party which contains them. Finally, the individual has a subjective status relative to all these other factors, although he has an objective existence in relation to other individuals.

In the second place, the multiple factors in any historical process do not, and indeed cannot have, an equal and simultaneous growth. Not only do some mature before others but certain of them may fail to achieve a full and adequate reality at the decisive moment, or indeed at any point. The coming together of *all* the various factors essential for the occurrence of a particular result in a great historical process is an exceptional or "accidental" event which is necessary only in the long run.

The leadership, collective and individual, embodies the conscious element in history.

The influence of an individual in determining a course of events can range from negligibility to totality. The extent of his effectiveness in action depends upon the stage of development of historical conditions, the correlation of social forces, and the person's precise connection with these at a given conjuncture.

There are long stretches of time when the strongest-willed revolutionist cannot in the least avail against the march of events and practically counts for nothing in redirecting them.

On the other hand, there are "tides in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, lead on to fortune".

Ordinarily, individual action takes place somewhere between these two extremes. What men do — or do not do — in their personal capacity affects to some limited degree the velocity and specific features of the main line of development.

The case in point is: Where and when can an individual exert the maximum weight and become the decisive force in the outcome of a struggle? This can happen only when his intervention is inserted at the culminating point of a prolonged evolution when all the other factors of a more objective sort have come into being. These set the stage for his decisive role and provide the means for carrying through the purposes and program of the movement he represents.

The great man, who helps start a novel line of development in any field, comes as the last link in the assemblage of conditions and the concatenation of events. We are all familiar with the straw that breaks the camel's back or the drop that overflows the cup. The individual who makes all the difference serves as the precipitant that transforms quantity into quality in the process whereby the new supersedes the old.

However, he must intervene at the critical turning point of development for his action to have so decisive an influence. Such fortunate timing, which does not always depend upon his own awareness, permits him to become the final cause in the cumulative sequence of conditions which are necessary determinants of the outcome.

The discrepancy noted by Deutscher between Trotsky's observations that Lenin was indispensable for the October victory and that the objective laws of history are far more powerful than the special traits of the protagonists involved is to be explained by the difference between the short and the long run of history. The calculus of probabilities applies to human history as well as to natural events. Given enough chances in the long run, the forces representing the objective necessities of social progress will break through all obstacles and prove stronger than the defences of the old order. But that is not necessarily true at any given stage or in any instance along the way. Here the quality of the leadership can decide which of the genuine alternatives growing out of the prevailing conditions will be realised.

The conscious factor has a qualitatively different import over an entire historical epoch than it has in a specific phase or situation within it. When antagonistic social forces vie for supremacy on a world-historical scale, such favourable and unfavourable circumstances as the character of the leadership tend to offset and cancel one another. The underlying historical necessities assert themselves in and through the aggregate struggles and override the more superficial and chance features which can decide the upshot of any particular encounter. Moreover, an ascending class in the long run benefits more than its opponent from the accidents of development, since the receding class has less and less reserve strength to withstand and overcome small variations in the relation of forces. The total assets of the one increase as those of the other diminish.

Time is an all-important element in the conflict of contending social forces. The indeterminate phase when events can be diverted in either direction does not last long. The crisis in social relations must be resolved quickly one way or the other. At that point the activity or passivity of dominant personalities, groups, parties and masses can tip the scales on one side or the other. The individual can enter as the ultimate factor in the total process of historical determination only when all the other forces in play are temporarily equalised. Then his added weight can serve to tip the balance.

Almost everyone can recall occasions where his own intervention or that of others proved decisive in resolving an uncertain situation. What happens in the small incidents of life applies to big events. Just as the single vote of the chairman can decide when the forces on an issue are evenly divided, so the outstanding qualities of great figures are manifested when history arrives at a deadlock. Their decision or decisiveness breaks the tie and propels events along a definitely different line. This holds for counterrevolutionary as well as revolutionary tendencies. Hitler was important because he took Germany into fascism and war. But he did not direct German or world history into a qualitatively new channel. He simply helped write a further horrible chapter in the death agony of capitalism.

Lenin's imperishable contribution was the push he gave to opening an entirely new path for Russian and world history, redirecting it from the dead end of capitalism onto the new beginning of socialism.

This brings us back to the specific problem Deutscher discusses. He does not question the fact that in the actual unrolling of the 1917 revolution Lenin functioned as the final cause in the October victory. The difference between Deutscher and Trotsky concerns the uncertain realm of historical possibilities. Could another revolutionist such as Trotsky, or a combination of them, have assumed Lenin's place?

Trotsky somewhat categorically said no. Deutscher objects that if others on hand could not have performed the same job of leadership, then the position of historical

materialism on the lawful determination of events must be abandoned. Either the objective or the subjective factors decide; it is necessary to choose between them.

In my opinion, Deutscher here takes a too constricted and one-sided stand on historical determinism whereas Trotsky employed a more flexible and multi-sided interpretation based upon the interrelation of mutually opposing categories. He tested his conception, first in practice, then in theory, in the successive stages of the Russian Revolution where the importance of the conscious factors stood out with remarkable clarity.

The type of leadership was very different in the two revolutions of 1917. The February Revolution was not planned or directed from above. Trotsky points out in the chapter of his *History*, "Who Led the February Revolution?" that it was led "by conscious and tempered workers educated for the most part by the party of Lenin". As educator and organiser of these key workers, Lenin was to that extent necessary to the February overturn, even though he was not on the spot in person.

Between February and October he became more and more decisive because of his resolute and farsighted stands at a series of crucial moments, starting with the reorienting of the Bolshevik cadres in April and culminating in his insistence on insurrection in October. According to Trotsky, Lenin's role could not have been duplicated. This was not simply because of his personal gifts but even more because of his exceptional standing in the Bolshevik party which was largely his creation.

The question of leadership in the Russian Revolution had a dual aspect. While the Bolsheviks led the workers and peasants to victory, Lenin led the Bolshevik party. His paramount role came from the fact that he *led the leaders* of the revolution.

Trotsky knew better than anyone else how Lenin could sway the higher echelons as well as the ranks of his party. His authority was a considerable help from April to October in getting his correct proposals adopted over the resistance of other Bolshevik chiefs. This accumulated capital of prestige was not at the disposal of others, including Trotsky, who had a different organisational history and relations. That was the objective basis for his opinion that the October Revolution would most likely not have taken place unless "Lenin was present and in command".

To be sure, it is not possible, as Deutscher remarks and Trotsky himself recognised, to be utterly categorical on this point. But Trotsky's conclusion, which is to be found in all his writings after October and before the rise of Stalin, was not based upon a regrettable lapse into excessive subjectivity. It came from applying the Marxist dialectic to the facts as he witnessed and assayed them. If he was wrong, it was not because of any deviation in principle or abandonment of method induced by unconscious political-psychological motives, which Deutscher considers to be the case, but the result of

misjudging the facts.

II

Sidney Hook has entered this controversy from the opposite end. In a review of *The Prophet Outcast* in the May 11, 1964, *New Leader* he seizes upon Deutscher's criticism of Trotsky's subjectivism for his own purposes. Instead of condemning, he compliments Trotsky for discarding the dogmas of dialectical materialism and attributing "the most important social event in human history' to the purely personal and contingent circumstance of Lenin's presence in Russia. In his eyes the October Revolution was the accidental consequence of the work of an individual. Hook repeats the view expressed in his book on *The Hero in History*, cited by Deutscher, that the October Revolution "was not so much a product of the whole past of Russian history as a product of one of the most event-making figures of all time".

Whereas Deutscher in the name of Marxist orthodoxy inclines to make the objective factors virtually self-sufficient and thus underrates the crucial importance of Lenin's leadership, Hook practically nullifies the other and prior determinants by making the October victory wholly dependent upon a single individual. His approach falls below the standards of the most enlightened liberal historians who at least placed objective factors on a par with the ideas and intervention of great men.

Hook has to falsify Trotsky's standpoint in order to convert him into a pragmatist as superficial as Hook himself. Trotsky's *History* is explicitly devoted to demonstrating the *necessity of the Russian Revolution and its specific outcome* as the result of the whole previous evolution of world capitalism, the backwardness of Russia complemented by its concentrated industrial enterprises and advanced working class, the stresses of the First World War upon a decayed tsarist autocracy, the weakness of the bourgeoisie, the failure of the petty-bourgeois parties and the bold vision of the Bolsheviks headed by Lenin.

Trotsky delineates the operation of this determinism in living reality by narrating and analysing the interconnection of the salient events from the February beginning to the October climax. The successive stages of the revolution did not unfold haphazardly; they issued with inexorable lawfulness one from the other in a causally conditioned sequence. The aim of his theoretical exposition was to find in the verified facts of the actual process the effects of the objective necessities formulated in the laws of the class struggle applied to a backward great power under 20th century conditions. He had already anticipated and articulated these in his celebrated theory of the Permanent Revolution.

Trotsky viewed the Bolshevik party as one of the components of this historical

necessity, and Lenin as the most conscious exponent and skilled practitioner of the political science of Marxism based on these laws. It was not purely fortuitous that Lenin was able to play the role that he did. He was no chance comer. "Lenin was not an accidental element in the historic development, but a product of the whole past of Russian development." For years he had prepared himself and his party for the task of steering the expected revolution to victory.

There was no foreordination in the full compass of the preconditions for October extending from the history of Russia in the world to the political foresight and insight of Lenin. Their joint necessity was proved in practice. Nor was the actual course of events realised without the concurrence of many accidental circumstances favourable or unfavourable to both sides.

It was, for example, a lucky chance that the German General Staff for its own reasons permitted Lenin to travel from his Swiss exile back to Russia through Germany in time to redirect the Bolshevik party. It was an historical accident that Lenin remained alive and active throughout the crucial months; it could have been otherwise and indeed Lenin thought his murder quite probable. In that case, if we credit Trotsky, the socialist outcome implicit in the situation could not have been achieved in 1917.

This means that the history of the 20th century, which is now unthinkable apart from the Russian Revolution in all its consequences, would have been quite different. Not in the broadest lines of its development but certainly in the particular course and features of the irrepressible contest between the socialist revolution and its capitalist antagonists.

There is nothing un-Marxist, as Deutscher seems to think, in acknowledging this. To link "the fortunes of mankind in this century" with Lenin's activity in 1917 is not subjectivist thinking; it is a matter of fact. Conversely, Lenin's absence could well have subtracted that margin of determinism from the total conditions required for victory which would have made the subsequent sequence of developments in the world revolution quite different.

The great fortune of the Russian people and all mankind is that in 1917 *both accident and necessity coincided* to carry the struggle of workers and peasants to its proper conclusion. This has not always happened in the decades since.

Deutscher weakens his case considerably by focusing attention on Russia. The role of Lenin and his party stand out more clearly and sharply in the light of the defeats suffered by the working class elsewhere in Europe and Asia during the 1920s and 1930s, in the last analysis because of the lack of a collective and individual leadership of Bolshevik-Leninist calibre. The October victory coupled with the post-October defeats convinced the once dubious Trotsky of the decisive role of leadership in an objectively

revolutionary situation. These experiences led him to the generalisation which was the keystone of the founding program of the Fourth International, adopted in 1938, that "the historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership". That is why he dedicated the last years of his life to the task of attempting to assemble such a leadership under the banner of the Fourth International.

Deutscher's disagreement with Trotsky over Lenin's part in the Russian Revolution is directly connected with his difference with Trotsky over the latter's role in the post-Lenin period. Deutscher regards Trotsky's assertion that the foundation of the Fourth International was "the most important work of my life — more important than 1917, more important than the period of the civil war, or any other …" as an aberration. The energy devoted to the Trotskyist groups was largely wasted, he believes, since the objective conditions were not suitable for constructing a new international. In his opinion, Trotsky would have been better advised to remain an interpreter of events instead of vainly trying to change their course by means of a rival world revolutionary organisation.

J.B. Stuart undertook to answer Deutscher's criticism of Trotsky's unrealism in connection with the Fourth International in *World Outlook*[a] and there is no point in repeating his arguments. Here we are primarily interested in the real rationale behind Trotsky's positions.

Deutscher contends that Trotsky misjudged Lenin's importance in the winning of the Russian Revolution and his own role in the period of world reaction after Lenin's death for psychological reasons which ran counter to Marxist objectivity. Trotsky actually derived his position in both cases, it seems to us, from his conception of the needs of the revolutionary process in our time. He thought that all the major objective ingredients for the overthrow of capitalism had in general ripened. What was missing for new Octobers was the presence of leadership of the type supplied by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in 1917.

Such cadres had to be created to prevent the incompetent and treacherous bureaucracies heading the different sectors of the workers' movement from ruining more revolutionary opportunities. Thus world political, rather than individual psychological, necessities accounted for his conclusions.

III

It is true, as Deutscher points out, that revolutionary power was conquered in Yugoslavia and China with leaderships trained in the Stalinist school which do not

[a] Issues of April 17 and 24, 1964.

match the standards of Lenin's Bolshevism. The 1963 Reunification Congress of the Fourth International took cognisance of this development in its resolution, *The Dynamics of World Revolution Today*. "The weakness of the enemy in the backward countries has opened the possibility of coming to power even with a blunted instrument."

However, the document hastens to add: "The strength of the enemy in the imperialist countries demands a tool of much greater perfection." For the taking of power in the capitalist strongholds as well as the administration of power in the degenerated or deformed workers' states, the building of new mass revolutionary parties and their unification in a new international organisation remains the central strategical task of the present period no less than in Lenin's and Trotsky's day.

This dialectical unity of the objective and subjective factors in the making of a revolution has been both exemplified and theorised by Fidel Castro and his close associates. If ever an historic event could be considered the work of one man, that was — and is — the Cuban Revolution. Castro is truly its "*lider maximo*" [main leader].

Castro has explained, notably in his December 21, 1961, speech on Marxism-Leninism, how the founders of the July 26 Movement did not wait for *all* the objective conditions required for revolutionary success to emerge spontaneously. They deliberately set about to create the still missing revolutionary conditions by fighting. Their guerrilla warfare did bring about the moral, psychological, political changes needed to overthrow Batista's tyranny. The general lesson of their experience for the further struggles against Latin-American dictatorships has been formulated as follows by Che Guevara in his handbook on guerrilla warfare: "It is not always necessary to wait until all the conditions are ripe for the revolution; the insurrectional centre can create them."

The transformation of the balance of forces in favour of the progressive side by the initiative of a small band of conscious revolutionary fighters dramatically demonstrates how decisive the subjective factor can be in making history. Yet Castro would be the first to caution against an adventurism which ignores objective conditions, to disavow any cult of the individual, and to acknowledge that his intentions would have miscarried and his combatants would have been rendered powerless without the response they received, first from the peasants in the mountains and then from the masses in the rural and urban areas. The sensitivity of the Cuban leaders to the interplay of the subjective and objective factors in the development of the revolution and its regime at all stages has brought them to a deeper understanding of the ideas of Marx and of the need for a party like Lenin's.

* * *

Events 90 miles from Cuba have highlighted the twofold aspects of the individual's weight in history-making. Kennedy's assassination in November 1963 did not seriously interrupt any operations of the US government or shift its course at home or abroad. After assuming executive authority, Johnson pursued essentially the same policies as his predecessor, albeit with a Texas brand rather than a Harvard accent. Thus the abrupt removal of an extremely popular and powerful personality proved to be inconsequential compared to the automatism of capitalist rulership. Pro-capitalist individuals come and go; the system remains.

At the same time, the holder of supreme office in the United States controls more massive military power than any other person in the world or in human history. On June 4, 1964, Johnson boasted that the national strength "is stronger than the combined might of all the nations in the history of the world".

The president can release enough nuclear missiles to destroy all mankind. Who can question the overwhelming importance of the individual when one man's decision can terminate human history on this planet? Kennedy was eyeball to eyeball with this possibility during the 1962 Caribbean crisis.

To be sure, the man in the White House does not act as an isolated individual. He is the chief executive of the United States, commander in chief of its armed forces, and more significantly, agent of the profiteers who run the economy and government. His personal role by and large accords with the objective necessities of monopolist domination; and, in the last analysis, the fundamental interests of the ruling class determine his political conduct.

But his representative functions do not nullify the fact that he alone is delegated to make the final decision and can give the command to press the H-button.

Personal decision is the crowning expression of social determinism, the last link in its causal chain. The social determinism operative in the world today is divided into two irreconcilable trends, stemming from opposing class sources. One is directed by the capitalist war-makers whose spokesmen in the United States have stated that they will not refrain from using atomic weapons if necessary. The other is constituted by the masses of the United States and the rest of the world who dread this prospect and have everything to lose if it should occur.

Which of these contending determinisms will prevail? The fate of mankind hangs in the balance of this decision. To dispossess and disarm the atomaniacs headquartered in Washington, a revolutionary movement of tremendous dimensions and determination will have to be built. No single individual will stop them. But victory in

the life-and-death struggle for world peace against nuclear annihilation will require the initiative and devotion of *individuals* who, though they may not possess the outstanding leadership capacities of a Lenin, Trotsky or Castro, can act in their spirit. ■

Major Theories of History from the Greeks to Marxism

Historical materialists would be untrue to their own principles if they failed to regard their method of interpreting history as the result of a prolonged, complex and contradictory process. Mankind has been making history for a million years or more as it advanced from the primate condition to the atomic age. But a science of history capable of ascertaining the laws governing man's collective activities over the ages is a relatively recent acquisition.

The first attempts to survey the long march of human history, study its causes, and set forth its successive stages along scientific lines were made only about 2500 years ago. This task, like so many others in the domain of theory, was originally undertaken by the Greeks.

The sense of history is a precondition for a science of history. This is not an inborn but a cultivated, historically generated capacity. The discrimination of the passage of time into a well-defined past, present and future is rooted in the evolution of the organisation of labour. Man's awareness of life as made up of consecutive and changing events has acquired breadth and depth along with the development and diversification of social production. The calendar first appears, not among food gatherers, but in agricultural communities.

Primitive peoples from savagery to the upper stages of barbarism have as little concern for the past as for the future. What they experience and do forms part of an objective universal history. But they remain unaware of the particular place they occupy or the part they play in the progression of mankind.

The very idea of historical advancement from one stage to the next is unknown. They have no need to inquire into the motive forces of history or to mark off the phases of social development. Their collective consciousness has not reached the

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point of an historical outlook or a sociological insight.

The low level of their productive powers, the immaturity of their economic forms, the narrowness of their activities and the meagreness of their culture and connections are evidenced in their extremely restricted views of the course of events.

The amount of historical knowledge possessed by extremely primitive minds may be gauged from the following observations made by the Jesuit father Jacob Baegert in his *Account of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of the California Peninsula* written 200 years ago. "No Californian is acquainted with the events that occurred in the country prior to his birth, nor does he even know who his parents were if he should happen to have lost them during his infancy … The Californians … believed that California constituted the whole world, and they themselves its sole inhabitants; for they went to nobody, and nobody came to see them, each little people remaining within the limits of its small district."

In pre-Spanish times they marked only one repetitive event, the pitahaya fruit harvest. Thus a space of three years is called three pitahayas. "Yet they seldom make use of such phrases, because they hardly ever speak among themselves of years, but merely say, 'long ago', or 'not long ago', being utterly indifferent whether two or 20 years have elapsed since the occurrence of a certain event."

Until several thousand years ago, peoples took their own particular organisation of social relations for granted. It appeared to them as fixed and final as the heavens and earth and as natural as their eyes and ears. The earliest men did not even distinguish themselves from the rest of nature or draw a sharp line of demarcation between themselves and other living creatures in their habitat. It took a far longer time for them to learn to distinguish between what belonged to nature and what belonged to society.

So long as social relations remain simple and stable, changing extremely slowly and almost imperceptibly over vast stretches of time, society melts into the background of nature and does not stand out in sharp contrast from it. Nor do the experiences of one generation differ much from another. If the familiar organisation with its traditional routine is disrupted, it either vanishes or is rebuilt on the old pattern. Moreover, surrounding communities, so far as they are known (and acquaintance does not extend very far either in space or time), are much the same. Before the arrival of the Europeans, the North American Indian could travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific, or the Australian native thousands of miles, without encountering radically different types of human societies.

Under such circumstances, neither society in general nor one's own special mode of living is looked upon as a peculiar object which is worth special attention and study.

The need for theorising about history or the nature of society does not arise until civilisation is well advanced and sudden, violent, and far-reaching upheavals in social relations take place during the lifetime of individuals or within the memories of their elders.

When swift strides are taken from one form of social structure to another, the old days and ways stand out in startling contrast, and even conflict, with the new. Through trade, travel and war, the representatives of the expanding social system undergoing construction or reconstruction come into contact with peoples of quite different customs on lower levels of culture.

More immediately, glaring differences in the conditions of life within their own communities and bitter conflicts between antagonistic classes induce thoughtful men who have the means for such pursuits to speculate on the origins of such oppositions, to compare the various kinds of societies and governments, and to try and arrange them in an order of succession or worth.

The English historian M.I. Finley makes a similar point in reviewing three recent books on the ancient East in the August 20, 1965, *New Statesman*: "The presence or absence of a 'historical sense' is nothing less than an intellectual reflection of the very wide differences in the historical process itself."

He cites the Marxist scholar, Professor D.D. Kosambi, who attributes "the total lack of historical sense" in ancient India to the narrow outlook of village life bound up with its mode of agricultural production. "The succession of seasons is all important, while there is little cumulative change to be noted in the village from year to year. This gives the general feeling of 'the Timeless East' to foreign observers."

The other civilised peoples of the ancient Near and Middle East likewise lacked a sense of history. There is nothing, notes Professor Leo Oppenhelm, "that would attest the awareness of the scribes of the existence of a historical continuum in the Mesopotamian civilisation". This is confirmed by the fact that "the longest and most explicit Assyrian royal inscriptions … were embedded in the substructure of a temple or a palace, safe from human eyes and only to be read by the deity to whom they were addressed".

The main preconditions for an historical outlook upon history in the West were brought into being from about 1100 to 700 BC by the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age in the Middle East and Aegean civilisations. The comparatively self-sufficient agricultural kingdoms and settlements were supplemented or supplanted by bustling commercial centres, especially in the Phoenician and Ionian ports of Asia Minor. There new classes — merchants, shipowners, manufacturers, artisans, seafarers — came to the fore and challenged the institutions, ideas and power of the old landed

gentry. Patriarchal slavery became transformed into chattel slavery. Commodity relations, metal money, mortgage debt corroded the archaic social structures. The first democratic revolutions and oligarchic counterrevolutions were hatched in the city states.

The Ionian Greeks, who set down the first true written histories, were associates of traders, engineers, craftsmen and voyagers. The pioneer of Western historians, Hecaeteus, lived in the same commercial city of Miletus as the first philosophers and scientists and belonged to the same materialist trend of thought.

The writing of history soon engendered interest in the science of history. Once the habit of viewing events in their sequence of change was established, the questions arose: How did history unfold? Was there any discernible pattern in its flux? If so, what was it? And what were its causes?

The first really rational explanation of the historical process as a whole was given by the outstanding Greek historians from Herodotus to Polybius. This was the cyclical conception of historical movement. According to this view, society, like nature, passed through identical patterns of development in periodically repeated rounds.

Thucydides, the pre-eminent Greek historian, declared that he had written his record of the Peloponnesian wars to teach men its lessons since identical events were bound to happen again. Plato taught the doctrine of the Great Year at the end of which the planets would occupy the same positions as before and all sublunary events would be reduplicated. This conception was expressed as a popular axiom in Ecclesiastes: "There is no new thing under the sun."

The cyclical character of human affairs was closely affiliated with the conception of an all-powerful, inscrutable, inflexible Destiny which came to replace the gods as the sovereign of history. This was mythologised in the persons of the Three Fates and further rationalised by learned men as the ultimate law of life. This notion of cosmic tragic fate from which human appeal or escape is impossible not only became the major theme of the classic Greek dramatists but is also embedded in the historical work of Herodotus.

Comparisons with other peoples, or between Greek states in different stages of social, economic, and political development, produced a comparative history along with the first inklings of historical progression. As early as the eighth century BC the poet Hesiod talked about the copper age that had preceded the iron one. Several centuries later Herodotus, the first anthropologist as well as the father of history, gathered valuable information on the customs of the Mediterranean peoples living in savagery, barbarism and civilisation. Thucydides pointed out that the Greeks once lived as the barbarians did in his own time. Plato in his *Republic*, *Laws* and other

writings, and Aristotle in his *Politics*, collected specimens of different forms of state rule. They named, classified and criticised them. They sought to ascertain not only the best mode of government for the city state but also the order of their forms of development and the causes of political variation and revolution.

Polybius, the Greek historian of the rise of the Roman empire, viewed it as the prize example of the natural laws which regulated the cyclical transformation of one governmental form into another. He believed, like Plato, that all states inevitably passed through the phases of kingship, aristocracy and democracy which degenerated into their allied forms of despotism, oligarchy and mob rule. The generation and degeneration of these successive stages of rulership was due to natural causes. "This is the regular cycle of constitutional revolutions, and the natural order in which institutions change, are transformed, and return to their original stage", he wrote.

Just as they knew and named the major kinds of political organisation from monarchy to democracy, so did the Greek thinkers of both the idealist and materialist schools originate the basic types of historical interpretation which have endured to the present day.

They were the first to try to explain the evolution of society along materialist lines, however crude and awkward were their initial efforts. The Atomists, the Sophists and the Hippocratic school of medicine put forward the idea that the natural environment was the decisive factor in the moulding of mankind. In its extreme expressions this trend of thought reduced social-historical changes to the effects of the geographical theatre and its climatic conditioning. Thus Polybius wrote: "We mortals have an irresistible tendency to yield to climatic influences; and to this cause, and no other, may be traced the great distinctions which prevail among us in character, physical formation and complexion, as well as in most of our habits, varying with nationality and wide local separation."

These earliest sociologists taught that mankind had climbed from savagery to civilisation by imitating nature and improving upon her operations. The finest exponent of this materialist view in Graeco-Roman culture was Lucretius who gave a brilliant sketch of the steps in the development of society in his poem *On The Nature of Things*.

Predominant among the Greek thinkers, however, were the sorts of explanation which have ever since been the stock in trade of the historical idealists. There were five of these.

1. *The Great God Theory.* The most primitive attempts to explain the origin and development of the world and man are the creation myths to be found among preliterate peoples. We are best acquainted with the one in *Genesis* which ascribes the making of heaven and earth with all its features and creatures to a Lord God who

worked on a six-day schedule. These fanciful stories do not have any scientific validity.

The raw materials for genuine history-writing were first collected in the annals of the reigns and chronicles of kings in the river valley civilisations of the Near East, India and China. The first synthetic conception of history arose from the fusion of elements taken over from the old creation myths with a review of these records. This was the Great God, or theological version of history which asserted that divine beings directed human affairs together with the rest of the cosmos.

Just as the royal despots dominated the city states and their empires, so the will, passions, plans and needs of the gods were the ultimate causes of events. The king is the agent who maintains the world in being by means of an annual contest with the powers of chaos. This theological theory was elaborated by the Sumerians, Babylonians and Egyptians before it came down to the Greeks and Romans. It was expounded in the Israelite scriptures whence it was taken over and reshaped by the Christian and Mohammedan religions and their states.

Under the theocratic monarchies of the East the divine guidance of human affairs was wrapped up with the godlike nature of the priest-king. In Babylon, Egypt, the Alexandrian Empire and Rome the supreme ruling force of the universe and the forceful ruler of the realm were regarded as equally divine. The Great God and the Great Man were one and the same.

2. *The Great Man Theory.* The straightforward theological view of history is too crude and naive, too close to primitive animism, too much in conflict with civilised enlightenment to persist without criticism or change except among the most ignorant and devout. It has been supplanted by more refined versions of the same type of thinking.

The Great Man theory emerged from a dissociation of the dual components of the Great God theory. The immense powers attributed to the gods become transferred to and concentrated in some figure at the head of the state, the church or other key institution or movement. This exceptionally placed personage was supposedly endowed with the capacity for moulding events as he willed. This is the pristine source of the tenacious belief that unusually influential and able individuals determine the main direction of history.

Fetishistic worship of the Great Man has come down through the ages from the god-kings of Mesopotamia to the adoration of a Hitler. It has had numerous incarnations according to the values attached at different times by different people to the various domains of social activity. In antiquity these ranged from the divine monarch, the tyrant, the lawgiver (Solon), the military conqueror (Alexander), the dictator (Caesar), the hero-emancipator (David), and the religious leader (Christ,

Buddha, Mohammed). All these were put in the place of the Almighty as the prime mover and shaper of human history.

The most celebrated latter-day expounder of this viewpoint was Carlyle who wrote: "Universal history, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here."

3. *The Great Mind Theory*. A more sophisticated and philosophical variant of the Great God-Man line of thought is the notion that history is drawn forward or driven ahead by some ideal force in order to realise its preconceived ends. The Greek Anaxagoras said: "Reason (*Nous*) governs the world." Aristotle held that the prime mover of the universe and thereby the ultimate animator of everything within it was God, who was defined as pure mind engaged in thinking about itself.

Hegel was the foremost modern exponent of this theory that the progress of mankind consisted in the working out and consummation of an idea. He wrote: "Spirit, or Mind, is the only motive principle of history." The underlying goal of the World Spirit and the outcome of its laborious development was the realisation of the idea of freedom.

The Great Mind Theory easily slides into the notion that some set of brilliant intellects, or even one mental genius, supplies the mainspring of human advancement. Plato taught that there are "some natures who ought to study philosophy and to be leaders in the state; and others who are not born to be philosophers, and are meant to be followers rather than leaders".

Thus some 18th century rationalists who believed that "opinion governs mankind" looked toward an enlightened monarch to introduce the necessary progressive reconstruction of the state and society. A more widespread manifestation of this approach contrasts to the unthinking mob some upper stratum of the population as the exemplar of reason which alone can be entrusted with political leadership and power.

4. *The Best People Theory*. All such interpretations contain infusions of the prejudice that some elite, the Best Race, the favoured nation, the ruling class alone make history. The Old Testament assumed that the Israelites were God's chosen people. The Greeks regarded themselves as the acme of culture, better in all respects than the barbarians. Plato and Aristotle looked upon the slave-holding aristocracy as naturally superior to the lower orders.

5. *The Human Nature Theory*. Most persistent is the view that history in the last analysis has been determined by the qualities of human nature, good or bad. Human nature, like nature itself, was regarded as rigid and unchanging from one generation to another. The historian's task was to demonstrate what these invariant traits of the

human constitution and character were, how the course of history exemplified them, and how the social structure was moulded or had to be remodelled in accordance with them. Such a definition of essential human nature was the starting point for the social theorising of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle and other great idealists.

But it will also be found at the bottom of the social and political philosophy of the most diverse schools. Thus the empiricist David Hume flatly asserts in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*: "Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature."

Many of the 19th century pathfinders in the social sciences clung to this old standby of "the constant and universal principles of human nature". For example, E.B. Tylor, the founder of British anthropology, wrote in 1889: "Human institutions, like stratified rocks, succeed each other in series substantially uniform over the globe, independent of what seems the comparatively superficial differences of race and language, but shaped by similar human nature."

Although they may have held different opinions of what the essential qualities of humanity were, idealist and materialist thinkers alike have appealed in the last resort to permanent principles of human nature to explain social and historical phenomena. Thus the materialist-minded Thucydides, as M.I Finley tells us in his introduction to *The Greek Historians*, believed that "human nature and human behaviour were … essentially fixed qualities, the same in one century as another".

For many centuries after the Greeks, scientific insight into the workings of history made little progress. Under Christianity and feudalism the theological conception that history was the manifestation of God's plan monopolised social philosophy. In contrast to the stagnation of science in Western Europe, the Moslems and Jews carried forward the social as well as the natural sciences. The most original and unsurpassed student of social processes between the ancients and moderns was the 14th century thinker of the Maghreb, Ibn Khaldun who analysed the stages of development of the Mohammedan countries and cultures and the causes of their typical institutions and features in the most materialist manner of his epoch.

This eminent Moslem statesman was very likely the first scholar to formulate a clear conception of sociology, the science of social development. He did so under the name of the study of culture.

He wrote: "History is the record of human society, or world civilisation; of the changes that take place in the nature of that society, such as savagery, sociability, and group solidarity; of revolutions and uprisings by one set of people against another with the resulting kingdoms and states, with their various ranks; of the different activities

and occupations of men, whether for gaining their livelihood or in the various sciences and crafts; and, in general, of all the transformations that society undergoes by its very nature."

The next big advance in scientific understanding of history came with the rise of bourgeois society and the discovery of other regions of the globe associated with its commercial and naval expansion. In their conflicts with the ruling feudal hierarchy and the Church the intellectual spokesmen for progressive bourgeois forces rediscovered and reasserted the ideas of class struggle first noted by the Greeks and instituted historical comparisons with antiquity to bolster their claims. Their new revolutionary views demanded not only a wider outlook upon the world but a deeper probing into the mechanism of social change.

Such bold representatives of bourgeois thought as Machiavelli and Vico in Italy, Hobbes, Harrington, Locke and the classical economists in England, the Scottish school of Adam Ferguson, Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, D'Holbach and others in France helped accumulate the materials and clear the site for a more realistic picture of society and a more rigorous understanding of its modes and stages of development.

On a much higher level of social and scientific development, historical thought from the 17th to the 19th centuries tended to become polarised, as in Greece, between idealist and materialist modes of explanation. Both schools of thought were animated by a common aim. They believed that history had an intelligible character and that the nature and sources of its laws could be ascertained.

Theological interpreters like Bishop Bossuet continued to see God as the director of the historical procession. While most other thinkers did not dispute that divine providence ultimately shaped the course of events, they were far more concerned with the mundane ways and means through which history operated.

Giambattista Vico of Naples was the great pioneer among these thinkers. He asserted at the beginning of the 18th century that since history, or "the world of nations", had been created by men, it could be understood by its makers. He emphasised that social and cultural phenomena passed through a regular sequence of stages which was cyclical in character.

He insisted that "the order of ideas must follow the order of things" and that the "order of human things" was "first the forests, after that the huts, thence the village, next the cities and finally the academies". His "new science" of history sought to discover and apply "the universal and eternal principles … on which all nations were founded, and still preserve themselves". Vico brings forward the class struggle in his interpretation of history, especially in the heroic age represented by the conflict between the plebeians and patricians of ancient Rome.

The materialistic theorists who came after Vico in Western Europe looked for these "universal and eternal principles" which determined history in very different quarters than the idealists. But neither school doubted that history, like nature, was subject to general laws which the philosopher of history was obligated to find.

The key thought of the English and French materialists of the 17th and 18th centuries was that men were the products of their natural and social environments. As Charles Brockden Brown, an American novelist of the early 19th century, put it: "Human beings are moulded by the circumstances in which they are placed." In accord with this principle, they turned to the objective realities of nature and society to explain the historical process.

Montesquieu, for example, regarded geography and government as the twin principal determinants of history and society. The physical factor was most influential in the earlier and more primitive stages of human existence, although its operation never ceased; the political factor became more dominant as civilisation advanced.

He and his contemporary materialists largely ignored the economic conditions which stood between nature and the political institutions. The economic basis and background of political systems and the struggles of contending classes which issued from economic contradictions were beyond their field of vision.

The French historians of the early 19th century acquired a deeper insight into the economic conditioning of the historical process through their studies of the English and French revolutions. They had watched the French revolution go through a complete cycle. This started with the overthrow of the absolute monarchy, passed through the revolutionary regime of Robespierre and the bourgeois-military dictatorship of Napoleon and ended in the Bourbon Restoration. In the light of these vicissitudes they learned the crucial role of class struggles in pushing history forward and pointed to sweeping shifts in property ownership as the prime cause of social overturns. But they remained unable to uncover the fundamental determinants which led to the reconstruction and replacement of property relations as well as political forms.

Many leading philosophers of the bourgeois era had a materialist view of nature and man's relations with the world around him. But none of them succeeded in working out a consistent or comprehensive conception of society and history along materialist lines. At a certain point in their analyses they departed from materialist premises and procedures, attributing the ultimate causal agencies of human affairs to an invariant human nature, a farseeing human reason, or a great individual.

What was generally responsible for their inability to reach bedrock and their deviation into nonmaterialist types of explanation in the fundamental areas of historical and social determination? As bourgeois thinkers, they were hemmed in and held back

by the inescapable restrictions of the capitalist horizon. So long as the ascending bourgeoisie was on its way to supremacy, its most enlightened ideologists had a passionate and persistent interest in boring deeply into economic, social and political realities. After the bourgeoisie had consolidated its position as the ruling class, its thinkers shrank from probing to the bottom of social and political processes. They became more and more sluggish and shortsighted in the fields of sociology and history because discovery of the underlying causes of change in these fields could only threaten the continuance of capitalist domination.

One big barrier to the deepening of social science was their tacit assumption that bourgeois society and its main institutions embodied the highest attainable form of social organisation. All previous societies led up to that point and stopped there. There was apparently no progressive exit from the capitalist system. That is why the ideologists of the English bourgeoisie from Locke to Ricardo and Spencer tried to fit their conceptions of the meaning of all social phenomena into the categories and relations of that transitory order. This narrowness made it equally difficult for them to decipher the past, get to the bottom of their present, and foresee the future.

Idealistic interpretations of history were promulgated and promoted by numerous theorists from Leibnitz to Fichte. Their work was consummated by Hegel. In the early decades of the 19th century Hegel revolutionised the understanding of world history, placing it at the widest vantage point of the bourgeois era. His contributions may be summed up in thirteen points.

1. Hegel approached all historical phenomena from the standpoint of their evolution, seeing them as moments, elements, phases in a single creative, cumulative, progressive and ceaseless process of becoming.
2. Since the world about him, which he called "objective mind", was the work of man, he, like Vico, was convinced that it was intelligible and could be explicated by the inquiring mind.
3. He conceived history as a *universal* process in which all social formations, nations and persons had their appropriate but subordinate place. No single state or people dominated world history; each was to be judged by its role in the development of the totality.
4. He asserted that the historical process was essentially rational. It had an immanent logic which unfolded in a law-governed manner defined by the dialectical process. Each stage of the whole was a necessary product of the circumstances of its time and place.
5. Every essential element of each stage hung together as components of a unified whole which expressed the dominant principle of its age. Each stage makes its own

unique contribution to the advancement of mankind.

6. The truth about history is concrete. As the Russian thinker Chernyshevsky wrote: "Every object, every phenomenon has its own significance, and it must be judged according to the circumstances, the environment, in which it exists … A definite judgment can be pronounced only about a definite fact, after examining all the circumstances on which it depends."
7. History changes in a dialectical manner. Each stage of social development has had sufficient reasons for coming into existence. It has a contradictory constitution, arising from three different elements. These are the durable achievements inherited from its predecessors, the special conditions required for its own maintenance, and the opposing forces at work within itself. The development of its internal antagonisms supplies its dynamism and generates its growth. The sharpening of its contradictions leads to its disintegration and eventual dispossession by a higher and antithetical form which grows out of it by way of a revolutionary leap.
8. Thus all grades of social organisation are interlinked in a dialectically determined series from lower to higher.
9. Hegel brought forward the profound truth later developed by historical materialism that labour is imposed upon man as the consequence of his needs and that man is the historical product of his own labour.
10. History is full of irony. It has an overall objective logic which confounds its most powerful participants and organisations. Although the heads of states apply definite policies, and peoples and individuals consciously pursue their own aims, historical actuality does not fall into line or accord with their plans. The course and outcome of history is determined by overriding internal necessities which are independent of the will and consciousness of any of its institutional or personal agencies. Man proposes … the historical necessity of the Idea disposes.
11. The outcome of history, the result of its agonising labour, is the growth of rational freedom. Man's freedom comes not from arbitrary, wilful intervention in events, but from growing insight into the necessities of the objective, universal, contradictory processes of becoming.
12. The necessities of history are not always the same; they change into their opposites as one stage succeeds another. In fact, this conflict of lower and higher necessities is the generator of progress. A greater and growing necessity is at work within the existing order negating the conditions which sustain it. This necessity keeps depriving the present necessity of its reasons for existence, expands at its expense, renders it obsolete and eventually displaces it.
13. Not only do social formations and their specific dominant principles change from

one stage to the next but so do the specific laws of development.

This method of interpreting history was far more correct, all-encompassing and profound than any of its predecessors. Yet it suffered from two ineradicable flaws. First, it was incurably idealistic. Hegel pictured history as the product of abstract principles which represented differing degrees of the ceaseless contest between servitude and freedom. Man's freedom was gradually realised through this dialectical development of the Absolute Idea.

Such a logic of history was an intellectualised version of the notion that God directs the universe and history is the fulfilment of His design, which in this case is the freedom of humanity. As envisaged by Hegel, this freedom was not realised through the emancipation of mankind from oppressive and servile social conditions but from the overcoming of false, inadequate ideas.

Second, Hegel closed the gates on the further development of history by having it culminate in fact with the German kingdom and the bourgeois society of his own era. The exponent of a universal and never-ending history concluded that its ultimate agent was the national state, a characteristic product of its bourgeois phase. And in its monarchical form, modified by a constitution! He mistook a transient creation of history for its final and perfected embodiment. By thus setting limits upon the process of becoming, he violated the fundamental tenet of his own dialectic.

These defects prevented Hegel from arriving at the true nature of social relations and the principal causes of social change. However, his epoch-making insights have influenced all subsequent thought and writing about history. With the indispensable revisions, they have all been incorporated into the structure of historical materialism.

Hegel, the idealist dialectician, was the foremost theorist of the evolutionary process as a whole. The French social thinkers and historians carried the materialist understanding of history and society as far as it could go in their day. But even within their own provinces both fell short. Hegel could not provide a satisfactory theory of social evolution and the materialists did not penetrate to the most basic moving forces of history.

Not until the truthful elements in these two contrary lines of thought converged and combined in the minds of Marx and Engels in the middle of the 19th century was a rounded conception of history produced that was solidly anchored in the dialectical development of the material conditions of social existence from the emergence of early man to contemporary life.

All the different types of historical explanation cast up in the evolution of man's thought survive today. Not one has been permanently buried, no matter how outmoded, inadequate or scientifically incorrect it is. The oldest interpretations can be

revived and reappear in modern dress to serve some social need or stratum.

What bourgeois nation has not proclaimed in time of war that "God is on our side", guiding its destiny? The Great Man theory strutted about under the swastika in the homage paid to Hitler. Spengler in Germany and Toynbee in England offer their re-editions of the cyclical round of history. The school of geopolitics makes geographical conditions in the shape of the heartland and the outlying regions into the paramount determinant of modern history.

Nazi Germany, Verwoerd's South Africa and the Southern white supremacists exalt the master race into the dictator of history in its crudest form. The conception that human nature must be the basis of social structure is the last-ditch defence of the opponents of socialism as well as the point of departure for the utopian socialism of the American psychoanalyst Erich Fromm and others.

Finally, the notion that reason is the motive force in history is shared by all sorts of savants. The American anthropologist Alexander Goldenweiser stated in *Early Civilisation*: "Thus the whole of civilisation, if followed backward step by step, would ultimately be found resolvable, without residue, into bits of ideas in the minds of individuals." Here ideas and individuals are the creative factors of history.

In describing his philosophy, the Italian thinker Croce wrote: "History is the record of the creations of the human spirit in every field, theoretical as well as practical. And these spiritual creations are always born in the hearts and minds of men of genius, artists, thinkers, men of action, moral and religious reformers." This position combines idealism with elitism, the spirit using geniuses, or the creative minority, as the agency which redeems the masses.

These diverse elements of historical interpretation can appear in the most incongruous combinations in a given country, school of thought or individual mind. Stalinism has provided the most striking example of such an illogical synthesis. The votaries of "the personality cult" sought to fuse the traditions and views of Marxism, the most modern and scientific philosophy, with the archaic Great Man version of the contemporary historical process.

Except in Maoist China, this odd and untenable amalgam of ideas has already crumbled. Yet it demonstrates how generalised thought about the historical process can retrogress after making an immense leap forward. The history of historical science proves in its own way that progress is not even or persistent throughout history. Thucydides, the narrator of the Peloponnesian Wars in the fourth century BC, had a far more realistic view of history than did St. Augustine, the celebrator of the City of God, in the fourth century AD.

Marxism has incorporated into its theory of social development not only the

verified findings of modern scientific research but all the insights into history of its philosophical predecessors, whether materialist, idealist or eclectic, which have proved valid and viable. To do otherwise would flout the mandate of its own method which teaches that every school of thought, every stage of scientific knowledge, is an outgrowth of the past work of men modified and sometimes revolutionised by the prevailing conditions and concepts of their existence. Scientific inquiry into history and society, like the process of history itself, has given positive, permanent and progressive results.

At the same time Marxism rejects all versions of antiquated theories which have failed to provide an adequate or correct explanation of the origins and evolution of society. It does not deny that historical idealisms contain significant ingredients of truth and can even exhibit a forward march. The main trend of their progression since the Greeks has been from heaven to earth, from God to man, from the imaginary to the real. Individuals, influential or insignificant, and ideas, innovating or traditional, are essential parts of society; their roles in the making of history have to be taken into account.

The idealists rightly pay attention to these factors. Where they go wrong is in claiming decisive importance for them in the total process of historical determination. Their method confines their analyses to the outer layers of the social structure so that they remain on the surface of events. Science has to delve into the nuclear core of society where the real forces which determine the direction of history are at work.

Historical materialism turns away from the Divine Director, the Great Man, the Universal Mind, the Intellectual Genius, the Elite, and an unchanging and uniformly acting Human Nature for its explanation of history. The formation, reformation and transformation of social structures over the past million years cannot be understood by recourse to any supernatural beings, ideal agencies, petty personal or invariant causes.

God didn't create the world and hasn't superintended the development of mankind. On the contrary, man created the idea of the gods as a fantasy to compensate for lack of real control over the forces of nature and of society.

Man made himself by acting upon nature and changing its elements to satisfy his needs through the labour process. Man has worked his way up in the world. The further development and diversification of the labour process from savagery to our present civilisation has continued to transform his capacities and characteristics.

History is not the achievement of outstanding individuals, no matter how powerful, gifted or strategically placed. As early as the French Revolution Condorcet protested against this narrow elitist view which disregarded both what moves the mass of the human race and how the masses rather than the masters make history. "Up to now,

the history of politics, like that of philosophy or of science, has been the history of only a few individuals: That which really constitutes the human race, the vast mass of families living for the most part on the fruits of their labour, has been forgotten, and even of those who follow public professions, and work not for themselves but for society, who are engaged in teaching, ruling, protecting or healing others, it is only the leaders who have held the eye of the historian", he wrote.

Marxism builds on this insight that history is the result of the collective actions of multitudes, of mass effort extending over prolonged periods within the framework of the powers of production they have received and extended and the modes of production they have created, built up and revolutionised.

It is not elites but the many-membered body of the people who have sustained history, switched it in new directions at critical turning points, and lifted humanity upward step by step.

History has not been generated nor has its course been guided by preconceived ideas in any mind. Social systems have not been constructed by architects with blueprints in hand. History has not proceeded in accord with any prior plan. Socio-economic formations have grown out of the productive forces at hand; its members have fashioned their relations, customs, institutions and ideas in accordance with their organisation of labour.

Human nature cannot explain the course of events or the characteristics of social life. It is the changes in the conditions of life and labour which underlie the making and remaking of our human nature.

In the introduction to the English edition of *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* Engels defined historical materialism as "that view of the course of history which seeks the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all historic events in the economic development of society, in the changes in the modes of production and exchange, in the consequent division of society into distinct classes, and in the struggles of these classes against one another".

These are the prime principles from which the rest of Marxist theory about the historical process is derived. They have come from two and half millennia of inquiry into the laws of human activity and social development. They represent its most valid conclusions. Historical materialism is itself the synthetic product of historically elaborated facts and ideas which are rooted in the economy and come to fruition in the science of society taken in the full span of its development.■

Uneven & Combined Development in History

1. The Uneven Course of History

This essay aims to give a connected and comprehensive explanation of one of the fundamental laws of human history — the law of uneven and combined development. This is the first time, to my knowledge, that this has been undertaken. I shall try to show what this law is, how it has worked out in the main stages of history, and also how it can clarify some of the most puzzling social phenomena and political problems of our age.

The dual nature of the law

The law of uneven and combined development is a scientific law of the widest application to the historic process. This law has a dual character or, rather, it is a fusion of two closely connected laws. Its primary aspect deals with the different rates of growth among the various elements of social life. The second covers the concrete correlation of these unequally developed factors in the historic process.

The principal features of the law can be briefly summarised as follows. The mainspring of human progress is man's command over the forces of production. As history advances, there occurs a faster or slower growth of productive forces in this or that segment of society, owing to the differences in natural conditions and historical connections. These disparities give either an expanded or a compressed character to entire historical epochs and impart varying rates and extents of growth to different peoples, different branches of economy, different classes, different social institutions and fields of culture. This is the essence of the law of uneven development.

These variations amongst the multiple factors in history provide the basis for the

The text has been taken from the third US edition (Merit Publishers; New York, 1966).

emergence of exceptional phenomena in which features of a lower stage are merged with those of a superior stage of social development. These combined formations have a highly contradictory character and exhibit marked peculiarities. They may deviate so much from the rule and effect such an upheaval as to produce a qualitative leap in social evolution and enable a formerly backward people to outdistance, for a certain time, a more advanced. This is the gist of the law of combined development.

It is obvious that these two laws, or these two aspects of a single law, do not stand upon the same level. The unevenness of development must precede any combinations of the disproportionately developed factors. The second law grows out of and depends upon the first, even though it reacts back upon it and affects its further operation.

The historical background

The discovery and formulation of this law is the outcome of over 2500 years of theoretical investigation into the modes of social development. The first observations upon which it is based were made by the Greek historians and philosophers. But the law itself was first brought into prominence and consistently applied by the founders of historical materialism, Marx and Engels, over a century ago. This law is one of Marxism's greatest contributions to a scientific understanding of history and one of the most powerful instruments of historical analysis.

Marx and Engels derived the essence of this law in turn from the dialectical philosophy of Hegel. Hegel utilised the law in his works on universal history and the history of philosophy without, however, giving it any special name or explicit recognition.

Many dialectically minded thinkers before and since Hegel have likewise used this law in their studies and applied it more or less consciously to the solution of complex historical, social and political problems. All the outstanding theoreticians of Marxism, from Kautsky and Luxemburg to Plekhanov and Lenin, grasped its importance, observed its operations and consequences, and used it for the solution of problems which baffled other schools of thought.

An example from Lenin

Let me cite an example from Lenin. He based his analysis of the first stage of the Russian Revolution in 1917 upon this law. In his "Letters From Afar", he wrote to his Bolshevik collaborators from Switzerland: "The fact that the (February) revolution succeeded so quickly … is due to an unusual historical conjuncture where there combined, in a strikingly favourable manner, *absolutely dissimilar movements, absolutely different* class interests, *absolutely opposed* political and social tendencies."[1]

What had happened? A section of the Russian nobility and landowners, the

oppositional bourgeoisie, the radical intellectuals, the insurgent workers, peasants and soldiers, along with the Allied imperialists — these "absolutely dissimilar" social forces — had momentarily arrayed themselves against the tsarist autocracy, each for its own reasons. All together they besieged, isolated and overthrew the Romanov regime. This extraordinary conjuncture of circumstances and unrepeatable combination of forces had grown up out of the whole previous unevenness of Russian historical development with all its long-postponed and unsolved social and political problems exacerbated by the first imperialist world war.

The differences which had been submerged in the offensive against tsarism immediately asserted themselves and it did not take long for this de facto alliance of inherently opposing forces to disintegrate and break up. The allies of the February 1917 revolution became transformed into the irreconcilable foes of October 1917.

How did this hostility come about?, The overthrow of tsarisrn had in turn produced a new and higher unevenness in the situation, which may be summarised in the following formula. On the one hand, the objective conditions were ripe for the assumption of power by the workers; on the other hand, the Russian working class, and above all its leadership, had not yet correctly appraised the real situation or tested the new relationship of forces. Consequently they were subjectively unready to solve that supreme task. The unfolding of the class struggles from February to October 1917 may be said to consist in the growing recognition by the working class and its revolutionary leaders of what had to be done and in overcoming the disparity between the objective conditions and the subjective preparation. The gap between these was closed in action by the triumph of the Bolsheviks in the October Revolution which combined the proletarian conquest of power with the widespread peasant uprising.

The formulator of the law

This process is fully explained by Trotsky in his *History of the Russian Revolution*. The Russian Revolution itself was the most striking example of uneven and combined development in modern history. In his classic analysis of this momentous event Trotsky gave to the Marxist movement the first explicit formulation of that law.

Trotsky, the theoretician, is most celebrated as the originator of the theory of the Permanent Revolution. It is likely that his exposition of the law of uneven and combined development will come to be ranged by its side in value. He not only gave this law its name but was also the first to expound its full significance and to give it a rounded expression.

These two contributions to the scientific understanding of social movement are in fact intimately interlinked. Trotsky's conception of the Permanent Revolution resulted

from his study of the peculiarities of Russian historical development in the light of the new problems presented to world socialism in the epoch of imperialism. These problems were especially acute and complex in backward countries where the bourgeois-democratic revolution had not yet taken place or set about to solve many of its most elementary tasks at a time when the proletarian revolution was already at hand. The fruits of his thinking on these questions, confirmed by the actual developments of the Russian Revolution, prepared and stimulated his subsequent elaboration of the law of uneven and combined development.

Indeed, Trotsky's theory of the Permanent Revolution represents the most fruitful application of this very law to the key problems of the international class struggles in our own time, the epoch of the transition from the capitalist domination of the world to socialism, and offers the highest example of its penetrating power. However, the law itself is not only pertinent to the revolutionary events of the present epoch but, as we shall see, to the whole compass of social evolution. And it has even broader applications than that.

Uneven development in nature

So much for the historical background out of which the law of uneven and combined development has emerged. Let us now consider the scope of its application.

Although directly originating in the study of modern history, the law of uneven and combined development is rooted in features common to all processes of growth in nature as well as in society. Scientific investigators have emphasised the prevalence of unevenness in many fields. All the constituent elements of a thing, all the aspects of an event, all the factors in a process of development are not realised at the same rate or to an equal degree. Moreover, under differing material conditions, even the same thing exhibits different rates and grades of growth. Every rural farmer and urban gardener knows that.

In *Life of the Past*, G.G. Simpson, one of the foremost authorities on evolution, develops this same point along the following lines:

> The most striking things about rates of evolution are that they vary enormously and that the fastest of them seem very slow to humans (including palaeontologists, I may say). If any one line of phylogeny is followed in the fossil record it is always found that different characters and parts evolve at quite different rates, and it is generally found that no one part evolves for long at the same rate. The horse brain evolved rapidly while the rest of the body was changing very little. Evolution of the brain was much more rapid during one relatively short span than at any other time. Evolution of the feet was practically at a standstill most of the time during horse evolution, but three times there

were relatively rapid changes in foot mechanism.

Rates of evolution also vary greatly from one lineage to another, even among related lines. There are a number of animals living today that have changed very little for very long periods of time: a little brachiopod called Lingula, in some 400 million years; Limulus, the horseshoe "crab" — really more of a scorpion than a crab — in 175 million or more; Sphenodon, a lizard-like reptile now confined to New Zealand, in about 150 million years; Didelphis, the American oppossum, in a good 75 million years. These and the other animals for which evolution essentially stopped long ago all have relatives that evolved at usual or even at relatively fast rates.

There are, further, characteristic differences of rates in different groups. Most land animals have evolved faster than most sea animals — a generalisation not contradicted by the fact that some sea animals have evolved faster than some land animals. [pp. 137-138]

The evolution of entire orders of organisms has passed through a cycle of evolution marked by an initial phase of restricted, slow growth, followed by a shorter but intense period of "explosive expansion", which in turn settled down into a prolonged phase of lesser changes.

In *The Meaning of Evolution*, G.G. Simpson states, "Times of rapid expansion, high variability and beginning adaptive radiation … are periods when enlarged opportunities are presented to groups able to pursue them" (pp. 72-73). Such an opportunity for explosive expansion was opened to the reptiles when they evolved to the point of independence from water as a living medium and burst into landscapes earlier barren of vertebrate life. Then a "quieter period ensues when the basic radiation has been completed" and the group can indulge in "the progressive enjoyment of a completed conquest".

The evolution of our own species has already gone through the first phase of such a cycle and entered the second. The immediate animal forerunners of mankind went through a prolonged period of restricted growth as a lesser breed compared to others. Mankind arrived at its phase of "explosive expansion" only in the past million years or so, after the primate from which we are descended acquired the necessary social powers. However, the further development of mankind will not duplicate the cycle of animal evolution because the growth of society proceeds on a qualitatively different basis and is governed by its own unique laws.

The evolution of the distinctive human organism has been marked by considerable irregularity. The skull developed its present characteristics among our ape ancestors long before our flexible hands with the opposable thumb. It was only after our prototypes had acquired upright posture and working hands, that the brain inside the

skull expanded to its present proportions and complexity.

What is true of entire orders and species of animals and plants holds good for its individual specimens. If equality prevailed in biological growth, each of the various organs in the body would develop simultaneously and to the same proportionate extent. But such perfect symmetry is not to be found in real life. In the growth of the human foetus some organs emerge before others and mature before others. The head and the neck are formed before the arms and legs, the heart at the third week and the lungs later on. As the sum of all these irregularities, we know that infants come out of the womb in different conditions, even with deformations, and certainly at varying intervals between conception and birth. The nine-month gestation period is no more than a statistical average. The date of delivery of a given baby can diverge by days, weeks or months from this average.

The frontal sinus, a late development in the primates since it is possessed only by the great apes and men, does not occur in young humans, but emerges after puberty. In many cases, it never develops at all.

The uneven evolution of primitive societies

The development of social organisation, and of particular social structures, exhibits unevenness no less pronounced than the life histories of biological beings out of which it has emerged with the human race. The diverse elements of social existence have been created at different times, have evolved at widely varying rates, and grown to different degrees under different conditions and from one era to another.

Archaeologists divide human history into the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages according to the main materials used in making tools and weapons. These three stages of technological development have had immensely different spans of life. The Stone Age lasted for around 900,000 years; the Bronze Age dates from 3000-4000 BC; the Iron Age is less than 4000 years old. Moreover, different sections of mankind passed through these stages at different dates in different parts of the world. The Stone Age ended before 3500 BC in Mesopotamia, about 1600 BC in Denmark, 1492 in America, and not until 1800 in New Zealand.

A similar unevenness in time-spans marks the evolution of social organisation. Savagery, when men lived by collecting food through foraging, hunting or fishing, extended over many hundred thousands of years while barbarism, which is based upon the breeding of animals and the raising of crops for food, dates back to about 8000 BC. Civilisation is little more than 6000 years old.

The production of regular, ample and growing food supplies effected a revolutionary advance in economic development which elevated food-producing

peoples above backward tribes which continued to subsist on the gathering of food. Asia was the birthplace of both domestication of animals and of plants. It is uncertain which of these branches of productive activity preceded and grew out of the other, but archaeologists have uncovered remains of mixed farming communities which carried on both types of food production as early as 8000 BC.

There have been purely pastoral tribes, which depended exclusively on stock raising for their existence, as well as wholly agricultural peoples whose economy was based on the cultivation of cereals or tubers. The cultures of these specialised groups underwent a one-sided development by virtue of their particular type of production of the basic means of life. The purely pastoral mode of subsistence did not however contain the potentialities of development inherent in agriculture. Pastoral tribes could not incorporate the higher type of food production into their economies on any scale, without having to settle down and alter their entire mode of life. This became specially true after the introduction of the plough superseded the slash-and-burn techniques of gardening. They could not develop an extensive division of labour and go forward to village and city life, so long as they remained simply herders of stock.

The inherent superiority of agriculture over stockbreeding was demonstrated by the fact that dense populations and high civilisations could develop on the basis of agriculture alone, as the Aztec, Inca and Mayan civilisations of Middle and South America proved. Moreover, the agriculturalists could easily incorporate domesticated animals into their mode of production, blending food cultivation with stockbreeding and even transferring draft animals to the technology of agriculture through the invention of the plough.

It was the combination of stockbreeding and cereal cultivation in mixed farming that prepared inside barbaric society the elements of civilisation. This combination enabled the agricultural peoples to outstrip the purely pastoral tribes, and in the favourable conditions of the river valleys of Mesopotamia, Egypt, India and China to become the nurseries of civilisation.

Since the advent of civilisation peoples have existed on three essentially different levels of progress corresponding to their modes of securing the necessities of life: the food-gatherers, the elementary food-producers, and the mixed farmers with a highly developed division of labour and a growing exchange of commodities. The Greeks of the classical age were very highly conscious of this disparity in development between themselves and the backward peoples around them who still remained at earlier, lower stages of social existence. They summed up these differences by drawing a sharp distinction between civilised Greeks and barbarians. The historical connection and distance between them was explicitly articulated by the historian Thucydides

when he said: "The Greeks lived once as the barbarians live now."

The new world & the old

The unevenness of world historical development has seldom been more conspicuously exhibited than when the aboriginal inhabitants of the Americas were first brought face to face with the white invaders from overseas Europe. At this juncture, two completely separated routes of social evolution, the products of from 10 to 20 thousand years of independent development in the two hemispheres, encountered each other. Both were forced to compare their rates of growth and measure their respective total achievements. This was one of the sharpest confrontations of different cultures in all history.

At this point the Stone Age collided with the late Iron and the early Machine Age. In hunting and in war the bow and arrow had to compete with the musket and cannon; in agriculture the hoe and the digging stick with the plough and draft animals; in water transportation, the canoe with the ship; in land locomotion, the human leg with the horse and the bare foot with the rolling wheel. In social organisation, tribal collectivism ran up against feudal-bourgeois institutions and customs; production for immediate community consumption against a money economy and international trade.

These contrasts between the American Indians and the West Europeans could be multiplied. However, the inequality of the human products of such widely separated stages of economic development was starkly apparent. They were so antagonistic and removed from each other that the Aztec chiefs at first identified the white newcomers with gods while the Europeans reciprocated by regarding and treating the natives like animals.

The historical inequality in productive and destructive powers in North America was not overcome, as we know, by the Indian adoption of white man's ways and their gradual, peaceful assimilation into class society. On the contrary, it led to the dispossession and annihilation of the Indian tribes over the next four centuries.

The backwardness of colonial life

But if the white settlers thereby displayed their material superiority over the native peoples, they themselves were far behind their motherlands. The general backwardness of the North American continent and its colonies compared with Western Europe predetermined the main line of development here from the start of the 15th century to the middle of the 19th century. The central historical task of the Americans throughout this period was to catch up with Europe by overcoming the disparities in the social development of the two continents. How and by whom this was done is the

main theme of American history throughout these three and a half centuries.

It required, among other things, two revolutions to complete the job. The colonial revolution which crowned the first stage of progress gave the American people political institutions more advanced than any in the Old World — and paved the way for rapid economic expansion. Even after winning national independence the United States had still to conquer its economic independence within the capitalist world. The economic gap between this country and the nations of Western Europe was narrowed in the first half of the 19th century and virtually closed up by the triumph of Northern industrial capitalism over the slave power in the Civil War. It did not take long after that for the United States to come abreast of the West European powers and outstrip them.

The inequality of continents & countries

These changes in the international position of the United States illustrate the unevennesses in the development between the metropolitan centres and the colonies, between the different continents, and between countries on the same continent.

A comparison of the diverse modes of production in the various countries brings out their unevenness most sharply. Slavery had virtually vanished as a mode of production on the mainland of Europe before it was brought to America — thanks to the needs of these very same Europeans. Serfdom had disappeared in England before it arose in Russia … and there were attempts to implant it in the North American colonies after it was on the way out in the mother country. In Bolivia, feudalism flourished under the Spanish conquerors and slavery languished while in the Southern English colonies feudalism was stunted and slavery flourished.

Capitalism was highly developed in Western Europe while only meagrely implanted in Eastern Europe. A similar disparity in capitalist development prevailed between the United States and Mexico.

Disparities in the quantity and quality of social formations in the course of their developments are so conspicuous and predominant that Trotsky terms unevenness "the most general law of the historic process".[2] These inequalities are the specific expressions of the contradictory nature of social progress, of the dialectics of human development.

They occurred even at the lowest stages of social evolution. In *New Light on Ancient America*, the anthropologist Ralph Linton tells us that, in passing over from savagery toward barbarism, the central areas of progress among the American Indians changed places. "As long as the Americans remained in a hunting, food-gathering economy, northern North America was culturally the most advanced part of the continent. None of the pre-agricultural cultures that have been found south of the Great Plains

and Northern Woodland areas compares with those of these areas in richness of content. With the rise of agriculture-based civilisations in Middle America, the situation was reversed. The main line of diffusion was now from south to north, and Middle American influences become increasingly recognisable over the whole area east of the Rockies."

Internal inequalities

The inequality of development between continents and countries is matched by an equally uneven growth of the various elements within each social grouping or national organism.

In a book on the American working class written by Karl Kautsky early in this century, the German Marxist pointed out some of the marked contrasts in the social development of Russia and the United States at that time. "Two states exist", he wrote, "diametrically opposed to each other, each of which contains an element inordinately developed in comparison with their standard of capitalist production. In one state — America — it is the capitalist class. In Russia it is the proletariat. In no other country but America is there so much ground for speaking of the dictatorship of capital, while the proletariat has nowhere acquired such importance as in Russia." This difference in development, which Kautsky described in the bud, has since become enormously accentuated.

Trotsky gave a superb analysis of the significance of such unevenness for explaining the course of a nation's history in the opening chapter of his *History of the Russian Revolution* on "Peculiarities of Russia's Development". Tsarist Russia contained social forces belonging to three different stages of historical development. On top were the feudal elements: an overgrown Asiatic autocracy, a state clergy, a servile bureaucracy, a favoured landed nobility. Below them were a weak, unpopular bourgeoisie and a cowardly intelligentsia. These opposing phenomena were organically interconnected. They constituted different aspects of a unified social process. The very historical conditions which had preserved and fortified the predominance of the feudal forces — the slow tempo of Russian development, her economic backwardness, her primitiveness of social forms and low level of culture — had stunted the growth of the bourgeois forces and fostered their social and political feebleness.

That was one side of the situation. On the other side, the extreme backwardness of Russian history had left the agrarian and the national problems unsolved, producing a discontented, land-hungry peasantry and oppressed nationalities longing for freedom, while the late appearance of capitalist industry gave birth to highly concentrated industrial enterprises under the domination of foreign finance capital and an equally

concentrated proletariat armed with the latest ideas, organisations and methods of struggle.

These sharp unevennesses in the social structure of tsarist Russia set the stage for the revolutionary events which started with the overthrow of a decayed medieval structure in 1917 and concluded in a few months with placing the proletariat and the Bolshevik Party in power. It is only by analysing and understanding them that it is possible to grasp why the Russian Revolution took place as it did.

Irregularities in society

The pronounced irregularities to be found in history have led some thinkers to deny that there is, or can be, any causality or lawfulness in social development. The most fashionable school of American anthropologists, headed by the late Franz Boas, explicitly denied that there were any determinate sequence of stages to be discovered in social evolution or that the expressions of culture are shaped by technology or economy. According to R.H. Lowie, the foremost exponent of this viewpoint, cultural phenomena present merely a "planless hodgepodge", a "chaotic jumble". The "chaotic jumble" is all in the heads of these anti-materialists and anti-evolutionists, not in the history or the constitution of society.

It is possible for people living under Stone Age conditions in the 20th century to possess a radio though not to manufacture one. But it would be categorically impossible to find such a product of contemporary electronics buried with human remains in a Stone Age deposit of 20,000 years ago.

It does not take much penetration to see that the activities of food-gathering, foraging, hunting, fishing and fowling existed long before food production in the forms of gardening or stockbreeding. Or that stone tools preceded metal ones; speech came before writing; cave-dwellings before house-building; camps before villages; the exchange of goods before money. On a general historical scale, these sequences are absolutely inviolable.

The main characteristics of the simple social structures of savages are determined by their primitive methods of producing the means of life which, in turn, depend upon the low level of their productive forces. It is estimated that food-gathering peoples require from four to 40 square miles per capita to maintain themselves. They could neither produce nor maintain large concentrations of population on such an economic foundation. The groups usually numbered less than 40 persons and seldom exceeded 100. The inescapable smallness of their food supply and dispersion of their forces set strict limits to their development.

From barbarism to civilisation

What about the next higher stage of social development, barbarism? The noted archaeologist, V. Gordon Childe, has published in a book called *Social Evolution* a survey of the "successive steps through which barbarian cultures actually passed on the road to civilisation in contrasted natural environments". He acknowledges that the starting point in the economic sphere was identical in all cases, "inasmuch as all the first barbarian cultures examined were based an the cultivation of the same cereals and the breeding of the same species of animals". That is to say, barbarism is marked off from savage forms of life by the acquisition and application of the higher productive techniques of agriculture and stock raising.

He further points out that the final result — civilisation — although exhibiting concrete differences in each case, "yet everywhere did mean the aggregation of large populations in cities; the differentiation within these of primary producers (fishers, farmers, etc.), fulltime specialist artisans, merchants, officials, priests and rulers; an effective concentration of the economic and political power; the use of conventional symbols for recording and transmitting information (writing), and equally conventional standards of weights and measures, and of measures of time and space leading to some mathematical and calendrical science".

At the same time Childe points out that "the intervening steps in development do not exhibit even abstract parallelism". The rural economy of Egypt, for example, developed differently from that of temperate Europe. In Old World agriculture the hoe was replaced by the plough, a tool which was not even known to the Mayas.

The general conclusion which Childe draws from these facts is that "the development of barbarian rural economics in the regions surveyed exhibits not parallelism but divergence and convergence" (p. 162). But this does not go far enough. Viewed in their totality and historical interconnections, the many peoples which entered barbarism all started from the same essential economic activities, cereal cultivation and stockbreeding. They then underwent a diversified development according to different natural habitats and historical circumstances, and, provided they traversed the entire road to civilisation and were not arrested en route or obliterated, ultimately arrived at the same destination: civilisation.

The march of civilisation

What about the evolution of civilisation itself? Is that all a "planless hodgepodge"? When we analyse the march of mankind through civilisation, we see that its advanced segments passed successively through slavery, feudalism and capitalism and is now on the way toward socialism. This does not mean that every part of humanity passed, or

had to pass, through this invariable sequence of historical stages, any more than each of the barbarians passed through the same sequence of stages. In each instance, it was necessary for the vanguard peoples to work their way through each given stage. But then their very achievements enabled those who followed after to combine or compress entire historical stages.

The real course of history, the passage from one social system to another, or from one level of social organisation to another, is far more complicated, heterogeneous and contradictory than is set forth in any general historical scheme. The historical scheme of universal social structures — savagery, barbarism, civilisation, with their respective stages — is an abstraction. It is an indispensable and rational abstraction which corresponds to the essential realities of development and serves to guide investigation. But it cannot be directly substituted for the analysis of any concrete segment of society.

A straight line may be the shortest distance between two points but we find that humanity frequently fails to take it. It more often follows the adage that the longest way round is the shortest way home.

Both regularity and irregularity are mingled together in history. The regularity is fundamentally determined by the character and development of the productive forces and the mode of producing the means of life. However, this basic determinism does not manifest itself in the actual development of society in a simple, direct and uniform fashion but in extremely complex, devious and heterogeneous ways.

The uneven evolution of capitalism

This is exemplified most emphatically in the evolution of capitalism and its component parts. Capitalism is a world economic system. Over the past five centuries it has spread from country to country and from continent to continent and passed through the successive phases of commercial capitalism, industrial capitalism, finance capitalism and state monopoly capitalism. Every country, however backward, has been drawn into the network of capitalist relations and become subject to its laws of operation. While every nation has become involved in the international division of labour at the base of the capitalist world market, each country has participated in its own peculiar way and to a different degree in the expression and the expansion of capitalism and played different roles at different stages of its development.

Capitalism rose to greater heights in Europe and North America than in Asia and Africa. These were interdependent phenomena, opposing sides of a single process. The capitalist underdevelopment in the colonies was a product and condition of the overdevelopment of the metropolitan areas at their expense.

The participation of various nations in the evolution of capitalism has been no less irregular. Holland and England took the lead in establishing capitalist forms and forces in the 16th and 17th centuries while North America was still largely possessed by the Indians. Yet in the final stage of capitalism in the 20th century the United States has far outdistanced England and Holland.

As capitalism absorbed one country after another into its orbit, it increased their dependence upon one another. But this growing interdependence did not mean that they followed identical paths or possessed the same characteristics. As they drew closer together economically, profound differences asserted themselves and separated them. Their national development in many respects did not proceed along parallel lines but at angles to each other, and sometimes even at right angles. They acquired not identical but complementary traits.

Same causes — different effects

The rule that the same causes produce the same effects is not an unconditional and all-embracing one. The law holds good only when the historically produced conditions are the same — and since these are usually different for each country and constantly changing and interchanging with one another, the same basic causes can lead to very different, and even opposite, results.

For example, in the first half of the 19th century England and the United States were both governed by the same laws of industrial capitalism. But these laws had to operate under very different conditions in the two countries and, in the field of agriculture, they produced very different results. The enormous demand of British industry for cotton and cheap foodstuffs immensely stimulated American agriculture at the same time that these very economic factors strangled farming in England itself. The expansion of agriculture in the one country and its contraction in the other were opposite but interdependent consequences of the same economic causes.

To shift from economic to intellectual processes, the Russian Marxist Plekhanov pointed out in his remarkable work "The Development of the Monist View of History" how the uneven development of the diverse elements composing a national structure permits the same stock of ideas to produce very different impacts upon philosophical life. Speaking of ideological development in the 18th century, Plekhanov stated:

> The very same fund of ideas leads to the militant atheism of the French materialists, to the religious indifferentism of Hume and to the "practical" religion of Kant. The reason was that the religious question in England at that time did not play the same part as it was playing in France, and in France not the same as in Germany. And this difference in the significance of the religious question was caused by the fact that in

each of these countries the social forces were not in the same mutual relationship as in each of the others. Similar in their *nature*, but dissimilar in their degree of development the elements of society combined differently in the different European countries, and thereby brought it about that in each of them there was a very particular "state of minds and manners" which expressed itself in the national literature, philosophy, art, etc. In consequence of this, one and the same question might excite Frenchmen to passion and leave the British cold; one and the same argument a progressive German might treat with respect, while a progressive Frenchman would regard it with bitter hatred.[3]

National peculiarities

I should like to close this examination of the processes of uneven development with a discussion of the problem of national peculiarities. Marxists are often accused by their opponents of denying, ignoring or underestimating national peculiarities in favour of universal historical laws. There is no truth to this criticism, although individual Marxists are sometimes guilty of such errors.

Marxists deny neither the existence nor the importance of national peculiarities. It would be theoretically stupid and practically reckless for them to do so, since national differences may be decisive in shaping the policy of the labour movement, of a minority struggle, or of a revolutionary party in a given country for a certain period. For example, most politically active workers in Britain follow the Labour Party. This monopoly is a prime peculiarity of Great Britain and the political development of its working people today. Marxists who failed to take this factor into account as the keystone of their organisational orientation would violate the spirit of their method.

Far from being indifferent to national differences, Marxism is the only historical method and sociological theory which adequately explains them, demonstrating how they are rooted in the material conditions of life and viewing them in their historical origins, development, disintegration and disappearance. The schools of bourgeois thought look upon national peculiarities in a different way, as inexplicable accidents, god-given birthrights, or fixed and final features of a particular people. Marxism regards them as historical products arising out of concrete combinations of worldwide forces and intra-national conditions.

This procedure of combining the general with the particular, and the abstract with the concrete, accords not only with the requirements of science but with our everyday habits of judgment. Every individual has a distinctive facial expression which enables us to recognise him and separate him from all others. At the same time we realise that this individual has the same kind of eyes, ears, mouth, forehead and other organs as the rest of the human race. In fact, the peculiar physiognomy which produces his

distinctive expression is nothing but the outward manifestation of the specific complex of these common human structures and features. So it is with the life and the profile of any given nation.

Each nation has its own distinctive traits. But these national peculiarities arise out of the operation of general laws as they are modified by specific material and historical conditions. They are at bottom individual crystallisations of universal processes.

Trotsky concluded that national peculiarity is the most general product of the unevenness of historical development, its final result.

The limits of national peculiarities

But however deep-seated these peculiarities may be in the social structure and however powerful their influence upon national life, national peculiarities are limited. First, they are limited in action. They do not replace the overriding processes of world economy and world politics nor can they abolish the operation of their laws.

Consider, for example, the different political consequences the 1929 world crisis had upon the United States and Germany, owing to their different historical backgrounds, special social structures and national political evolution. In one case Roosevelt's New Deal came to power; in the other, Hitler's fascism. The program of reform under bourgeois-democratic auspices and the program of counterrevolution under naked totalitarian dictatorship were totally different methods utilised by the respective capitalist classes to save their skins.

This contrast between the American and the German capitalist modes of self-preservation was exploited to the hilt by the apologists for American capitalism who attributed it to the inherently democratic spirit of the American nation and its capitalist rulers. In reality, the difference was due to the greater wealth and resources of US imperialism on the one hand, and the immaturity of its class relations and conflicts on the other.

However, at the very next stage and before the decade was over, the processes of imperialism drove both powers into a second world war to determine which would dominate the world market. Despite the significant differences in their internal political regimes, both arrived at the same destination. They remained subordinate to the same fundamental laws of capitalist imperialism and could not abolish their operation or avoid their consequences.

In the second place, national peculiarities have definite historical limits. They are not eternally fixed and absolutely final. Historical conditions generate and sustain them; new historical conditions can alter and eliminate them, even transform them into their opposites.

In the 19th century, Russia was the most reactionary country in Europe and in world politics; in the 20th century it became the most revolutionary. In the middle of the 19th century the United States was the most revolutionary and progressive nation; in the middle of the 20th century it has taken Russia's place as the fortress of world counterrevolution. But this role, too, will not be everlasting, as will be indicated in the next section where we shall deal with the character and consequences of combined development.■

2. Combined Development & Its Consequences

We must now examine the second aspect of the law of uneven and combined development. This law bears in its name indications of the more general law of which it is a special expression, viz., the law of dialectical logic called the law of interpenetration of opposites. The two processes — unevenness and combination — which are united in this formulation, themselves represent two different and opposing, yet integrally connected and interpenetrating aspects or stages of reality.

The law of combined development starts from the recognition of unevenness of the rates of development of various phenomena of historical change. The disparities in technical and social development and the fortuitous combination of elements, tendencies and movements belonging to different stages of social organisation provide the basis for the emergence of something of a new and higher quality.

This law enables us to observe how the new qualities arise. If society did not develop in a *differential* way, that is, through the emergence of differences which are sometimes so acute as to be contradictory to each other, the possibility for combination and *integration* of contradictory phenomena would not present itself. Therefore, the first phase of the evolutionary process — i.e. unevenness — is the indispensable precondition for the second phase — the combination of features belonging to different stages of social life into distinctive social formations, deviating from abstractly deduced standards or "normal" types.

Since combination comes about as the necessary outcome of pre-existent unevenness, we can see why both are always found together and coupled in the single law of combined and uneven development. Starting with the fact of disparate levels of development which result from the uneven progression of the various aspects of society, we will now analyse the next stage and necessary consequence of this state of affairs — their coming together.

Fusion of different historical factors

We must ask, first of all, what is combined ? We can often see in the world how features which are appropriate to one stage of evolution become merged with those essentially belonging to another and higher stage. The Catholic Church, with its seat at the Vatican, is a characteristically feudal institution. Today the Pope uses radio and television — inventions of the 20th century — to disseminate Church doctrines.

This leads to the second question: how are the different features combined? Here metal alloys provide a useful analogy. Bronze, which played so great a part in the development of early tool-making that its name has been given to an entire stage of historical development — the Bronze Age — is composed of two elementary metals, copper and tin, mixed together in specific proportions. Their fusion produces an alloy with important properties different from either of its constituents.

Something similar happens in history when elements belonging to different stages of social evolution are fused. This fusion gives rise to new phenomena, a new formation with its own special characteristics. The colonial period of American history, when European civilisation, changing over from feudalism to capitalism, met and merged with savagery and barbarism, provided a lush breeding ground for combined formations and furnishes a most instructive field for their study. Almost every kind of social relationship then known to mankind, from savagery to the shareholding company, was to be found in the New World during colonial times. Several colonies, such as Virginia and North and South Carolina, were originally settled by capitalist shareholding enterprises which had been granted charters by the Crown. This highest form of capitalist undertaking, the shareholding firm, came into contact with Indians still living under primitive tribal conditions.

One of the prime peculiarities of American development was the fact that every one of the precapitalist forms of life which grew up here were combined to one degree or another with fundamental features of bourgeois civilisation. Indian tribes, for example, were annexed to the world market through the fur trade and it is true that the Indians thereby became somewhat civilised. On the other hand, the white European colonists, hunters, trappers and pioneer farmers, became partially barbarised by having to survive in the wilds of the plains and hills of the "virgin" lands. Yet the European woodsman who penetrated the wilds of America with his rifle and iron axe, and also with the outlook and habits of civilisation, was very different from the Red Indian tribesman, however many of the activities of barbaric society the woodsman had to indulge in.

In his pioneer work on *Social Forces in America History*, A.M. Simons, an early socialist historian, wrote: "The course of evolution pursued in each colony bears a

striking resemblance to the line of development that the race has followed" (pp. 30-31). In the beginning, he points out, there was primitive communism. Then came small individual production and so right through to capitalism.

However, the conception that the American colonies, or any one of them, substantially repeated the sequence of stages through which advanced societies had travelled before them, is entirely too schematic and misses the main point about their development and structure. The most significant peculiarity in the evolution of the British colonies in America came from the fact that all the organisational forms and driving forces belonging to earlier stages of social development, from savagery to feudalism, were incorporated into, conditioned by, and in the case of chattel slavery, even produced by the expanding system of international capitalism.

There was no mechanical serial reproduction on American soil of outmoded historical stages. Instead, colonial life witnessed a dialectical admixture of all these varied elements, which resulted in the emergence of combined social formations of new and special types. The chattel slavery of the American colonies was very different from the chattel slavery of classical Greece and Rome. American slavery was a bourgeoisified slavery which was not only a subordinate branch of the capitalist world market but became impregnated with capitalist features. One of the most freakish offshoots of this fusion of slavery and capitalism was the appearance of commercial slaveholders among the Creek Indians in the South. Could anything be more anomalous and self-contradictory than communistic Indians, now slaveholders, selling their products in a bourgeois market?

The dialectics of combination

What results from this coming together, this fusion of different stages or elements of the historical process, then, is a peculiar blend or alloy of things. In the joining of such different, and even opposing, elements, the dialectical nature of history asserts itself most forcefully and prominently. Here contradiction, flat, obvious, flagrant contradiction holds sway. History plays pranks with all rigid forms and fixed routines. All kinds of paradoxical developments ensue which perplex and confuse those with narrow, formalised minds.

As a further important example of this let us consider the nature of Stalinism. In Russia the most advanced form of property, nationalised property, and the most efficient mode of industrial organisation, planned economy, both brought about through the proletarian revolution of 1917, were fused into a single mass with the most brutal tyranny, which was itself created by the political *counter*revolution of the Soviet bureaucracy. The economic foundation of the Stalinist regime historically belongs

to the socialist era of the future. Yet this economic foundation became yoked to a political superstructure showing the most malignant traits of the class dictatorships of the past. No wonder this exceptionally contradictory phenomenon has puzzled so many people and led them astray!

Uneven and combined development presents us with a peculiar mixture of backward elements with the most modern factors. Many pious Catholics affix to their automobiles medals of St. Christopher, the patron saint of travellers who is supposed to protect them against accidents. This custom combines the fetish of the credulous savage with the products of the motor industry, one of the most technically advanced and automated industries of the modern world.

These anomalies are, nowadays, especially pronounced in the most backward countries. Such curiosities exist as air-conditioned harems!

"The development of historically backward nations leads necessarily to a peculiar combination of different stages in the historical process", wrote Trotsky in *History of the Russian Revolution*.[4]

Carlton S. Coone writes: "… there still are marginal regions where cultural diffusion has been uneven, where simple Stone Age hunters are suddenly confronted by strangers carrying rifles, where Neolithic garden-cultivators are trading their stone axes for steel ones and their pottery water jugs for discarded oil tins, and where proud citizens of ancient empires, accustomed to getting news some weeks later from camel caravans, find themselves listening to propaganda broadcasts over public radios. In the blue and white tiled city square the clear call of the muezzin, bidding the faithful to prayer, is replaced one day by a tinny summons issuing not from the lips of a bearded man, but from a shiny metal cone hanging from the minaret. Out at the airport, pilgrims to the holy places climb directly from the backs of camels to seats in a DC-4. These changes in technology lead to the births of new institutions in these places as elsewhere, but what is born from such travail is often an unfamiliar child, resembling neither the laggard nor the advanced parent, and hard for both to cope with." (*The Story of Man*, pp. 413-414.)

In Africa today, among the Kikuyu in Kenya, as well as among the peoples of the Gold Coast, ancient tribal ties and customs lend strength to their solidarity in the struggles for social advance and national independence against the English imperialists. In Premier Nkrumah's movement [in Ghana] a national parliamentary party is linked with trade unions and tribalism — all three of which belong to different stages of social history.

The blending of backward elements with the most modern factors can also be seen when we compare modern China and the United States of America. Today many Chinese peasants in tiny hamlets have pictures of Marx and Lenin on their walls and

are inspired by their ideas. The average American worker, living in the most modern cities, has, by contrast, paintings of Christ or photographs of the president on his prefabricated walls. However, the Chinese peasants have no running water, paved roads, cars or television sets which the American workers have.

Thus, although the United States and its working class in its basic industrial development and its living and cultural standards have progressed far beyond China, in certain respects the Chinese peasant has outstripped the American worker. "The historical dialectic knows neither naked backwardness nor chemically pure progressiveness", as Trotsky put it.

Britain's social structure

If we analyse the social structure of contemporary Britain we can see how it has features belonging to three different social-historical periods, inextricably interwoven. On top of its political system is a monarchy and an established church, both inherited from feudalism. This is connected with and serves a capitalist-monopolist property structure belonging to the highest stage of capitalism. Alongside these capitalist-owned industries exist socialised industries, mighty trade unions, and a Labour Party — all precursors of socialism.

It is significant that this particular contradictory combination in Britain sorely perplexes the American. The liberal American cannot understand why the English retain a monarchy and an established church; the capitalist-minded American is puzzled by the British ruling class's toleration of the Labour Party.

At the same time, Britain is being shaken by the most formidable of all the combined movements of social forces on a world scale in our time, viz., the combination of the anticapitalist movement of the working class with the anticolonial revolution of the coloured peoples. These two very different movements, both of them flowing out of opposition to imperialist rule, reinforce one another.

These two movements, however, do not have the same effects in all imperialist countries. They are felt, for example, more directly and forcefully in Britain and France than in the United States. Even in the United States, however, the struggles of the colonial peoples for independence and of the Negro minority for equality reciprocally influence one another.

Forward leaps in history

The most important outcome of the interaction of uneven and combined development is the occurrence of "leaps" in the flow of history. The biggest leaps are rendered possible by the coexistence of peoples on different levels of social organisation. In

today's world, these social organisations stretch all the way from savagery to the very threshold of socialism. In North America, while the Eskimos in the Arctic and the Seri Indians of Lower California are still in the stage of savagery, the bankers of New York and the workers of Detroit operate in the highest stage of monopoly capitalism. Historical "leaps" become inevitable because retarded sections of society are brought face to face with tasks which can be solved only by the most up-to-date methods. Under the spur of external conditions, they are obliged to skip over, or rush through, stages of evolution which originally required an entire historical epoch to unfold their potentialities.

The wider the range of differences in development and the greater the number of stages present at any one time, the more dramatic are the possible combinations of conditions and forces and the more startling is the nature of the leaps. Some combinations produce extraordinary sudden eruptions and twists in history. Transportation has evolved, step by step, through the ages from human to animal locomotion, through wheeled vehicles on to railways, cars and airplanes. In recent years, however, peoples in South America and Siberia have passed directly and at one bound from the pack animal to the use of planes for transport.

Tribes, nations and classes are able to compress stages, or skip over them entirely, by assimilating the achievements of more advanced peoples. They use these, like a polejumper, to soar upward, clear intermediate stages, and surmount obstacles in one mighty leap. They cannot do this until pioneer countries in the vanguard of mankind have previously paved the way for them by prefabricating the material conditions. Other peoples prepare the means and models which, when the time is ripe, they then adapt to their own peculiar needs.

Soviet industry, for example, was able to make such rapid progress because, among other reasons, it could import techniques and machinery from the West. Now China can march ahead at an even faster pace in its industrialisation by relying not only upon the technical achievements of the advanced capitalist countries but also upon the planning methods of Soviet economy.

In their efforts to come abreast of Western Europe, the colonists of the North Atlantic coast quickly passed through "wilderness barbarism", virtually skipped over feudalism, implanted and then extirpated chattel slavery and built large towns and cities on a capitalist basis. They did all this at an accelerated rate. It took the European peoples 3000 years to climb from the upper barbarism of Homeric Greece to the England of the triumphant bourgeois English revolution of 1649. North America covered this same transformation in 300 years. This was a tenfold speed-up in the rate of development. It was, however, only made possible by the fact that America was

able to profit from the previous achievements of Europe combined with the impetuous expansion of the capitalist market to all quarters of the globe.

Alongside of this acceleration and compression of social development came an acceleration of the tempo of revolutionary events. The British people took eight centuries to progress from the beginnings of feudalism in the ninth century to their victorious bourgeois revolution in the 17th century. The North American colonists took only one and three quarter centuries to pass from their first settlements in the 17th century to their victorious revolution in the last quarter of the 18th century.

In these historical leaps, stages of development are sometimes compressed and sometimes omitted altogether, depending upon the particular conditions and forces. In the North American colonies, for example, feudalism, which flowered in Europe and Asia over many centuries, hardly obtained a foothold. Feudalism's characteristic institutions — landed estates, serfs, the monarchy, the established church and the medieval guilds — could find no suitable environment and were squeezed out between commercial chattel slavery on the one hand and the budding bourgeois society on the other. Paradoxically, at the very time that feudalism was being stunted and strangled in the North American colonies, it was undergoing vigorous expansion on the other side of the world in Russia.

On the other hand, slavery in the Southern colonies of North America sank deep roots, enjoyed such an extensive growth and proved so tough and durable that it required a separate revolution to eradicate it. There are, indeed, still, to this day, significant anachronistic survivals in the South of chattel slavery.

Historical reversions

History has its reversions as well as its forward marches; its periods of reaction no less than its periods of revolution. Under conditions of reaction, infantile forms and obsolete features appropriate to bygone ages and periods of development can be fused with advanced structures to generate extremely retrogressive formations and hinder social advance. A prime example of such a regressive combination was chattel slavery in America, where an obsolete mode of property and form of production belonging to the infancy of class society sprang up in a bourgeois environment belonging to the maturity of class society.

Recent political history has made us familiar with the examples of fascism and Stalinism, which are symmetrical, but by no means identical, historical phenomena of the 20th century. Both represented reversions from pre-existing democratic forms of government which had entirely different social foundations. Fascism was the destroyer and supplanter of bourgeois democracy in the final period of imperialist domination

and decay. Stalinism was the destroyer and supplanter of the workers' democracy of revolutionary Russia in the initial period of the international socialist revolution.

Thus far we have singled out two stages in the dialectical movement of society. First, some parts of mankind, and certain elements of society, move ahead faster and develop farther than others. Later, under the shock of external forces, laggards are prodded along, catching up with and even outstripping their forerunners on the path of progress by combining the latest innovations with their old modes of existence.

The disintegration of combinations

But history does not halt at this point. Each unique synthesis, which arises from uneven and combined development, itself undergoes further growth and change which can lead on to the eventual disintegration and destruction of the synthesis. A combined formation amalgamates elements derived from different levels of social development. Its inner structure is therefore highly contradictory. The opposition of its constituent poles not only imparts instability to the formation but directs its further development. More clearly than any other formation a struggle of opposites marks the life course of a combined formation.

There are two main types of combination. In one case, the product of an advanced culture may be absorbed into the framework of an archaic social organisation. In the other, aspects of a primitive order are incorporated into a more highly developed social organism.

What effects will follow from the assimilation of higher elements into a primitive structure depends upon many circumstances. For example, the Indians could replace the stone axe with the iron axe without fundamental dislocations of their social order because this change involved only slight dependence upon the white civilisation from which the iron axe was taken. The introduction of the horse considerably changed the lives of the Indians of the prairies by extending the range of their hunting grounds and of their war-making abilities, yet the horse did not transform their basic tribal relations. However, participation in the growing fur trade and the penetration of money had revolutionary consequences upon the Indians by disrupting their tribal ways, setting up private interests against communal customs, pitting one tribe against another and subordinating the new Indian traders and trappers to the world market.

Under certain historical conditions the introduction of new things can, for a time, even lengthen the life of the most archaic institutions. The entrance of the great capitalist oil concerns into the Middle East has temporarily strengthened the sheikdoms by showering wealth upon them. But in the long run the invasion of up-to-date techniques and ideas cannot help but undermine the old tribal regimes because they

break up the conditions upon which the old regimes rest and create new forces to oppose and replace them.

A primitive power can fasten itself upon a higher one, gain renewed vitality, and even appear for a time superior to its host. But the less developed power leads an essentially parasitic existence and cannot indefinitely sustain itself at the expense of the higher. It lacks suitable soil and atmosphere for its growth while the more developed institutions are not only inherently superior but can count upon a favourable environment for expansion.

Slavery & capitalism

The development of chattel slavery in North America provides an excellent illustration of this dialectic. From the world-historical standpoint, slavery on this continent was an anachronism from its birth. As a mode of production, it belonged to the infancy of class society; it had already virtually vanished from Western Europe. Yet the very demands of Western Europe for staple raw materials, like sugar, indigo, and tobacco, combined with the scarcity of labour for carrying on large-scale agricultural operations, implanted slavery in North America. Colonial slavery grew up as a branch of commercial capitalism. Thus a mode of production and a form of property which had long passed away emerged afresh out of the demands of a higher economic system and became part of it.

This contradiction became more accentuated when the rise of capitalist factory industry in England and the United States lifted the cotton-producing states of the deep South to top place in American economic and political life. For decades the two opposing systems functioned as a team. They then split apart at the time of the American Civil War. The capitalist system, which at one stage of its development fostered slavery's growth, at another stage created a new combination of forces which overthrew it.

The combined formation of the old and the new, the lower and the higher, chattel slavery and capitalism turned out to be neither permanent nor indissoluble; it was conditional, temporary, relative. The enforced association of the two tended toward dissociation and growing conflict. If a society marches forward, the preponderant advantage, in the long run, goes to the superior structure which thrives at the expense of the inferior features, eventually outstripping and dislodging them.

The substitution of classes

One of the most important and paradoxical consequences of uneven and combined development is the solution of the problems of one class through the agency of another.

Each stage of social development inherits, poses, and solves its own specific complex of historical tasks. Barbarism, for example, developed the productive techniques of plant cultivation and animal breeding and husbandry as branches of its economic activity. These activities were also prerequisites for the supplanting of barbarism by civilisation.

In the bourgeois epoch, the unification of separate provinces into centralised, national states and the industrialisation of these national states were historical tasks posed to the rising bourgeoisie. But, in a number of countries, the underdevelopment of capitalist economy and the consequent weakness of the bourgeoisie made them unable to fulfil these historically bourgeois tasks. Right in the heart of Europe, for example, the unity of the German people was effected, from 1866 to 1869, not by the bourgeoisie and not by the working class, but by an outmoded social caste, the Prussian Junker landlords, headed by the Hohenzollern monarchy and directed by Bismarck. In this case, the historical task of a capitalist class was carried through by precapitalist forces.

In the present century, China presents another, reversed example — on a higher historical level. Under the double yoke of its old feudal relationships and of imperialist subordination, China could neither be unified nor industrialised. It required nothing less than a proletarian revolution (however deformed this revolution may have been from the start) backed up by a mighty peasant insurrection to clear the way for the solution of these long-postponed bourgeois tasks. Today China has been unified for the first time and is rapidly becoming industrialised. However, these jobs are not being carried out by capitalist or precapitalist forces but by the working class and under the leadership of the working class. In this case, the unfinished tasks of the aborted capitalist era of development have been shouldered by a post-capitalist class.

The extremely uneven development of society makes necessary these exchanges of historical roles between classes; the telescoping of historical stages makes the substitution possible. As Hegel pointed out, history often resorts to the most indirect and cunning mechanisms to achieve its ends.

One of the major problems left unsolved by the bourgeois democratic revolution in the United States was the abolition of the old stigmas of slavery and the extension of equality to the Negroes. This task was only partially solved by the industrial bourgeoisie of the North during the American Civil War. This failure of the bourgeoisie has ever since been a great source of embarrassment and difficulty for its representatives. The question now posed is whether the present ultra-reactionary capitalist rulers of the USA can now carry through to fulfilment a national task which it failed to complete in its revolutionary heyday.

The spokesmen for the Democrats and Republicans find it necessary to say that they can in fact do this job; the reformists of all kinds claim that the bourgeois government can be made to do it. It is our opinion, however, that only the joint struggle of the Negro people and the working masses against the capitalist rulers will be able to carry through the struggle against the hangovers of slavery to its victorious conclusion. In this way, the socialist revolution will complete what the bourgeois-democratic revolution failed to realise.

The penalties of progressiveness & the privileges of backwardness

Those who make a cult of pure progress believe that high attainments in a number of fields presuppose equivalent perfection in other respects. Many Americans automatically assume that the United States surpasses the rest of the world in all spheres of human activity just because it does so in technology, material productivity, and standard of living. Yet in politics and philosophy, to mention no others, the general development of the United States has not yet passed beyond the 19th century, whereas countries in Europe and Asia, far less favoured economically, are far ahead of the USA in these fields.

In the last few years of his rule, Stalin sought to impose the notion that only "rootless cosmopolitans" could maintain that the West had outdistanced the USSR in any branch of endeavour from mechanical invention to the science of genetics. This expression of Great Russian nationalism was no less stupid than the Westerners' conceit that nothing superior can come out of the alleged Asiatic barbarism of the Soviet Union.

The truth is that each stage of social development, each type of social organisation, each nationality, has its essential virtues and defects, advantages and disadvantages. Progress exacts its penalties; it has to be paid for. Advances in certain fields can institute relapses in others. For example, civilisation developed the powers of production and the wealth of mankind by sacrificing the equality and fraternity of the primitive societies it supplanted. On the other hand, under certain conditions, backwardness has its benefits. Moreover, what is progressive at one stage of development can become a precondition for the establishment of backwardness at a subsequent stage or in an affiliated field. And what is backward can become the basis for a forward leap.

It seems presumptuous to tell those peoples who are oppressed by backwardness and are yearning to cast it off, that their archaic state has any advantages. To them backwardness appears as an unmixed evil. But the consciousness of this "evil" emerges in the first place only after these peoples have come into contact with superior forms

of social development. It is the contact of the two forms, backward and advanced, which exposes the deficiencies of the backward culture. So long as civilisation is unknown, the primitive savage remains content. It is only the juxtaposition of the two that introduces the vision of something better and feeds the yeast of dissatisfaction. In this way the presence and knowledge of a superior state becomes a motor force of progress.

The resulting criticism and condemnation of the old state of affairs generate the urge to overcome the disparity in development and drive laggards forward by arousing in them the desire to draw abreast of the more advanced. Every individual who has become involved in the learning process has felt this personally.

When new and imperative demands are made upon backward peoples, the absence of accumulated, intermediate institutions can be of positive value, because then fewer obstacles are present to obstruct the advance and the assimilation of what is new. If the social forces exist and exert themselves effectively, intelligently and in time, what had been a penalty can be turned to advantage.

The twisted course of the Russian Revolution

The recent history of Russia provides the most striking example of this conversion of historical penalties into advantages. At the start of the 20th century, Russia was the most retarded great power in Europe. This backwardness embraced all strata from the peasantry at the bottom to the absolutist Romanov dynasty at the top. The Russian people and its oppressed nationalities suffered both from the heaped up miseries of their decayed feudalism and from the backwardness of bourgeois development in Russia.

However, when the time came for a revolutionary settlement of these accumulated problems, this backwardness disclosed its advantages in many ways. Firstly, tsarism was *totally* alienated from the masses. Secondly, the bourgeoisie was too weak to take power in its own name and hold it. Thirdly, the peasantry, having received no satisfaction from the bourgeoisie, was compelled to rely upon the working class for leadership. Fourthly, the working class also did not have any petrified modes of activity or entrenched trade union and political bureaucracies to hold it back. It was easier for this energetic young class, which had so little to unlearn and so much to learn so quickly, to adopt the most advanced theory, the boldest and clearest program of action and the highest type of party organisation. The peasant revolt against medievalism, a movement which in Western Europe had been characteristic of the dawn of the bourgeois democratic revolutions, intermeshed with the proletarian revolution against capitalism, which belonged to the 20th century. As Trotsky explained in *The History of the Russian Revolution*, it was the conjunction of these two different revolutions which gave an

expansive power to the upheaval of the Russian people and accounted for the extraordinary sweep and momentum of its achievements.

But the privileges of backwardness are not inexhaustible; they are limited by historical and material conditions. Accordingly, in the next stage of its development, the backwardness inherited from the Russia of the tsars reasserted itself under new historical conditions and on an entirely new social basis. The previous privileges had to be paid for in the next decades by the bitter suffering, the economic privations and the loss of liberties which the Russian people endured under the Stalinist dictatorship. The very backwardness which had previously strengthened the revolution and which had propelled the Russian masses far ahead of the rest of the world, now became the starting point of the political reaction and bureaucratic counterrevolution, a consequence of the fact that the international revolution failed to conquer in the industrially more advanced countries. The economic and cultural backwardness of Russia, combined with the retarded development of the international revolution, were the basic conditions which enabled the Stalinist clique to choke the Bolshevik Party and permitted the bureaucracy to usurp political power.

For these reasons, the Stalinist regime became the most self-contradictory in modern history, a coagulation of the most advanced property forms and social conquests emanating from the revolution with a resurrection of the most repulsive features of class rule. Giant factories with the most up-to-date machinery were operated by workers who, serf-like, were not permitted to leave their places of employment; airplanes sped above impassable dirt tracks; planned economy functioned side by side with "slave labour" camps; tremendous industrial advances went hand in hand with political retrogression; the prodigious growth of Russia as a world power was accompanied by an inner decay of the regime.

However, the dialectical development of the Russian Revolution did not stop at this point. The extension of the revolution to Eastern Europe and Asia after the Second World War, the expansion of Soviet industry, and the rise in the numbers and cultural level of the Soviet workers, prepared conditions for a modified reversal of the old trends, the revival of the revolution on a higher stage, and the undermining and partial overcoming of the scourge of Stalinism. The first manifestations of this forward movement of the masses in Russia and in its satellites, with the working class in the lead, have already been announced to the world.

From the Khrushchev speech to the Hungarian Revolution there has been a continuous series of events demonstrating the dialectics of revolutionary development. At every stage of the Russian Revolution since 1905, we can see the interaction of its backwardness and progressiveness with their conversion one into the other according

to the concrete circumstances of national and international development. Only an understanding of the dialectics of these changes can provide an accurate picture of the extremely complex and contradictory development of the USSR throughout the 40 years of its existence. The dozens of oversimplified characterisations of the nature of modern Russian society, which serve only to confuse the revolutionary movement, derive directly from a lack of understanding of the laws of dialectics and the use of metaphysical methods in analysing historical processes.

The law of uneven and combined development is an indispensable tool for analysing the Russian Revolution and for charting its growth and decay through all its complex phases, its triumphs, its degeneration and its prospective regeneration as the process of de-Stalinisation is carried through to the end by the Soviet people.■

3. Disproportions of American Development

The previous section showed how the law of uneven and combined development enables the Marxist to unravel the twisted course of the Russian Revolution. Every socialist today recognises the supreme importance of arriving at a satisfactory explanation of the degeneration of the Soviet Union and so of reliably estimating the significance of the conflict between the progressive character of nationalised property in the USSR and the reactionary bureaucracy which rules that country. Equal in importance to the Russian question for the international socialist movement is an understanding of the dialectics of the development of the socialist movement in the United States of America, the most highly developed and most powerful capitalist country in the world. How, in essence, has the law of uneven and combined development shown itself in the principal stages in the history of the USA? How does an understanding of this law help us to forecast the possible future course of the class struggle in America?

The 'War of Independence'

Prior to breaking loose from British rule, the North American colonies of Britain were certainly underdeveloped in many respects — compared, that is to say, with the mother countries of Western Europe, particularly with Britain herself. The first American revolution, which is usually called the "American War of Independence", was a mighty effort on the part of the colonies to come abreast of the Old World.

In preparing, organising and conducting the War of Independence, the American Patriot Party profited abundantly from the "privileges of backwardness". Its merchant leaders had acquired wealth and power by developing the latest techniques of shipbuilding and the practices of world trade. The people acquired freedom and democracy by taking over those forms of party organisation (Whigs and Tories) and governmental forms of legislative representation and local government which had been worked out in England and brought over by the colonists. To justify their demands,

the colonists found ready-made theories of natural law in the writings of ideologists of the English revolution of the 17th century like Milton, Harrington and John Locke. In addition the colonists created a new technique of warfare, uniting their experiences of hunting in the wilds of the North American plains and mountains with the potentialities of the musket. These new tactical methods were important in helping the colonists to defeat the British Redcoats of George III. As a result of its victory America not only caught up with the Old World but, politically, *surpassed* it. This was the first victorious colonial revolution of modern times and it established what was then the most progressive democracy in the world.

However the American revolution of the 18th century, like the Russian revolution of the 20th century, could not draw upon unlimited resources. The *political* progressiveness of the Yankee republic became combined with *economic* backwardness. For example, the War of Independence did not, and could not, uproot slavery or curb the power of the slaveowners. The backwardness of the USA in this decisive sphere took its revenge upon the Americans of the 19th century.

The American people had for some time to endure the rule of the Southern slaveowners, who later became so reactionary and insolent that they not only prevented further progress of the country but even endangered the democracy and unity achieved by the first revolution. Fortunately a new combination of social forces had been created in the meantime, and this new combined formation proved strong enough to meet and overthrow the slaveholders' counterrevolution.

Historically considered, this second American revolution — i.e., the Civil War — represented, on the one hand, the price paid by the American nation for the *economic* backwardness which it had inherited from its colonial youth. On the other hand, the impetus provided by the Yankee victory in the Civil War jet-propelled the USA once again into becoming the leading nation of the world. After all the precapitalist forces and formations, from the barbarism of the Red Indian tribes to the slavery of the Southern states, had been disposed of, American capitalism was able to leap forward with mighty strides, so making the USA today the model and most advanced capitalist nation and the paramount world power.

However, this dominant position was not achieved all at once but in two revolutionary leaps separated by an interval of gradual progress and political reaction.

Major sources of unevenness in American life

What are the major penalties of progressiveness and the privileges of backwardness to be found in the USA today? American technical know-how is the most advanced and American industry and agriculture the most productive in the world. This not

only enriches the capitalist monopolists but showers many benefits upon the American people — ranging from an abundance and wide variety of foodstuffs to a plethora of television sets, refrigerators, motorcars and other "luxuries". This is one side of the picture. On the other side, the American monopolists are the most efficient of all the capitalists in the world in exploiting both their own working people and the rest of the toilers of the world. While the American worker enjoys the highest standard of living of any worker in the world, he is also the most heavily exploited. This tremendously productive working class gets back for its own consumption a smaller part of its output and hands over in the form of profit to the capitalist owners of the instruments of production a greater part of its output than does either the English or the French working class.

The greatest unevenness of America's social development is this: its economy is so advanced that it is fully ripe for collective ownership and planned production (that is, it is ripe for socialism) and yet this economy remains encased in a straitjacket of capitalist and nationalist restrictions. This contradiction is the main source of the social insecurity of our age and of the main social evil of our time, not only in the USA but also throughout the whole world.

The high productivity of the American economy, along with the privileges of the dominating position of American capitalism in world economy, is primarily responsible for another phenomenon of American life, and one which always impresses foreign observers — the extraordinary backwardness of American politics in general and the backwardness of the political ideology of organised labour in particular. In this field, it may be said, a colonial cottage is standing upon foundations suitable for skyscrapers. The workers and even the farmers of Britain, or even for that matter the peasants of China, are today influenced and, to some extent, guided by socialist ideas while the working people of America remain captive to the crudest bourgeois ideas and organisations.

This is the second outstanding feature of unevenness in the social structure of the USA. The political life of America lags far behind that of most of the rest of the world and even further behind the economic and social development of the country itself. This lag is, ironically enough, part of the price America is paying for the successes of its two previous revolutions and for its resulting outstanding achievements in industry and agriculture. The third American revolution, the socialist revolution, is being retarded precisely because its forerunners accomplished so much.

Unevenness also prevails in other sections of the American social consciousness. The ideology of the American ruling class is one of the most highly developed in capitalist history. This ruling class not only has a militant, positive philosophy to justify

its privileges, a philosophy which it assiduously disseminates inside the USA and internationally, but also it is simultaneously engaged in an unceasing offensive against the ideas of communism and socialism, even though Marxist ideas have spread amongst the people of America to the most limited degree. This anti-communist, anti-socialist crusading zeal, together with its acute class sensitivity and consciousness of the class struggle, expresses the American ruling class's forebodings about its own future. But in contrast to this class consciousness of the capitalists the American working class has not yet reached the level of generalising its own particular class interests even in the form of the most elementary social-reformist notions. This indifference to socialist ideology is one of the most pronounced peculiarities of the American worker. This is not to say that the American worker is devoid of class feeling and initiative. On the contrary, he has asserted himself time and time again as an independent fighting force, especially in the industrial field — often with brilliant results. But these experiences have not led to the establishment of a conscious and permanent challenge to the capitalist order, i.e., to a mass socialist movement.

The hyper-development in America of bourgeois ideology and the corresponding underdevelopment of working-class consciousness are the inseparable products of the same historical conditions. They are interdependent aspects of the present stage of social and political development in the USA.

Today the political complexion of the whole world reflects the major unevennesses of American society — one in the domain of production, another in political organisation and a third in social consciousness. The gap between the economy's ripeness for socialisation and its capitalist-monopolist ownership and administration, and the gap between the high level of labour's trade union organisation and its political and ideological immaturity, are the most striking peculiarities of American life. This situation sets the most difficult theoretical and practical problems to all socialists, especially to those who have to operate in such an environment. To the whole world of labour these gaps in American social life sometimes look like bottomless pits into which the peoples of the whole world must be dragged to their nuclear destruction. Sometimes it seems impossible to imagine that forces could ever come into existence to fill up or bridge the abyss.

Prospects of American development

But will things in the US remain like this forever or even for the remainder of this century? Will the contradictions in America's social life persist indefinitely without essential changes? Will the gaps between the level of American economic development and the forms of ownership, between the present weakness and the potential power

of the American working class, remain as they are today? The capitalists, the reformists, the liberals, the pragmatists and pseudo-Marxists of all kinds not only think they will but try also to induce everyone else to share their convictions.

But all these people reckon without the movement of world history, a movement which has been considerably speeded up in our time. They reckon without the contradictions of the capitalist system on a world scale. These contradictions will, in time, generate new and more devastating crises. They reckon without the development of the class conflicts in our own time and above all they underestimate the creative capacities of the American working class. Again, not being Marxists, they leave out of their calculations the operation and effects of the law of uneven and combined development.

Let us see how the law of uneven and combined development can help us to penetrate below the surface and to expose the kernel of present realities. As we have seen, this is certainly not the first time in the history of America, nor is America the only place in the world in the 20th century, where economic relations, political structures and social ideas have lagged far behind the development of the forces of production. The undeniable facts of history are that, in the past, the only way in which similar disparities have been resolved, and unevenness eliminated, has been through revolutionary upheavals whose function, on each occasion, has been to place new progressive forces at the head of the nation. In our time only the working class can perform once more this historically necessary function. There is no adequate reason for believing that, whatever else intervenes, the extreme contradictions in American life can be resolved in any other way.

At this point an astute critic may object: "According to the law of uneven and combined development, and this exposition of it, events do not necessarily reproduce themselves in the same way even within the same social system, but, under a different set of circumstances, the course of events may take a different line of development. Why then does the USA have to follow the same revolutionary path in the 20th century as it did in the 18th and 19th centuries? Why must the USA necessarily follow the course taken by the backward countries like Russia and China in our own time? Is it not possible for America to make a detour around the socialist revolution and by easy and gradual stages arrive at a higher form of social organisation and a better life?"

Now it is certainly true that no historical precedent, however superficially apposite, can properly replace the direct analysis of the real concrete situation; precedents can only guide and supplement the specific investigation. Of course, it would be more advantageous for the peoples of the whole world if the transition from capitalism to socialism in America (or, indeed, in Britain or anywhere else) could be effected by

mutual agreement between the classes. Marxists have never denied this nor desired otherwise. But this pious wish, unfortunately, does not dispose of the problem. The question then arises: is this ideal and desirable prospect a realistic one? Should it be made the basis for practical socialist politics in Britain or in the USA? This same question has once more been raised in the British and American Communist Parties in the "great debate" which has followed the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party.

The "peaceful" road of development to socialism in America presupposes that American capitalism can proceed without further devastating economic convulsions, social crises and world wars, and that if these do occur the rulers, discredited by these catastrophes, would step aside and voluntarily relinquish their power, property and privileges, in answer to the demands (and perhaps votes) of an aroused people.

Can it be realistically expected that the most profound social conflict in all history, the conflict which involves the final abolition of exploitation of man by man, will, in the advanced capitalist countries of "Western democracy", be resolved through diplomatic negotiations between the classes backed up by peaceful forms of mass pressure and by the counting of votes? Incidentally, there are no precedents for such "revolutions" in British, French, German or American history. It can, however, be easily shown that the most powerful reasons exist indicating why the capitalist monopolists of today, in the USA and elsewhere, are even less likely to relinquish voluntarily their ruling position, to act against their basic material interests and to commit "social suicide" than were the courts of Charles I, George III and Louis XVI, the slaveholders of the Southern states of the USA and, for that matter, the court of Tsar Nicholas II, in their day.

The powerful financial and industrial magnates who rule America today have long been accustomed not only to rule but to believe in the rightness and eternity of their rule. Moreover they realise that they would not merely be relinquishing their own supremacy but also that of capitalism on a world scale. For should the American workers assume state power, this would not be just a minor shift of power within a single social system. It would represent the decisive act in the most fundamental and far-reaching of all the transformations of society. Nothing less would be involved than the worldwide historical *coup de grace* of capitalism and the passing of decisive sections of mankind to a higher social system, to socialism. Fundamentally the fate of two world historical systems, capitalism and socialism, are at issue in the struggle between the American capitalists and the American working class. The recognition of this key position of the American working class is of fundamental importance for the socialist movement in every country of the world.

With so much at stake, the reflex action of the American capitalists to the threat of

displacement by the working class would most likely be, as McCarthyism indicated, a sharp turn towards military dictatorship or fascism. In any event, it would be unrealistic and irresponsible for a serious Marxist to count only upon the most favourable line of development and to ignore the probability that, instead of facilitating the transition to socialism, the representatives of capitalism will try to throw up new barriers against socialist advance and to fight to retain their sovereignty, however illegal and "undemocratic" their resistance might be.

However, if this last stronghold of world capitalism, the USA, is the least likely of all countries to escape the necessity for revolutionary struggle on its road to socialism, this certainly does not mean that the pattern of this struggle will duplicate precisely the path taken in other countries, say, for example, Russia. It is an elementary proposition of Marxism, which to suit their own temporary aims the Stalinists are now busy "rediscovering", that the revolutionary class in each country will proceed in its own peculiar way in achieving state power and in building socialism.

After decades of the most discouraging and demoralising delay, the American workers obtained their industrial organisation in one mighty leap during the thirties through the CIO. They compressed several stages of development in this leap. The American auto workers did not proceed through craft unionism to industrial unionism, but went at one bound from a state of non-organisation to the highest form of industrial organisation, skipping the intervening craft stage which industrial workers in Britain found it necessary to pass through.

The contrast of British & American labour

Similar spectacular leaps will most probably be repeated in the forthcoming political development of the American working class. The value of the law of uneven and combined development consists in helping to anticipate such leaps. When Britain lost its paramount position on the world market around the beginning of the 20th century, the most progressive elements of British labour began to draw the necessary political deductions by turning away from the Liberal Party and establishing their own class party around a program of social reform — albeit social reform supplementing and expressing itself through a quasi-socialist ideology. American labour has yet to reach the point reached by the British workers over half a century ago. The American trade union movement still remains politically attached to the Democratic Party, the American equivalent of the old and now obsolete Liberal Party in Britain.

How are the American working masses likely to respond to radical changes in their economic and political conditions? Can they be expected to follow in the footsteps of the British workers? A Marxist, dialectical thinker can only answer this question thus

— yes and no. The American worker will follow the British worker but only in the most general way. He will certainly find it imperative to cut loose from the capitalist parties and to create an independent class outlook and organisation, just as the workers of Britain have done. But the specific forms, the special features and the rate of political development of the American workers not only *need* not, but most certainly *will* not, simply duplicate the features of British development, because the world historical conditions under which they will set up their class political party will be vastly different from those under which the British Labour Party was created.

When the British working class launched itself into independent politics at the turn of the century world capitalism was still ascending and no country had yet overthrown capitalist rule. Today capitalism on a world scale is on the defensive, while the anticapitalist powers and the socialist and colonial movements have become a mighty reality.

Nor is the America of today, internally, anything like the Britain of the first half of the 20th century. Today America is the last stronghold of capitalism and, unlike the British capitalists of Edwardian days, the US capitalists have little room for strategic retreat. These differences will ensure that there will be great differences between the British Labour Party and the American Party of Labour which still remains to be created. Accordingly, the American working class will enter this new chapter of American political events in a mood very different from that of their British predecessors

In the USA it will take a very acute crisis to jerk labour loose from the old moorings, rather than the sort of chronic long-drawn-out crisis which was the case in Britain. The impact of these social shocks will run up against the stunted political development of the US working class at a time when capitalism is on the defensive and the anticapitalist forces on the offensive in the rest of the world. The offensive of the working class will not only collide with intensified resistance from the capitalists, but also with the inertia and short-sightedness of the trade union bureaucracies — as it has already done in Britain. But the American reactionary trade union bureaucracies will also have to operate under far different conditions from those which obtain in Britain. The critical situation will, on the one hand, dictate the most radical measures. On the other hand, the bureaucrats will be challenged for the leadership of the militant workers by a strong and solid revolutionary socialist grouping.

‘Explosive expansion’

Such a combination of a strongly organised, highly cultured and newly radicalised working class with a leadership equipped with the most advanced theory and farseeing policies, as is in the process of gestation in the USA today, will have extraordinary

explosive power.

At such a juncture in world history, the penalties of backwardness from which the American socialist movement now suffers will be certain to show their other, more hopeful side. The American workers will be receptive to the boldest revolutionary prospects and will be prepared to assimilate them readily and to act upon them.

New species, it was noted earlier, have experienced "explosive expansion" when they have broken into virgin territories under favourable conditions. An analogous acceleration in development can be expected when the American workers enter the field of independent class political action and take possession of the ideas of scientific socialism and the methods of Marxism. In such days of grave social crisis this amalgamation of a previously politically backward but potentially powerful working class with the science of society and of political action, i.e., with Marxism, can effect the greatest leap forward any society has yet achieved — greater than any leap forward in American history — and, by this single act, raise the whole of humanity by a head.■

4. APPENDIX: How to Apply a Law of Sociology

William F. Warde's series "The Law of Uneven and Combined Development" must have been very stimulating to British Marxists. In the complex and rapidly moving world of the 20th century a formal notion of eternal sequences for the development of societies is as useless as the idea that there are no law-governed processes at all in social life. Warde therefore does a service in highlighting that aspect of materialist dialectics which explains the result of a clash between, or a combination of, phenomena at different levels of development, e.g., American technical efficiency with semi-feudal — or recently tribal — economies and the accompanying customs.

The place of this law of uneven and combined development requires a systematic treatment as part of the dialectical method; meanwhile one question seems to be raised from Warde's own material. A scientific law should outline the particular sets of conditions which give rise to a typical result in the given sphere of investigation. In sociology, a law of this kind is the law that the productive forces develop to a point where they demand a change in, first, the economic structure and then the political and ideological superstructure of a society. A definite dependence of one set of facts on another set is clearly stated. Can the law of uneven and combined development be seen in the same way? It states that factors developed to an uneven extent, either between societies or within one society, combine to form single formations of a contradictory character. If this generalisation is to be accorded the status of a law it should give clear guiding lines to the following problem, among others. Will the processes at work give rise to a dialectical leap forward in history, as in the October Revolution in Russia, or will they give rise to degenerative processes, as in the bureaucratic distortions of Stalin's regime, or the destruction of the Tasmanian aborigines? One does not expect of course an answer to all questions which will be a substitute for analysis of each particular case, for that is the essence of the scientific method. But a law should state the characteristics of progressive as against regressive combinations. If this point can be cleared up, then other fruitful controversial problems can be raised later.

C.S.

I do not clearly see why C.S. hesitates to accord the law of uneven and combined development the status of a law. Lawfulness is derived from ascertaining materially conditioned, necessary connections among phenomena. Laws formulate such necessary relations among the factors in a certain sector of reality in a generalised way. In natural science, for example, the early physicists Boyle, Charles, Gay-Lussac and Avagadro established simple relationships connecting the volume, temperature and pressure of gases which they formulated in elementary empirical laws.

Since different aspects of reality have their own laws, different laws do not operate on the same level of generality nor do they have the same degree of necessity. The broadest laws are formulated in the materialist dialectic of being and becoming, which embraces universal processes and modes of development. The law of the interpenetration of opposites belongs in this class. On the other hand there are particular laws which apply only within the limits of specific social-economic formations — as, for instance, the law of the growing concentration of capital which pertains exclusively to the capitalist system.

The law of uneven and combined development stands midway between these two types in its scope of operation. It belongs not to philosophy or to political economy but primarily to the science of sociology which seeks to discover the general laws of human evolution. It formulates certain important aspects of the historical tendencies of social development. It is more concrete than the law of the interpenetration of opposites, of which it is a specific expression, and less limited than the law of the concentration of capital.

The material source of unevenness

1. Historical materialism starts from the factual premise that men cannot exist without eating, drinking, etc. This is the supreme law of life.
2. This inescapable physical contradiction between eating and living which animals overcome by direct appropriation of and consumption of food is solved by mankind through labour activities.
3. The development of society is determined by the development of the productive forces at men's command.
4. These productive forces give rise to certain definite relations of production which shape the rest of the social structure.
5. The further development of the productive forces eventually comes into conflict with the existing relations of production, initiating a revolutionary period which, if progressively resolved, results in the establishment of a higher social-economic order.

These are the main links in the chain of necessity which governs social development and in the logical reasoning of the scientific socialism which explains them. The law of uneven and combined development enters this chain at the following point: the productive forces which are the mainspring of the entire social movement developed unevenly from one time and place to another, from one people to another, and from one social formation to the next. These differences in the degree of development in turn produce disproportion not only between different segments of society but also among the various elements in any given social structure.

The fundamental lawfulness of the phenomena theoretically expressed in the law of uneven development comes from the observed, verifiable fact, running throughout history, that disproportions of various types emerge from the different rates of economic development. Given these disparities, certain consequences inescapably follow in the subsequent unfolding of the social process.

To prove the contrary, i.e., the lack of historical necessity in this law, it would have to be demonstrated that society proceeds in a different way; that the productive forces develop evenly and that the resultant social organisations and cultural superstructures consist of harmonious elements perfectly proportioned to one another.

The further course of evolution

From this basic starting point, the process goes on to a second stage formulated in the law of combined development, which is the essential supplement of the first. The diversely developed elements are united, not in simple homogeneous structures, but in complex, heterogeneous and sometimes highly contradictory ways.

The contradictory characteristics of the combinations do not depend only on the fact that the various formations and factors have evolved independently of one another and coexist on different levels of social development. The manner and consequences of the merger also depend upon the historical period in which they come together. It can make considerable difference whether the elements are united in precapitalist times, during the capitalist period, or under post-capitalist conditions.

After such combinations are brought into being, the process passes over to a still higher stage in which the emergence of new unevennesses in the situation leads to the conflict and dissociation of the previously synthesised, contradictory factors.

This sociological law, whose operations and effects can be observed throughout the course of history, has attained its maximum strength and scope under capitalism and during the period of transition to socialism because all the accumulated disproportions of historical development inherited from past ages come to a head and are entangled in the most acute contradictions at this juncture.

'Circumstances alter cases'

The single difficulty raised in the remarks of C.S. is that the law of uneven and combined development ought to indicate without ambiguity what the specific outcome of its operation is going to be. It should enable us to foretell what the combination of factors at different levels of development will culminate in: a leap forward or retrogression.

The law cannot do that because its action and results do not depend upon itself alone as a theoretical formulation of general tendencies, but even more upon the total situation in which it functions. The latter is decisive. What determines the specific outcome of its operation are the material factors in their totality: the living structure of a society, the dynamics of its inner forces, and their historical and international connections.

One and the same law can give different results at different stages in the development of the same economic system, as the objective conditions of its operations change. The law of value, which is the supreme regulator of the capitalist system, energetically promotes the productive forces in its progressive period — and then in its further operation leads to the constriction of the productive forces in its declining monopolist-imperialist stage.

The law of uneven and combined development likewise leads to different results according to the specific circumstances of its operation. Under certain conditions the introduction of higher elements and their amalgamation with lower ones accelerates social progress; under other conditions, the synthesis can retard progress and even push it back for a time. Which trend will be dominant, whether progress or reaction will be favoured, depends upon the specific weight of all the factors in the given situation and the depth of the penetration of the higher ones.

Advanced elements cannot, in and of themselves, guarantee a comprehensive and uninterrupted forward movement unless and until they reach down into the foundations of the social system, revolutionise and reconstruct them. Otherwise their efficacy can be restricted and distorted.

Russian development

Consider in this light the evolution of the Soviet Union since 1917, as Trotsky explained it in The *Revolution Betrayed* with the aid of the law of uneven and combined development. Trotsky pointed out how, in the first place, "the law of uneven development brought it about that the contradiction between the technique and property relations of capitalism (a universal feature in its death agony) shattered the weakest link in the world chain."[5] The Russian Revolution was, as he stated elsewhere, a national avalanche in a universal social formation. "Backward Russian capitalism was

the first to pay for the bankruptcy of world capitalism."

Trotsky then observes that in general "the law of *uneven* development is supplemented throughout the whole course of history by the law of *combined* development".[6]

What was its specific result in Russia? "The collapse of the bourgeoisie in Russia led to the proletarian dictatorship — that is, to a backward country's leaping ahead of the advanced countries." As we know, this caused a lot of grief to the schematic theorists in Russia and Western Europe who insisted that the workers could not and should not take power until capitalism had elevated the national economy to an advanced height.

But it also brought much genuine grief to the Russian people, as Trotsky goes onto explain. "However, the establishment of socialist forms of property in a backward country came up against the inadequate level of technique and culture." That is, new types of unevenness emerged on the basis of the preceding achievements and on a higher historical level. "Itself born of the contradictions between high world productive forces and capitalist form of property, the October Revolution produced in its turn a contradiction between low national productive forces and socialist forms of property."

While the achievements of the revolution — the nationalised property and planned economy — exercised a highly progressive action upon the Soviet Union, they were themselves subjected to the degrading influence of the low level of production in the isolated workers' state. From this fundamental condition flowed all the degenerative effects witnessed in the Soviet state under the Stalinist regime, including that regime itself. The most advanced ideas and progressive productive relations could not prevail against the inadequacy of their economic substructure and suffered debasement as a result.

Thus unevenness prevents any simple, single straight line of direction in social development, and what we have instead is a complex, devious and contradictory route. The theoretical task is to analyse the dialectical interplay of action and reaction of the contending forces in their connection with the historical environment.

In this now the progressive tendencies and now the reactionary counterforces assert themselves and come to the fore.

China and Japan under imperialism

This dialectical interplay can be observed in the contradictory consequences brought about by the same historical factors in the neighbouring countries of China and Japan. Both of these formerly isolated and backward countries felt the impact of capitalist forces upon them in the 19th century. Western capitalism invaded China, penetrated

its economy, and established political and military control over its main centres. Only the rivalry of the contending imperialisms saved China from outright division amongst them.

Although the intrusion of capitalism with the latest techniques in production, transport, commerce, finance and knowledge mangled and shook up China, these instruments of modern capitalism did not, on the whole, modernise Chinese life or emancipate it. On the contrary, entrenched imperialism propped up the most archaic institutions, the feudal landholding system, and helped the compradore bourgeoisie, landlords, officials and militarists prolong precapitalist forms of social organisation. Its grip prevented China from passing through a genuine bourgeois democratic renovation or having any independent capitalist development.

In the same period that these capitalist influences were stunting Chinese development, they were stimulating Japan. There the introduction of Western capitalist civilisation promoted a reorganisation of the country's precapitalist structure from on top without revolutionary convulsions from below. Along with the Meiji Restoration, the capitalist agencies of change strengthened new classes of industrialists, merchants, financiers, who developed large-scale industry, trusts, banks and military power after the most advanced Western models. Instead of being a victim of Western imperialism, Japan became the supreme embodiment of Eastern imperialism, avidly flinging itself upon China for its share of the spoils.

Thus, in the first stage, under the given historical conditions, the law of uneven and combined development led to the degradation and subjugation of China, while Japan experienced a tremendous surge of national energy and achievement under capitalist auspices. Little wonder that in Japan nationalism poured into imperialist channels, while across the China Sea nationalism had to seek other outlets along anti-imperialist lines.

However, as we know, the world historical process swung in a different direction following the First World War and the Russian Revolution, and this affected the trend of development in the Far East.

Even during the first period of the merger of Western capitalism with Far Eastern life, tendencies emerged that ran counter to the dominant direction of development in both countries. In Japan, the imperialist regime — product of the highest stage of world and national evolution — was headed by an Emperor cult carried over from pre-feudal times. Its capitalist structure bulged with bizarre combinations and extreme disproportions. Modern factories and workshops sprang up in the cities while feudal relations in the countryside remained unaltered. Light industry was overdeveloped, while the heavy industry from which contemporary mastery is derived remained

underdeveloped. The military, equipped with the latest weapons, remained animated by feudal traditions. Because of its reformation from above instead of revolutionisation from below, democracy was feeble and parliamentary life flimsy. This incomplete modernisation of Japan's social structure culminated in a supreme disproportion: the imperialist program imposed upon that latecomer by the needs of national capitalist expansion and world competition were beyond the capacities of its forces and resources. The result was the debacle suffered by Japanese militarism in the Second World War.

After the Russian Revolution

Meanwhile, China's backwardness under imperialism built up the impetus for its forward leap at the next stage. Along with the venal and weak compradore bourgeoisie, represented by Chiang Kai-shek, the Westernisation process created a modern proletariat. The unsolved but pressing problems of national unification and independence, agrarian revolution, industrialisation, etc., which imperialism blocked and Chiang's regime could not tackle, gave an explosive force to the popular movements for their solution.

After the Russian Revolution, world historical factors of a higher order intervened in the Far East and with special force in China. The influences emanating from the October Revolution and the Soviet Union permeated China more effectively than the capitalist ideas and forces of Western imperialism had penetrated Japan.

Thanks to the power of these influences on an international and national scale, China, so long dragged down by imperialism and its servitors, rose up after the Second World War. In the process of tackling the long-postponed historical task, the movements of the proletarian and peasant masses lifted the country over native capitalism into the first stage of a workers' state.

This mighty leap reversed the relations between China and Japan. Under the pressures of world capitalism, Japan had climbed from feudalism to imperialism in a couple of generations, while China was held down by the same forces. Then, at the next stage, under the combined pressures of reactionary imperialism and progressive socialism (intermixed with Stalinism) China vaulted beyond capitalism and took the lead from Japan.

Thus each of the two series of historical influences, the first issuing from capitalism in the 19th century, the second from post-capitalist movements in the 20th century, had very different impacts upon the development of the two neighbouring countries. This demonstrates how the consequences of the law of uneven and combined development depend upon the action and reaction of the new forces upon the old; the

concrete reality at any given stage is a resultant of the dynamic interplay between them. These can acquire the most divergent forms.

'The truth is concrete'

A sociological generalisation like the law of uneven and combined development can serve only as a guide to the investigation and analysis of the processes at work in a given social environment. It can help us understand the peculiarities of past history and orient us in respect to the peculiarities of unfolding social processes. But it cannot categorically tell us in advance what will issue from its further operation. The specific results are determined by the struggle of living forces on the national and international arenas.

The law of uneven and combined development expresses certain features of the dialectics of history. The dialectic is "the algebra of revolution" and evolution. That is to say, it formulates certain necessary aspects, relations or tendencies of reality in a general form, extracted from specific conditions. Before its abstract algebraic qualities can be converted into definite, "arithmetic" quantities, they have to be applied to the substance of a particular reality. In every new case and at every successive stage of development, specific analysis is necessary of the actual relations and tendencies in their connection and continual interaction. The dialectical formulas are abstract but "the truth is concrete". ■

The Problem of Transitional Formations

The problem of transitional formations has immense methodological significance in both the natural and social sciences. It has special theoretical and political importance for contemporary Marxists, because the 20th century is preeminently an age of transition from one socioeconomic formation to another.

Each epoch in the progress of humanity has its dominant form of economy, politics and culture. In the 18th and 19th centuries this was the capitalist system in its stages of expansion. The distinctive general form of the 20th century is its *transitional* character. This is a period of rapid and convulsive motion from the dominion of world capitalism as the ultimate form of class society to the establishment of postcapitalist states oriented toward socialism, which will eradicate all vestiges of class differentiations.

"The old surviving in the new confronts us in life at every step in nature as well as in society", Lenin observed in *State and Revolution*. He wrote this during the first world war and the Russian Revolution — the two cataclysmic events that ushered in the new epoch of history. Although that epoch is already 50 years old, it is far from maturity, and its progeny suffer from many congenital maladies of infancy.

The fundamentally transitional character of this period and the prevalence of conspicuously contradictory traits necessitate research into the essential nature of this phenomenon. The presence of transitional formations, types, and periods has been empirically noted, and their concrete characteristics analysed, in the writings of many Marxists, and not by them alone. But the topic has seldom been treated along systematic lines. This theoretical deficiency is regrettable because a host of perplexing sociological and political problems could be illuminated through a correct understanding of the peculiarities of this widespread aspect of things.

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The exceptional duality of transitional states

In the unceasing cosmic process of becoming and being, all things pass from one state to another. This means that transitional states and forms are everywhere to be found in the physical world, in society, in intellectual development.

The antithesis to a transitional formation is a fixed and stable one with clear-cut characteristics which compose a definitive pattern. The distinction between the two is relative, since even the most enduring entity is subject to change and transformation into something else over a long enough stretch of time.

The dynamic polarity of physical forms is exemplified by a liquid. This is a more or less stable state of matter on earth, intermediate between a solid and a gas, being partly like one and partly like the other, yet essentially different from both. A liquid has more cohesion than a gas and more mobility than a solid. It resembles a solid by having a definite volume but differs from it and resembles a gas by the absence of any definite shape.

The qualitative transformations of H_2O and other chemical compounds result from changes in molecular constitution. A solid consists of rigidly locked molecules. When these are disaggregated by changes of temperature and pressure, they pass over into a more fluid condition in which the molecules maintain a certain proximity to one another while acquiring more mobility than in a solid. Once the molecules move farther away from one another and are fully loosened from their mutual bonds, they become gaseous. Gaseousness is the state of matter most unlike the solid in respect to the interlock of its molecular constituents.

Thus a liquid is *negatively* defined by its relations to the solid state on one of its boundaries and the gaseous state on the other. It is *positively* determined by its special intermixture of cohesiveness and mobility. If the capacity of a liquid to turn into its opposite at either end exhibits its intermediate character, its combination of contrary properties brings out the intrinsic duality of its being.

But when a liquid boils, these polarities of definite volume and variable shape are sharpened to the extreme of contradiction. At one and the same time, within the system as a whole, there is both definite and indefinite volume, as well as indefinite shape. This difference is distributed over parts of the system, over different molecules. Thus, water and steam coexist; some molecules are in gaseous state, others in liquid state. But for the system as a whole, we can say neither that it is exclusively gas nor exclusively liquid; it is in fact both gas and liquid: it is boiling. This is the transitional stage between liquid and gas.

All things have a dual nature, as an example taken from geography rather than chemistry will illustrate. A beach is defined both by water and by land. Each of these

opposing physical entities are essential components of its makeup. Take away one or the other and the beach no longer exists.

But transitional formations are distinguished from ordinary things by the *heightened* character of their dual constitution. They belong to a special kind of processes, events and forms in nature, society, and individual experience which have exceptionally pronounced, almost outrageously, contradictory traits. They carry the coexistence of opposites in a single whole to the most extreme and anomalous lengths.

These phenomena are so self-contradictory that they can embody the passage from one stage or form of existence to another. Since the major features of transitional formations belong to consecutive but qualitatively different stages of development, they must represent a combination of the old and the new.

In the life process, the first products of development are necessarily inadequately realised on their own terms. What is new makes its first appearance in and through underdeveloped forms and asserts its emerging existence within the shell of the old. The new becoming is struggling to go beyond its previous mode of existence. It is passing over from one stage to the next but is not yet mature, powerful or predominant enough to destroy and throw off the afterbirth of its natal state and stand fully and firmly on its own feet. Like a foetus, it is still dependent on the conditions of its birth or, like an infant, dependent on its parents.

In a full and normal development, transitional formations go through three phases. 1. A prenatal or embryonic stage when the functions, structures and features of the nascent entity are growing and stirring within the framework of the already established form. 2. The qualitative breakthrough of its birth period, when the aggregate of the novel powers and features succeeds in shattering the old form and stepping forth on its own account. At this point the fresh creation continues to retain many residues belonging to its preceding state. 3. The period of maturation when the vestigial characteristics unsuited to its proper mode of existence are largely sloughed off and the new entity is unmistakably, firmly, strongly developing on its distinctive foundations.

It takes time for the unique features and functions of something novel to manifest their potential, engender the most appropriate type of expression, and become stabilised in normal or perfected shape. At the beginning of their career they are trammeled, often even disfigured, by the heritage of the past.

These borderline phenomena are so significant — and puzzling — because they form the bridge between successive stages of evolution. Their hybrid nature, embodying characteristics belonging to antithetical phases of growth, casts light upon both the old and the new, the past and the future. Through them it is possible to see how and where the carapace of the old is being broken through by antagonistic forces striving

to establish the groundwork, the basic conditions, for higher forms of existence.

Each turning point in the evolution of life has produced species with contradictory features belonging to different sequential forms. These betoken their status as links between two separate and successive species.

Problems of classification

The most momentous turning point in organic evolution was the changeover from the ape to man. Here scientists have found once living fossils with opposite characteristics. Structurally the South African *Australopithecus* is not altogether an ape nor altogether a man; it is something in between. He habitually stood and walked erect as ably as man and his brain volume comes close to that of man. The fact that these beings used tools, and thereby engaged in labour activity to get their means of existence, proves that they had crossed the boundary separating the ape from man and had embarked on a new mode of existence, despite the heavy vestiges of the primate past they bore with them.

Precisely because of their highly self-contradictory and unfinished traits, transitional forms present exceedingly vexing problems of precise definition and classification to scientists and scholars. They are the most enigmatic of phenomena. It is often difficult, and sometimes impossible, to tell on which side of a frontier they definitely belong.

The task is to discriminate the genuinely new from what is rooted in the preceding conditions of existence and then to assay the relative weights of the conflicting traits and tendencies of development incorporated in the specimen. Taxonomists among biologists, botanists and physical anthropologists have engaged in prolonged, bitter and sometimes inconclusive controversies over whether a given specimen properly belongs to one category or another.

What settles the locus of classification? The mere possession of one or another trait of a higher or lower type is not considered conclusive evidence. The question is decided one way or the other by the totality of characteristics in relation to what went before and what came out of it.

For example, the fossil remains of *Archaeopteryx* show many characteristics now found only in reptiles or in bird embryos: reptilian tail, jaws with teeth, and clawed wings. Yet it is a true bird. This superior classification is warranted by the presence of feathers and the structure of the legs and wings which fitted it for flight. *Archaeopteryx* had broken through the confines of the reptile state to become the first incarnation of a higher form of living creature.

The difficulties of classification arising from the contradictory characteristics of transitional phenomena are well illustrated by the current controversy among

authorities on early man over the new fossil finds at Olduvai Gorge in Tanganyika. (See *Current Anthropology*, October 1965.) This famous site has yielded evidences of tool-using and tool-making hominoids at levels which are dated as far back as over two million years ago — the oldest yet discovered.

The problem posed by the latest finds concerns a group of fossil remains named *Homo habilis*. The *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (1961) insisted on dividing the *Hominidae* into two genera: *Australopithecus* and *Homo*. It did not permit any intergeneric or ambigeneric groups.

However, *Homo habilis* did not fit into either one of these counterposed categories. It diverged from *Australopithecus* in its more humanised morphological pattern (biological traits), but even more significantly because it had taken the decisive step of making stone tools according to a regular and evolving pattern. While *Australopithecus* used and modified tools and may even have improvised them for immediate purposes, he did not fabricate implements according to a set pattern. On the other hand, the biological and cultural traits of *Homo habilis* fell short of the status of *Homo*.

The dilemma facing the classifiers was formulated as follows by Phillip V. Tobias, professor of anatomy at the University of Witwatersrand: "… the *habilis* group was in so many respects intermediate between *Australopithecus* and *Homo*. Were we to regard it as the most advanced species of *Australopithecus* or the most primitive species of *Homo*?" Neither of these solutions was satisfactory. 'We had come face to face with a fundamental weakness in classical taxonomic procedure: Our systems of classification make inadequate allowance for intermediate or transitional forms."

How was the issue resolved? Tobias and L.B.J. Leakey concluded that, on the basis of the evidence regarding these hominid remains, it was necessary to recognise a new species of early man which they designated as *Homo habilis*. This species of hominid was younger and more advanced then *Australopithecus* yet older and less matured than *Homo*.

The great significance of *Homo habilis* as a bridge between *Australopithecus* and *Homo* is that it closes the last remaining gap in the sequence of Pleistocene hominid phylogeny. The lineage of human evolution now comprises three distinct stages: partially humanised (*Australopithecus*); markedly humanised (*Homo habilis*); and fully humanised (*Homo*).

Professor Tobias concludes: "There will always be arguments about the names to be given to transitional forms (like *Homo habilis*); but the recognition of their crucial intermediate status is of more importance than the name given to the taxon. It seems that our nomenclatural procedure is not equal to the naming of 'missing links' when the gaps have narrowed to such fine gradations as now exist in the hominid sequence

of the Pleistocene."

As Tobias remarks in answer to objections from his critics: "Intermediate forms ('missing links') always cause taxonomic headaches, although they make good phylogenetic sense." Once it had been established that *Homo habilis* did not properly belong to either group, it had to be accorded a separate status. What that should be was determined by its specific place in the evolutionary ascent of man.

It was not an *Australopithecus* because it had attained the capacity to make tools with the aid of other tools. Yet it had not progressed sufficiently along the road of humanisation to justify inclusion with *Homo*. There was no alternative except to recognise it as a new and distinct species of the genus *Homo*.

Tobias suggests that the new group of hominids might have been designated *Australopithecus-Homo habilis*. The compromise of making it a subcategory would have brought out its emergent position but not its distinctive nature or subsequent destiny. It evidently has enough important attributes of its own to deserve independent status.

Like all transitional formations, the qualitative difference of *Homo habilis* consisted in its peculiar combination of features, one set resembling its predecessor, the other anticipating its successor. The relative weight of these contradictory features changed in the course of its development. It moved away from and beyond the antecedent genus as it more closely approached the earliest members of the next higher stage.

Hegel supplied a key to comprehending transitional formations by the concepts of determinate being and limit analysed in the first section of *The Logic*. Anything is what it is by virtue of the negations which set its qualitative limits. Both what it comes out of and what it passes into are essential elements of its being. This being is a perpetual process of becoming, of continual determination and redetermination through the interaction of the conflicting forces within itself. These drive it forward to becoming something other than it has been or is.

Thus *Homo habilis* is to be designated as a determinate being, that is, a qualitatively distinct grouping bounded on one side by *Australopithecus* and on the other side by *Homo*. This transitional species is delimited through its organic connections with both the anterior and posterior stages of human evolution. Its special standing depends on its qualitative differences from these opposing determinants. To the extent that these differences are effaced it passes over into and merges with one or the other.

The transition from food gathering to food production

The major transitions within the development of society manifest contradictory features in as striking a manner as the transition from ape to man. Further modifications in

man's physical equipment recede in importance with the appearance of *Homo sapiens*. From that point on, the laws of social and historical development, which originate in labour activity and are based on the growth of the forces of production, have taken full command of the evolution of our species.

It would be possible to go through the whole course of social history, so far as it is known, and pick out for study a diversity of transitional forms in which the new is mingled with the old and struggling to replace it with more or less success. We can give only a few salient examples to clarify in broad terms the inwardly divided nature of transitional processes.

Let us start with the substructure of the first chapter of human existence, the Stone Age, which lasted for hundreds of thousands of years. Throughout that time no fundamental changes occurred in men's economic activities. They acquired the means of subsistence exclusively through different means of food gathering: hunting, fishing (which is hunting in water), and foraging for roots, nuts, fruits, insects and small game.

This primeval state of savagery ends, and the next higher grade of social existence, barbarism, begins, with the replacement of food gathering by food production. This new stage in the creation of material wealth was brought about from 10-12,000 years ago by the domestication of animals and the introduction of cereal crops.

Since the close of the Second World War, archaeologists, teamed with other scientific specialists, have been extending their investigations in both the Old World and the New to find out how, why and, more precisely, when and where, this epoch-making changeover took place. They have unearthed many more traces of the origins of agriculture and stock raising than were known before, so that a distinct outline of the steps in the great food-producing revolution is beginning to take shape.

Agriculture may have originated independently in several places on our planet. It emerged almost simultaneously at opposite ends of the earth, in the Middle East and in Mexico, roughly around 7000 BC. More is known about the origin and spread of farming from the archaeological sites in the Middle East than as yet in Middle America.

In the former it appears that animal domestication preceded plant cultivation. At the Zarvi Chemi Shanidan, not far north of Jarmo in the hills of Northern Iraq, archaeologists from Columbia University found indications that, in shifting from cave living to open-air encampments around 9000 BC, the inhabitants, who had formerly hunted many wild goats and occasionally wild sheep, had tamed sheep.

The type of tools at similar open sites in northern Palestine and in Iraq and Iran showed that the people who lived in these camps, while hunting and collecting most of their food, possessed sickles and mortars. Taken together with the many bones of animals capable of domestication, this suggested that they may have already become

regular food producers.

The oldest site yet excavated of a community on the boundary line between the Old and New Stone Age is at Jericho in Palestine, Nine thousand years ago the inhabitants of this oasis in the desert grew cereals and bred sheep and goats, in addition to hunting and collecting. However, they did not yet make pottery or use ground stone axes.

It is therefore difficult to ascertain whether the villagers of Jericho I, the most ancient settlement, simply supplemented their diet through food production, or whether they had gone so far as to make food production the foundation of their economy. In that case they would have passed beyond the borders of savagery and entered barbarism.

The situation is clearer, though not yet unmistakable, in the case of the next oldest village, Jarmo in Kurdistan, a settlement of about 30 houses which was rebuilt 15 times after its founding. Its deepest layers date back to about 6750 BC. The inhabitants had domesticated goats and sheep. They not only raised grains as cultivated plants, which implies a considerable previous history, but they possessed most of the equipment used by later neolithic farmers to make grain into bread. They had flint sickle blades, mortars or querns to crack the grain, ovens to parch it, and stone bowls out of which to eat their porridge. In the upper levels pottery had begun to replace some of the stone vessels.

All this implies that Jarmo's residents had left food gathering behind and subsisted on what they themselves produced. They had become full-fledged food producers, genuine villagers and farmers.

An interesting sidelight on the botanical aspect of this process of transformation has been provided by the data accumulated by the archaeological botanist Hans Helbaek of the Danish National Museum. The successive changes in the details of carbonised grain and of the imprints of plant parts can tell a sharp-eyed botanist just as much as successive changes in tools and artifacts can tell an archaeologist. Domesticated plants and animals are living artifacts, products of man's modifications and manipulations.

The Danish botanist concluded that the Jarmo wheat and barley were early cultivated varieties which had been grown for a number of generations. Their growers were several steps removed from the first farmers who would have taken the seeds from plants in their wild state. Who, then, were these pioneers? Diggers have recently come across caches of wild cereal grain in villages of hunters and seed collectors. They may possibly have started to reap wild grain before purposively planting the first wheat and barley.

Thus a hunters' village of about 200 small stone houses excavated at Mureybat in

northern Syria contained bones of wild animals at all 17 levels. Seeds of wild barley and wheat showed up at the fifth level from the bottom, along with sickle blades, mortars, flat stone slabs, and small raised fire pits filled with big pebbles and ashes. Mauritz Van Loon of the Oriental Institute of Chicago believes the pebbles were heated and used to crack the wild seeds.

It took about 2500 years to make the changeover from hunting to farming and arrive at the earliest farming villages. According to present indications, the sequence of steps in this food-producing revolution began with animal domestication about 10,000 BC, proceeded through hamlets of seed collectors, and culminated with the emergence of farming communities by 7500 BC.

This record shows that, before they could shake off dependence upon food gathering, the first domesticators of plants and animals had to pass through intermediate steps in which the primitive mode of procuring the means of subsistence was combined with either food or stock raising, or even both. In the first phase, food production remained subordinate and supplementary to hunting and foraging pursuits until the new techniques and forces of production gained predominance. Just before this crucial turning point, a period must have come when the total activities and output of communal labour were about equally divided between the two, and it would have been difficult to tell whether the group belonged to one category or the other.

This internal contradiction would be resolved by the further development of the more dynamic new productive forces. Thus, when food and stock raising were introduced into the less advanced Old Stone Age culture of Europe some thousands of years later, the Starcevo folk who lived in the Balkan peninsula learned to practice a system of rotating crops and pasture that made hunting and fishing less and less vital to their economy.

The insuperable ambiguities of the boundary separating food gatherers from food producers have been underscored in a recent account of the rise of Mesopotamian civilisation. "We cannot with the material at our disposal pinpoint the crucial passage from a food-gathering to a food-producing economy. It can be argued that hoes could be used for uprooting as well as for tilling, sickles for reaping naturally growing or cultivated wheat, querns and mortars for grinding and pounding wild seeds or even mineral pigments; and it is not always easy to decide whether bones of sheep or cattle belonged to wild or to domesticated animals. All considered, our best criterion is perhaps the presence on a site of permanent habitations, for agriculture ties man to the land. But here again, it is sometimes difficult to draw a firm line between the stone huts of hunters, for whom agriculture was an occasional activity, and the farms of fully settled peasants." (*Ancient Iraq*, Georges Roux, 1964. p. 54.)

Village, town & city

Agriculture is the basis for the permanent human settlements which have supplied the main motive forces for progress since savagery. The village, town and city are the three kinds of communities that line the road from barbarism to civilisation. The evolution of the village to the city highlights the transitional and contradictory character of the town, the second link in the sequence of human habitations.

Agriculture consolidated and proliferated, if it did not actually create, the village. This type of enduring settlement is the cell, the basic unit, of all social structures rooted in agriculture. These comprise forms of society extending all the way from the birth of barbarism up to industrial capitalism.

The problem of transitional formations is most sharply posed after the emergence of the farming community by the development of the village into the city at the beginnings of civilisation. Based on farming or mixed farming with family handicrafts, the village is common to both barbarism and civilisation. It is small in numbers, self-subsistent, with a rudimentary division of social labour.

The town is an enlarged village growing out of the expansion of the forces of production. It is an agglomeration of permanent residents situated between the village and the city and transitional between them. It is difficult to draw a clear-cut line between a village and a town, but there is a definite point at which the town grows over into a city.

The city is not only quantitatively but also qualitatively different from either a village or a town because it has a different economic foundation. It is the outgrowth of a far more advanced division of labour between the rural and urban inhabitants. The kings, priests, officials, soldiers, artisans and merchants in the cities do not produce their own food. They subsist on the surplus food coming from the output of the direct producers, farmers or fishermen, who may in some cases dwell within the city precincts but for the most part reside in village communities outside its walls or borders.

The city is the organised expression, the visible embodiment, of a highly stratified society based on the division between cultivators of the soil who provide the sustenance and those layers of consumers who produce other goods and the administrators of various kinds who serve higher social functions. The city comes to dominate the country and is the force that civilises the barbarians.

The town is an overgrown village at one end of its growth and an embryonic city at the other. It displays characteristics common to both types of settlement without being either. Unlike the village, it is not completely rural but is larger and more complex. At the same time it is smaller, less diversified, less developed, less centralised and less powerful than the city.

Neither rural nor urban, the town has an indeterminate character and an imprecise and fluctuating connotation. It is not easy to single out the ensemble of positive features which distinguish the town from the village it has come out of or from the city status it may be heading toward. This ambiguity is built into its constitution as an intermediate form of permanent settlement.

Thus the town exemplifies the congenital fluidity of a transitional form. Its structure is amorphous; its boundaries are blurred. This indefiniteness, which is inherent in its very nature, is reflected in the concept "town", which is likewise clouded with an insurmountable fuzziness.

The transition from Roman slavery to feudalism

The transition from food gathering to food production, from the village to the city, and from communal to private property are major instances of fundamental changes in the life of mankind on the way to class society. As class society climbed from slavery to capitalism, many highly anomalous formations arose from the supersession of one basic mode of production by another. One case that has provoked considerable controversy both among academic historians and Marxist scholars concerns the nature of the social organisation in the West that issued from the downfall of the Roman Empire.

West European society from the fourth to the ninth centuries AD was situated between the ruin of the Roman slave state and the birth of feudalism. This intermediate formation resulted from the blending of elements derived from decadent Roman civilisation and disintegrating Germanic barbarism — two societies at very different levels of development — into a variegated configuration that did not conform either to the antecedent slave mode of production or the feudal form which came out of it.

The historical movement from slaveholding antiquity to European feudalism followed a more complex and circuitous path than the changeover from feudalism to capitalism. The feudal organisation did not emerge directly and immediately from its predecessor in the sequence of class societies.

The Roman Empire contained no forward moving social force that was capable of replacing the obsolescent exploitative order with a more productive economy. The slave population revolted on various occasions but did not have access to the economic and social prerequisites for establishing a new order. The slave system foundered in a blind alley which provided no way out through a progressive social and political revolution.

From the fourth century on, Roman civilisation slid downhill. The imperial government went bankrupt; the cities decayed; commerce shrank to petty proportions;

the estate owners and agrarian masses vegetated in rural isolation. The general disorder and decline in the productive forces ushered in the Dark Ages.

These conditions of decomposition endured for almost five centuries. During this time, however, a slow revitalisation of economic life began to stir beneath the surface stagnation. Agriculture was the centre of the regenerative processes. To form the groundwork for a superior form of social production, two classes had to be reconstituted. One was the labouring force of the cultivators of the soil; the other was the class of landed proprietors.

The original nucleus of the subject peasantry came from the small farmers, or *coloni*, though not as they were under Roman rule. The *coloni* passed from their marginal status as semiserfs under Roman rule to the status of free farmers organised in dispersed communities until, fleeing from hunger, distress and danger, they fell in considerable numbers under the protection and therewith the domination of the landed gentry.

Their masters were also of a new breed. They were made up of the newly created nobility, military caste and church hierarchy which grew into it distinct and powerful agrarian aristocracy from 500 to 1000 AD.

The main seat of Western feudalism was not in Italy but in France and Germany. The transformation of the Germanic conquerors of Rome from barbarism to feudalism was more determinative of the future than their concomitant conversion to Christianity because of the indispensable contributions they made to the postimperial social organisation.

The dissolution of tribal and clan ties led to pronounced social differentiations among the Franks and other peoples. From more or less equalised members of tribal groupings, the mass of the agricultural population changed first into free peasants and thereafter into serfs as they became impoverished and passed into hereditary submission to their liege lord. Serfdom seems to have become widely established beginning with the ninth century.

Although feudalism depended upon large landholdings as a property form, it was not rooted in large-scale production. Cultivation of the soil was carried on by petty producers. However extensive the landlord's manor or domain, it was tilled by a cluster of serf or peasant households. The economic transition from slavery to feudalism therefore consisted in the replacement of the slave latifundia of the Roman proprietors and the individual households of the Germanic communities by a more productive type of small farming.

The invaders provided important ingredients for raising the technical and social level of the nascent feudal regime. They introduced such new crops as rye, oats, spelt

and hops, along with soap and butter. The heavy-wheeled plough permitted the development of the three-field system of tillage on which the medieval manor depended. Thanks to the stirrup, the horse collar, the tandem harness and the iron shoe, horses could be used in place of oxen for pulling the plough; they had four times the tractive power of earlier draft animals.

Another key innovation was the water wheel, which was known to antiquity but utilised only in the simplest form. The medieval water mills were large and costly installations which belonged to the feudal lords, but to which their dependents could bring their grain for grinding. The creation of a more efficient agricultural technology during the Dark Ages paved the way for increasing agricultural productivity in Northern Europe from the ninth century on. As Professor Lynn White points out in *Technology and Invention in the Middle Ages*: "In technology, at least, the Dark Ages mark a steady and uninterrupted advance over the Roman Empire."

Certain features carried over from tribal collectivism were equally consequential in preparing the advent of the new order. When the lands conquered by the Germans were allotted to individual households and the hierarchy of subordinates and superiors arose, woods and pastures were reserved for common use, and many other customs of collective activity were retained. These vestiges of common possession incorporated into the agrarian economy strengthened communal solidarity, made the serfs and villeins less dependent upon their masters, and gave the mass of rural toilers some measure of control over their means of livelihood, which mitigated their servitude and enhanced their margin of freedom.

The society that stretched from the Roman to the Carolingian empires was a conglomerate of elements encompassing slavery, barbarism, peasant farming and incipient feudal relations. The feudal structure eventually crystallised out of this variegated plasma as both the Roman dependents and the Germanic settlers forfeited their positions as free peasants and entered serfdom.

The contradictory course of development which marked the prolonged period of transition from Roman slavery to the feudal age invalidates any rigid scheme of historical evolution predicated on an undeviating line of succession from one form of production to the next. The native population of the Romano-Germanic world sank to a lower level of production and culture before it went on to assemble the conditions for a higher mode of existence. This discontinuity in economic growth illustrates the dialectical nature of the concrete processes of social evolution. Far from following prescribed paths in a mechanical manner, the peoples of the past have often fallen backward before taking the next step in historical progress.

Manufacture: the stepping stone from the craft guild to machine industry

Capitalism did directly supplant feudalism in Western Europe and, in the course of doing so, brought forth an assortment of transitional economic phenomena. Among these was manufacture which, as the bridge between medieval and modern industry, was one of the pivotal developments in the emergence of bourgeois society.

In the urban craft guilds the master handicraftsman possessed all the means of production, from the raw materials to the shop which usually housed both his family and work force of apprentices and journeymen. He sold the finished product in a local and regulated market and pocketed the proceeds. This simple small-scale commodity production was extremely restricted, dispersed, routinised, static and monopolistic.

The manufacturing system bypassed, broke up and replaced the guild associations, going beyond this kind of industry in important respects. Unlike the guild master, who was a petty personal producer, the manufacturer brought together under one roof many propertyless workers, purchased their labour-power for wages and subjected them to the control of capital. Labour thus became social instead of individual. Every element of the entrepreneur's operations was on a larger scale: He needed more money, greater amounts of raw materials, extensive workshops, better tools, a detailed subdivision of labour, intense supervision, more careful calculation and longer-range planning.

This quantitative growth generated many qualitative improvements in industry. Capitalist manufacture was far more productive, innovative and progressive than the guild system. Yet its artisans, craftsmen and foremen used essentially the same technical methods as their medieval predecessors. They had little or no mechanical power at their disposal and relied exclusively on hand labour using simple tools. In this rudimentary form of a capitalist economy, advanced relations of production were yoked to an ancient technology dating back to the dawn of civilisation.

The inner contradiction of this transitional type of capitalist activity was broken through and overcome with the introduction of steamdriven machinery into industry and transportation. Mechanical industry fashioned the modern proletariat; it enabled the capitalists to exploit wage labour to maximum advantage by reducing the value of commodities and thereby increasing the surplus value which the workers produced and the capitalists appropriated. On this technical basis the capitalist mode of production stood squarely on its own feet for the first time and went forward to conquer the globe. But it could not have embarked on that career unless manufacture had left the guild system behind and prepared the advent of that technology best adapted to the needs of capital accumulation.

Transitional regimes & societies in the 20th century

Let us skip from the beginnings of capitalism to its concluding stage and focus upon the principal problems presented by the transformation of society in the 20th century, which is witnessing both the death agony of capitalism and the birth pangs of socialism.

The contemporary revolutionary process aims at undermining and abolishing the power and property of the capitalist owners and whatever archaic privileged classes cling like parasites to their domination. The political mechanism of this social revolution consists in the transfer of state power from these possessing classes to the primary producers of wealth, the proletariat and its allies.

Twentieth-century revolutionists must operate in three main types of transitional situations. Let us consider these in the order of progression toward the ultimate objectives of the socialist revolution.

The first extends over the period of preparation for the overturn of the old regime. The working masses are moving from a nonrevolutionary condition, where the social and political foundations of the established order are stable and strong, into a prerevolutionary period or, beyond that, toward a direct showdown with the possessors of power. At this stage, although the ruling class is losing its grip the forces destined to dislodge and replace it are not yet ready or able to challenge its supremacy.

The advance from a less to a more revolutionary situation calls for a special strategy employing a set of demands which, on the one hand, are adapted to the conditions and consciousness of the masses and, on the other, will lead them forward to the goal of the conquest of power. The recognition of the special characteristics of this interim period in the development of the class struggle — which is neither wholly nonrevolutionary nor fully revolutionary but heading in that direction — is the objective basis for the transitional demands incorporated in the program of the Fourth International adopted at its foundation in 1938.

The avowed purpose of that program is to promote and facilitate the shift of the proletariat from concern with its immediate needs to a grasp of the necessity for directing its struggle ever more consciously and energetically against the bases of the bourgeois regime. In this way a prerevolutionary state can be transformed into a revolutionary one, as the masses pass over from defensive positions to offensive action. Such a leap was taken, for example, during the French general strike of May-June 1968.

The revolutionary process of our time has a permanent character. And so, once engaged in direct revolutionary action on a large scale, the masses enter upon a second and higher kind of transitional period. The ascending class that is destined to exercise sovereignty in place of the old rulers cannot concentrate all power in its hands overnight.

Even less can it effect a thorough reconstruction of social relations in its own country in a few decades. Thus, after the preceding alignment of class forces has been radically upset, there usually ensues a more or less protracted interval when the capitalist or colonialist regime has been shattered but a stable new governmental power, squarely resting on the revolutionary class forces, has yet to be securely established.

During this transitional period, when the supreme power is being transferred from the old rulers to the working masses, forms of government may arise which are extremely contradictory, inwardly divided, unstable and short-lived. The first example of such an interregnum had a classical character. It was the Provisional Government which tried vainly to rule Russia from the February to the October revolutions in 1917.

The partisans of this crippled regime sought to impose upon a nation in the flood tide of revolution a political setup which would be intermediate between tsarism and Bolshevism, between the obsolete domination of the monarchy and the landlords and the rule of the workers and peasants, between feudalised capitalism and socialism. It was a hopeless, ill-fated experiment because, under the given circumstances of the world war and the severity of the class conflicts, no such hybrid government could solve the urgent problems of peace, bread and land. The real choice lay between a counterrevolutionary military dictatorship or the dictatorship of the workers supported by the peasantry.

The Provisional Government and the soviets constituted a dual power in which the contending class camps offset each other. In order to break the deadlock, one or the other of these opponents had to be smashed and eliminated. In the ensuing test of strength, the soviets emerged victorious, thanks to the kind of leadership provided by the Bolsheviks.

Since 1917 analogous situations of dual power have appeared in numerous revolutions with varying results. Cuba and Algeria have provided the most recent and dramatic instances in the colonial countries. In Cuba, by virtue of the exceptional qualifications of Castro and the July 26th leaders, the transitional period of dual power from 1959 to 1961 eventuated in the ousting of the procapitalist conciliators, the consolidation of the revolutionary regime, and the expropriation of the native and foreign property owners.

In Algeria, on the other hand, the revolutionary process has yet to culminate in so happy a conclusion. After the winning of national independence, the drive toward socialism was interrupted by the *coup d'état* against Ben Bella and has been sliding backward under Boumedienne. Algeria is the prime example of an uncompleted revolution halted midway in its progress from colonialism and capitalism to a workers' state.

This brings us to the third and highest category of the transitional periods in our epoch. Once the question of class power has been decisively settled with the victory of the workers and peasants, and the socioeconomic bases of the new order have been laid down by the dispossession of the capitalists and landlords, a new social formation begins to take shape. The workers' state necessarily has a transitional character. While it has cut loose from the exploiters of labour and taken the road to socialism, it has still to develop the productive forces and create the human relations proper to the new system.

The historical task of the proletarian power is to bring the preconditions for socialism into existence on the basis of the new relations of production. This would be an arduous and prolonged job under the best conditions. Unfortunately, the world-historical setting during the first 50 years of the present transitional period from capitalism toward socialism has turned out to be far more unfavourable than the founders of Marxism anticipated, because the first victorious anticapitalist revolutions took place in countries least prepared for the new methods of production and politics.

All the peoples from Russia to Cuba that drove out the possessing classes and established a revolutionary state power of a socialist type had not previously experienced any renovation of their social and political structures along bourgeois-democratic lines. They were therefore obliged to undertake such presocialist tasks as the abolition of feudalism, agrarian reform, national independence and unification, and the democratisation of their political life along with the overthrow of imperialist domination and capitalist relations. They were overloaded with the colossal combination of presocialist and socialist tasks at one and the same time. Their construction of a new social order has been rendered still more complicated and difficult by the encircling pressures and interference of imperialism and by their inherited economic and cultural backwardness.

As a result, these transitional regimes have been subjected to varying degrees of degeneration or deformation. They exhibit bizarre blends of progressive and regressive features, the first belonging to the new society in the making, the second stemming from past conditions and imperialist pressures.

For example, the Soviet Union abounds in contradictions on all levels of its life. In this workers' state the workers have no political power, and freedom of expression is severely restricted. In transportation huge jet passenger planes speed over the trackless wilderness and the dirt roads where peasant carts creak along in well-worn ruts as they have for centuries. A country in the front rank of technology, science and industry is weak in the very social sciences — political economy, sociology, history and philosophy — where its Marxist heritage should make it the strongest. The Soviet public had no

access to any reliable history of its revolutionary origins on the 50th anniversary of October. Such anomalies are the hallmarks of the Soviet social structure shaped and misshaped during the first phase of the epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism. However, contradictions are not only stigmas and stumbling blocks but motive forces of contention and progress. The workers' states are not stagnant but highly mobile. In the last analysis, they must either go backward to capitalism or forward to socialism. So far, none of the peoples that have abolished capitalism have restored it. In this respect 20th-century history to date has been a one-way street. This fact testifies to the immense power and vitality of the new institutions as well as to the debility and disintegration of world capitalism.

The governments of the workers' states are equally in flux. They can either relapse into bureaucratic despotism or move ahead to greater democracy. The three stages in the political history of the Soviet Union since 1917 demonstrate this dialectic. After the seething democracy of the early revolutionary years, the country was plunged into the dreadful darkness of Stalin's tyranny for three decades. Since then, too slowly but surely, there is developing a turn toward democratisation which must culminate in a showdown between the bureaucrats and the workers.

In Cuba, from the first, despite resistance and brief detours along the way, the main trend has been toward increased decision-making by the masses. Czechoslovakia's break from authoritarianism and its drive toward democratisation in 1968 was halted and reversed by Moscow's military intervention.

The program of the Fourth International likewise contains a series of transitional proposals for the struggle against bureaucratism within the degenerated and deformed workers' states. These demands are designed to accelerate and consummate the movement toward workers' democracy in the postcapitalist countries and the adoption of revolutionary socialist policies and perspectives which can lessen the birth pangs of the new society and shorten the interval between the abolition of capitalist power and private property and the creation of harmonious and equal relations for all mankind.

Although postcapitalist economic relations and their superstructures have existed for half a century, they are only in the elementary stage of their historical process of formation and remain subject to all the infirmities of infancy. Furthermore, they have yet to be installed in the habitat most propitious for their growth.

When bourgeois society came forth from feudal Western Europe, capitalist relations did not all at once take possession of the whole of social life. They first preempted the field of commerce where monetary wealth was accumulated. Meanwhile, the production of material wealth either continued in the old ways or else, as with industry, passed over into manufacture which retained the old handicraft techniques. The new

laws of capitalist development did not break through all limitations, take full command of economic and social life, and unfold their immense potency until the industrial revolution of the early 19th century, based on the steam engine, large-scale industry and the factory system, thoroughly transformed the methods of production.

A comparable incompleteness has characterised, and even disfigured, the first period of the transition from capitalism to socialism. Since 1917 the laws of socioeconomic development bound up with the new system of production have had to function under the least favourable and most restrictive conditions. Whereas they required the most advanced productive forces for effective operation, they were confined to the poorest and most backward countries, where they had to contend with incompetent and bureaucratised regimes at home and imperialist encirclement and hostility on a world scale.

Even under such adverse historical circumstances the new mode of production based on nationalised property and the planning principle disclosed its effectiveness and registered colossal achievements.

Despite these successes, the methods of socialist development have not yet been given the chance to manifest their real potential. Implanted in poor soil, they have not had the right nutriment or atmosphere for their flowering. As Marx long ago pointed out, socialism needs a preponderant and highly cultivated working class, a powerful industry, a well-rounded economy and an international basis. None of these prerequisites for socialism prevailed in the first half-century of the international anticapitalist revolution. They have had to be created largely from scratch under forced draft and with intolerably heavy sacrifices by the working masses.

Consequently, the laws of the transition from capitalism to socialism have thus far received a mutilated and inadequate expression. Fortunately, the configuration of historical conditions responsible for this deviation does not have a permanent but a temporary character. The distortions of the workers' states are the malign product of the confinement of proletarian power to the less developed countries and the grip of capitalism upon the most industrialised economies. These handicaps can — and will — be weakened and removed once the workers overthrow capitalist rule in one or more of the imperialist powers. This breakthrough will enable the new laws of social development to find a far more appropriate arena and broader scope for their expression and fulfilment.

The present historical conjuncture has this paradoxical character. The transitional period from capitalism to socialism has itself been obliged, because of the uneven progress of the world revolution, to pass through an agonising transitional situation in which the forces of the nascent social system have been penned up in an area least

suited to their capacities. These abnormal and episodic restraints upon their growth can be eliminated provided the socialist revolution is extended to Western Europe, Japan, and, above all, to North America. Once the new tendencies of socialist development can operate freely and fully in a favourable environment, emancipated mankind will be astonished by the results.

Sociology & Historical Materialism

The place of sociology among the sciences

The process of becoming and being in our world is a never-ending, materially unified whole. This evolutionary process can be divided into two sections according to their order of emergence and their level of development. The first period comprises the development of the physical universe from its observable beginnings up to the advent of the first humans. According to the latest hypothetical calculations, this cosmic evolution took at least twenty billion years.

The second period covers the origins and growth of our species from the point where our primate progenitors graduated from the animal state to the present. This process of humanisation has lasted almost two million years.

The natural sciences from astrophysics and geology to biology and zoology deal with one or another sector of the evolution of the material world apart from the social existence of mankind. The social sciences from archaeology and anthropology to political economy and history have as their objects of investigation one or another of the aspects of social life arising from the activities of human beings.

Sociology is one of the social sciences. What are its special features and its relations to other branches of social investigation?

Other social sciences, such as archaeology, economics, demography, law, linguistics, psychology, logic, study special aspects and restricted areas of human activity and achievement. Linguistics, for example, deals solely with the phenomena of human speech and its structural elements. These sciences that seek to discover the laws of a delimited domain of social life necessarily have a narrow, one-sided character.

But society is not actually partitioned into domains completely cut off from one another nor is its development split into absolutely disjointed stages. Human life has

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developed continuously from its origins to the present. Each stage of human history and its social organisation has had an integrated constitution depending upon its mode of production and its appropriate place in the sequence of the historical process.

Sociology is that branch of scientific knowledge which investigates the evolution of society in its entirety and the content of social life in its fullness. It endeavours to discover the laws governing the progress of social life from the most primitive and simple form of social organisation to its most complex and mature structures.

Both the laws of nature and the laws of society are historical in character since they are drawn from phenomena engaged in constant change. But social phenomena are qualitatively different from the purely natural events out of which they have grown and in which they remain rooted. Social facts are produced by our species, which obtains its means of existence in a unique manner through cooperative labour. Man's activities of production and their results invest the laws of social development with characteristics distinctively different from those governing other living creatures.

The laws of social evolution have retained certain traits in common with the laws of organic evolution, since up to now these have operated without conscious collective direction or control. That is why Marx regarded "the evolution of the economic formation of society …as a process of natural history", as he wrote in the preface to the first edition of Volume 1 of *Capital*. But the dominant features of the social-historical process are fundamentally different from those prevailing in the rest of reality.

The broad scope and aims of sociology make it the most general of the social sciences. It seeks to synthesise the findings of the rest of the social sciences into a comprehensive conception of the dynamics of the historical process.

Sociology plays a role in regard to the social sciences comparable to scientific cosmology, which comprehensively explains the evolution of the physical universe, or synthetic biology, which aims to provide a coherent picture of the whole realm of living matter.

To the degree that sociology succeeds in comprehending the laws of human development, it provides the other social sciences with a general method of investigation which can serve as a guide to their more specialised studies. There is an unbreakable interdependence and constant interaction between sociology and the more specialised departments of social science, each of which has its relative autonomy. The data provided by these in turn enrich and extend the ideas and method of sociology as it grows.

Sociology seeks to answer such questions as: What is society and in what respects does it differ from nature? How did social life originate? How and why does it change?

What are the most powerful driving forces in its development? Through what stages has social evolution passed? What forms of organisation has society acquired? What are the standards of social progress? What relations do the various aspects of the social structure have to one another? What laws regulate the replacement of one grade of social development by the next and the transformation of one type of social organisation into another?

Sociology & the philosophy of history

The generality that distinguishes sociology as a science stands out most clearly in contrast with history. These two branches of knowledge are so intimately interlinked that at certain points on their boundaries they are barely separable.

History relates what men did at a certain time and place and under certain specific circumstances, however extensive the period and theatre of operations. Sociology takes up where history leaves off. Proceeding from the results of historical research, it seeks to find in them and through them the inner connections and causal laws of the actual historical process. Considerable historical data had to be amassed before sociology became possible.

Sociology and history have the broadest scope of all the social sciences. These two used to merge at that border line which has been designated as "the philosophy of history". This term, invented by Voltaire, refers to the systematic theoretical interpretation of the historical process as a whole, what Hegel called Universal History.

This side of the study of history was energetically pursued by those West European thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries who sought to extend to social phenomena the methods which were revolutionising research into the physical world. They proceeded on the premise that the world of man, no less than the world of nature, was a rational system whose principles of development could be found out and should be known. So they set out to ascertain the causal laws which determined human history.

Although some of their speculations went wide of the mark, these explorers of the logic of the historical process gathered materials and cleared the way for those eminent theorists in the 19th century from Saint-Simon to Marx who placed the study of society on solid scientific foundations.

These theoretical inquiries into the motive forces of history were prompted and promoted by practical aims. The philosophers of the Enlightenment who heralded the French revolution, and their successors of the Napoleonic and Restoration periods who came after the revolution, looked for the efficient agents of history in order to change society according to their lights. Just as the physical scientists had acquired control over nature through deeper insight into its modes of operation, so these

thinkers aspired to control the reconstruction of society by understanding and managing the main factors that shaped the course of history.

The authors of the conjectures associated with the philosophy of history were ideological precursors and progenitors of sociology. Whatever was valid in their contributions and conclusions on the whole of human history became incorporated into the science of society.

The philosophy of history as such, however, belongs to the prescientific stage of sociological knowledge. It bears the same relation to scientific sociology as alchemy to chemistry and astrology to astronomy. Its hypotheses were stimulating and indispensable so long as the prime motive forces of social development were unknown and being sought for. But once historical materialism uncovered the true laws of social evolution and progressive research guided by scientific principles could replace guesswork, the old purely speculative philosophical approach to sociology was rendered obsolete and retrogressive.

Types of sociological theory

Sociology has a long prehistory going back to the Greeks. Ibn Khaldun, the eminent Berber scholar and statesman of the 14th century, was very likely the first thinker to formulate a clear conception of sociology. He did so under the name of the study of culture.

He wrote: "History is the record of human society, or world civilisation; of the changes that take place in the nature of that society, such as savagery, sociability, and group solidarity; of revolutions and uprisings by one set of people against another with the resulting kingdoms and states, with their various ranks; of the different activities and occupations of men, whether for gaining their livelihood or in the various sciences and crafts; and, in general, of all the transformations that society undergoes by its very nature." (*An Arab Philosophy of History* by Charles Issawi, London, 1950.)

But sociology is a comparatively recent department of social science. Such sciences as economics and history developed on an independent basis much earlier and faster. Sociology was constituted as a distinct branch of learning only after the French revolution. It was given its own name over 150 years ago by August Comte.

Since then sociology has developed in different directions and given rise to a motley host of theoretical approaches. The diverse schools can be roughly classified into three major categories: the materialist, the idealist, and the eclectic or dualistic tendencies.

Idealists rely upon mental, superstructural or purely subjective factors for the prime explanation of social-historical phenomena. Thus the Swiss writer, Bachofen,

who first called attention to the system of kinship through the mothers, said in the introduction to his book *Das Mutterrecht*: " Religion is the only efficient lever of all civilisation. Each elevation and depression of human life has its origin in a movement which begins in this supreme department."

The American anthropologist, Alexander Goldenweiser, stated in his work on *Early Civilisation*: "Thus the whole of civilisation, if followed backward step by step, would ultimately be found resolvable, without residue, into bits of ideas in the minds of individuals."

The British biologist Julian Huxley encompasses the whole span of social development with a similar explanation: "Human evolution occurs primarily in the realm of ideas and their results — in what anthropologists call *culture* …" (*Issues in Evolution*, p. 45.)

Historical idealism is prevalent not only in the sciences but in all areas of culture. Thus the literary critic, Alfred Kazin, reviewing *The Life of the Mind in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War* by Perry Miller, asserts: "In the end, the national mind is the national force." This is diluted Hegelianism.

The materialists, on the other hand, teach that everything in social life comes from objective and observable material causes of a physical or man-made character. Thus, in *The Nature of Things*, the Roman poet-philosopher Lucretius attributed the discovery of the uses of metals to men's thoughtful notice of their melting by forest fires and moulding in the bed from which the lump of silver and gold, copper or lead, was lifted. He was reaching toward a materialist explanation for the metallic revolution which had given immense impetus to human progress several thousands of years before him.

In the 14th century Ibn Khaldun sought to explain the emergence of the civilised state from the primitive tribal community along the following essentially materialist lines: To satisfy the physical needs for food, procreation and protection which they shared with plants and animals, men were impelled to cooperate, learn to make tools and weapons and establish small and simple communities. The development of cooperation and the division of labour led to producing more than was required for sheer survival. The subsequent fierce conflicts over possession of this surplus of wealth threatened the existence of men. To curb their animal appetites and create civil order, they set up a powerful and able ruler who forced the aggregate to obey his directives. Thus kingship and the state came into existence as the necessary outcome of economic opulence.

The interplay of natural and man-made factors in shaping the course of history was emphasised by the 18th century French thinker Montesquieu, who picked out

geography and government as the main determinants of social phenomena. The influence of the first factor prevailed in the earlier stages of human development; the second came forward as civilisation progressed. But both continue to work together upon the mental life of man and generate his predominant characteristics. Thus heat and despotism made certain Asiatic peoples placid and docile while cold and democracy made some Europeans active in mind and body.

Besides such efforts to apply either idealist or materialist procedures in a more or less consistent and clear-cut manner, we find an array of thinkers who shuttle between these opposing modes of reasoning and arrive at the most incongruous conclusions in their works. The literature of the social sciences is saturated with such eclecticism in theory and method; it is the habitual, normative viewpoint of contemporary Western scholarship.

A characteristic expression of this dualism was provided by Charles Beard, the American liberal historian. His last word on historical philosophy was that ideas and interests were the twin motive forces of civilisation. If it be asked which is predominant as a rule and in the long run, he answered that this cannot be ascertained in advance. All depends upon the concrete circumstances of the given case. The door was thus flung open for ideological considerations to prevail over material conditions both in particular and in general.

Although the idealist approach to history is false in principle, it is not all wrong. It takes into account certain features of the development of society. Ideas, opinions, religions, individual action, are all parts of history and contribute to its making. The point is that they are not the decisive factors in social life and therefore cannot serve to explain the rest They are secondary and derivative elements which themselves stand in need of explanation. The idealistic conception is misleading because it is shallow; it does not get to the inner core, the essential causes, of social phenomena.

Every materialist school of historical explanation has had erroneous and inadequate notions. But their procedure was valid in essence because it oriented social investigation in the right direction. The materialists looked for the motive forces and root causes of social evolution in the influence and changes of the material conditions of human existence and kept digging deeper and deeper into these. With Marx and Engels they succeeded in reaching bedrock: They located the basis of society in the mode of production which arises out of the given state of man's struggle with nature for the means of life and further development.

Historical materialism

Historical materialism is a particular type of sociological theory. It is the sociological method of Marxism. It investigates the same phenomena as rival schools of sociology but in a more probing, many-sided, rigorously scientific way that gives more insight into the total life of society and more foresight about its trends of development.

Historical materialism is not the whole of Marxist theory. It forms a special branch arising from the application of its dialectical and materialist principles to the evolution of society. This is disputed by certain revisionist interpreters of Marxism, like Sidney Hook and Jean-Paul Sartre, who contend that the Marxist domain is restricted to social phenomena, to the life of man, and cannot be extended to nature. The Russian Marxist Plekhanov, more correctly stated that it had an all-embracing universal jurisdiction.

Plekhanov divided the unified and systematic structure of Marxist thought into three parts: 1. *Dialectical materialism*, the most general approach to reality, which covers nature, society and the mind and which aims to discover the general laws governing the modes of motion in all three interacting sectors of existence; 2. *Historical Materialism*, the application of these laws to the development of mankind and the discovery of the specific laws involved in social existence; 3. *Scientific socialism*, the application of the laws of historical materialism to that particular stage of social evolution in which capitalism takes shape, fulfils and exhausts its potential, and passes over to the higher formation of socialism. Thus dialectical materialism is a school of philosophy, logic and theory of knowledge; historical materialism, of sociology; and scientific socialism, of political economy and revolutionary practice.

Historical materialism is accurately named. It did not acquire either element of its designation by chance. Its title formulates the essential features which demarcate this method from other ways of interpreting social phenomena: On the one hand, its derivation of all the higher manifestations of culture from their economic foundations opposes it to the historical idealisms which have been the chief adversary of materialist thought in history and sociology. On the other hand, there have been tendencies which analysed social processes and structures materialistically but disregarded or minimised their evolutionary aspects. These unhistorical materialisms attributed the basic elements of social formations either to an unchangeable nature or to some fixed traits of human nature.

The distinctiveness of Marxist sociology comes from its fusion of the materialist approach to society with a thoroughgoing evolutionary outlook. It teaches that everything in social life is subject to modification and transformation in accord with causes of a physical or historical character.

An idealistic philosophy of history may also be evolutionary, as in Hegel, but it vests the ultimate causal agencies in nonmaterial factors such as spirit, mind or God. Marxism in fact originated by detaching the evolutionary outlook projected by Hegel in his dialectical logic from its idealistic context and by removing the nonhistorical elements from preceding materialist theories. Many critics insist that this marriage of dialectical method with materialist principles is impossible. Nonetheless, their indivisible combination constitutes the pith of the Marxist mode of thought in sociology as in all other fields.

The class character of sociology

Sociology could not have arisen or prospered in a homogenous, harmonious, equilibrated, unchanging, social medium. The accelerated economic changes, social instability and class antagonisms characteristic of commercial civilisation were needed to impel men to look for the forces which moved and transformed society.

The earliest systematic observations and critical reflections on the course and causes of social change were made by Greek thinkers in those city-states torn by class conflict where revolutions and counterrevolutions periodically upset and replaced the form of rule. Plato set forth the specifications for his ideal republic in the quest for stability as the obverse of the restless regimes of the commercial slave society around him. Aristotle carefully analysed the causes of revolution with an eye to preventing, not promoting, them.

Ibn Khaldun brought forth his new science of culture, the first extended essay in sociology, in response to the decline and disintegration of the Islamic states of North Africa and Spain during the 14th century. Living in a time of distress and desolation when nomadic incursions and the Black Death had ruined the Maghreb he keenly felt the need for a deeper understanding of history. "When the universe is being turned upside down, we must ask ourselves whether it is changing its nature, whether there is to be a new creation and a new order in the world. Therefore today we need a historian who can declare the state of the world, of its countries and people, and show the changes that have taken place in customs and beliefs", he wrote.

Since his time inquiry into the causes of social progress and regress has been quickened whenever and wherever the social order has been unsettled, turned topsy-turvy, and the historical destiny of peoples has been radically redirected. The upheavals in social relations and political institutions issuing from the development of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions in England, France and North America provided both the incentives and data for the research and reflections which crystallised in the creation of sociology as a separate science in the 19th century.

Conceived, nurtured and functioning in a setting of clashing social interests, the

social sciences could not avoid having a class character. In order to serve as tools and weapons in the contest of social forces, they have been bent to class purposes.

This bias can be observed from ancient times. It is obvious in Aristotle's *Politics*. Like other Greek aristocrats, he viewed the state as founded on households where the male is master over wives, children, slaves and all property; the concept of sexual, civic or universal equality is conspicuously absent in Aristotle's social thought.

Coming to our own time, those Anglo-American sociologists who ignore evolution in society, disregard revolutionary changes in social organisation, and focus exclusively on functional correlations in small-scale static structures are equally class-conditioned in their outlook. They present the viewpoint of the liberal middle-class intellectual or progressive.

How is the patently class character of social science and its practitioners to be reconciled with the tests of scientific objectivity? This is one of the most vexing problems in the sociology of knowledge. If the vision of the investigator is inescapably blurred and distorted by class motivations, how can any valid truths be attained in the social sciences?

Karl Mannheim offered an ingenious solution. He held that the ideologists of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are prohibited from being clear-sighted and impartial because they must defend overwhelming material interests. Their views are clouded by a deceptive "false consciousness" and a utopianism, which, despite its unrealism, is in practice the generator of political action and social progress. Fortunately for science, the relativism and subjectivism of the representatives of the major classes can be offset by the capacity of socially detached and politically uncommitted intellectuals to comprehend and appraise social phenomena without prejudice. Thus Mannheim tried to resolve the contradiction between prejudiced spokesmen for contending social forces and the demands of science by vesting the virtues of objectivity in an uprooted but fair-minded intellectual elite with which he identified himself.

Marxism handles this problem in a more correct and consistent way. It acknowledges that the thinkers of every social regime and layer without exception are animated by class considerations, however little or much they may be aware of the influence on them. This class outlook can hamper their work and warp their conclusions. But it is not an insuperable barrier to the acquisition of genuine knowledge and indeed under certain circumstances may prompt and speed its development.

Every successive ruling class — and the rising class which challenges its supremacy — has created a general conception of the world and society conforming to its needs. These ideologies intermingle accurate descriptions and correct explanations of phenomena with prejudices derived from the special situation and outlook of the class

formation they speak for. This twofold character permeates Aristotle's *Politics*, which, through his aristocratic angle of vision, conveys valuable information and valid generalisations on the economic, sociological and political features of the Greek city-states.

The demands which a given social order or class imposes upon its ideologists have differential effects upon their capacities to extend knowledge at different points of their historical evolution. When the basic interests of a class accelerate economic development and promote political and cultural progress, the beneficial influence of its predispositions and preoccupations radiates through the sciences and spurs the advance of knowledge.

The science of mineralogy received its strongest impetus from the direct economic interest of the Western European mine owners in the study of rocks. The father of mineralogy, the German physician Georg Bauer (1490-1555), better known under his Latinised name, Agricola, who lived and worked in one of the mining centres of the continent, wrote on the geographical distribution of various economically useful metals, the growth of metallurgy and its machinery in Germany and Austria, and the classification of the minerals known in his time. After him more and more attention was directed to the study of rocks for their potential economic value and many institutions of learning established teaching positions in mineralogy. The growth of this science led to increased knowledge of the history of the earth and eventually to the need for ascertaining a time scale for prehistory. Thus the progress made in positive knowledge and the accrued benefits to mankind transcended and outlasted the drive for private profit which gave birth to mineralogy.

The same considerations are true of the social sciences. The businessmen, financiers and statesmen of the early bourgeois era needed more extensive and exact statistics for trade, insurance, banking, government tax and administrative purposes. Their interests brought the science of statistics into being during and after the 17th century. Yet this branch of knowledge has an objective basis and scientific validity which goes beyond the special class motives inseparable from its origins and development.

In order to conduct a successful struggle against precapitalist institutions and ideas, the rising bourgeoisie had to probe more deeply into the structure of society and the motive forces of history. Its economists studied foreign trade, the role of money and the forms of capital and labour, amassing materials and devising theories for placing economics on solid scientific foundations. Its political thinkers developed theories of popular sovereignty and representative government in opposition to monarchical and theocratic views. Their critical and creative thought introduced lasting enlightenment into these fields of social science.

As one type of social regime has supplanted another in the onward march of civilisation, there has been a cumulative growth of knowledge about society. The comprehension of social relations and their modes of transformation arrived at by the most penetrating theorists of one stage of social and scientific development and its dominant class has been reevaluated, sifted and corrected by the leading ideologists of the next higher social formation. Thus the political economy of the working class took off from a critical reworking of the doctrines of the classical bourgeois economists, just as its philosophy combined the principles of previous materialists with the logical method of the German philosophers from Kant to Hegel. In this way the deficiencies and inherent limitations of the outmoded stage were reduced and removed while the store of genuine knowledge was amplified and improved by the fresh findings of the representatives of the more progressive class forces.

The incentives for objective research and judgment in sociology are lessened and the advance of the science slowed down when the major efforts of a class become dedicated to preserving an obsolete system of production and a reactionary political structure. The statesmen and economists of Southern slavery added very little to the sum of knowledge even about the laws regulating their own peculiar social regime. This blindness to the real forces stirring within society and their trends of development has afflicted all decadent and outdated ruling classes. Because they had acted as the dominant power in national politics for decades, the representatives of the slavocracy believed they could continue to hold sway after the economic, social and political balance of forces in the country had decisively shifted against them. The test of the Civil War burst this illusion.

Today the statesmen and ideologists of the major capitalist power expect the United States to exercise the same prolonged supremacy over world affairs that England did 100 years ago, regardless of the growing weight of the anticapitalist states and forces in this century. Their vision and prevision of world history is impaired, not sharpened, by their class position and prejudices.

The best understanding of society at the disposal of the world working class is contained and codified in the tenets of historical materialism. This is the most comprehensive and integrated system of sociological laws and the most profound interpretation of historical development. It incorporates the verified knowledge of history and society bequeathed from the past with the contributions made by the masters of Marxism.

The needs of the working class in its struggle for emancipation impose exacting demands and a severe objectivity upon its ideologists. As two world wars and fascism have demonstrated, the working class has to pay heavily for every failure of cognition

about the dynamics of contemporary society. It suffers from every instance of ignorance, subjectivity and shortsightedness in the socioeconomic analyses of its leaders and scholars.

This puts a premium on finding out the reality of social and political conditions and ascertaining the precise movements of the diverse social forces. False ideas have to be constantly corrected by the results of actual experience in the arena of struggle on a world scale; a more objective and rounded picture of the concrete situation in all its interacting aspects has to be worked out if the historical aims of the socialist movement are to be fulfilled.

These vital stimuli emanating from the movement for liberation from bondage to class society are the lifeblood of the progress of historical materialism. This method teaches that theory and practice, science and experience go hand in hand throughout history. But the two do not evolve symmetrically; their progress is extremely uneven. The understanding of peoples and classes about their situation and tasks has usually lagged far behind their actual relations and the possibilities of changing them.

This gap has never been greater than in the atomic age. Although the world is ready to receive socialism, a considerable section of the working class in the West is not ready to achieve it. Yet the very salvation of humanity depends upon its capacity to intervene as the dominant and decisive force in redirecting the history of our time. The enlightenment and guidance provided by historical materialism can do much to alter the gross imbalance between the immense untapped revolutionary potential of the working people and their present inadequate level of consciousness.

From the 1840s to the 1960s the victories and defeats, advances and setbacks of the masses in their strivings to change the course of history and reconstruct society on new foundations has amplified the method and enriched the content of historical materialism. The greatest value of all science comes from its usefulness in practice. The science of the social process formulated in historical materialism must also meet and pass this supreme test.

The history of the past century has given many proofs of its superior capacities to decipher the past, analyse current events, and forecast the variants of social and political development Its truth and potency will be irrefutably vindicated as the application of its ideas enables the revolutionary forces to forge a policy which can bring about with the greatest speed and efficiency the abolition of the old order and the building of a better world.■

Positivism & Marxism in Sociology

Apropos of Professor Popper & his methods

Does history have any regularities that can be scientifically known and used to foresee and shape the future? Marxism says yes, positivism says no, to this cardinal question of sociology.

Both the positivists and their ideological cousins, the pragmatists, are extremely dubious about the existence of sociological laws and the possibilities of ascertaining the direction of social developments. They disavow historical determinism, especially in connection with the prospects of capitalism, and are intent upon disqualifying the claims of Marxism to be scientific.

Their case is most vigorously argued nowadays by Professor Karl Popper of the University of London, author of *The Open Society and its Enemies*, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* and *The Poverty of Historicism*. This influential theorist of positivist method in the social sciences is a proponent of "piecemeal social engineering". He is also a pioneer of cold-war liberalism whose reputation in the West has been enhanced by the political consequences of his views. As early as 1945 he expounded the thesis that the central issue of our time was the world conflict between capitalist democracy and communist totalitarianism, the first safeguarding the values of reason, freedom, democracy, individualism and liberalism in "an open society", the other promoting collectivism, servitude and authoritarianism in "a closed society". The contending camps had their respective philosophies in a flexible empiricism versus a dogmatic dialectical materialism.

Professor Popper is not conservative but progressive in his social outlook. He expresses agreement with Marx that philosophers should not simply interpret the world but help change it. He contends, however, that Marxist historical method is not suited for that purpose; its pretensions to scientific knowledge of the laws of social

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development are spurious.

Although Professor Popper believes in a kind of physical necessity, he does not extend any determinism to social phenomena. In an address on "Prediction and Prophecy in the Social Sciences", delivered at the 10th International Congress of Philosophy at Amsterdam, 1948, and printed in *Theories of History*, edited by Patrick Gardiner, he asserts that "there exists no law of evolution" either for plants and animals or for man. Consequently there is no factual basis for forecasting economic, political or historical developments. He labels the irrepressible fondness for prediction shared by diverse schools of sociology as "historicism" and focuses his attack upon Marxism as the worst offender in the practice of "futurism".

Scientific socialism maintains that the purpose of both natural and social science is to know in order to foresee correctly and act most effectively. That is its practical value, the reason why so many people devote so much time to scientific work and governments today subsidise it so heavily.

Professor Popper dismisses this aim in sociology as wishful thinking. It is the modern secular version of an age-old dream of prophecy — "the idea that we can know what the future has in store for us, and that we can profit from such knowledge by adjusting our policy to it". The kind of predictability pursued by historical materialists, who believe that human affairs are causally determined and lawful, is a chimera because history exhibits no regularities, he says. It is largely made up of singular cases. "Non-repetitive events are the most striking aspects of historical development", he writes.

Obviously, no general laws can be derived from an endless series of purely unique events. If every occurrence in social life and the procession of history was as unprecedented as he proclaims, scientific analysis would indeed be impossible. So would any reasonable orientation and effective action.

Positivism claims to be superior to dialectical materialism because it is not dogmatic but faithful to the facts. The rival theories may therefore be tested by reference to the basic facts about the regularities and irregularities of social existence and historical development.

The society around the professor does undergo minor modifications from day to day but, barring overnight revolutions, he can count on meeting substantially the same institutions and customs in the morning as when he fell asleep on the previous evening. But he has not awakened to the philosophical import of this simple fact.

It is grossly unfactual to assert that history has no regularities or that nonrepetitive events are its decisive characteristics. Social relations themselves refute such a contention; they are definite types of perennially repeated mutual interactions among

men arising from continuous activities of a definite kind. The regularities of society are primarily expressed in the productive activities and economic relations of its members. Since our species emerged from the primate stage, men have acquired and produced the means of satisfying their needs in routine ways through repetitive labour processes. The tools they made for that purpose were fashioned according to traditional techniques and previous models.

Our prime source of knowledge about preliterate times comes from archaeology, that science of society which deals with the earliest human activities incorporated in artifacts. Although each of these products and instruments of labour has individual characteristics, almost all belong to specific types. These constitute the data of archaeology. "If the implement be unique, it is not a datum for archaeology at all; it remains just a curio, until a similar implement, that is, one of the same type, be observed in a significant archaeological context … Archaeologists must ignore the small individual peculiarities of any given knife and treat it as an instance of one or another of the standard types, as a member of that class of knives", observes V. Gordon Childe in *A Short Introduction to Archaeology* (pp. 13-14). Jacquetta Hawkes tells us that "in the Lower Palaeolithic period the hard-axe, although it was gradually improved, remained in use as the dominant tool form for over a quarter of a million years" (*Prehistory*, p. 172).

The social relations of the most primitive peoples were as simple and standardised as their instruments of production. The small bands or tribes of Stone Age food-gatherers, hunters or fisherman, had collectivist institutions and customs. The scope of variations in their social organisation were held within the narrow limits prescribed by their mode of production. They might live in caves or camps but had, as a rule, no permanent settlements.

The innovation of food production which gave rise to barbarism introduced the first epoch-making changes and extensive diversifications into primitive social structures. But the barbaric communities and kingdoms were based upon agriculture. What could be more repetitive than this kind of economy rooted in the natural processes of plant growth and reproduction, regulated by the round of the seasons and carried on by traditional techniques and rituals?

Mankind took more than a million years to go from savagery through barbarism to civilisation. This crawling pace indicates how greatly recurrences outweighed novelties in daily life. Even after the most advanced sections of humanity became civilised, the fixity of social relations and the slow and intermittent rate of change in the agricultural societies culminating in feudalism betokened the predominance of repetition in the lives and labours of their human constituents.

Change becomes the rule rather than the exception in society and history only with the advent of capitalism — precisely because of the peculiar nature of its mode of production. Unlike previous master classes, the bourgeoisie is impelled by the dictates of its economic interests to keep modernising and revolutionising the conditions of production. This is imposed by competition, the necessities of capital accumulation, the drive for the maximisation of profits. Incidentally, that is why the peasant is "history-less", the proletariat is so historical minded, and theorists like Professor Popper are so preoccupied with the problem of changeability.

However, bourgeois changeability has inherent limits. As much as the capitalist class may reform the economy and other parts of society, it cannot replace the mode of production and appropriation upon which its property, profits and power rest. It must safeguard these at all costs. This conservative basis of its socioeconomic position clashes with the cumulative changes in the rest of the system. The intensification of these contradictions in its system has led to grave social and political crises that have already resulted in the overturn of capitalist relations in countries on three continents.

What about the nonrecurrent features of events? These may be interesting and dramatic, but they cannot be the decisive causal factors, the main determinants and driving forces of history. Random events are usually the unessential, accessory, incidental, superficial and trivial aspects of the historical process. However, this is not always the case. Qualitatively new events or deviations from the norm, which ordinarily have little historical consequence or a negligible scientific significance, can be converted into causally important factors. They become determinative to the extent that they are reduplicated. In the further course of development, the previously unprecedented can become more and more of a causally effective precedent. History would never progress if unique events did not contribute to its making. But novelties acquire weight in the total process of determination only as they forfeit their originality and become recurrent.

This dialectical process can be seen at the dawn of humanity. According to the labour theory of social origins, tool-using and tool-making differentiated man from the beasts. The occasional use of natural objects as tools for some momentary purpose by other anthropoids had no enduring evolutionary consequences and brought about no fundamental changes in their animal mode of existence. The *regular and collective* use and fabrication of tools and the habitual skills associated with them converted our primate progenitors into human beings.

The same is true of that sound-tool, language. Sporadic cries of other species had no social significance and made no essential difference in their relations. The reiteration of verbal utterances by our ancestors, in conjunction with their cooperation in labour,

created speech. Language is rooted in the reproduction of words, the conventionalisation of meaningful references to things, the stabilisation of grammatical elements and structures to which Professor Popper has to conform in order to communicate with us.

The main task of historical and social science, according to Marxism, is to find out the pattern of all those regularities and formulate them into laws that express the necessary connections of objective realities in their evolution. Such regularities are not confined to established social structures. They also operate within the evolutionary and revolutionary changes which bring new and higher types of social organisation into existence. These processes begin with occasional variations from the customary pattern which massively recur until they acquire power enough to overthrow and replace the old order.

Professor Popper avers, in defiance of the facts, that only variables and not constants shape history. Actually, history is made by the interplay of its constant and variable elements. In the course of development constants turn into variables and variables into constants — and they do so, not in an arbitrary manner, but in lawful, materially determined ways.

Let us review a case from the history of politics, the relations between monarchy and democracy. In the earlier stages of civilisation the sacred monarchy was the predominant form of sovereignty from Egypt to China. For several thousands of years states rose and fell and dynasties came and went while kingship persisted as the rule. Democracy was unknown in Mesopotamian civilisation. This remarkable uniformity in the political constitution of the ancient empires was rooted in the essential stability of the economic and social substructures of these agricultural despotisms.

Political democracy first emerged in seventh century Greece as a result of profound changes in the economic conditions and class relations of its most progressive commercial city-states. But this novel kind of government was exceptional, unstable and short-lived, enduring here and there for little more than two centuries. Kingship in one form or another remained the normal form of the state through all the subsequent stages of class rule, until the more thoroughgoing bourgeois revolutions deposed the monarchies and set up democratic republics in their stead. Even so, parliamentary democracy did not become widespread or deep-seated until the peak of capitalist expansion and stability was reached in the 19th century and then was largely restricted to the richest, most favoured nations of the West.

The monarchy that in its twilight monopolised political life at the dawn of class rule has become a rarity, a curious decorative relic, because the fundamental historical conditions for its survival and revival are no longer at hand. Popular sovereignty, on

the other hand, which was absent in the first civilisations, is today regarded as the normal and most desirable form of government to which even antidemocratic regimes pay lipservice. What was once constant has become variable and vanishing; what was nonexistent is on the rise and constantly growing.

The second case, taken from technology, deals with an analogous transformation in the relations between the two major consecutive types of means of labour. Until 200 years ago men used nothing but hand-tools in production; machines were an insignificant exception. This historical constant was set aside by the large-scale introduction of machinery, an innovation which came about lawfully and comprehensibly by transferring the function of handling the working tool from a human being to a mechanism. The more complex and efficient means of production displaced the more primitive and less productive implements as the capitalists recognised their greater profitability. In factory industry the use of hand-tools is exceptional while machine production is its basis; their roles have become reversed.

This fundamental change in technology generated a host of others which together constitute industrial capitalism. Under this system tens of millions of people get up five to six days a week and go to work for eight hours or more for wages in enterprises operated by capitalist owners for their private profit. Whatever their individual differences and personal preferences, the wageworkers must submit to this standard type of labour relation in order to get their daily bread, pay the landlord monthly and meet installment loans regularly. This is not an accident but a necessity of capitalism, its fundamental law, the source of its exploitation.

Professor Popper denies that there are any such essential necessities in economic activities and social relations or that the aim of sociology is to discover and explain them in order to foresee their development. He even contends that social systems or "wholes" do not exist as "empirical objects"; they are only "ideal objects". What really exists are "individuals and their actions and reactions", which presumably never acquire a definitely organised or systematised character.

He therefore assigns an entirely different task to the social sciences. Their main task, he tells us, "is to trace the unintended social repercussions of intentional human actions". That is to say, sociology must revolve around an explanation of the accidents rather than the necessities of history.

This is a legitimate subject of social science, although it is not central to it. Sociology should be more concerned with demonstrating the interplay of accident and necessity in history and the conversion of the one into the other as it develops. Nevertheless, the discrepancies between the conscious purposes of human beings and the real results of their activities, which Hegel called "the cunning of reason", that is to say, the irony of

history, does pose an important problem for social science.

In order to clarify why this anomaly has been such a pronounced and persistent trait of human affairs to date, it is essential to find out the social and historical circumstances that have prevented the outcome of man's collective activities from coinciding with their avowed aims or will. Professor Popper apparently believes that this is an eternal law and irremediable flaw of history. Actually, this prime feature of past and present history originated in the exchange of commodities and man's consequent loss of control over his social relations issuing from the expansion of exchange relations. This lack of control is most accentuated in the capitalist phase of commodity production. The phenomenon so overwhelms Professor Popper because capitalism is an inherently anarchic system, beyond regulation by its most powerful agencies and privileged beneficiaries.

The conflicting private interests of its constituent parts make it impossible for the plans of an individual, a corporation or a state to be assured of realisation. The main objective of the socialist movement is to do away with the economic sources of this social disorder and establish the material preconditions for bringing man's aims into consonance with his results, by eliminating the private ownership of the means of production, and planning economic development.

This is abhorrent to Professor Popper, who is a partisan of individualism and free enterprise. The last sentence of his liberal polemic against Marxism reads: "The fight against avoidable misery should be a recognised aim of public policy, while the increase of happiness should be left, in the main, to private initiative."

The theoretical justification for his program is that social science in general, and Marxism in particular, possesses no predictive power that could contribute to effective social control over the next stage of human progress. He would have us believe that our contemporaries, who have proved capable of the intricate computations and constructions required to send spacecraft and their instruments to the moon and to Mars, are unable to discern the forces at work around them on earth and figure out the main lines of their evolution. Or, having analysed and ascertained these trends, they cannot act consciously and collectively to realise the best alternative.

Fortunately, even pre-Marxist revolutionaries have not been as myopic as the positivist scholar. They have grasped historical necessities before these became actualities. Indeed, a clear and conscious recognition of these was a prerequisite for their realisation. In the Declaration of Independence the colonial patriots proclaimed that it was imperative to break loose from English crown rule at least seven years before they succeeded in doing so. Sam Adams saw its urgency much sooner. The Abolitionists understood the necessity for eradicating the institution of slavery as the

biggest block to national progress decades before that was done through the Civil War.

Professor Popper maintains, however, that history has no discernible progressive direction. To assume, as historicists and Marxists do, that we can know where a social structure is — or is not — heading is to arrogate a divine foresight forbidden mere mortals. According to his highly subjective and idealist conception, history can have only the meaning individuals ascribe to it.

This is contradicted by the entire march of history. Every primitive people and outlived ruling class expected to perpetuate themselves and projected that wish upon their historical horizon. In North America the Indians, the feudalists and the slaveholders asserted their will to survival through furious resistance. Yet all were swept under by the invincible forces of bourgeois civilisation. Their subjective desires could not prevail over historical necessities.

Why, then, should scientific socialism be prohibited from analysing the structure and functioning of capitalism, identifying the strategic forces and factors which affect its development, foreseeing their further trends (at least in outline if not in concrete detail) and devising a practical program of revolutionary action? Is there any empirical evidence that this can be done? The *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 was so prescient that even today it is more pertinent to contemporary realities than any other political document of its time.

Here are two examples of Marxist foresight, one confirmed in a positive, the other in a negative manner. In 1906 Trotsky set forth his theory of the permanent revolution, which predicted that the proletariat would have to take power and adopt socialist measures in the coming Russian revolution. That is what happened in 1917.

Twelve years later the exiled Russian Marxist declared in a series of writings that German capitalism had been plunged into so severe a crisis by the crash of 1929 that the shaky Weimar Republic was doomed. The crisis could be resolved only by victory for the socialist working class or its defeat at the hands of the fascists. He warned that the mistaken policies of the social-democratic and communist leaderships were preparing a catastrophe and forecast that Nazism in power would crush the entire German labour movement, destroy democracy, unleash world war and attack the Soviet Union. Although his alarms went unheeded, their correctness was substantiated by the events of the next 15 years.

This example is pertinent to another one of Professor Popper's strictures. The conclusions of the historicists are unfounded and unverifiable prophecies rather than scientific predictions, he contends, because they are unconditional. However, Marxist prognoses, which should flow from an all-sided diagnosis of the given situation, are

not presented with such absoluteness. Where there are opposing necessities at work, the outcome must be conditional on their further interaction and relative weight.

Proceeding from a knowledge of the laws of the class struggle and their specific refraction in the Germany of the Weimar Republic, Trotsky concluded that the rickety bourgeois democracy could not be saved and only two opposing roads were open under the given circumstances: fascism or socialism. He stated that all the objective conditions for another October 1917 were present but that the subjective factors of correct leadership would have to be brought to bear for the favourable variant to be achieved. If the divided leadership of the working masses failed to apply the right policies in time, Hitler would win. The perspectives which guided his recommendations for action were conditional, although the possible outcomes were categorical.

The same conditionality applies to judgments on the prospects of the conflict between capitalism and socialism on a world-historical scale. The triumph of the socialist cause is not predetermined in the same way as an astronomical eclipse, since the factor of human consciousness and timely action is involved and decisive. If a cosmic catastrophe or a nuclear war should blow up the planet, that would end human history and dispose, among other things, of the controversy between positivism and Marxism.

Assuming, however, as one must, that mankind will have a future and a better one, victory for the international working class depends upon many factors: the course of development and degree of disintegration of monopoly capitalism, the growth in power of the workers' states, the advances of the colonial revolution, the actions and consciousness of the industrial workers in the imperialist strongholds, the kind of political organisation and leadership they get.

It is possible for all the conditions required for a successful socialist revolution to be met. The overthrow of capitalism is no longer the wholly conditional or conjectural prospect it was when Marx and Engels predicted its advent in the *Communist Manifesto*. It is already an accomplished fact in countries on three continents.

As an empiricist, Professor Popper would maintain that no amount of precedents establishes a rule. He does not understand that what has been more or less possible becomes more and more probable, and eventually necessary, as the conditions for its occurrence and recurrence pile up and come together. What has hitherto been conditional, at a certain critical turning point in the processes of development, becomes necessary.

His death is conditional and avoidable at any time of his life; it is more and more probable as he ages and is inevitable in the long run because of the laws of his biological constitution. Social systems are no more immortal than the human beings whose

activities sustain them. Like capitalism, they can perish piecemeal before they are abolished in toto.

Let us consider a fresh historical instance which is most favourable to his viewpoint. The Cuban revolution developed in an unexpected fashion which surprised not only the Cuban property owners and the corporations and government of the United States but also the July 26th leaders and the entire world socialist movement. Yet, even if it was not specifically predicted before the fact, its line of development can be explained after the fact.

Political analysts should first ask: Why did the Cuban revolution follow a different path and have an outcome different from its Latin American predecessors in Mexico, Bolivia and Guatemala? There were numerous reasons for its unprecedented turn. Among these was the fact that Castro and his associates learned from the military coup in Guatemala in 1954 that, if colonialism was to be stamped out and popular power preserved, the officer corps and the old army had to be destroyed and replaced by a revolutionary armed force. In addition, they learned how to expropriate the capitalists and start building a planned economy from Russia, Yugoslavia and China. The whole experience of 20th century history since 1917, plus the international balance of forces issuing from it, were indispensable preconditions for the unanticipated course taken by the Fidelistas.

The transformation of the armed insurrection against Batista's capitalist dictatorship into a proletarian-peasant revolution is a spectacular example of the law governing the present stage of world history that the fundamental problems of backward countries cannot be solved except by a revolutionary struggle directed along socialist lines.

This theorem of the permanent revolution formulates an irrepressible and growing tendency inherent in all the insurgent colonial movements of our time.

The positivist professor must protest against this logic of contemporary history. The Cuban experience, he will expostulate, was unique; it cannot be taken as a sample of a law. "Society is changing, developing. Its development is not, in the main, a repetitive one." Contrary to his shortsighted philosophy, the Cuban revolution is not regarded as unique either by its leaders or its enemies. Its general import and impact is what makes it such a touchy issue in American and world politics.

Official Washington does not view Cuba as an isolated incident that can have no sequel, although it would like to have it that way. That was demonstrated by its armed intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965 and declared intention to dispatch troops elsewhere in Latin America if a comparable threat arises. Both sides recognise the potential for further Cubas in the Western hemisphere and are taking appropriate measures to promote or prevent them.

The policies of Washington to contain and crush, and of Havana to aid and extend, the socialist revolution have a lawful character. They correspond to the logic and dynamics of current history, which is determined and directed by the necessities of the mortal combat between capitalism and socialism.

Standing helplessly between the class adversaries, Professor Popper would advise them that no such necessities exist. Since both sides know better, his advice would fall on deaf ears.

Professor Popper is acclaimed in scholarly circles for his special definition of the nature of scientific method. He teaches that the essence of science consists, not so much in the verification of hypotheses, as in their falsification. The greatest scientific progress is registered when it is disclosed, not what theories and laws can tell us about what exists and what can be done, but when they advise us what does not exist and what cannot be done. Laws above all set limits to the possible.

The timidity of his sceptical epistemology is evident in this lopsided conception of scientific lawfulness. To be sure, the clarification of the conditional limits, inadequacies and errors of existing theories are an indispensable and fruitful function of scientific activity, a prime source of its growth, the starting point for fresh advances and breakthroughs. That happened in the 19th century and early 20th century with Euclidean geometry, Newtonian physics and classical political economy.

But exposures of this kind, which have stimulated progressive crises in science, represent only one phase, one step in the totality of scientific investigation and advancement. It is the negative side of the unending process of acquiring more precise and deep-going understanding of the phenomena in question. Such revisions in the light of further experimental facts pave the way for the elaboration and verification of more comprehensive, complex and correct theories. Darwin banished incorrect doctrines from biology as part of his positive demonstration of the evolutionary mechanism and unity of living beings. The eventual outcome, the net result, is a steady accumulation of more ample and dependable information with which to foresee and control natural and social processes.

Ironically, positivism shies away from acknowledging this growth of positive knowledge about the world, does not properly assess its significance and its role and relevance in providing foresight and facilitating action. It is badly named and should be more precisely termed "negativism".

Finally, Professor Popper, who insists that the social sciences cannot and should not forecast historical developments and that unconditional laws are taboo, fails to abide by these two precepts of his own position. Despite his contention that the future is opaque, this liberal does not hesitate to affirm most categorically that revolution in

general, and above all the socialist revolution heralded by Marxism, is bound to be ruinous. "I am convinced that revolutionary methods can only make things worse — that they will increase unnecessary suffering; that they will lead to more and more violence; and that they must destroy freedom."

On what scientific grounds, empirical or rational, can such an unconditional assertion be justified? Many past revolutions have benefited mankind and enlarged freedom for the masses. The very bourgeois democracy he defends and cherishes was the offspring of revolutionary struggles. The American people have had two revolutions which made things much better rather than worse for them. Is it then only contemporary proletarian, and not previous bourgeois revolutions, that are full of evils? He will not convince the peoples of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, China and Cuba that their revolutions brought no good, whatever their shortcomings. Nor will his timid admonitions prevent other peoples from seeking and finding the revolutionary socialist method of solving their otherwise insoluble problems. This empiricist turns rigidly dogmatic when he confronts the prospect of socialist revolution. In order to uphold gradualism and piecemeal reform at all costs, he is compelled to throw overboard the principles of his own method and relapse into "ahistoricism", an absolute rule that revolutions always and everywhere have baneful results.

Such inconsistency is a congenital vice of positivist epistemology. It is engendered in the last analysis by the predicament of the middle-class liberal under monopoly capitalism who wishes to work toward a better society but fears to overstep the framework of the established order in his views, perspectives, and actions. Others, who refuse to be hemmed in by these arbitrary and essentially reactionary standards, are told that they are "unscientific". This demonstrates how different conceptions of science and its methods, which appear so remote and detached from everyday life, have their social implications, class affiliations, and political uses. ■

Marxism Versus Existentialism

Existentialism and Marxism are the most widely discussed and widely held philosophies of our time. The first is dominant in Western Europe and gaining increasing popularity in the United States. The second is not only the official doctrine of all communist countries but, in one form or another, is accepted as a guide by many movements and parties throughout the world.

Over the past 20 years the proponents of these two schools of thought have engaged in continual debate with one another. The centre of this controversy has been France. There existentialism has found its most talented spokesmen in Nobel Prize winner Jean-Paul Sartre and his associates, who have developed their positions in direct contact and contest with Marxism. They live on a continent where, unlike the United States, socialism has influenced public life for almost a century, and in a country where the Communist Party gets a quarter of the vote, is followed by most of the working class, and exerts heavy pressure upon radical intellectuals. These circumstances have compelled the so-called mandarins of the left to make clear their attitude toward Marxism at every stage in the evolution of their views.

The development of Sartre has been especially paradoxical. He worked out his original existentialist ideas under the sway of nonmaterialist thinkers such as Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger as a deliberate challenge to Marxism. In *Being and Nothingness* (1943) and *Materialism and Revolution* (1947) Sartre presented his philosophy as an alternative to dialectical materialism. Then in the late 1950s he made a turnabout and embraced Marxism, at least in words — which for him, as he explains in the first volume of his recent autobiography, have had a reality greater than the objective world.

In his latest philosophical treatise, *The Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960), the first section of which has been published in English as *Search for a Method*, he declares that existentialism has become a subordinate branch of Marxism which aspires to

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renew and enrich it. Thus the phenomenologist of existence who condemned dialectical materialism as false and a foe to human freedom in the 1940s now proposes to marry Marxism and existentialism.

To what extent, if any, can these philosophies be conjoined? Can a synthesis of the two be viable? This article intends to show that the contending world outlooks cannot be harmonised or integrated into one containing "the best features" of both. A legendary alchemist thought that by putting together fire and water he would concoct that most desirable of delights, "fire-water". Actually, the one nullifies or extinguishes the other when they come into contact. It is the same with Marxism and existentialism. Their fundamental positions over a broad spectrum of problems extending from philosophy and sociology to morality and politics are so divergent that they cannot really be reconciled.

This piece can do no more than indicate the main lines of their disagreement on the most important issues. Let us first consider their opposing conceptions on the nature of reality and then on science, which is the highest expression of our endeavours to investigate and know the world.

Science & the absurdity of reality

For existentialism the universe is irrational; for Marxism it is lawful. The propositions of existentialist metaphysics are set in a context of cataclysmic personal experience. They all flow from the agonising discovery that the world into which we are thrown has no sufficient or necessary reason for existence, no rational order. It is simply there and must be taken as we find it. Being is utterly contingent, totally without meaning, and superfluous.

Human existence as such is equally meaningless. "It is absurd that we were born, it is absurd that we die", writes Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. We do not know where we came from, why we are here, what we must do; or where we are going. "Every existing thing is born without reason, prolongs itself out of the weakness of inertia and dies by chance", says one of Sartre's characters in *Nausea*.

If the world is devoid of meaning and impervious to rational inquiry, a philosophy of existence would seem a contradiction in terms. In contrast to religious mysticism, philosophy aims to illuminate reality by means of concepts, the tools of reasoning. How is it possible to explain an unconditionally absurd universe or even find a foothold for theory in it?

Soren Kierkegaard did contend that it was neither possible nor desirable to think systematically about the reality of life, which eluded the grasp of the abstracting intellect. Albert Camus rejected existentialist theorising on similar grounds. It is hopeless, he

asserted, to try to give rational form to the irrational. The absurdity of existence must be lived through, suffered, defied; it cannot be satisfactorily explained.

However, the professional thinkers of this school do not choose to commit philosophical suicide. They have proceeded, each in their own way, to elaborate a philosophy of "being in an absurd world". There is logic to their illogicality. If everything is hopelessly contradictory, why should the enterprise of philosophy be an exception? The human mission, they say, is to find out the meaning of meaninglessness — or at least give some meaning through our words and deeds to an otherwise inscrutable universe.

For dialectical materialism, reality has developed in a lawful manner and is rationally explicable. The rationality of nature and human history is bound up with matter in motion. The concatenation of cosmic events gives rise to cause-and-effect relations that determine the qualities and evolution of things. The physical preceded and produced the biological, the biological the social, and the social the psychological in a historical series of mutually conditioned stages. The aim of science is to disclose their essential linkages and formulate these into laws that can help pilot human activity.

The rationality, determinism, and causality of the universal process of material development do not exclude but embrace the objective existence and significance of absurdity, indeterminism, and accident.

However, these random features of reality are no more fundamental than regularity. They are not immutable and irremovable aspects of nature and history but relative phenomena which in the course of development can change to the extent of becoming their own opposites. Chance, for example, is the antithesis of necessity. Yet chance has its own laws, which are lodged in the occurrence of statistical regularities. Quantum mechanics and the life insurance business exemplify how individual accidents are convertible into aggregate necessities.

Exceptions are nothing but the least frequent alternatives, and when enough exceptions pile up they give rise to a new rule of operation which supersedes the formerly dominant one. The interplay of chance and necessity through the conversion of the exception into the rule can be seen in the economic development of society. Under tribal life, production for immediate personal consumption is the norm whereas production for exchange is a rare and casual event. Under capitalism, production for sale is the general law; production for one's own use is uncommon. What was categorically necessary in the first economic system is fortuitous in the second. Moreover, in the transition from one economy to the other the bearers of chance and necessity have changed places, have become transformed into each other.

Social structures that are rational and necessary under certain historical

circumstances become absurd and untenable at a further stage of economic development and are scrapped. Thus feudal relations, which corresponded to a given level of the powers of social production, became as anachronistic as Don Quixote and had to give way before the more dynamic forces and more rational forms of bourgeois society.

The existentialists go wrong, say the Marxists, in making an eternal absolute out of the occurrence of chance events and unruly phenomena. These are not unconditioned and unchangeable but relative and variable aspects of being.

As a result, of their conflicting conceptions of reality, the two philosophies have entirely different attitudes toward science. If the universe is irrational through and through, then science, which is the most sustained and comprehensive effort to render the relations and operations of reality intelligible and manageable, must be nonsensical and futile. The existentialists mistrust and downgrade the activities and results of science. They accuse the scientists of substituting conceptual and mathematical abstractions for the whole living person, proffering the hollow shell of rationality for its substance, neglecting what is most important in existence, and breeding an unbridled technology which, like Frankenstein's monster, threatens to crush its creator.

Marxism, which holds fast to the rationality of the real, esteems scientific knowledge and inquiry as the fullest and finest expression of the exercise of reason. It believes that the discovery of physical and social laws can serve to explain both the regularities and irregularities of development, so that even the most extreme anomalies of nature, society, and the individual can be understood.

The predominance of ambiguity

In the eyes of the existentialists, ambiguity presides over existence. It is easy to see why. Ambiguity is a state between chaos and order, darkness and light, ignorance and knowledge. If the universe is ruled by chance, everything is inevitably and ineradicably indeterminate. The absence of cause-and-effect relations endows reality with a duplicity and disorder which renders it hopelessly obscure.

This uncertainty is exceedingly acute in the individual. We are torn by warring elements within ourselves. This predicament is all the more difficult because we are trapped in a maze of conflicting possibilities. We must act in a fog where indistinct shapes move in no definite direction and toward no ascertainable destination. Since the given situation has no intrinsic structure, trends, or signs which make one alternative superior to another, the existentialist is entitled to pick whatever solution seems most appealing. What comes out is then a matter of chance or caprice.

"The essential form of spiritual life is marked by ambiguity", observes Heidegger

in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Simone de Beauvoir tells us that "from the very beginning, existentialism defined itself as a philosophy of ambiguity". She has attempted to found an ethics on the tragic ambivalence of the human being, who is tossed like a shuttlecock between pure externality and pure consciousness without ever being able to bring them into accord.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty likewise made ambiguity the leading principle of his social and political outlook. Human beings, he maintained, are thrust willy-nilly into situations where many conflicting forces are at work. These do not have any central line of development or indicate any particular outcome. We must arbitrarily select one of the multifarious possibilities and act upon it amidst uncertainty and confusion. Our option makes and throws light on our character but cannot remove either the inherent ambiguity of the situation or the risk of the undertaking. Everything in life is a gamble.

Merleau-Ponty objected to historical materialism because it did not give accident primacy over necessity in history. He applied his sweeping indeterminism to the outcome of the struggle for socialism: "The possibility remains of an immense compromise, of a decaying of history where the class struggle, powerful enough to destroy, would not be powerful enough to build and where the master-lines of history charted in the *Communist Manifesto* would be effaced." This was the theoretical source of the scepticism which lay behind his reluctance to join the Communist Party, and which later led to his rejection of the Stalinised Soviet Union as in any respect socialist.

The personages in the works of existentialist writers exemplify the enigmatic duplicity of the human being. They do not have stable characters or predictable courses of conduct. They plunge into unexpected and uncalled-for actions which contravene their previous commitments. Their lives and motives are susceptible to multiple meanings and inconclusive interpretations — which the authors are not concerned to clarify, since misunderstanding must accompany the ambiguity of existence. The latest example of this is Edward Albee's play *Tiny Alice*, whose symbolism and significances have puzzled not only the drama critics but the author and director as well.

The problem of ambiguity is very real; it arises from the contradictory content of things. While the universe has a determinate structure and a discernible order of evolution, its elements are so complex and changing that the forms of their development can assume highly equivocal and puzzling appearances. The question is whether these paradoxical manifestations must remain forever indecipherable and unsettled or whether the diverse and misleading forms can be correlated by scientific means into some lawful pattern which gets at the essence of things.

The existentialists refuse to concede that the outcome of a situation depends upon the relative weight of all the factors at work within it; they want to make the settlement

depend entirely upon the will of the individual. This runs into conflict with their observation that the results of our activities are often at odds with our intentions, desires, and expectations. If this is so, what other underlying forces determine the outcome? The existentialists have no answer but accident. For them, arbitrariness remains the arbiter of all events.

The materialist dialectician takes up where the baffled existentialist leaves off, proceeding from the premise that what can become definite in reality can find clear-cut formulation in thought. No matter how hidden, complicated, and devious the contradictions encountered in reality may be, they can with time and effort be unravelled. The dialectical essence of all processes consists precisely in the unfolding of their internal oppositions, the gradual exposure and greater determination of their polar aspects, until they arrive at their breaking point and ultimate resolution. As the contending forces and tendencies within things are pushed to the extreme, they become more and more sharply outlined and less and less ambiguous. The struggle of opposites is brought to a conclusion and maximum clarification through the victory of one irreconcilable alternative over the other. This is the logical course and final outcome of all evolutionary processes.

Marxists do not regard ambiguity as an impenetrable and unalterable property of things or thoughts but as a provisional state which further development will overcome. Any unsettled situation can give way to greater determination. Reality and our understanding of it need not be forever ambiguous, any more than water must remain fluid under all circumstances.

Order and disorder are relative features of things. The greatest chaos has sources of order within it, behind it and ahead of it. The most crystallised form of order contains elementary traces of irregularity which can in time spread out, upsetting and overturning its symmetry and stability. Moreover, ambiguity can be as much of a challenge and an opportunity as an obstacle. It prods knowledge and practice forward. Science advances and action becomes more effective as humanity succeeds in displacing what is indeterminate and problematic with definite ideas about objectively determined things.

The existentialists make much of the ineradicable ambiguity of history. They emphasise that history does not move in a straight line or a uniform manner from one point to another; indeed some among them question whether humankind has progressed at all. Marxism does not deny that history is full of irregularities, relapses, stagnation, and oddities. Despite its zigzags, however, history has moved onward and upward from one stage to the next, from savagery to civilisation, for ascertainable reasons. It exhibits necessities as well as ironic contingencies, final settlements as well

as unresolved issues. The French feudalists, the colonial Loyalists, the Southern slaveholders, the German Nazis, and the Russian capitalists can attest to that.

Individuals & their environment

For purposes of analysis, reality can be divided into two sectors: one public, the other private. There is the objective material world that exists around us, regardless of what anyone feels, thinks, or knows about it. Against this is the inner domain of personal experience, the world as it appears to each one of us, as we perceive, conceive, and react to it. Although these two dimensions of human existence are never actually disjoined, and although they roughly correspond with each other, they do not coincide in certain essential respects. They can therefore be considered separately and studied on their own account.

Existentialism and Marxism take irreconcilable views on the nature of the relationship between the objective and subjective sides of human life, on the status, the interconnection, and the relative importance of the public and private worlds.

Marxism says that nature is prior to and independent of humanity. Human existence, as a product and part of nature, is necessarily dependent upon it. Existentialism holds that the objective and subjective components of being do not exist apart from each other, and that in fact the subject makes the world what it is.

The contrast between the idealistic subjectivity of the existentialist thinkers and the materialist objectivity of Marxism can be seen in the following assertion of Heidegger in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*: "It is in words and language that things first come into being and are." In accord with the conception that other aspects of reality acquire existence only to the extent that they enter human experience, Heidegger makes not simply the meaning but the very existence of things emanate from our verbal expression of them. To a materialist such human functions as speech and thought reflect the traits of things but do not create them. The external world exists regardless of our relations with it and apart from the uses we make of its elements.

The whole of existentialism revolves around the absolute primacy of the conscious subject over everything objective, whether it be physical or social. The truth and values of existence are to be sought exclusively within the experiences of the individual, in our self-discovery and self-creation of what we authentically are.

Marxism takes the reverse position. It gives existential priority, as any consistent materialism must, to nature over society and to society over any single person within it. Nature, society, and the individual coexist in the closest reciprocal relationship, which is characterised by the action of human beings in changing the world. In the process of subduing objective reality for their own ends they change themselves. The

subjective comes out of the objective, is in constant interaction and unbreakable communion with it, and is ultimately controlled by it.

These opposing conceptions of the object-subject relationship are reflected in the conflict between the two philosophies on the nature of the individual and the individual's connections with the surrounding world. The category of the isolated individual is central in existentialism. The true existence of a person, it asserts, is thwarted by things and other people. These external forces crush the personality and drag it down to their own impersonal and commonplace level.

The individual can attain genuine value only in contest with these external relationships. We must turn inward and explore the recesses of our being in order to arrive at our real selves and real freedom. Only at the bottom of the abyss where the naked spirit grapples with the fearful foreknowledge of death are both the senselessness and the significance of existence revealed to us.

Thus existentialism pictures the individual as essentially divorced from other humans, at loggerheads with an inert and hostile environment, and pitted against a coercive society. This desolation of the individual is the wellspring of inconsolable tragedy. Having cut off the individual from organic unity with the rest of reality, from the regular operation of natural processes and the play of historical forces, existentialism is thereafter unable to fit the subjective reactions and reflections of the personality to the environing conditions of life. Indeed, says Sartre, our attempts to make consciousness coincide with "facticity", the world of things, are a futile business.

By a grim paradox, the solitary human mind is completely sovereign in shaping its real existence. With nothing but its own forces to lean on and its own judgment as a guide, it must confront and solve all the problems of life.

Existentialism is the most thoroughgoing philosophy of individualism in our time. "Be yourself at all costs!" is its first commandment. It champions the spontaneity of the individual menaced by the mass, the class, the state. It seeks to safeguard the dignity, rights, initiatives, even the vagaries of the autonomous personality against any oppressive authority, organised movement, or established institution.

With individual liberty as its watchword and supreme good, existentialism is a creed of nonconformism. "I came to regard it as my task to create difficulties everywhere", wrote Kierkegaard in describing how he turned to an existentialist view of life. The existentialists are averse to routine, externally imposed ideas, or disciplined modes of behaviour, and whatever is uncongenial to the desires of the ego. All submission to projects not freely chosen is evidence of bad faith, says Sartre.

The targets of existentialism's protest are as diversified as the interests and inclinations of its exponents. These have ranged from religious orthodoxies to

philosophical systematising, from capitalist exploitation to Stalinist regimentation, from bourgeois morality to workers' bureaucratism. Kierkegaard set about to disturb the peace of mind of the hypocritical Danish middle class. Nietzsche heralded the superman who was to rise above the herdlike crowd and transcend good and evil. The favoured heroes of Camus and Sartre are rebels and outsiders. Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre analyse writers such as the Marquis de Sade and Jean Genet, whose ideas and lives have outrageously flouted the ordinary canons of moral conduct.

It must be said that the heresies of the existentialists do not always succeed in shedding completely the values of the society they rebel against. Kierkegaard assailed the sluggishness and self-deception of the smug citizens around him only to embrace the Christian God with more passionate intensity. And Sartre, who attacks stuffed shirts and stinkers for their egotism, clings to the concept of the totally free person beholden solely to himself as the pivot of his philosophy and moral theory.

Existentialism proclaims the urge of the individual to develop without hindrance. But its constitutional aversion to the organised action of mass movements determined by historically given circumstances renders it incapable of finding an effective solution of this problem for the bulk of humanity. That is why it is nonconformist rather than revolutionary.

Historical materialism takes an entirely different approach to the relationship between individual and environment. We are essentially social beings; we develop into individuals only in and through society. For Marxists, the isolated individual is an abstraction. All distinctive things about humans, from toolmaking, speech, and thought to the latest triumphs of art and technology, are products of our collective activity over the past million years or so.

Take away from the person all the socially conditioned and historically acquired attributes derived from the culture of the collectivity and little would be left but the biological animal. The specific nature of the individual is determined by the social content of the surrounding world. This shapes not only our relations with other people but our innermost emotions, imagination, and ideas.

Even the special kind of solitude felt by people today is an outgrowth of the social system. One of the major contradictions of capitalism is that it has brought humans into the closest "togetherness" while accentuating conditions that pull them apart. Capitalism socialises the labour process and knits the whole world into a unit while separating people from one another through the divisive interests of private property and competition. Frederick Engels noted this when he described the crowds in the London streets in his first work, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*: "This isolation of the individual, this narrow self-seeking, is the fundamental principle

of our society everywhere … The dissolution of mankind into monads, of which each has a separate *principle*, the world of atoms, is here carried out to its utmost extreme." The "barbarous indifference, hard egotism and nameless misery" which he observed over a century ago still strongly permeate our acquisitive society.

Like the existentialists, the socialist movement has made one of its chief aims and persistent concerns the defence and expansion of individuality — however much this has been violated in practice by bureaucratic powers speaking in the name of socialism. But Marxism differs from existentialism by denying that individualism as a philosophy can provide an adequate method of social change and political action. Since the social structure shapes and dominates the lives of individuals, it has to be transformed by the collective struggle of the working people in order to eliminate the conditions that repress individuality and create an environment suited to the unhampered cultivation of the capacities of each living human being.

Freedom, necessity & morality

According to its supporters, the supreme merit of existentialism is its capacity to explain and safeguard human freedom. It is superior to Marxism, they claim, because it does not subjugate human life to determinism, which robs us of free choice and moral responsibility for our deeds.

The problem of freedom and necessity arises from two apparently contradictory facts of life. Science teaches, and practice confirms, that nature and society have regularities which are expressed in laws. At the same time, people deliberately select between different lines of action. How can universal determinism coexist with freedom of choice?

The existentialists cut this Gordian knot by depriving determinism of any sway over human beings. What is nonhuman may be subject to objective causation but a person cannot be reduced to the status of a thing. To be human is to be totally free, that is to say, completely self-determined by successive acts of will. When external circumstances compel us to be or do anything against our will, we are not behaving like human beings but like automatons. It is only by detaching ourselves from the given situation that we can freely decide the character and course of our lives.

Marxism resolves the antithesis between scientific determinism and human choice in an altogether different manner. Humanity really becomes free by uncovering and understanding the laws of nature, society and thought. Our aims become effective to the extent that verified scientific knowledge enables us to control and change the world around us. The existentialist demand for absolute personal freedom does not correspond to anything real or realisable. People must act under the constraint of

their conditions of life and cannot cast off their causal weight.

Human activity is an unequal synthesis of extrinsic determination and self-determination. People react consciously and vigorously to their environment and take initiatives to alter certain aspects of it. The measure of control exercised by the objective and subjective components of the causal process changes and develops in the course of time according to the growth of our mastery over nature and society. History has proceeded, by and large, toward greater freedom, toward a growth in our ability to decide and direct an increasing number of activities.

The existentialists regard determinism as an inveterate foe of human aims and aspirations. In reality, determinism can display either a hostile or friendly face to us, depending upon the given circumstances. Humans became free in this century to travel through the atmosphere for the first time and even to leave this planet. This was achieved by finding out the principles of aerodynamics and propulsion and then utilising them to construct the instruments to realise the aim of flight. In making aircraft we have succeeded in putting the determinism of the material world to work for us, rather than against us.

The same is true of social determinism. People have been enabled to enlarge their freedom not by ignoring and rejecting the determinants of history but by recognising them and acting in accord with their requirements. The American people acquired and extended their liberties by seeing the need for abolishing British domination and Southern slaveholding when national progress demanded such revolutionary deeds.

Far from being incompatible with freedom, as the existentialist thinks, natural and social necessities are the indispensable foundation of all the freedoms we have.

The existentialists, however, are more concerned about the narrower dilemmas of personal responsibility than with the broader problem of the interaction of freedom and necessity in social and historical evolution. Both existentialism and Marxism agree that our conduct has to be regulated and judged by relative human standards. We are accountable only to ourselves and for ourselves, and have no right to sanctify or justify our decisions by reference to any supernatural source.

What, then, is the basis of morality? Where do our standards of right and wrong come from? The ethics of existentialism is uncompromisingly libertarian. We create both ourselves and our morality through our utterly uncurbed choices. Authentic freedom manifests itself in the causeless selection among alternative possibilities and fulfils itself in the deliberate adoption of one's own set of values.

The Marxist theory of morality does not rest upon an inborn capacity of the individual to make unconditioned and unmotivated choices but upon historical and social considerations. Its position can be summarised as follows: 1. Morality has an

objective basis in the conditions, relations, needs, and development of society. Its rational character is derived from a correspondence with given historical realities and an understanding of specific social necessities. 2. Morality has a variable content and a relative character, depending upon changes, in social circumstances. 3. Under civilisation to date, morality inescapably takes on a class character. 4. There are no absolute standards of moral behaviour and judgment. Human acts are not good or had, praiseworthy or iniquitous, in themselves. All moral codes and conduct must be evaluated by reference to the prevailing conditions and the concrete social needs, class interests, and historical aims they serve.

The rival theories of morality are put to a test in cases which pose conflicting lines of action. The philosophical and literary works of the existentialists concentrate upon such "either-or" situations. To accept God or reject Him. To join one side rather than the other. To turn traitor or remain loyal to one's comrades. To live or die.

Existentialism insists that there cannot be any sufficient and compelling grounds within the situation itself, the individual's connections with it, or the person's own character to warrant choosing one rather than the other of mutually exclusive alternatives. Humans, says Sartre, are the beings through whom nothingness enters the world. This power of negation is most forcefully expressed in our perfect liberty to do what we please in defiance of all external circumstances. The exercise of fully conscious, uninhibited preference distinguishes people from animals and one person from another. "By their choices shall ye know them."

The historical materialists reply that, while we can make choices in situations permitting real alternatives — that is the crux of personal morality — these decisions are not made in a void. Making up one's mind about the possibilities of a confusing or conflicting situation is only a part of the total process of moral action.

Voluntary acts are links in a chain of events beginning with objective circumstances and ending with objective consequences. The given situation, personal character, motivation, decision, action and results form a continuity of phases which are lawfully connected and feed back upon one another. The uniqueness of individual choice does not consist in its self-sufficiency or release from essential relations with other facts, but in contributing its special quality of approval or dissent, collaboration or resistance, to them.

The existentialists deny any causal ties between the psychological act of choice and the circumstances in which it takes place.

They sheer away the moment of personal decision from all that precedes and follows it, from the environing conditions, motivations, and consequences of human action. However, there is no empirical evidence that choice occurs apart from and

unaffected by the totality of concurrent conditions; this is a purely metaphysical assumption.

In fact, the power of choice is far from unlimited. A multitude of social, historical, and biographical factors enter into the process of moral determination. The real opportunities open to the individual are restricted by natural and social history, by the forces operating in a particular situation and the trends of their development. These provide objective criteria which make it possible to ascertain beforehand whether one alternative is preferable to another, or, after the fact, whether one was better than another. Moreover, the individual is predisposed, though not predestined, by previous experiences and existing connections to take one path rather than another. Otherwise human behaviour would be completely unpredictable.

The highest good in the existentialist scale of values is personal sincerity, which is certified by devotion to a freely chosen object of faith. This psychological quality, which is considered the most powerful manifestation of freedom, is the sole principle of moral worth. The feelings of the autonomous individual determine what is right or wrong in any given case.

Marxists judge actions to be good or bad not according to the intentions or emotions of the agents, but by their correspondence with social and class needs and their service to historical aims. They are considered justified or unjustified to the extent that they help or hinder progress toward the goals of socialism. Good deeds must be judged by their consequences. They must actually lead to increasing our command over nature and to diminishing social evils.

The destiny of humanity

The ambivalence of existentialism is most conspicuous in its view of human destiny. It is at the same time a philosophy of the utmost despair and of breathless effort to go beyond it. Existentialism swings back and forth between these extremes. At one end stand the principal characters in *Waiting for Godot*, a classic of the existentialist theatre. They wait and wait but nothing important happens, nothing changes, no one comes. Their expectations continuously disappointed, they are sunk in the futility of an empty existence which must go on without hope or help.

But most writers and thinkers of this school cannot remain in the unrelieved apathy and inertia dramatised by Samuel Beckett. His ending is their point of departure. After looking the worst in the face, they challenge the tragic absurdity of existence. Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between "bad" existentialism, which wallows in pure negativism, and "good" existentialism, which strives to project itself beyond despair. Camus regards the revolt against nihilism as the basis of everything worthwhile.

The mark of freedom, says Sartre, is conscious refusal to submit to any externally imposed condition of life. The authentic person will pass from total negation to self-affirmation in action, from nay-saying to yea-saying. Individuals forge genuine selves by bucking against the "practico-inert" around them and surpassing their given situation through involvement in a characteristic venture, a cause, a future.

The existentialists take many divergent paths out of the original abysmal human condition. The religious, such as Kierkegaard, Gabriel Marcel, Martin Buber, Paul Tillich, try to find a way to God. The unbelievers seek a solution, a transcendence, in this world. This quest has led the most radically inclined among them toward the revolutionary struggle of the working masses. As Julian Symons wittily put it, they would rather be "waiting for Lefty" than "waiting for Godot".

Yet they cannot completely merge themselves with the aims of any movement because of their stand on the insurmountable ambiguity of everything. Existentialism remains fundamentally a creed of frustration in the midst of fulfilment. The most brilliant success turns into failure as coal into ashes. The hazardous leap from what is to what should be inevitably falls short of realisation. For Camus every act of rebellion against oppression is justified in itself but installs a new form of servitude. For Sartre the act of transcendence negates itself and in the very process of materialisation, trickles out and dies. It must be followed by a fresh exertion of creative revolt — which in turn will not reach its goal.

Thus we hunger but are never fully fed. We ask for nourishing bread and receive a stone. The most promising road forward winds up in a blind alley. Life is not only a gamble; it is in the end a cheat. We are swindled by the limitations of time, history, and death, which nullify our fondest hopes. "The sorrows of our proud and angry dust are from eternity and will not fail." But human beings always will.

Sartre has epitomised this pessimism coiled in the heart of existentialism in the famous aphorism from *Being and Nothingness*: "Man is a useless passion." So grim a humanism, in which every venture must turn out to be a lost cause, can stimulate spasmodic expenditures of energy in social struggle. But the expectation that defeat lurks in ambush spreads scepticism and cripples the steadfastness of the inwardly divided individual at every step.

The pessimistic irrationalism of the existentialists clashes head-on with the militant temper of Marxism, which feels sure of the victory of humanity over all obstacles. For the historical materialist, humanity is above all the creative producer that has succeeded through its own titanic efforts in elevating itself from animality to the atomic age — and is just on the threshold of its authentically human career.

This belief in the rationality of social evolution and in the necessity of the socialist

revolution to usher in the next stage of human progress is the theoretical source of the optimism which suffuses scientific socialism. Marxism points to the historical achievements recorded in humanity's rise over the past million years and incorporated in the accumulated knowledge, skills, and acquisitions of world culture as tangible proofs of the worth of human work and as a pledge of the future.

The indomitable struggles for a better life among the downtrodden, the "wretched of the earth", the key role of the industrial workers in modern economy, the successes of the first experiments in nationalised property and planned economy even under extremely adverse conditions, give confidence to Marxists that the most difficult problems of our age are susceptible of solution through the methods of proletarian-peasant revolution and socialist reconstruction.

As in the past, many surprises, setbacks, disappointments, and detours will be encountered *en route*. These are part of the price exacted by the fact that we have to climb and sometimes crawl upward unaided by anything but our own collective efforts. Yet every great social and political revolution has added new stature and power to humankind despite the pains and even disenchantments attending it. The offspring of history have been worth the agonies of birth and the difficulties of their upbringing.

Alienation in modern society

Why do so many people nowadays feel that the major forces governing their lives are inimical and inscrutable and beyond their capacity to control or change? Where does this state of helplessness come from and what can be done to remove it? Their disagreements on the causes and cure of alienation in modern society constitute an impassable dividing line between the two philosophies.

Both existentialism and Marxism recognise that people have become dehumanised by the alienations they suffer in contemporary life. Alienation expresses the fact that the creations of the human mind and hand dominate their creators. The victims of this servitude become stripped of the qualities of self-determination and self-direction which raise them above the animal level.

For existentialism, human alienation has neither beginning nor end. It is not a historical phenomenon but a metaphysical fate. It is a primordial, indestructible feature of human existence, the quintessence of "human nature". The free and conscious human being is irreconcilably estranged from the world into which we have been hurled. Although we can interject meaning, value, usefulness into it, this does not efface its alien and absurd nature.

Hostility is likewise built into the structure of interpersonal relations. The world whose meaning I create differs from that of others. This produces incessant friction

between me and other people, who strive to impose their views on me, nullify my authentic existence, and divert me from my own needs and aims to serve their alien needs.

Finally, individuals are ill at ease with themselves. Our inner being is rendered unhappy by the perpetual tension of conflicting impulses and claims. The goals we set are unrealised or result in something other than we expected or desired.

Since all these sources of alienation are ineradicable, we can do no more than clear-sightedly confront and stoically bear up under this sombre state, trying to cope with it as best we can. All the diverse ways in which the existentialists seek to transcend their fate — religion, artistic creation, good works, liberalism, social revolution — are by their own admission only palliative and superficial. They make life tolerable and meaningful but do not and can not end alienation. Free people are obliged to try to overcome their alienation in ways most suitable to themselves — that is their glory. But their efforts prove unavailing — that is their melancholy destiny.

Alienation plays the same part in the existentialist metaphysics as Adam's fall from grace in Christian theology. It is the equivalent of original sin. Just as Jehovah expelled the erring pair from paradise and condemned their descendants to sin and suffering on earth forever after, so through the fatality of our existence as humans we are eternally and ineluctably withdrawn from others and enclosed within ourselves. There is no release or redemption from such estrangement.

Instead of indicating any exit from the state of alienation, existentialism makes it the permanent foundation of human life, reproducing and justifying it in metaphysical terms.

Marxism gives a materialist and historical analysis of alienation. It is the product of our impotence before the forces of nature and society and our ignorance of the laws of their operation. It diminishes to the extent that our powers over nature and our own social relations, and our scientific knowledge of their processes of development, are amplified.

The idolatries of magic and religion by which people prostrate themselves before supernatural beings of their own imaginative manufacture are the most primitive forms of alienation. But the alienations peculiar to civilisation are based not upon subjection to nature, but upon subjection to others through the exploitation of labour.

This type of alienation originates in a highly developed division of labour and the cleavage of society into antagonistic classes. Bereft of the conditions of production, the masses of direct producers lose control over their lives, their liberties, and their means of development, which are at the mercy of hostile social forces. This is obvious under slavery, which was the first organised system of alienated labour. The alienation of

labour is far more complex and refined under capitalism, where it attains ultimate expression.

The wage workers are subjected to uncontrollable external forces at every step of capitalist economy. Having none of the material prerequisites of production, they must go to work for their owners. Even before physically participating in production, they surrender their labour power to the entrepreneur in return for the payment of the prevailing wage. While at work, the conditions and duration of the job are determined by the capitalist and his foremen. As men and women on the assembly line can testify, workers become degraded into mere physical accessory factors of production. Instead of intelligently exercising their capacities, they are constrained to perform monotonous, repetitious tasks which strain their endurance. The plan, process, and aim of production all confront them as hostile and hurtful powers.

At the end of the industrial process the product does not belong to the workers who made it but to the capitalist who bought their labour power. It goes into the market to be sold. There the masses of commodities and money function like an untameable force which even the biggest groups of capitalists cannot control, as the fluctuations of the business cycle and periodic crises demonstrate.

On top of this, the competitiveness of capitalism pits the members of all classes against one another and generates unbridled egotism and self-seeking. The members of bourgeois society, whatever their status, are immersed in an atmosphere of rivalry rather than communal solidarity.

Thus the alienations within capitalism come from the contradictory relations of its mode of production and the class antagonisms and competitive conditions engendered by them. The divisions rooted in the economic foundations of capitalism branch out into all aspects of social life. They appear in the collisions of class interests and outlooks on a national and international scale, in the opposition of monopolist-dominated governments to the mass of the people, in the struggle of the creative artist against commercialism, in the contrast between metropolitan slums and ghettos and luxury apartments and hotels, in the subordination of science to militarism, and in myriad other ways. Its cruelest and sharpest large-scale expression today in the United States is the deep-going estrangement between the Black people and the whites.

These stigmata mangle human personalities, injure health, stamp out the chance of happiness. They produce many of the mental and emotional disturbances which make up the psychopathology of everyday life in the acquisitive society.

Can the alienations of modern humankind be overcome? The existentialists contend that they cannot. Marxism replies that these characteristics of a barbarous past and exploitative present can be removed by revolutionising outworn social

structures. Now that we have achieved superiority over nature through science and technology, the next great step is to gain supremacy over the blind and anarchic forces in our lives. The sole agency that is strong enough and strategically placed to carry through this task of instituting conscious collective control over economic and political life is the alienated labour embodied in the industrial working class.

The material means for liberating humanity from the causes and consequences of alienation can be brought into existence only through the socialist revolution, which will concentrate economic, political, and cultural power in the hands of the toiling majority. Planned economy along socialist lines on an international scale can lead to such plenty that the circumstances permitting and even necessitating rule over the many by the few will be wiped out forever.

When all the compulsory inequalities in the conditions of life and in access to the means of self-development are done away with, then the manifestations of these material disparities in the estrangements of one section of society from another will die away. The equal and fraternal relations at the base of the future socialist culture will facilitate the formation of integrated personalities no longer at odds with each other or with themselves.

The meaning of life & death

The cleavage between the two outlooks comes to a sharp focus over the meaning of life and death. Humanism has traditionally upheld the supreme value of life on earth against the religious emphasis on death, resurrection, and immortality. For humanists, death was to be countered by making the sole span of existence allotted to mortal creatures as productive and joyous as possible.

Despite their disbelief in divinity, even the secular existentialists invert these values and reinstate the fact of death to the centrality it has had in Christian theology and church practice. Like a medieval meditation upon mortality, Karl Jaspers opines: "Philosophising means learning to die." Camus insists in *The Myth of Sisyphus* that suicide — that is, what answer to give to the question: *Is life worth living?* — is the only philosophical issue.

Heidegger defines life as a being-for-death. "When you stand by the cradle of a newborn child., there is only one statement you can make of him with entire certainty", he says. He must die.

According to existentialism, life acquires its deepest meaning not from its own aims and activities, but only when one awakens to the full implications of one's doom. Most people try to shut out this awful awareness by cowardly evasion. The ordinary citizen becomes immersed in everyday activities and distracting pleasures, the artist in

creative work, the philosopher in spinning cobwebs of thought. These are nothing but diversions and illusions so long as the individual refuses to confront the realisation of eventual annihilation with unflinching and complete consciousness.

Death is the foundation of morality and liberation because it compels each of us to decide whether life is worthwhile and what to do with it. Every act of moral choice is literally a life-and-death matter. All the freely created values of life are stacked up against the overwhelming prospect of death.

Heidegger declares that death is the only thing nobody else can do for me. If we embrace our finitude, our being-for-death, we internalise it and integrate it into the totality of our existence and thus give it meaning. To Sartre, on the other hand, death is a meaningless external fact, a limit that cannot be interiorised in the sum total of our lives. The consciousness of death does not make us human. It merely heightens our individuality by prodding us to decide in defiance of conventional values. "The choice that each of us has made of his life was an authentic choice because it was made face to face with death", he says.

For Heidegger death gives life all meaning; for Sartre it removes all meaning from life. These opposing evaluations show how difficult it is to extract a common position from the existentialists. But, despite the extreme variations in their answers to this problem, the terrifying shock of the recognition of death overshadows their reflections on the meaning and worth of life.

The Marxist approach is more in accord with the humanist mainstream. It is the first law of nature — as well as dialectical materialism — that everything has its day and then must perish. Nothing and no one is immune from this law. The processes of life and death emerged on this planet as the result of new biochemical reactions several billion years ago. Humankind is the highest product of this development.

Is life worth living? And if so, how should the inevitable approach and advent of death be met? Marxism replies to the first question with a ringing affirmative. No matter what the toil, turmoil, and pain of personal and social experience, life is the supreme value for humankind. Not life as it is but life as liberated humanity will make and remake it. The paramount practical-moral aim of socialism is to improve the quality of life without limit. By increasing humanity's power over nature, and decreasing the power of one person over another, a boundless potential of happiness and creative achievement can be released from generation to generation.

The prospect of our own death and the death of others we love and admire often causes anguish and sorrow. Such grief is a normal sentiment among civilised people and is morbid only when it becomes obsessive. The dread of death is not the primal and central fact of human existence, an eternal attendant of the human condition, as

the existential metaphysicians contend. It is a historically conditioned psychological reaction. Many primitive peoples do not experience it.

Excessive preoccupation with death belongs to the psychopathology of civilisation. The malfunctioning and disproportionate wearing out of our bodies, the multiple insecurities, disorders, stresses, sufferings, and alienations of a crisis-ridden, class-divided society make life difficult and burdensome. Paradoxically, for all their hysterical fear of death many people desperately welcome and even hasten the ending of a too hard life.

The socialist movement aspires to transform and eventually eradicate such attitudes and feelings by changing the conditions of life and labour for all. The remodelling of humanity must begin with the transformation of social relations from antagonism into cooperation, with its ever-enlarging possibilities of satisfying human desires. But it will not stop there. The scientists of the future, in teamwork with highly conscious individuals, will plan to reshape the physiological side of life and subordinate that to the control of reason and will. Biology and medicine will ease the processes of birth and postpone the incidence of death. The coming biological-social type of human will manifest a new psychology in which, among other things, people will no longer have reason to dread death. So long as it cannot be indefinitely put off or averted, the end of living will be greeted not as a frightful calamity, but as the ransom of time.

The existentialist displacement of the seat of value from life to death reflects both the ordeals of our age and a loss of vitality among sensitive souls who despair of triumphing over the dark and destructive forces of a sick social order. On the other hand, a lust for life, conscious participation in the collective struggle for a better world, and an indestructible confidence in the real possibilities of unbounded progress characterise the working class humanism projected by Marxism. It is intent on making life what it could and should be — a serene and splendid adventure for all members of the human family.

Can existentialism & Marxism be reconciled?

Are existentialism and Marxism compatible? Are they opposites or affinities? Can they be synthesised into a coherent unit?

Most interpreters and adherents of existentialism, especially the theists among them, do not think the two are reconcilable. They reject Marxism totally because it fails to recognise what to them is the most meaningful aspect of being: the sovereign subjectivity and dignity of the individual. They maintain that materialist theory debases people to mere objects while socialist practice stamps out personal freedom.

Orthodox Marxists no less firmly insist that the contending philosophies have far

too many principled differences to be welded into one.

In between stand a variegated group who agree with Sartre that the two can be fused into a single alloy that will reinforce both. In the United States the noted psychoanalytical sociologist Erich Fromm is the most ardent champion of the thesis that existentialism and Marxism are substantially identical. In *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961), which presents Fromm's concept of Marx, he asserts that Marx's thinking is humanist existentialism. The doctrines appear alike to him since both protest against the alienation in modern society and seek ways to overcome it. "Marx's philosophy", he writes, "constitutes a spiritual existentialism in secular language and because of this spiritual quality is opposed to the materialistic practice and thinly disguised materialistic philosophy of our age. Marx's aim, socialism, based on his theory of man, is essentially prophetic Messianism in the language of the 19th century."

This transmutation of the materialist Marx into a precursor and preacher of existentialism is typical of radical humanists of very different backgrounds and beliefs; Fromm is their chief American representative They locate the "true" Marx in the early *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, which mark transitional stages of his development, instead of in the ripe conclusions of his mature thoughts. They contend that Marx has been misrepresented as a crude dialectical materialist by his orthodox disciples from Engels to Lenin — until the radical humanists revealed that he really was an ethical existentialist.

Fromm's equation of dialectical materialism with existentialism is as ill-founded as his astonishing statement that "Marx's atheism is the most advanced form of rational mysticism". The atheistic Marx is no more a mystic than the Marx of scientific socialism is an existentialist.

Ever since socialism became a powerful movement and Marxism its dominant ideology, attempts have been made to disqualify the dialectical and materialist principles of its method in favour of a different theoretical basis. At various times and places Kantianism, ethical idealism, positivism, pragmatism and even Thomism have been nominated as replacements. None of these proposed supplements and substitutes (or their eclectic combinations) have proved convincing or viable. The Marxist system has such an integrated structure, from its philosophical and logical premises to its political economy and historical outlook, that it cannot easily be chopped up and recombined with other theories.

Sartrean existentialism is the latest and most popular candidate for the office of eking out the real or alleged deficiencies of Marxist thought. It is unlikely to be more successful than its predecessors.

The existentialists aver that the individual's sincerest act and tragic responsibility is

the necessity to choose between anguishing alternatives and take the consequences. Sartre shrinks from doing this in philosophy. The confrontation of existentialism with dialectical materialism is a genuine case of "either-or." But Sartre wants to embrace *both* Kierkegaard and Marx without choosing between them.

"To the marriage of true minds, let us admit no impediment", Shakespeare said. The trouble is that dialectical materialism and existentialism are contrary-minded and oriented along diametrically different lines. They clash at almost every point on the major issues of philosophy, sociology, morality, and politics. It is a pointless task to try to mate these opposites.

This has not — and will not — deter either radical-minded existentialists or socialist eclectics from trying to coalesce the one with the other. The controversy between the philosophers of existence and the dialectical materialists, as well as those who mix the two, has steadily expanded its area over the last two decades. It is still in full swing and far from concluded.

The first commandment of existentialism is, as has been said: "Be yourself!" This is not a bad maxim, and it ought to be applied as strictly to philosophies as to personalities. Let existentialism be what it really is — the ideological end product of liberalism and individualism — and not pretend to be something else. Let Marxism likewise be what it should be: that dialectical materialism which is the scientific expression and practical guide of the world socialist revolution of the working masses.

But let not the two be intermixed and confused. Their mismating can produce only stillborn offspring, whether in philosophy or in politics. ■

Is Nature Dialectical?

On December 7, 1961, 6000 young people gathered in a Paris auditorium to listen to a debate on dialectics by four noted French scholars.[1] Such a meeting would be as unlikely in New York as the outdoor recitals poets give before large crowds in Moscow. Different countries, different customs — and different levels of cultural and intellectual development.

The participants in the symposium represented the two most widely discussed philosophies of our time: existentialism and Marxism. Neither trend of thought has the following in the United States that the first has in Western Europe or the second in communist countries. America's ideological life is provincial and lags far behind the most advanced movements elsewhere.

Jean-Paul Sartre, possibly the most influential living man of letters, and Jean Hyppolite, Sorbonne professor and Hegelian scholar, upheld the existentialist viewpoint. Roger Garaudy of the Political Bureau of the French Communist Party, director of its Centre for Marxist Studies and Research, and author of numerous philosophical works, and Jean-Pierre Vigier, one of France's leading theoretical physicists, spoke for Marxism. Their topic was: "Is the dialectic solely a law of history or is it also a law of nature?"

It is possible to hold one of three main positions on this question. The first is that dialectics is sheer metaphysics, a vestige of theology, an aberration of logic, meaningless verbiage which has no reference to reality and is useless for scientific thought in any field. This is the opinion of almost all scholars, scientists, and those trained by them in the universities of the US and England, where empiricism, positivism, and pragmatism hold sway.

Another is that dialectics is valid in certain domains but not in others. Adherents of partial dialectics usually maintain that its laws apply to mental or social processes but not to nature. For them a dialectic of nature belongs to Hegelian idealism, not to a

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consistent materialism. This position has been put forward by quite a number of Marxists and semi-Marxists. Such is the view taken by the existentialists Sartre and Hyppolite.

The third position is that dialectical materialism deals with the entire universe and its logic holds good for all the constituent sectors of reality which enter into human experience: nature, society, and thought. The laws of dialectics, which have arisen out of the investigation of universal processes of becoming and modes of being, apply to all phenomena. Although each level of being has its own specific laws, these merge with general laws covering all spheres of existence and development, which constitute the content and shape the method of materialist dialectics. This view, held by the creators of scientific socialism and their authentic disciples, was defended in the debate by Garaudy, Vigier, and the chairman, Jean Orcel, professor of mineralogy at the National Museum of Natural History.

An American would consider it strange that the controversy on the question should take place only between two schools of dialecticians, one piecemeal, the other thoroughgoing. Very few people in the United States today are convinced that dialectical logic of any kind is worth serious consideration.

A broad spectrum of attitudes toward Marxism is exhibited in the Soviet Union, the United States, and France. In the US, where capitalism reigns supreme, anything associated with socialism and communism is depreciated, if not tabooed. Marxism is regarded as obsolete, its philosophy false.

In the Soviet Union, where the socialist revolution abolished capitalism decades ago, dialectical materialism is the state philosophy. Under Stalin, in fact, it became scholasticised and ossified, as Vigier admits and Hyppolite testifies. The latter tells how during a recent visit the Soviet Academy of Sciences contrived to have him talk to the students about mechanism instead of existentialism, as he wished. However, all the questions after his lecture related to existentialism. "It seems to me that the youth were strongly interested in Sartre's existential philosophy", he dryly observes.

The intellectual and political climate of France stands between those of the major cold war antagonists. There is lively tension and continual intercourse between Marxist and non-Marxist currents of thought, and especially between the politically oriented atheistic existentialists such as Sartre, and various exponents of Marxism. Sartre and C. Wright Mills reflect the ideological differences between their two countries. Mills held a place among radical intellectuals in the English-speaking world like that of Sartre in Europe. Yet in his last work, *The Marxists*, Mills dismissed the laws of dialectics as something "mysterious, which Marx never explains clearly but which his disciples claim to use". Indeed, even this footnote reference was an afterthought added to his

original manuscript in deference to friendly critics.

Such a blackout of dialectics would be unthinkable for Sartre. He was educated and lives in an environment where both Hegelian and Marxist philosophies are taken seriously, on a continent where scientific socialism has influenced intellectual and public life for almost a century, and in a country where the Communist Party gets a quarter of the vote and has the allegiance of much of the working class. He has developed his own ideas in contact and contest with Marxism, from the time he propounded the philosophy of existence as its rival to the present stage, when he conceives of existentialism as a subordinate ideology within Marxism which aspires to renovate and enrich it.

Mills took from Marxism only those elements that suited his empirical sociology and New Left orientation. He cut the dialectical heart out of the Marxist method of thought and presented what was left as the whole organism. Sartre has a higher esteem for dialectics. But as we shall see, he too accepts only what can be fitted into his Marxised existentialism.

The transcript of this Paris debate between existentialists and Marxists is worth examining at length because many of the chief objections to materialist dialectics were posed and answered in the light of present-day scientific developments.

Sartre's case against a dialectic of nature is quite different from that of an American pragmatist or positivist. His arguments are distinctively existentialist.

He agrees that history and knowledge are dialectical processes because they are created by humanity and humanity is involved in their development. There is a historical materialism but no dialectical materialism. Dialectics is internal to history. The province of dialectics cannot go beyond human practice. It is illegitimate to extend dialectical laws to nonhistorical, nonhuman phenomena. Sartre presents three main reasons for this restriction:

1. Dialectics deals only with concrete totalities which human beings themselves "totalised" through practice. History and society are such. Nature, on the other hand, does not constitute a single integrated whole. Nature may be infinite, even contain an infinity of infinites. But it consists of fragmented totalities which have no inner unity, no universal and necessary interconnection. The disunity of nature forbids any universal dialectic.

2. The contradictions operating in history cannot be the same as antagonisms in nature. Social contradictions are based upon the reciprocal conditioning and organic interpenetration of their contending sides through human mediation. The opposing forces inside a physical-chemical system are not interactive and interrelated in this way. Brute matter, the "practico-inert", is disjointed, dispersed, resistant to dialectical

movement.

3. We can know society and history from the inside, as they really are, because they are the work of humanity, the result of our decision and action. Their dialectical linkages are disclosed through the contradictory interplay of subject and situation. But physical phenomena remain external to us and to other objects. They are opaque to our insight. We cannot penetrate to their real inner nature and grasp their essence.

In sum, nature must be nondialectical because of its disunity, its lack of contradiction, its insurmountable externality and inertia. The only possible dialectical materialism is historical materialism, which views our establishment of relations with the rest of reality from the standpoint of our action upon it.

Orthodox Marxists revert to theology and metaphysics, says Sartre, by extending dialectical laws over nature on purely philosophical or methodological grounds. He does, however, concede that dialectical laws may at some point be found applicable to nature. But only by way of analogy. This presently involves a risky extrapolation, which must await verification through further findings by the natural scientists. And even if they should discover that physical processes resemble the dialectical type and start to use dialectical models in their research, this would provide no insight into the nature of nature, no true knowledge of its essential features.

Thus the existentialist Sartre turns out to be a positivist in his last word on the possible relations of dialectics to the physical world. For him the ideas of this logic can be no more than handy hypotheses in metaphorical dress that may help scientists order and clarify their data but cannot reflect the content of nature.

Sartre is not consistent in his effort to imprison dialectics in the social world and strike it out of prehuman and nonhuman phenomena. His arguments against the dialectics of nature are more fully set forth in his 1960 philosophical work of 755 pages, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, of which the first part was published here in 1963 under the title *Search for a Method*. There he admits that living matter, at least, may develop dialectically. Sartre writes: "The organism engenders the negative as that which disrupts its unity; disassimilation and excretion are still opaque and biological forms of negation in so far as they are a movement oriented toward rejection." This exception opens a breach in his position. Garaudy correctly observes that once Sartre has recognised that negation and totalisation exist in the prehuman state, it will be difficult to stop halfway and keep dialectics confined to biology without extending its jurisdiction to the rest of nature.

In his rejoinder to Sartre, who wishes to see only partial unities or specific totalities in nature, Vigier points out that nature is a whole made up of myriad parts. The reality of the universe we inhabit is both material and dialectical. Its unity is expressed in an

infinite series of levels of existence. Each of the specific realms of being which collectively constitute the material universe is finite, partial; it incorporates only a limited aspect of the whole.

In itself nature is endless and inexhaustible. It forever generates new properties, modes, and fields of existence. There are no limits to what it has been, to what it now is, to what it may become. One of the major errors of mechanical and metaphysical thought about nature, Vigier says, is the notion that it is based upon ultimate elements from which everything else issues and with which the rest of reality can be built up. This conception, which goes back to the Greek atomists, has been carried forward by the natural scientists who believed that molecules, atoms, and then "elementary" particles were the basic building blocks of the entire universe.

Actually science has been developing along different lines, both in regard to the universe at large (the macrocosm) and to the subatomic domain (the microcosm). There is no foreseeable end to astronomical phenomena or our discovery of them, as the recently discovered "black holes" indicate. What appears immobile on one level is really in flux at another level. There are in principle no irreducible or immutable elements in nature. This has just been reconfirmed by the acknowledgment that so-called elementary particles can no longer be considered the ultimate objects of microphysics. New microparticles keep turning up which reveal more profound movements and antagonisms.

The history and practice of the sciences demonstrate that various totalities exist in nature as well as in human history. Vigier points out that living organisms are totalities which can be decomposed into finer totalities such as the giant molecules. Farther afield, the earth, the solar system, our galaxy, and all galactic systems taken together can be approached and analysed as totalities with a disregard for their detailed fluctuations. The distinct totalities which are found all around us in nature are relative, partial, and limited. Yet, far from negating the unity of nature, they constitute and confirm it.

Experiments show that however complicated the biochemistry of life, its processes are fundamentally the same from the algae to the human organism. We ourselves are made of star-stuff. It has been ascertained that the universe has a common chemistry, just as all the diverse forms of life on earth share similar biological laws. The same elements that make up the earth and its inhabitants are present in the most remote stellar regions.

The substantial unity of nature is asserted not only in its structural components, but in its stages and modes of development. Science is rapidly filling in a vast panorama of cosmic advancement. It is uncertain how the observable universe originated, if it did

at all. But it has certainly evolved — from the creation of the elements, the constitution of the stellar galaxies, and other celestial phenomena to the birth of our solar system and the formation of the earth's crust and atmosphere. Then it proceeded to the chemical conditions required for the primary reactions leading to the first forms of life, on through the transformations of organic species, up to the advent of humanity. All this has been climaxed by the birth and forward movement of society over the past million-odd years.

This unified process of development is the real basis for the universality of the dialectic, which maintains that everything is linked together and interactive, in continuous motion and change, and that this change is the outcome of the conflicts of opposing forces within nature as well as everything to be found in it.

To assert that everything is in the last analysis connected with everything else does not nullify the relative autonomy of specific formations and singular things. But the separation of one thing from another, its qualitative distinctions from everything else, breaks down at a certain point in time and in space. So long as the opposing forces are in balance the totality appears stable, harmonious, at rest — and is really so. But this is a transient condition. Sooner or later, alterations in the inner relation of forces, and interactions with other processes in the environment, upset the achieved equilibrium, generate instability, and can eventuate in the disruption and destruction of the most hard-and-fast formations. Dialectics is fundamentally the most consistent way of thinking about the universal interconnections of things in the full range of their development.

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In addition to denying the unity of nature, Sartre attempts to erect impassable barriers between different orders of existence by splitting nature from human history. Is this justified by the facts? There was a profound interruption in the continuity of natural evolution, a qualitative jump, when humankind lifted itself above the other primates by means of the labour process. There are basic differences between nature and society; they have different laws of development. But there is no unbridgeable gap between them.

Just as the inorganic gave rise to the organic, that in turn and in time engendered social life, the distinctive field of human action. But all three sectors of reality remain in the closest communion. The chemical elements (nitrogen, carbon, hydrogen, oxygen) which enter into the total metabolism of organisms through food consumption, inhaling, exhaling, internal utilisation and breakdown, excretion and elimination, return to the atmosphere, earth, and water for reuse. Our economy as well as our physiology

exhibits the unbreakable unity of the diverse levels of being. The farmer furrowing the soil with an animal-drawn plough and seeding it brings together mineral, botanical, zoological, and human forces in the unified process of producing food.

The inanimate, the animate, and the social belong to a single stream of material existence and evolution with endless currents.

Are the oppositions in nature so radically different from contradictions in the life of humanity as Sartre contends? Contradictions on every level of existence have their peculiar characteristics, which must be found out in the course of practical experience and formulated in scientific inquiry. The sociological law that as technology expands, the productive forces of humankind tend to grow beyond and conflict with the relations of production and the property forms in which they have been encased is very different from Isaac Newton's laws of motion.

Does this mean that physical and social processes have no common denominators? Marxism maintains that general laws of being and becoming exist which allow both for the identities and differences, the persistent and the changing, in the real world. They embrace both nature and human life and are capable of expression as laws of logical thought. Included in the inventory of the laws of dialectics are the interpenetration of opposites, the passage of quantity into quality, the negation of the negation, the conflict of form and content, and many others. They are as relevant to nature as to society because they are rooted in the objective world.

Vigier observes that "internal antagonisms (that is to say, the assemblage of forces which necessarily evolve in contrary directions) illustrate the nature of contradiction … The unity of opposites is understood as the unity of elements on one level which engenders the phenomena of a higher level. The transformation of quantity into quality is interpreted as the sudden rupture of equilibrium within a system (for example, the destruction of one of the antagonistic forces), which modifies the equilibrium and gives rise to a qualitatively new phenomenon in the midst of which new contradictions appear."

Vigier cites the advances of modern physics as evidence of the intrinsically contradictory properties of analysed systems, which contain simplicity and complexity, inertia and violent motion at one and the same time. "The material elements considered inert at one level, for example the macroscopic bodies described by classical physics, are revealed upon analysis to be prodigiously complex and mobile as scientific knowledge progresses. On our scale this table can appear to me inert, but we know it is composed of molecules in extremely complex and violent motion. These molecules themselves can be decomposed into mobile atoms when I push analysis much further. Finally, the atoms themselves split into so-called 'elementary particles' which in their

turn disclose equally mobile and complex internal structures."

The motion dealt with in contemporary microphysics is not considered as the simple shift of an inert element from one point to another but rather as a violent oscillating movement which develops at one point to the degree it is destroyed in the immediately preceding position. Each side of this dual process of annihilation and creation reciprocally conditions the other.

The new emerges from the old in nature by way of contradiction, that is to say, by negating the essential properties of the previous form of being and absorbing its reconstituted elements into a higher synthesis. The major leaps from one qualitative state to another take place on the borderlands of evolution where one state of matter passes over into another.

Biochemists are now seeking to ascertain and duplicate the successive steps through which purely chemical reactions produced the first biochemical mechanisms. Although the inorganic is the matrix, the mother of life, life on earth is something radically novel. As a totality it is other and more than a chemical process; it has structures, properties, and powers that go far beyond its predecessor. "It is necessary to seek in the mineral for the origin of the processes and materials of the organic world", says J.D. Bernal, the British physicist, "but life itself represents a capital stage in the evolution of matter: the containment of continual chemical processes in a limited volume."

Formal logic, which is based on abstract, or simple, identity (A equals A), is too one-sided to explain this negation of one state of matter and its transformation into its opposite, in this case the lifeless into the living, because it excludes from its premises real difference and contradiction, which is the extreme development of difference. But the unity of opposites (A equals non-A), which makes contradiction explicit and intelligible, can explain this transition, which actually occurred on earth. The emergence of life from the nonliving in turn substantiates the objective basis in nature of this law of concrete contradiction, a cornerstone of dialectical logic.

According to Sartre, we are barred from knowing the inside of nature because it is not the work of humankind. Are physical-chemical phenomena inaccessible to us because we do not have such direct contact with them as with history? To be sure, remarks Vigier, we have to make and employ experimental devices to delve into the thick of things. But through these instruments we do find out their real properties and inner relations.

How can we be sure that our ideas actually correspond to what nature is "in itself"? This is no new question for philosophy, and Marxism developed a theory of knowledge to answer it. Sartre, like Immanuel Kant, bases his agnosticism upon the supposedly impenetrable character of materiality. Garaudy points out that while relations between

the subject and object, the human and nonhuman, may initially be opaque, they can be rendered more and more transparent by practice and theory.

The proof that we know what things really are comes from useful practice. From solar masses to subatomic particles, we handle the materials and direct the operations of nature for our social purposes.

If we project through action an idea or scientific hypothesis about the material world or any portion of it, we receive a response, either negative or affirmative. The idea either fits the situation or it does not. Both responses enable us to deal with, and eventually to understand, the features and functions of nature. They disclose not only the movement but the structure of reality.

A new hypothesis does not simply destroy the old, leading to null results in the history of thought. The superior hypothesis that replaces the cruder and narrower one contains within itself whatever remains valid and valuable in its outworn and discarded predecessor, as an automatic shear retains the cutting edge of chipped stone and Albert Einstein's relativity theory includes and explains what is true and useful in Newtonian physics. Knowledge progresses and accumulates in this dialectical manner. It is thus possible to deepen our understanding and extend our control. Even if we never get to learn everything about nature, the verified knowledge actually gained through endless investigation enables us to probe ever more deeply into its recesses.

The issue in dispute is whether the structure and movement of nature disclosed by science and experiment is such that only a dialectical method of thought renders the phenomena intelligible and manageable. Sartre evades a definite answer to this question by walling up nature in an unbreachable externality with no windows we can look and reach through. He rejects the Marxist conception that human knowledge reflects objective reality.

Garaudy is obliged to clear up two common misunderstandings about this theory which Sartre plays upon. The term "reflection" does not signify that knowledge is a passive phenomenon which merely duplicates the object, like a mirror image, or mechanically reproduces it, like a stamping machine. The process of conception is more complex and active. Arising out of work and everyday practice, stimulated by the predicaments of life, the human mind invents ideas and hypotheses and tries various means of verifying them. Further, knowledge is not simply derived from sensation — which gives immediate contact with the external world — as the original empiricists taught. It is essentially historical, the product of prolonged social practice and intricate modifications of thought in its adjustments to reality, which remain forever incomplete.

This is true of the dialectics of nature as well. It is not imposed a priori or wilfully

upon nature, as Sartre charges. It represents the verified conclusions, the systematic formulations of practical experience, scientific investigation, and critical thought extending from Heraclitus to Hegel. Like other theoretical acquisitions, it is projected into the future as a guide to further inquiry into concrete reality.

But if Marxism has discarded the passive, oversimplified, and nonevolutionary versions of the thought process held by previous schools of materialism from Epicurus to the 18th-century sensationalists, it asserts with them that conceptual reflection does bring out and define the essential qualities and relations of things. Nature is prior to consciousness. There is an internal bond between what exists and what is known — and even how it is known. The order of ideas, as Benedict Spinoza said, does correspond with the order of things.

Hyppolite makes two charges against the Marxist interpretation of dialectics. On the one hand it aims to make nature historical by importing dialectical laws into it, and on the other it tries to "naturise" history by subjecting it to the same laws as the physical world. He wishes to keep history and nature in totally separate compartments.

This is alien to reality. Nature is through and through historical. Vigier emphasises how, "proceeding from the history of biology and the human sciences, the idea of evolution has step by step invaded the whole of the sciences: after astronomy it is today breaking through into chemistry and physics … This idea of history, of evolution, of analysis in terms of development is for us precisely the profound logical root of the dialectics of nature. It can even be said that in a sense all scientific progress is being achieved along the line of abandoning static descriptions for the sake of dynamic analyses combining the intrinsic properties of the analysed phenomena. For us, science progresses from Cuvier to Darwin, from the static to the dynamic, from formal logic to dialectical logic."

Nature and society form two parts of a single historical process. But they are basically different, contradictory parts. Other living beings have history made for them; we make our own history.

Animals depend upon the available food and other features of their environment for survival; they cannot alter or discard their specialised organs and ways of life to cope with sudden changes. Entire species can perish when their habitats change too rapidly and radically. Humans, on the other hand, are not subjected to any particular environment or mode of adaptation. We can adjust to new conditions, meet changes, and even institute them by inventing new tools and techniques and producing what we need.

Up to now social development has carried over certain traits of natural development because by and large it has proceeded in an unconscious and uncontrolled

manner. The course of society has been determined not by human purposes, but by the unintended results of the operation of the productive forces. But human history has reached the point where it can discard its blind automatism and enter an entirely different type of development. By discovering the laws of social development and collectively acting upon them, we can take control of society and consciously plan its further growth.

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Hyppolite and Sartre accuse Marxism of instituting a new dogmatism by presenting a fixed and finished system of thought about the world. Hyppolite's last words in the debate are: "You risk giving us a sort of dialectics, under the pretext of dialectics of nature, which would be a speculative (i.e., idealistic) thought, in certain respects a theological thought, even though you disclaim such an intention." Sartre contends that Marxist dialectics is a frozen system based upon a limited number of laws, the three mentioned by Engels in *Dialectics of Nature*.

Sartre is right in saying that the laws of logic are not limited. But so does genuine Marxism, even though some doctrinaires of the Stalinist school have sought to limit them. The French philosopher Henri Lefebvre ridiculed one official of the French Communist Party who smugly declared to him: "The house [of dialectical thought] is finished; there is nothing left to do but put up the tapestries."

"There does not exist a closed, finished, definitive list of dialectical laws", says Garaudy. "The presently known laws constitute a provisional balance sheet of our knowledge … Further social practice and scientific experiment will permit us to enrich and extend them." Although the dialectical laws discovered and formulated to date have a definite content and universal scope, they are neither completed nor unchangeable. The number and the character of the laws of logic have changed over the past 2500 years. They will continue to be transformed along with the development of nature, society and knowledge.

Sartre strives to secure an objective basis for dialectics by locating it exclusively within human practice. "If we refuse to see the original dialectical movement in the individual and in his enterprise of producing his life, of objectifying himself, then we shall have to give up dialectic or else make of it the immanent law of history," he writes in *Search for a Method*. This is a very misleading description of dialectical movement even within human history. The dialectical development of society proceeds not from the action and decision of the isolated individual in a concrete situation but from the work of the group, first in the struggle against nature, then in the conflict of classes. Subjective components of the whole — such as individual psychology — which so

preoccupy the existentialists, are integral and subordinate elements of this objective historical process and derive their validity and significance from it.

In the reciprocal relationship whereby human practice transforms and masters the environment, nature retains existential priority, however much this offends the subjectivity of the existentialist philosopher.

The origin of human practice itself requires explanation. The distinctive activities that have separated humanity from the animal condition originated with the using and making of tools and weapons to obtain the means of subsistence. But this new kind of activity, which is at the foundation of society, grew out of natural processes which antedate human practice by billions of years.

In the evolutionary scale, animal activity preceded human practice, which was a qualitatively new offshoot of it. When the first fish developed lungs, came to live on dry land, and converted themselves into amphibians, that was a dialectical change in organic nature. Through the natural mechanisms of the evolution of species, the fish, to use Sartre's language, "objectified himself" into something else.

The dialectics of human history grew out of this dialectics of nature. It originated in the conversion of the early primate into the human, the most meaningful of all the contradictory developments of matter. The elevation of humanity above animality was the greatest rupture in the continuity of nature's evolution. The qualitative disjunction between us and other species is so deepgoing that Sartre takes it as the ground for excluding dialectics from nature.

He is here baffled by a genuine contradiction. Human beings are both creatures of nature and a departure from it. When the human is low-rated as nothing but a high-grade animal, different in degree but not in kind from other living beings, the essential and distinctive nature of humanity is obliterated. Human life, which stems from the production of the means of subsistence by tools and weapons, is something radically new compared with the animal foraging for food. The labour process is the beginning of society and provides the platform for the dialectical movement of history. Fundamental changes in the organisation of this labour process are the decisive steps in the further advancement of humanity.

But the processes which humanised our primate ancestors were both a prolongation of brute nature and a level above and beyond it. Just as there is both continuity and discontinuity in the transition from ape to human, so there is comparable continuity and discontinuity between the dialectics of nature and that of history. The dialectics of nature has different forms and proceeds according to different laws than the dialectics of social evolution. It is the prehistory of human dialectics, the precondition for it. The one passes over into the other as humanity has created its own characteristics in

distinction from the rest of nature.

The evolution of human life through social practice is only the culminating chapter in the evolution of matter. The dialectic of human history, which for Sartre is the be-all and end-all of dialectics, is the latest episode in the universal dialectic.

Sartre's subjectivist and anthropocentric conception of dialectical movement is belied by the latest finding of modem science. Scientists now say that billions of planets are suitable for the creation of life and may very likely be populated by intelligent organisms of some sort. There are 100 million eligible planets in our galaxy alone! Humanity is only one manifestation of life, inhabiting a small planet of a solar system on the edge of an ordinary galaxy in an explorable universe of billions of galaxies containing other — and in some cases higher — specimens of life.

This remarkable addition to our knowledge does not detract from the value and significance of life on earth for us. After all, the improvement of our own scientific practice and theory has led us to this insight. But it should serve to put our existence into proper cosmic proportion and perspective. Dialectics can no more be restricted to the people on our planet than life and intelligence can be.

The existentialist resents and rejects the rationalism and objectivity of science. It supposedly leads us away from real being, which is to be perpetually sought, though never reached, through the ever-renewed, ever-baffled effort of the individual consciousness to go beyond our human condition. The terrible destiny of the human race is like "the desire of the moth for the star/ the night for the morrow/ the devotion to something afar/ from the sphere of our sorrow".

So the exasperated existentialist Sartre flings as his trump card against the dialectics of nature the current crisis in science. "There has never been, I believe, as grave a crisis as the present one in science", he cries to Vigier. "So when you come to talk to us about your completed, formed, solid science and want to dissolve us in it, you'll understand our reserve."

Vigier calmly replies: "Science progresses by means of crises in the same manner as history; that's what we call progress. Crises are the very foundation of progress." And he concludes: "The very practice of science, its progress, the very manner in which it is today passing from a static to a dynamic analysis of the world, that is precisely what is progressively elaborating the dialectic of nature under our very eyes … The dialectic of nature is very simply the effort of the philosophy of our time … of the most encyclopedic philosophy, that is, Marxism to apprehend the world and change it."

This ringing affirmation will appear bizarre to Anglo-American scientists who may respect Vigier for his work as a physicist. They summarily disqualify dialectical logic on the ground that, whatever its philosophical or political interest, it has no value

in promoting any endeavour in natural science. If the method is valid, the antidialecticians say, then purposeful application by its proponents should prove capable of producing important new theories and practical results in other fields than the social. Marxists are challenged to cite instances where the dialectical method has actually led to new discoveries and not simply demonstrated after the fact that specific scientific findings conform to the generalisations of dialectical logic.

The most splendid contribution of this kind in recent decades has been Oparin's theories on the origin of life, which are widely accepted and have stimulated fruitful work on the problems of biogenesis and genetics. The Soviet scientist's theory is based on the hypothesis that the random formation and interaction of increasingly complex molecules gave rise to the simplest forms of living matter, which then began to reproduce at the expense of the surrounding organic material.

Oparin consciously employed such principles of materialist dialectics as the transformation of quantity into quality, the interruption of continuity (evolution by leaps), and the conversion of chance fluctuations into regular processes and definite properties of matter, to initiate an effective new line of approach to one of the central problems of science: How did inanimate nature generate life on earth? Such cases would undoubtedly multiply if more practicing scientists were better informed about the Marxist method of thought.

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The crisis of method within science is only one aspect of the more general crisis of modern civilisation. This has become most excruciating in the deadly consequences of physical science under capitalist auspices. The dialectics of nature exhibited in the fission and fusion of atoms has merged with the dialectics of history in the most monstrous and momentous of all contradictions facing humanity: the threat of self-destruction by nuclear war.

Why have the immense strides in physical knowledge and technology designed to serve humankind become perverted into an intolerable menace to our survival? The H-bomb exemplifies the sociological law that the fast-expanding forces of production have outgrown capitalist relations and are pounding against them for liberation. Used for good or evil, nuclear energy, the greatest source of power at our command, is proving incompatible with private ownership of the economy and capitalist control over the government.

The imperative political conclusion is that the representatives of the money power in the United States must be prevented from pressing the button which can doom us all, as was nearly done in the 1962 missile crisis over Cuba. Capitalism is the last form

of socioeconomic organisation dominated by laws which operate in an ungovernable way, like laws of nature. The aim of scientific socialism, the task of the proletarian world revolution, is to subdue all the anarchic forces tied up with capitalism which generate insecurity and havoc in our society. The blind drives of class society have pushed humanity to the brink of extinction. Conscious understanding and application of the dialectical laws of evolution — and revolution — can help save us.

Only through public ownership and operation of the economy and democratic direction of state policy can the working people introduce scientific enlightenment into the material foundations of life, overthrow the last entrenchment of automatism in social evolution, and clear the way for the rule of reason in all human affairs.

A comment & a response

I have just read your article, "Is Nature Dialectical?" in the Summer 1964 issue of the *International Socialist Review*, and I was quite impressed by it.

Although I must plead guilty to a rather superficial knowledge of Marxism, I am very interested in Hegel's work. During my study of Hegel, I have come to the conclusion that the question of the philosophy of nature is a crucial one. In my opinion, Hegel's philosophy falls apart into a dualism of mind and matter instead of being the synthesis he desired just because of the failure of his philosophy of nature.

This failure is not, I submit, a failure of the dialectical method, but the result of the lack of sufficient scientific knowledge at Hegel's time plus Hegel's insistence on bending the inadequate knowledge he did have into his philosophic system. It is the latter fault that makes his philosophy of nature appear downright silly today; but it is only today that we are beginning to attain the scientific knowledge that makes a dialectical view of the facts the only reasonable one.

This part of Hegel's philosophy has been largely neglected, but I consider it vital to a serious consideration of his thought today. Therefore, your article on the dialectics of nature was a very welcome piece of writing to me. On the whole, I agree with your position — the laws of dialectics apply to nature as well as humanity.

The scientific knowledge available now can only be understood thoroughly by the use of dialectics. This appears most obviously in the realm of evolution and biology in general, but the interrelationship of all aspects of our world means that it is applicable to the other sciences as well.

The existentialist position would create a complete alienation between man and the world, and would destroy the objectivity of our knowledge and thus our ability to act. Sartre's position, as described in your article — that humans can never attain to the "reality" of things, that our knowledge and the laws of our (dialectical) logic apply only

to humanity and society, etc. — sounds like that of a resuscitated Kant.

It can only lead to a divided world-view, a denial of the possibility of true knowledge and, ultimately, to excesses of subjectivity rather than creative activity. The existentialists may begin their philosophic inquiry from the standpoint of the individual, but that does not mean that they can stop there without losing sight of the essential thing — that we are in and of the world.

The points made by Vigier and Garaudy were, I felt, an excellent rebuttal to Sartre and Hyppolite. There is one point in your article, however, with which I would take some exception. That is when you argue against the antidialecticians by pointing out the advances made in science, especially by Oparin, through the use of dialectical method. Dialectical logic may help the scientist reach some useful hypotheses for later investigation, but this is not the essential point here.

It seems to me that the method or means by which scientific discoveries are made is secondary in this argument. What is really vital is the fact that only a dialectical view of nature can provide an adequate framework in which these new discoveries can be seen in their total relationship. That is, how one gets to the discovery is not so important as the realisation that this new "fact" can only be thoroughly explained and related to the rest of our knowledge through a dialectical viewpoint.

There is one other point that seems appropriate to this discussion: I read recently that Roger Garaudy was to write an introduction to a Russian translation of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's *Phenomenon of Man*. Now Teilhard certainly is not a dialectical materialist in any sense of the word. However, beneath the theological portion of his thought, one finds a view of evolution that is certainly dialectical — in a Hegelian, if not a Marxist, sense. And Teilhard's work seems to have been a little too "materialistic" for the Roman Catholic church.

Teilhard's work in itself deserves study, but simply in connection with the question of the dialectics of nature, it seems to me that it may be a sign that we are approaching a higher synthesis of thought. The static conceptions of "idealism" and "materialism" may give way to a newer, more adequate realisation of their interdependence throughout the whole sphere of nature. That can only be achieved if we recognise the objective character of dialectics — that it applies to nature as well as to history. The perpetuation of alienation between "mind" and "matter", humanity and the world, nature and history, can serve no good purpose, but only leads to fragmentation and confusion in philosophy and action.

Dialectics by its nature has to be an "open" system which not only allows for the addition of new knowledge but also admits our freedom and ability to shape history. The recognition of nature as dialectical is the only way to a whole world-view that

includes humanity in the world while recognising our unique position and frees us to control our own future. Your article is an excellent statement of the issues and their importance, and I hope it will precipitate in this country a greater appreciation of the problem and wide discussion of it.

Yvonne Groseil

Here are some comments on the main questions of theoretical interest raised by this friendly comment.

1. Would knowledge of the method of the materialist dialectic, which is based on the most general laws of being and becoming, assist physical scientists in their investigations of nature?

Up to now almost all scientists have carried on their work without conscious understanding of the dialectical laws of universal development, just as most people speak very well without knowing the history or grammar of their language, breathe without awareness of the physiological processes of respiration, and acquire the necessities of life without comprehending the principles of political economy.

Western philosophers and scientists almost unanimously believe that the dialectical view of nature is false, irrelevant, and even positively harmful in the theory and practice of science. This prejudice, rooted in our predominantly empirical and positivist intellectual traditions, has been reinforced by the arbitrary and ignorant interference of the Stalinist bureaucrats with scientific theory, along with their narrowly schematic, distorted, and dogmatic interpretation of Marxist method.

This correspondent has a more favourable attitude toward the dialectical conception of nature. But she suggests that it may be far less important in facilitating progress in physical science than it is for explaining and correlating its discoveries after they have been made.

Such a one-sided emphasis runs the risk of lapsing into the very Kantian dualism which she correctly criticises in the case of the existentialists. What are here involved are the organic connections between the unity of reality, the sum total of our knowledge, and the scientific inquiry which shuttles from one to the other. If the dialectical method can be useful in clarifying the relationships of the knowledge of nature once it has been acquired, why cannot it be equally valuable in helping scientists to arrive at verified results? After all, the dialectical characteristics which are disclosed in the body of known facts must already have existed and been effective in the objective realities from which they have been derived.

If scientists should approach the problems for which they seek solutions in their particular fields with an informed understanding of the fundamental traits of development formulated in the laws of dialectical logic, why couldn't these serve as a

general methodological guide in their concrete inquiries?

In fact, the most creative scientists have assumed the truth of this or that rule of dialectical logic in conducting their work, although they have done so in a piecemeal, haphazard, semiconscious manner. Without referring to past examples, let's take the many non-Marxist scientists around the world who are cooperating with Oparin in studying the specific steps by which the most elementary processes and mechanisms of life have emerged from inanimate matter. Unlike him, they pay no heed to the fact that the transition of the lifeless into the living exemplifies at least two laws of dialectical logic.

One is the unity of opposites, which states that A equals non-A; the other is the transformation of quantity into quality. That is to say, a sufficient aggregate of chemical reactions of a special type gave rise to new properties appropriate to a new and higher state of material existence on this planet, the biochemical level, of which humans are the most complex and advanced embodiment.

Just as Teilhard de Chardin's religious views did not prevent him from participating in the discovery of Peking Man in 1929 and thus adding to our knowledge of human origins, so practicing physicists, chemists, and biologists can and do promote their sciences without any clear notions of the logic underlying their investigations, or even with erroneous ideas of the world. But would not the work of individual scientists benefit — as much as science as a whole — if they could rid their minds of errors and inconsistencies which run counter to a scientific outlook, and thus bring their general ideas about the universe and their logical theory into closer accord with their experimental practice and the requirements of science itself?

That is why Marxists contend that a comprehensive grasp of the logic of dialectical materialism would not only clarify what science has already achieved but enable contemporary scientists to promote and improve their work. Science is still in its infancy and is only now being applied on a grand scale. There are more scientists in the world today than in all previous history. This sudden and sharp jump in the number of scientists and the facilities at their disposal demands a corresponding expansion in their understanding of the logic of evolution, which so far has been best provided by the school of dialectical materialism.

2. The works of Father Teilhard de Chardin can throw light on this matter, although not entirely in the way intended by our correspondent. While Chardin is an inconsistent dialectician, he is not at all a materialist in his philosophy and procedure. One of the world's most eminent biologists, George Gaylord Simpson, who was a friend of Chardin's and has read both his published and unpublished manuscripts, concurs with this judgment in his book *This View of Life*. There, in a chapter entitled

"Evolutionary Theology: the New Mysticism", Simpson states that Chardin's ideas are mystical and nonscientific in two major respects. First, he divides all energy into two distinct kinds which cannot be verified: a "tangential" material energy and a "radial" spiritual energy. Second, he advocates orthogenesis as the principal mechanism of evolution. Unlike natural selection, which is based upon random and multidirectional trends of evolution, orthogenesis holds that evolution proceeds in a unidirectional, predetermined, and even purposive manner.

Simpson severely censures Chardin for his spiritualistic "doubletalk", which really has nothing to do with science. He writes that "Teilhard was *primarily* a Christian mystic and only secondarily a scientist".

Roger Garaudy likewise deals with Chardin in his book *Perspectives of Man*. Ironically, this foremost French communist philosopher is far more conciliatory toward the views of the Jesuit father than is the American biologist Simpson. Garaudy's book undertakes a critical analysis of the main currents of contemporary French thought: existentialism, Catholicism, and Marxism. He claims that all three are engaged in a common effort to grasp "man in his totality", and he seeks to emphasise their "possible convergences". He concludes that radical existentialists, liberal Catholics, and communists can cooperate "not as adversaries but as explorers in a common venture" which proceeds by different paths toward the same goal.

This theoretical position is the reverse of that taken by Garaudy in the days of Stalin-Zhdanov. It is motivated by the desire for a philosophical rapprochement among these incompatible schools of thought to accompany the CP's quest for a political alliance of all "democratic, progressive, peace-loving" forces as prescribed by the policy of "peaceful coexistence".

Those unorthodox features of Chardin's thought, which scandalise his superiors in the Jesuit order and the church but attract liberal Catholics, lend themselves to this purpose. It is true, as Garaudy points out, that Chardin recognised certain dialectical characteristics in the process of evolution, such as the universal interconnection and reciprocal action of all things, the transformation of quantity into quality in connection with biogenesis (though not in the transition from biological to social life), and the transmutation of matter in an ascending series of higher forms.

But the "finalism" and "vitalism" which permeate his thought — based on the supposition that evolution heads in only one direction, toward greater "centro-complexity", toward the Omega point where humanity will merge with God — are irreconcilable not only with dialectical materialism but, as Simpson insists, with any acceptable scientific approach to universal evolution.

3. Somewhat in the spirit of Chardin, Yvonne Groseil intimates that "the static

conceptions of 'idealism' and 'materialism' may give way to a newer, more adequate realisation of their interdependence throughout the whole sphere of nature." A Marxist cannot agree with this for numerous reasons.

First, there is nothing "static" about a consistently dialectical and materialist view of nature, which is based upon the proposition that everything is in flux because of the opposing forces at work within it and in the universe. Materialist dialectics is dynamic, mobile, evolutionary through and through.

Second, the valid and valuable contributions made to the store of human knowledge by the great idealists of the past (like dialectical logic itself) have been — or ought to be — incorporated into the structure of dialectical materialism without surrendering or compromising its fundamental positions: that reality consists of matter in motion, and that social life and intellectuality are the highest manifestations of the development of matter.

Idealism, on the other hand, makes spiritual, supernatural, ideological, or personal forces the essence of reality. Such a fundamentally false philosophy has to be rejected in toto.

Nor can these two opposing conceptions of the world and its evolution be amalgamated into some superior synthesis eclectically combining the "best features of both", as Sartre tries to do with his neo-Marxist existentialism and Father de Chardin in his blend of religious mysticism and evolutionism.

Modern thought and science can be most effectively advanced through a firm repudiation of all religious, mystical, and idealistic notions and the conscious adoption, application, and development of dialectical materialism. Working in equal partnership, Marxist logic and the sciences can enable us to penetrate more surely and deeply into the nature of the world we live in.

* * *

After finishing this reply, I chanced to read "The Emergence of Evolutionary Novelties" by Ernst Mayr, Agassiz Professor of Zoology at Harvard, in *The Evolution of Life*. It deals with the key problem of explaining the origin of entirely new biological phenomena on the basis of random variations.

Mayr points out that "the exact definition of an 'evolutionary novelty' faces the same insuperable difficulty as the definition of the species. As long as we believe in gradual evolution, we must be prepared to encounter mediate evolutionary stages. Equivalent to the cases in which it is impossible to decide whether a population is not yet a species or already a species, will be cases of doubt as to whether a population is already or not yet an evolutionary novelty. The study of this difficult transition from

the quantitative to the qualitative is precisely one of the objects of this paper."

Mayr finds that there are three main kinds of evolutionary novelties: cellular biochemical innovations (the uric acid and fat metabolism of the cleidoic egg of the terrestrial vertebrates); new structures (eyes, wings, stings); and new habits or behaviour patterns (the shift from water to land or from the earth to air).

The saltationists and mutationists of various schools argued against the natural selectionists that new structures could only have come into existence suddenly and all ready for advantageous use, whereas Charles Darwin held that they would have to be formed by numerous, successive, and slight modifications of preexisting organs. "The problem of the emergence of evolutionary novelties", writes Mayr, "then consists in having to explain how a sufficient number of small gene mutations can be accumulated until the new structure has become sufficiently large to have selective value." He calls this the "threshold problem".

His paper undertakes to demonstrate the ways in which different organisms have actually effected the changeover from one structure to another in the evolutionary process. Mayr's treatment is highly pertinent to our own discussion of logical method in science because it indicates how a biologist concerned with the fundamental problem of evolution has been impelled to invoke the dialectical law of the transformation of quantity into quality in order to explain the generation of novelty in living beings.

Indeed, how would it be possible to comprehend how the mere piling up of quantitative variations could give rise to something decisively different from its antecedents unless this law was operative?

It may be objected that Mayr has not used this law to discover anything new but only to clarify how new biological phenomena come into existence. But, as John Dalton's atomic theory of the chemical elements, Darwin's theory of evolution, and Max Planck's quantum theory testify, the discovery of the general laws at work, the basic features and essential relations in any field of reality, is the highest expression of scientific activity. A correct and comprehensive conception of the production of novelty in organic evolution is more important for the advancement and reinforcement of biological science than the discovery of some new aspect of functional adaptation to a habitat by a particular group of fauna.

Mayr is one of the most eminent of contemporary American biologists. It can be assumed that he is not a Marxist or an adherent of dialectical materialism. He has resorted to one of the major laws of dialectics empirically, without a full awareness of the type of logical thinking he was applying, just as another naturalist of lesser stature might explore a novel type of adaptation of a group of organisms without concerning himself about a general explanation of evolutionary novelty as Mayr had done.

Mayr's acknowledgment of the indispensability of this law of dialectics in solving the problem of the emergence of evolutionary novelties provides involuntary and forceful testimony to its value for the natural scientist.■

Trotsky's Views on Dialectical Materialism

January 10, 1937 — the day after Leon Trotsky and his wife, Natalia Sedova, had landed in Mexico. His party was on the troop-guarded private train sent by the minister of communications to ensure their safe conduct from Tampico to Mexico City. That sunny morning Max Shachtman and I sat with Trotsky in one of the compartments, bringing the exile up to date on what had happened during his enforced voyage from Norway.

Our conversation was animated; there was so much to tell, especially about developments around the Moscow trials. (This was in the interval between the first and second of Stalin's stage-managed judicial frame-ups.) At one point Trotsky asked about the philosopher John Dewey, who had joined the American committee set up to obtain asylum for him and hear his case.

From there our discussion glided into the subject of philosophy, in which, he was informed, I had a special interest. We talked about the best ways of studying dialectical materialism, about Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, and about the theoretical backwardness of American radicalism. Trotsky brought forward the name of Max Eastman, who in various works had polemicised against dialectics as a worthless idealist hangover from the Hegelian heritage of Marxism.

He became tense, agitated. "Upon going back to the States", he urged, "you comrades must at once take up the struggle against Eastman's distortion and repudiation of dialectical materialism. There is nothing more important than this. Pragmatism, empiricism, is the greatest curse of American thought. You must inoculate younger comrades against its infection."

I was somewhat surprised at the vehemence of his argumentation on this matter at such a moment. As the principal defendant in absentia in the Moscow trials, and

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because of the dramatic circumstances of his voyage in exile, Trotsky then stood in the centre of international attention. He was fighting for his reputation, liberty, and life against the powerful government of Stalin, bent on his defamation and death. After having been imprisoned and gagged for months by the Norwegian authorities, he had been kept incommunicado for weeks aboard their tanker.

Yet on the first day after reunion with his cothinkers, he spent more than an hour explaining how important it was for a Marxist movement to have a correct philosophical method and to defend dialectical materialism against its opponents!

He proved how serious he was about this question three years later by the manner of his intervention in the struggle which convulsed the Socialist Workers Party at the beginning of the Second World War.[1] By this time Shachtman had switched philosophical and political fronts. He was aligned directly with James Burnham and indirectly with Eastman and others against Trotsky, breaking away from the traditional positions of Marxism and the Fourth International on issues extending from the role of philosophy to the class nature of the Soviet Union and its defence against imperialist attack.

The Burnham-Shachtman opposition sought to separate philosophy from politics in general, and the principled politics of the revolutionary working class movement from Marxist theory in particular. In the spirit of pragmatism, Burnham demanded that the issues in dispute be confined to "concrete questions". "There is no sense *at all*", he declared in "Science and Style", "in which dialectics (even if dialectics were not, as it is, scientifically meaningless) is fundamental in politics, none at all."[2]

In "An Open Letter to Comrade Burnham" Trotsky had pointed out that the experience of the labour movement demonstrated how false and unscientific it was to divorce politics from Marxist sociology and the dialectical method.

> You seem to consider apparently that by refusing to discuss dialectic materialism and the class nature of the Soviet state and by sticking to "concrete" questions you are acting the part of a realistic politician. This self-deception is a result of your inadequate acquaintance with the history of the past 50 years of factional struggles in the labour movement. In every principled conflict, without a single exception, the Marxists sought to face the party squarely with the fundamental problems of doctrine and program, considering that only under this condition could the "concrete" questions find their proper place and proportion.[3]

On the other hand, opportunists and revisionists of every shade avoided discussion of principles and counterposed superficial and misleading episodic appraisals of events to the revolutionary class analysis of the scientific socialists. Trotsky cited examples from the history of the German social-democracy and from the disputes of the Russian

Marxists with the "Economists", the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks. The Narodnik terrorists, bomb in hand, used to argue: "*Iskra* [Lenin's paper] wants to found a school of dialectic materialism while we want to overthrow tsarist autocracy … It is historical experience", Trotsky observed with characteristic irony, "that the greatest revolution in all history was not led by the party which started out with bombs but by the party which started out with dialectic materialism."[4]

Trotsky attached such great importance to the generalised theory incorporated in Marxist philosophy because of its utility in political practice. "The question of a correct philosophical doctrine, that is, a correct method of thought, is of decisive significance to a revolutionary party just as a good machine shop is of decisive significance to production", he wrote.[5] Many of the now indispensable tools of thought for investigating and analysing reality were fabricated by the great philosophers before entering into common use. In dialectical materialism, he asserted, Marx and Engels forged the theoretical tools and weapons required by the workers in their struggle to get rid of the old order and build a new one.

* * *

Trotsky never claimed originality for his philosophical views. He was an orthodox Marxist from his conversion to its doctrines in 1898 to his death in 1940. However, he did enrich and extend the teachings of the masters by his far-ranging applications of their method to the complex problems presented by the transition of humanity from capitalism to socialism. His insight and foresight in this field equalled that of any other disciple, Lenin included.

In his four decades of writing he touched upon almost all the principal aspects of materialism, from its insistence upon the primordial reality of nature to its explanation of the supreme products of human thought and artistic imagination. The basis of all life, of all human action and thought, and the object of knowledge, was the being and becoming of the independently existing material world. This universal evolutionary process of material nature was dialectical in character. It proceeded through the conflict of antagonistic forces, which at certain points in the slow accumulation of changes exploded the old formations, bringing about a catastrophic upset, a revolution.

> We call our dialectic, materialist [he explained] since its roots are neither in heaven nor in the depths of our "free will", but in objective reality, in nature. Consciousness grew out of the unconscious, psychology out of physiology, the organic world out of the inorganic, the solar system out of nebulae. On all the rungs of this ladder of development, the quantitative changes were transformed into qualitative. Our thought, including dialectical thought, is only one of the forms of the expression of changing matter.

> There is place within this system for neither God, nor Devil, nor immortal soul, nor eternal norms of laws and morals. The dialectic of thinking, having grown out of the dialectic of nature, possesses consequently a thoroughly materialist character.[6]

To clarify the operation of dialectical laws in nature he cited two examples from 19th-century science — one from biology, the other from chemistry. "Darwinism, which explained the evolution of species through quantitative transformations passing into qualitative, was the highest triumph of the dialectic in the whole field of organic matter. Another great triumph was the discovery of the table of atomic weights of chemical elements and further the transformation of one element into another."[7]

Materialism provided the only solid theoretical foundation for progress in the sciences, even though many natural scientists might be unaware of this truth or even deny it.

> It is the task of science and technology [Trotsky said in a 1926 speech] to make matter subject to man, together with space and time, which are inseparable from matter. True, there are certain idealist books — not of a clerical character, but philosophical ones — wherein you can read that time and space are categories of our minds, that they result from the requirements of our thinking, and that nothing actually corresponds to them in reality. But it is difficult to agree with this view. If any idealist philosopher, instead of arriving in time to catch the 9pm train, should turn up two minutes late, he would see the tail of the departing train and would be convinced by his own eyes that time and space are inseparable from material reality. The task is to diminish this space, to overcome it, to economise time, to prolong human life, to register past time, to raise life to a higher level and enrich it. This is the reason for the struggle with space and time, at the basis of which lies the struggle to subject matter to man — matter, which constitutes the foundation not only of everything that really exists, but also of all imagination …
>
> Every science is an accumulation of knowledge, based on experience relating to matter, to its properties; an accumulation of generalised understanding of how to subject this matter to the interests and needs of man.[8]

Trotsky made many such penetrating observations on the materialist approach to the problems of the natural sciences. But his principal contributions to scientific knowledge came from his studies of contemporary society. These were all illuminated and directed by the Marxist method.

Trotsky became engrossed in the problems connected with the materialist conception of history at the early age of 18, when he was already involved in the illegal

workers' movement of South Russia. From that time on these two sides of his activity — the theoretical investigation of social reality and the practical urge to transform it with the masses along revolutionary lines — went hand in hand.

Trotsky tells in *My Life* how he at first resisted the unified outlook of historical materialism. He adopted in its stead the theory of "the multiplicity of historical factors", which even today is the most widely accepted theory in social science. (Compare the school of Max Weber in Europe or C. Wright Mills in the United States.) His reading of two essays by the Italian Hegelian-Marxist Antonio Labriola convinced him of the correctness of the views of the historical materialists. They conceived of the various aspects of social activity as an integrated whole, historically evolving in accord with the development of the productive forces and interacting with one another in a living process where the material conditions of life were ultimately decisive. The eclectics of the liberal school, on the other hand, split the diverse aspects of social life into many independent factors, endowed these with superhistorical character, and then "superstitiously interpreted their own activity as the result of the interaction of these independent forces".

During his first prison sentence Trotsky wrote a study of Freemasonry, which was later lost, as an exercise in the materialist conception of history. "In the writings of Marx, Engels, Plekhanov and Mehring, I later found confirmation for what in prison seemed to me only a guess needing verification and theoretical justification. I did not absorb historical materialism at once, dogmatically. The dialectic method revealed itself to me for the first time not as abstract definitions but as a living spring which I had found in the historical process as I tried to understand it."[9]

Trotsky employed the newly acquired method to uncover the "living springs" of the class struggle in modern society and, first of all, in tsarist Russia at the turn of the 20th century, where a revolution was being prepared. The development of his celebrated theory of the permanent revolution was the first result of his researches. This was one of the outstanding triumphs of dialectical analysis applied to the social tendencies and political prospects of prerevolutionary Russia and, in its further elaboration, to the problems confronting backward countries in the imperialist epoch.

Marxists are often accused by their critics of dogmatism, of obsession with abstract schemes of historical development. Some would-be Marxists have been guilty of this fault. Not so Trotsky. He was a consistent practitioner of historical materialism, but within those principled boundaries he was the least formalistic and the most flexible of thinkers.

The materialist dialectic is based upon the existence of conflicting movements, forces, and relations in history, whose contradictions as they develop expose the

shortcomings of all fixed formulas. As Trotsky wrote in 1906 in *Results and Prospects*: "Marxism is above all a method of analysis — not analysis of texts, but analysis of social relations."[10]

Trotsky undertook to apply the Marxist method in this materialist manner to the specific conditions of tsarist Russia. He pointed out that the social structure of Russia at the beginning of the 20th century was a peculiar blend of extremely backward and advanced features. The predominant political and religious backwardness embodied in the Asiatic despotism of the all-powerful monarchy and its servile state church was rooted in the historical and economic backwardness of the country. In Russia there had been no Reformation, no successful bourgeois revolutions, no strong third estate (bourgeoisie) as in Western Europe. The boundless spaces and windswept climate had given rise to nomadic existence and an extensive agriculture, a thin population, a belated and meagre feudal development, and an absence of commercial and craft centres. The prevalence of peasant agriculture and home industry self-contained in small villages, of large landed estates, and of administrative-military consuming cities restricted the domestic market and led to dependence upon foreign capital and culture.

However, with the entry of modern industry, this Asiatic backwardness became complemented and combined with the most up-to-date products of Western European development. Large-scale industry led not only to the fusion of industrial with banking capital and domination of the Russian economy by foreign finance, but ultimately to a proletariat in the major industrial centres, a modern labour movement engaging in political strikes and mass demonstrations, and scientific socialism. These exceptional conditions set the stage for the revolutionary events which were to explode in 1905 and culminate in 1917.

The schematic thinkers among the Russian social-democrats, who had learned the letter but not the essence of Marx's method and were more or less under bourgeois influence, asserted that Russia would have to follow the trail blazed by Western Europe.

The older capitalist nations had passed from feudalism through a prolonged period of capitalist evolution toward socialism; in politics they had proceeded from rule by the monarchy and landed aristocracy to bourgeois parliamentarism before the workers could bid for supremacy. From this the Mensheviks concluded that the rulership of the bourgeoisie in a democratic republic on a capitalist basis was the logical successor to feudalised absolutism; the workers would have to wait a long while for their turn.

The attempt to impose such a prefabricated sequence upon 20th-century Russia was arbitrary and false, according to Trotsky. The powerful peculiarities of Russia's past and present made possible, and even inevitable, an unprecedented path of development which opened up immense new prospects for the labour movement.

The rottenness of tsarism, the weakness of the bourgeoisie and its institutions, the strategic position of the industrial workers, and the revolutionary potential in the peasantry springing from the unsolved, but urgent, problems of the land question would enable the pending revolution to compress and leap over stages. The workers could place themselves at the head of the insurgent people; they could lead the peasantry in overthrowing the old order and establishing democracy in a higher form under the government of the working class, which would quickly pass over from bourgeois democratic to revolutionary socialist measures. Thus the belated bourgeois democratic revolution would clear the way for and be a direct introduction to the first steps of the socialist revolution.

The political force of the working class could not be viewed in isolation but had to be judged in its relation with all the other factors at work within the country and the world. Although "the productive forces of the United States are 10 times as great as those of Russia, nevertheless the political role of the Russian proletariat, its influence on the politics of its own country and the possibility of its influencing the politics of the world in the near future are incomparably greater than in the case of the proletariat of the United States".[11] From all these considerations he drew the conclusion that "the Russian revolution will create conditions in which power can pass into the hands of the workers — and in the event of the victory of the revolution it must do so — *before* the politicians of bourgeois liberalism get the chance to display to the full their talent for governing".[12]

This was the first form of his theory of the permanent revolution. Upon the basis of Russian experience he subsequently extended it to cover the problems and prospects of the revolution in other underdeveloped countries where the workers and peasants must struggle against imperialism and its native agents to extricate themselves from precapitalist barbarism and acquire the benefits of modern economy and culture.

From 1904 to 1917 Trotskyism was identified with the conception that the Russian revolution could end only in the dictatorship of the proletariat, which in its turn must lead to the socialist transformation of society, given the victorious development of the world revolution. This outlook was opposed by the Mensheviks, who could not see beyond the bourgeois democratic republic, and was even unacceptable to the Bolsheviks. However, the young Trotsky was able to see farther than all the others among the brilliant constellation of Russian Marxists thanks to his precocious mastery of the materialistic and dialectical sides of Marx's method and his exceptional boldness and keenness of thought. He was the Columbus of the most extraordinary event in modem history: the first successful proletarian revolution, in the most backward country of Europe.

In working out his prognosis of the Russian revolution, Trotsky utilised the law of uneven and combined development, which he was later to formulate in general terms. This generalisation of the dialectical intertwining of the backward and advanced features of the historical process is one of the most valuable instruments for deciphering the complex relations and contradictory trends of civilised society.

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The laws of the class struggle constitute the essence of historical materialism applied to civilised society. Liberals and conservatives find this part of scientific socialism impossible to accept; reformists and Stalinists are unable to carry it through in the day-by-day struggle against capitalism. The recognition of the class struggle in its full scope and ultimate consequences was the very nerve centre of Trotsky's thought and action.

> The history of the development of human society is the history of the succession of various systems of economy, each operating in accordance with its own laws. The transition from one system to another was always determined by the growth of the productive forces, i.e., of technique and the organisation of labour. Up to a certain point, social changes are quantitative in character and do not alter the foundations of society, i.e., the prevalent forms of property. But a point is reached when the matured productive forces can no longer contain themselves within the old forms of property; then follows a radical change in the social order, accompanied by shocks. The primitive commune was either superseded or supplemented by slavery; slavery was succeeded by serfdom with its feudal superstructure; the commercial development of cities brought Europe in the 16th century to the capitalist order, which thereupon passed through several stages.[13]

This historical process was propelled forward by the action and reaction of one class upon another. The material stake in their struggles was the acquisition and distribution of the surplus product — that portion of the total social product beyond the minimum required for the survival and reproduction of the working force. Possessing and oppressing classes, from the slaveholders to the capitalists, have been distinguished primarily by the different methods of exploitation they have used to extract this surplus from the labouring masses. "The class struggle is nothing else than the struggle for surplus-product. He who owns surplus-product is master of the situation — owns wealth, owns the state, has the key to the church, to the courts, to the sciences and to the arts."[14]

Each society forms an organic whole. The bones of the social organism consist of its productive forces; its muscles are its class (property) relations. The functions and

reflexes of all other social organs can be understood only in their connections with the skeletal and muscular systems (the productive forces and property forms) which make up the general structure of the social organism. Since civilised society is split up into classes, the critical point of analysis in scientific sociology has to be "the *class* definition of a given phenomenon, e.g., state, party, philosophic trend, literary school, etc. In most cases, however, the mere class definition is inadequate, for a class consists of different strata, passes through different stages of development, comes under different conditions, is subjected to the influence of other classes. It becomes necessary to bring up these second and third rate factors in order to round out the analysis, and they are taken either partially or completely, depending upon the specific aim. But for a Marxist, analysis is impossible without a class characterisation of the phenomenon under consideration."[15]

In order to ascertain the decisive tendencies and the main course of development of any given social formation or nation, the scientific sociologist, according to Trotsky, has to examine its structure and the dynamics of its social forces in their connections with world historical conditions. We must find specific answers to the following questions: What classes are struggling in a country? What are their interrelations? How, and in what direction, are their relations being transformed? What are the objective tasks dictated by historical necessity? On the shoulders of what classes does the solution of these tasks rest? With what methods can they be solved?

During his revolutionary career Trotsky analysed the situations in many major countries at critical turning points in their evolution, according to this procedure. These included Russia, Germany, France, England, Austria, and Spain in Europe; China and India in Asia; and the United States. The results of his inquiries are contained in a series of works which are models for any aspiring scientific historian or sociologist.

Ever since Marxism stirred up the academicians, much dust has been raised about its conception of the relations between the economic foundations and the rest of the social structure in the process of historical evolution. Trotsky tried not only to clear up the misunderstandings around this question in general, but also to show by example how the material substructure of society, crystallised in the relations of production and its property forms, reacted with other social and cultural phenomena.

"The opinion that economics presumably determines directly and immediately the creativeness of a composer or even the verdict of a judge, represents a hoary caricature of Marxism which the bourgeois professordom of all countries has circulated time out of end to mask their intellectual impotence", he declared.[16] The dialectical approach of Marxism has nothing in common with this crude "economic determinism", so often practiced by the Stalinist school.

The economic foundation of a given society is organically interrelated and continuously interactive with its political-cultural superstructure. But the relations between them can be harmonious or inharmonious, depending upon the given conditions of historical development and the specific combinations of historical factors. In some cases the political regime can be in stark contradiction with its economic basis. Indeed, this is the source of the deepening class antagonisms which generate the need for revolutions. This can hold true not only for capitalist states but for postcapitalist political structures in the period of transition to socialism. In the Soviet Union under Stalin and his heirs, for example, the economic basis of nationalised property and planned production has been increasingly at odds with the autocratic system of bureaucratic rule.

In the long run, economics takes precedence over politics Political regimes, institutions, parties, and leaders are defined by the roles they play in upholding or changing the existing relations of production. "[A]lthough economics determines politics not directly or immediately, but only in the last analysis, *nevertheless economics does determine politics*", Trotsky affirmed.[17] Capitalist property relations determine the nature of the bourgeois state and the conduct of its representatives; nationalised property determines the nature of the workers' states, however deformed and bureaucratic they may be.

The controversy around "the cult of the individual" provoked by the de-Stalinisation campaign in the Soviet bloc has raised again for consideration the question of the role of the individual in history. This much-debated issue has long divided one tendency from another in the social sciences.

Nonmaterialists make one or another of the subjective factors in social life, from ideas to the actions of individuals, paramount in the determination of events. For a historical materialist like Trotsky, the social takes precedence over the individual, the general over the particular, the whole over the part, the material over the intellectual. The individual is important in history. But the extent of his influence depends upon broader historical factors. The strictly personal elements are subordinate to objective historical conditions and the major social forces of which they are a product, a part, and an exemplar.

The Russian Marxists from Plekhanov to Lenin gave considerable attention to this question. In arguing against the Narodnik school of subjective sociology, which in its most extreme expression upheld terrorism as a political means of struggle, the Marxists pointed out that social and political power was not simply an individual attribute; it was at bottom a function of the relations between people and, in the last analysis, between classes. The most prominent personages wield power not solely on their own

account, but on behalf of social forces greater than themselves. Even kings, tyrants, dictators represent the material interests of a specific class or combination of classes.

No political institution, for example, fuses the superpersonal forces in history with the personal more than the monarchy. "Monarchy by its very principle is bound up with the personal", wrote Trotsky in *The History of the Russian Revolution*.[18]

Under tsarism the royal family appeared to count as everything, the rest of the nation as nothing. Yet this was only the outward semblance of things.

"The king is king only because the interests and prejudices of millions of people are refracted through his person."[19] The king cannot rule without the tacit consent of nobles, landlords, and other class forces which he serves, or even in the end without the acquiescence of the mass of his subjects. When these refuse any longer to recognise or abide by the royal authority, it is in danger or done for. The first act of the Russian revolution, the overthrow of the monarchy, verified this social basis of personal power.

The Russian revolution, led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, abolished both tsarism and capitalism and instituted a workers' and peasants' democracy under the Soviets. This was smashed, and a new despotism came to flourish under Stalin. What was the social basis for Stalin's absolute one-man rule?

Trotsky is often severely condemned for "permitting" Stalin to outwit him in the contest for supremacy after Lenin's death. Critics of this superficial stamp do not understand that the most intelligent individuals with the most correct ideas and strategy are necessarily subordinated to the historical tides of their time and to the prevailing relations of class forces. Power is not a personal possession which can be transported at will like any commodity from one owner to another.

The fundamental factors at work in the world that decide the turn and outcome of great events were then ranged against the cause for which Trotsky fought; they favoured and facilitated the advance of Stalin. On the basis of the defeats of the working class in Europe, the isolation of the Soviet Union, and the weariness of the Soviet masses, Stalin was being lifted up and pushed to the fore during the 1920s by the increasingly powerful Soviet bureaucrats and labour aristocrats, backed up and egged on by an acquisitive upper layer of the peasantry. The Left Opposition, headed by Trotsky, which spoke for the revolutionary movement of the world working class and fought for the interests of the Soviet poor, was being pushed aside.

Trotsky explained over and over again that Stalin's triumph and his own defeat did not signify the mere displacement of one individual by another, or even of one faction by another, but the definitive transfer of political power from the socialist working class to the privileged Soviet bureaucracy. He consciously tied his own fate and the fortunes of the Communist Left Opposition to the situation of the world revolution

and the Russian working class.

Trotsky had thought profoundly on the dialectical interplay between the individual and the great impersonal driving forces of history. The purely personal characteristics of individuals, he stated, have narrow limits and very quickly merge into the social conditions of their development and collectivity to which they belong. "The 'distinguishing traits' of a person are merely individual scratches made by a higher law of development."[20]

> We do not at all pretend to deny the significance of the personal in the mechanics of the historic process, nor the significance in the personal of the accidental. We only demand that a historic personality, with all its peculiarities, should not be taken as a bare list of psychological traits, but as a living reality grown out of definite social conditions and reacting upon them. As a rose does not lose its fragrance because the natural scientist points out upon what ingredients of soil and atmosphere it is nourished, so an exposure of the social roots of a personality does not remove from it either its aroma or its foul smell.[21]

The tsar, as the head of his dynastic caste resting upon the Russian bureaucracy and aristocracy, was a product of its whole historical development and had to share its destiny. The same law held good for his successors at the helm of the Russian state after February 1917. Each of the leading individuals, from Kerensky through Lenin and Trotsky to Stalin, represented and incarnated a different correlation of social forces both national and international, a different degree of determination by the working class, a different stage in the development of the Russian revolution and the state and society which issued from it.

Trotsky was as thoroughgoing a materialist in his psychological observations as in his sociological and political analyser. Stalin as a man, he explained, acquired his definitive historical personality as the chosen leader of the Soviet aristocratic caste. "One can understand the acts of Stalin only by starting from the conditions of existence of the new privileged stratum, greedy for power, greedy for material comforts, apprehensive for its positions, fearing the masses, and mortally hating all opposition", Trotsky told the Dewey Commission in 1937.[22] Stalin's depravity, confirmed two decades afterward by Khrushchev, was not uniquely his own.

The more precipitate the jump from the October overturn — which laid bare all social falsehood — to the present situation, in which a caste of upstarts is forced to cover up its social ulcers, the cruder the Thermidorian lies. It is, consequently, a question not simply of the individual depravity of this or that person, but of the corruption lodged in the position of a whole social group for whom lying has become a vital political necessity. In the struggle for its newly gained positions, this caste has

reeducated itself and simultaneously reeducated — or rather, demoralised — its leaders. It raised upon its shoulders the man who best, most resolutely and most ruthlessly expresses its interests. Thus Stalin, who was once a revolutionist, became the leader of the Thermidorian caste.

Conversely, the revolutionary essence of the principles, positions, and social interests that Trotsky consistently embodied and expressed throughout his lifetime made him what he was and placed him where he had to be at each stage. He worked at the side of the Russian working class while it was preparing its first revolution; he rose to its head in the Soviet of 1905. He remained with its active vanguard during the subsequent reaction. When the revolution surged up to the heights he organised the October insurrection, and then led the Red Army until after the Civil War.

Later, when the workers again became politically passive and prostrate under Stalin's regime, he still stood firmly with them. Throughout this period of reaction he did his utmost to stem the decline of the revolution, rally and educate its forces, and prepare the best conditions for its revival. Trotsky was too much the Marxist to desire or exercise power for any purpose other than to promote socialist aims.

* * *

Trotsky's forecast of the Russian revolution was the first triumph of his application of the method of dialectical materialism; his analysis of its degeneration was his final and greatest achievement.

Here Trotsky was confronted with an unprecedented historical phenomenon. To be sure, previous revolutions had mounted to great heights and then receded. But these relapses had taken place within a class society where a new and more progressive — but nevertheless exploiting and oppressing — ruling class had been installed in power. He was familiar with leaderships of other workers' movements which had succumbed to the temptations of privilege and office, abused their authority, become bureaucratised. But these, too, had been beneficiaries and appendages of imperialist capitalism.

The situation in the young Soviet Republic appeared fundamentally different. The workers and peasants, led by the most conscious revolutionary party in history, guided by the scientific doctrines of Marxism, had taken state power and begun to reconstruct society in their own image. For years the leaders and members of the Bolshevik Party had distinguished themselves in battle by their ideas and their program, showing their readiness to sacrifice everything for the cause of socialism.

And yet the viruses of bureaucratism and privilege — "the professional dangers of power", as Christian Rakovsky designated them — had attacked the new rulers of

Russia and weakened their resistance to alien class influences. The inroads of infection had been manifest during Lenin's last years, and he had asked Trotsky to join him in combating their spread.

For someone like Trotsky, who had been so wholly and intimately identified with the revolution and its leadership, it required the utmost objectivity to detach his personal fate from this situation and cope with the problems it presented. He was like a medical scientist who, having detected the presence of a wasting disease in a dear companion, notes its symptoms and makes a diagnosis and prognosis, understanding all the while that the disease may not be arrested and can prove fatal. He followed the unfolding of the bureaucratic reaction step by step, analysing its causes, pinpointing its results — while prescribing the necessary therapeutic measures to alleviate and cure the disease.

The basic conditions for the growth of bureaucratism, he said, were first of all lodged in the world situation. The failure of the Russian revolution to be matched by the workers in the more advanced industrialised countries of the West, and the temporary stabilisation of international capitalism, left the first workers' state in an exposed and weakened position. In the Soviet Union a small working class, exhausted after enormous and sustained exertions, surrounded by a sea of peasantry and poverty, lacking culture, an adequate economic basis, even the elementary necessities of life, had to relinquish the powers and positions it had won to a layer of bureaucratic specialists in administration who wanted rest and the enjoyment of the fruits of the previous revolutionary efforts. The material privileges and narrow political views of this upstart caste came into ever greater conflict with the interests of the masses.

This was the source of the factional conflicts which tore apart the Russian Communist Party and were extended into the Communist International. With the deepening and strengthening of world reaction during the 1930s this process reached its climax in the consolidation of the Stalinist autocracy and the total erasure of Soviet democracy. The ascendancy of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and of fascism in Western Europe were symmetrical historical phenomena. The destruction of bourgeois democracy under the decadence of capitalist imperialism and the destruction of workers' democracy in the Soviet Republic were parallel products of the defeats of the working masses by reaction.

These totalitarian states had, however, completely opposite and historically different economic bases. The fascist dictators Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Francisco Franco ruled over states which defended capitalist property relations. Stalin's government, the uncontrolled agent of Soviet bureaucratism, rested upon nationalised property.

Trotsky gave a dialectical, historical, and materialist definition of the Soviet Union. By virtue of its nationalised property, its planned economy, its monopoly of foreign trade, and the socialist consciousness and traditions in the working class, it remained a workers' state. But it was a special type of workers' state in which the political structure contradicted the economic foundations. The policies and activities of Stalinist tyranny not only trampled upon the rights, feelings, and welfare of the masses in whose interests the revolution was made but injured the development of the Soviet economy itself, which required democratic administration by the workers to function most efficiently.

The conflict between Stalin's one-man rule and workers' democracy, between the totalitarian political structure and the economic foundation, was the prime motive force in Soviet society, however much it was repressed and hushed up. The tension between these contending social forces could not endure indefinitely. Either the workers would clean out the bureaucratic usurpers — or the bureaucrats would extrude a wing which would strike at the last remaining achievements of the revolution and clear the way for the return of capitalism from within or from abroad.

Trotsky was no defeatist; he did not declare in advance that the worst would happen. On the contrary, he threw all his forces and resources into the balance to help the favourable outcome prevail. Now, 20 years after his death, his struggle and foresight have been vindicated. While imperialism tore itself to pieces for the second time and was further weakened by the Second World War, the Soviet state survived, despite all the crimes of Stalinism. After revealing its powers of resistance in the war against Hitlerism, it has displayed amazing capacities for recuperation and swift growth in the postwar years. The socialist revolution itself broke through to new ground, extending into Eastern Europe and Asia and scuttling Stalin's theory of "socialism in one country" as a by-product.

These international and national developments have elevated the Soviet working class to a higher cultural and material level and impelled the most progressive elements in Soviet society to press hard upon the bureaucrats to relax their dictatorship and grant concessions. The drive for de-Stalinisation breaks through with such irresistible force that — up to a certain limited point — it has even carried along elements among the bureaucracy. Its momentum testifies to the growing powers and impatience of the socialist elements in Soviet society and confirms Trotsky's analysis of its main motive forces and trends.

Thus far we have seen only the opening events in this new chapter of internal Soviet development, which is heading toward an all-out conflict between the self-appointed successors of Stalin and the resurgent masses. The Soviet workers,

intellectuals, and peasants will have to throw off all their overlords and restore democracy on an incomparably higher basis.

The reexamination of values which has been started under the slogan "Return to Lenin" will be supplemented and completed by the slogan "Return to Trotsky". The new leaders of the people in the coming antibureaucratic revolution will reinstate Trotsky's achievements to their proper place and honour him as the initiator, herald, and guide in the fight for socialist freedom and the preservation of the heritage of Marxism and Bolshevism.

* * *

Trotsky probed more deeply than any other Marxist thinker into the problems of materialist psychology. In the controversies that counterposed Pavlov's school of conditioned reflexes to the Freudian school of depth analysis he took a third position. While he observed that their respective approaches to the formation of consciousness were different, he did not believe there was an insuperable materialist-idealist conflict between them, as the Stalinists have contended. Both Pavlov and Freud considered that physiology constituted the basis of the higher functions of thought. Trotsky compared Pavlov to a diver who descends to the bottom of the well of the human mind to inspect it from there upwards, while Freud stood above peering through the obscure and troubled waters of the psyche to discern what was at work within its depths.

The characteristic traits of people are elicited, formed, and perfected by their social environments; even the oddest quirks soon pass over into the behaviour and psychology proper to the individual's epoch, group, or class. Certain common characteristics are imposed on people by the mighty forces of historical conditions; similar conditions call forth similar responses and produce similar personality traits. "Similar (of course, far from identical) irritations in similar conditions call out similar reflexes; the more powerful the irritation, the sooner it overcomes personal peculiarities. To a tickle, people react differently, but to a red-hot iron, alike. As a steam-hammer converts a sphere and a cube alike into sheet metal, so under the blow of too great and inexorable events resistances are smashed and the boundaries of 'individuality' lost."[23]

In this way he explained the puzzles of what bourgeois psychologists call "the behaviour of crowds", or, more precisely, mass consciousness. Despite all their individual differences and peculiarities, despite their separation in time and place, individuals placed in similar settings and faced with similar problems behave alike.

The so-called faculty psychologists of the 19th century split up the human

personality and psyche into different factors such as instinct, will, intuition, consciousness, the unconscious, etc., elevating one or another of these elements of human behaviour into predominance. Trotsky viewed all these various functions as interpenetrating aspects of a unified physiological-psychological process, materially conditioned and subject to development and change.

Inspiration and intuition are usually regarded as the special province of idealists and mystics. However, Trotsky did not hesitate to come to grips even with these obscure and elusive phases of psychic activity. He noted that the conscious and unconscious coexist in the historical process just as they do within the individuals who compose it. He gave an incomparable definition of their interaction in *My Life*:

> Marxism considers itself the conscious expression of the unconscious historical process. But the "unconscious" process, in the historico-philosophical sense of the term — not in the psychological — coincides with its conscious expression only at its highest point, when the masses, by sheer elemental pressure, break through the social routine and give victorious expression to the deepest needs of historical development. And at such moments the highest theoretical consciousness of the epoch merges with the immediate action of those oppressed masses who are farthest away from theory. The creative union of the conscious with the unconscious is what one usually calls "inspiration". Revolution is the inspired frenzy of history.
>
> Every real writer knows creative moments, when something stronger than himself is guiding his hand; every real orator experiences moments when someone stronger than the self of his everyday existence speaks through him. This is "inspiration". It derives from the highest creative effort of all one's forces. The unconscious rises from its deep well and bends the conscious mind to its will, merging it with itself in some greater synthesis.
>
> The utmost spiritual vigour likewise infuses at times all personal activity connected with the movement of the masses. This was true for the leaders in the October days. The hidden strength of the organism, its most deeply rooted instincts, its power of scent inherited from animal forebears — all these rose and broke through the psychic routine to join forces with the higher historico-philosophical abstractions in the service of the revolution. Both these processes, affecting the individual and the mass, were based on the union of the conscious with the unconscious: the union of instinct — the mainspring of the will — with the higher theories of thought.[24]

Trotsky had absorbed the materialist attitude into every fibre of his being; it permeated all his thought and action from his outlook upon human life to his appraisals of the individuals around him. As a consistent materialist he was a proud and avowed atheist. He would not permit himself to be degraded or humanity to be subjugated to any of

its own fictitious creations issuing from the barbarous past.

His humanistic profession of faith was frankly stated in the testament he set down a few months before his assassination: "For 43 years of my conscious life I have remained a revolutionist; for 42 of them I have fought under the banner of Marxism … I shall die a proletarian revolutionist, a Marxist, a dialectical materialist, and, consequently, an irreconcilable atheist."[25]

He felt no need for the fictitious consolations of personal life after death. Cramped and contaminated though it was by class society, life on earth was enough because of the potential for human enjoyment and fulfilment latent within it. "I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall, and the clear blue sky above the wall, and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression, and violence and enjoy it to the full." A few days later he added: "Whatever may be the circumstances of my death I shall die with unshaken faith in the communist future. This faith in man and in his future gives me even now such power of resistance as cannot be given by any religion."[26]

Such was the final testimony of the most gifted exponent of the 2500-year-old materialist philosophy in our time. ■

Alienation

The international socialist movement is witnessing a crusade in its own ranks nowadays for Moral Rearmament. To support their conclusions the intellectual apostles of this new tendency lean heavily upon the alienations suffered by man in modern society. Mixing socialist doctrines with psychoanalytical theory, they approach the problem of alienation as though it were pivotal in modern life and treat it as though it were the very centre of Marxist thought.

Their preoccupation with the question has been stimulated by numerous commentaries on recent translations of such early writings of Marx and Engels as *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, *The Holy Family* and *The German Ideology* in which the concept of alienation plays a large part.

The intensified interest in this subject is not a mere crotchet of the radical intellectuals. It stems from the very real alienations experienced in present-day society and from the growing antagonism between the rulers and the ruled in both the capitalist and postcapitalist sectors of the world.

The people & their rulers

The contradictions of life under contemporary capitalism engender deepgoing feelings of frustration. The wealth pouring from the factories and the farms during the prolonged postwar boom has not strengthened assurance about the future. Instead, it has become another source of anxiety, for it is widely felt that a new depression will follow. Similarly, the enhanced control over industrial processes made possible by automation confronts the workers, not with welcome release from burdensome toil, but with the spectre of chronic unemployment. The command over nature involved in the tapping of nuclear energy holds over humanity's head the threat of total annihilation rather than the promise of peace and plenty. An uncontrolled inner circle of capitalist politicians and military leaders decide matters of life and death. No wonder that

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people feel the economic and political forces governing their fate as alien powers.

Although the social soil is different, similar sentiments are widespread in the anticapitalist countries dominated by the bureaucratic caste. Despite the great advances in science, technology, industry, public health and other fields made possible by their revolutions, workers and peasants, students and intellectuals keenly resent their lack of control over the government and the administration of the economy. Freedom of thought, expression and organisation are denied them. Despite the official propaganda that they have at least become masters of their own destinies, the people know that the powers of decision in the most vital affairs are exercised, not by them, but by bureaucratic caliphs. The cardinal duty of the masses in the Communist Party, the unions, the factories and collective farms, the educational institutions and publishing houses is still to obey the dictates from above.

That now discarded handbook of falsifications of history and Marxism edited by Stalin, *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, closes with the admonition that the "Bolsheviks" will be strong and invincible only so long as "they maintain connection with their mother, the masses, who gave birth to them, suckled them and reared them". Khrushchev has told how Stalin in his later years never visited the factories or farms and was totally insulated from the lives of ordinary folk. But Stalin's successor has lifted only a corner of the veil hiding the profound estrangement of the Soviet masses from the "boss men", as they are called.

Many thoughtful members of the Communist Party have been impelled by the revelations at the 20th Congress and by the Polish and Hungarian events of 1956 to reconsider their former views. Some of them seek an explanation for the crimes of the Soviet leaders and the Stalinist perversions of socialism in the Marxist outlook itself.

This search has led them back to the young Marx. They believe that they have found in the early works, which mark his transition from Hegelianism through humanism to dialectical materialism, the clue to the falsifications of Marxism and the distortions of socialism which have run rampant in the Soviet Union and the communist parties. In these observations of Marx on the alienation of mankind under class society, in particular, they see the basis for a salutary regeneration of the tarnished socialist ideal.

The new socialist humanists

These intellectuals have raised the banner of a neo-socialist humanism against "mechanical materialism" and "economic automatism". The seeds of the evil that bore such bitter fruits under Stalin, they claim, were planted by the "mechanical" Marxists and cultivated by the crudely materialistic Leninists. They call for a renovated morality

and a more sensitive concern for the "concrete, whole, living man". Monstrous forms of totalitarianism are produced by subservience to such "abstractions" as the Forces of Production, the Economic Foundations and the Cultural Superstructure, they say. Such an immoral and inhuman materialism leads to the reappearance, behind socialist phrases, of the rule of things over men imposed by capitalism.

The same message was proclaimed over a decade ago in the United States by Dwight MacDonald, then editor of *Politics*, and by the Johnson-Forest sect. It is a favourite theme of the social-democratic and ex-Trotskyist writers of the magazine *Dissent*, It is now becoming the creed of some former Communist Party intellectuals grouped around *The New Reasoner* in England.

E.P. Thompson, one of the two editors of *The New Reasoner*, wrote in a programmatic pronouncement in the first issue (Summer, 1957): "The ideologies of capitalism and Stalinism are both forms of 'self-alienation'; men stumble in their minds and lose themselves in abstractions; capitalism sees human labour as a commodity and the satisfaction of his 'needs' as the production and distribution of commodities; Stalinism sees labour as an economic-physical act in satisfying economic-physical needs. Socialist humanism declares: liberate men from slavery to things, to the pursuit of profit or servitude to 'economic necessity'. Liberate man, as a creative being — and he will create, not only new values, but things in scope and abundance."

Despite their up-to-date reasoning, the "new thoughts" brought forward by such socialist humanists against dialectical materialism are hardly original. The essence of their viewpoint is to be found in the schools of petty-bourgeois socialism which flourished in Germany before the revolution of 1848. Scientific socialism was created in struggle against these doctrines, as anyone familiar with the ideological birth process of Marxism knows.

The "true socialism" of Moses Hess and Karl Grün sought to base the socialist movement, not upon the necessary historical development of economic conditions and the struggles of class forces, but upon abstract principles and ethical precepts regarding the need for mankind, divided against itself, to recover its wholeness and universality. In the section on "true socialism" in *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels ridiculed these phrasemongers who talked about the "alienation of the essence of mankind" instead of undertaking a scientific investigation of money and its functions.

In their justified revulsion from Stalinism, the new "humane" socialists have not gone forward to genuine Marxism, as they mistakenly believe; they have landed behind it. They have unwittingly relapsed into a stage of theoretical development that socialism and its materialist philosophy surmounted over a century ago. What is worse, in taking this backward leap to a prescientific socialism of the most mawkish variety, they

discard both the materialist principles and the dialectical method which constitute the heart of Marxism.

The attempts of these disoriented intellectuals to insert abstract moralistic foundations under Marxism are retrogressive. Yet it must be admitted that the theory of alienation is by no means foreign to Marxism. It did play an influential part in the genesis and formative period of scientific socialism. Indeed, in the history of the concept we find a striking example of how the founders of Marxism divested Hegel's central conceptions of their "idealist trappings" and placed them on solid materialist supports, transforming both their form and substance in the process. It is worthwhile to ascertain what the Marxist attitude toward alienation really is. This will be the best corrective to the wanderings of those upset socialists who are fumbling for a new equilibrium.

Hegel's contribution

Marx took the concept of alienation from Hegel. In this instance, as in so many others, Hegelianism was the ideological source and starting point of Marxian thought.

Alienation and estrangement are key categories in Hegel's idealist philosophy. These are the most extreme expressions of difference or "otherness". In the process of change everything necessarily has a divided and antithetical nature, for it is both itself and, at the same time, becoming something else, its "other".

But viewed as a whole, the "other" is simply a development of the "itself"; the implicit becomes explicit; the possible, actual. This process is a dual one. It involves estrangement from the original form and the realisation of the essence in a higher form of existence.

In his system Hegel applied this dialectical logic to the evolution of the "Absolute", his synonym for the whole of reality. The Absolute first exists as mere Logical Idea, self-enclosed like a bud. It breaks out of itself by way of an inner revolution (just how and why is not clear) to a completely alienated condition — Nature. Hegel saw Nature as a lifeless dispersed mode of existence in contradiction to the lively perpetual movement and universal interconnection inherent in the Absolute.

This contradiction drives the Idea forward through a prolonged course of development until it emerges from its material casing and appears as Mind. Mind in turn passes through a series of stages from crude sensation to its highest peak in philosophy, and above all in Hegel's own idealist outlook.

Throughout this complex process alienation plays the most positive role. It is the expression of the Negative at work. The Negative, forever destroying existing forms through the conflict of opposites, spurs everything onward to a higher mode of existence. For Hegel a specific kind of alienation may be historically necessary at one

stage, even though it is cancelled out at the next in the universal interplay of the dialectic.

All of this may appear to be a dull chapter in the life of the German universities of a century and a half ago. But Hegel saw the development of society as one of the outcomes of this evolution of the Idea. Moreover, he traced the course of alienation in human history. He noted such curious items as the fact that man alone of all the creatures on earth can take the objective conditions around him and transform them into a medium of his subjective development. Despite the bizarreness of considering a material process like that to be an expression of the evolution of Idea, such observations, it will be recognised, have a modern ring.

Still more, at turning points in his development, Hegel pointed out, man finds himself in deep conflict with the world around him. His own material and spiritual creations have risen up and passed beyond his control. Ironically man becomes enslaved to his own productions. All this the great philosopher saw with astounding clarity.

Hegel applied the notion of the alienation of humanity from itself to the transitional period between the fall of the Greek city-states and the coming of Christianity; and above all to the bourgeois society around him. Early in his career he described industrial society, as "a vast system of mutual interdependence, *a moving life of the dead*. This system moves hither and yon in a blind elementary way, and like a wild animal calls for strong permanent control and curbing". (*Jenenser Realphilosophie*, p. 237.) He looked to the state to impose that control over capitalist competition.

Of still livelier interest to our nuclear age, he had some sharp things to say about the institution of private property which forces men to live in a world that, although their creation, is opposed to their deepest needs. This "dead" world, foreign to human nature, is governed by inexorable laws which oppress mankind and rob him of freedom.

Hegel also emphasised that the complete subordination of the individual to the division of labour in commodity-producing society cripples and represses human development. Mechanisation, the very means which should liberate man from toil, makes him still more a slave.

On the political plane, especially in his earlier writings, Hegel discussed how, in the Germany of his day, the individual was estranged from the autocratic state because he could not actively participate in its affairs.

The very need for philosophy itself, according to Hegel, springs from these all-embracing contradictions in which human existence has been plunged. The conflict of society against nature, of idea against reality, of consciousness against existence, Hegel generalises into the conflict between "subject" and "object." This opposition arises from the alienation of Mind from itself. The world of objects, originally the product of

man's labour and knowledge, becomes independent and opposed to man. The objective world becomes dominated by uncontrollable forces and overriding laws in which man can no longer recognise or realise his true self. At the same time, and as a result of the same process, thought becomes estranged from reality. The truth becomes an impotent ideal preserved in thought alone while the actual world functions apart from its influence.

This brings about an "unhappy consciousness" in which man is doomed to frustration unless he succeeds in reuniting the severed parts of his world. Nature and society have to be brought under the sway of man's reason so that the sundered elements of his essential self can be reintegrated. How is this opposition between an irrational world and an ineffectual reason to be overcome? In other words, how can the world be made subject to reason and reason itself become effective?

Philosophy in such a period of general disintegration, Hegel declared, can discover and make known the principle and method to bring about the unity mankind needs. Reason (we almost wrote *The New Reasoner*) is the authentic form of reality in which the antagonisms of subject and object are eliminated, or rather transmuted into the genuine unity and universality of mankind.

Hegel related the opposition of subject and object to concrete social antagonisms. In his own philosophical language he was struggling to express the consequences of capitalist conditions where men are misled by a false and distorted consciousness of their real relations with one another and where they cannot make their wills effective because they are overwhelmed by the unmanageable laws of the market.

Hegel further maintained that the solution of such contradictions was a matter of practice as well as of philosophic theory. Inspired by the French Revolution, he envisaged the need for a similar "reign of reason" in his own country. But he remained a bourgeois thinker who never transcended his idealist philosophy in viewing the relations of class society. In his most progressive period Hegel did not offer any practical recommendations for overcoming existing social antagonisms that went beyond the bounds of bourgeois reform.

It was only through the subsequent work of Marx that these idealistic reflections of an irrational social reality were placed in their true light. Against Hegel's interpretation of alienation, Marx showed what the historical origins, material basis and real nature of this phenomenon were.

The young Marx

Marx began his intellectual life as an ardent Hegelian. Between 1843 and 1848, under the influence of Feuerbach, he cleared his mind of what he later called "the old junk"

and emerged together with Engels as a full-fledged materialist.

The "humane" socialists are now embarked on the quixotic venture of reversing this progressive sequence. They aim to displace the mature Marx, the thoroughgoing dialectical materialist, with the youthful Marx who had yet to pass beyond the one-sided materialism of Feuerbach.

Marx recognised that the concept of alienation reflected extremely significant aspects of social life. He also became aware that Hegel's idealism and Feuerbach's abstract Humanism obscured the real historical conditions and social contradictions that had generated the forms of alienation.

Marx did not reach his ripest conclusions on this subject all at once but only by successive approximations over decades of scientific study. Between his Hegelian starting point and his final positions there was an interim period of discovery, during which he developed his preliminary conclusions.

Marx first undertook the study of political economy, which occupied the rest of his life, in 1843. He pursued this task along with a criticism of his Hegelian heritage. The first results were set down in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* he wrote primarily for his own clarification during 1844. These were published posthumously in our own time and did not appear in their first complete English translation until this year.

These essays were Marx's earliest attempt at analysing capitalism. In them for the first time he applied the dialectical method learned from Hegel to the categories of political economy. In many passages his ideas are formulated so abstractly and abstrusely that it is not easy to decipher their meaning without a grasp of the terminology and mode of thought prevalent in German classical philosophy.

Whereas in his later works (*The Critique of Political Economy*, *Capital*) Marx takes the commodity as the cell of capitalism, he here puts forward alienated labour as the central concept. He even views private property as derived from the alienation of labour. It is both the product of estranged labour, he writes, and the means by which labour is estranged from itself. "Just as we have derived the concept of private property from the concept of estranged alienated labour by analysis, in the same way every category of political economy can be evolved with the help of these two factors; and we shall find again in each category, for example, trade, competition, capital, money, only a definite and developed expression of these first foundations", he declares.

Having established alienated labour as the basis and beginning of capitalist production, Marx then deduces the consequences. Labour becomes alienated when the producer works, not directly for himself or a collective united by common interests, but for another with interests and aims opposed to his own.

This antagonistic relation of production injures the worker in many ways. 1. He is estranged from his own body which must be maintained as a physical subject, not because it is part of himself, but so that it can function as an element of the productive process. 2. He is estranged from nature since natural objects with all their variety function, not as means for his self-satisfaction or cultural fulfilment, but merely as material means for profitable production. 3. He is estranged from his own peculiar essence as a human being because his special traits and abilities are not needed, used or developed by his economic activities which degrade him to the level of a mere physical force. 4. Finally, he is separated from his fellow human beings. "Where man is opposed to himself, he also stands opposed to other men."

Consequently the dispossessed worker benefits neither from the activity of his labour nor from its product. These do not serve as means for his enjoyment or fulfilment as an individual because both are appropriated by someone other than himself, the capitalist. "If the worker's activity is torment to himself, it must be the enjoyment and satisfaction of another."

The object which labour creates, the labour product, becomes opposed to man as an alien essence, as a power independent of the producer. "Wage-labour, like private property, is only a necessary consequence of the alienation of labour." Society can be emancipated from both private property and servitude only by abolishing wage-labour.

Marx honoured Hegel for seeing that man is the result of his conditions of labour. He found this primary proposition of historical materialism in Hegel, though in an idealist shape. The greatness of the *Phenomenology*, Marx observed, lies in the circumstance that "Hegel conceives the self-production of man as a process …"

Marx criticises Hegel for seeing only one side of this process, the alienation of consciousness, and neglecting the most important aspect of labour in class society, the alienation of the actual man who produces commodities. Marx accepted Feuerbach's view that Hegel's philosophy was itself an abstract expression of the alienation of mankind from itself. Hegel's Absolute Idealism separated the thought process from real active and thinking persons and converted it into an independent, all-powerful subject which absorbed the world into itself. At bottom, it was a sophisticated form of religious ideology in which the Logical Idea replaced God.

In the Hegelian dialectic, Nature, the antithesis to the Idea, was nothing in and for itself; it was merely a concealed and mysterious embodiment of the Absolute Idea. However, Marx, following Feuerbach, pointed out that this Absolute Idea was itself nothing but "a thing of thought", a generalised expression for the thinking process of real individuals dependent on nature.

Marx pays tribute to Feuerbach for exposing the religious essence of Hegel's

system and thereby reestablishing the materialist truth that Nature, instead of being an expression of the Idea, is the real basis for thought and the ultimate source of all ideas.

Hegel, Marx said, discovered "the abstract, logical and speculative expression for the movement of history". What Marx sought to do was to uncover the real motive forces in history (comprising both nature and society in their development, as he was to emphasise in *The German Ideology*) which preceded all theorising and provided both the materials and the motives for the operations of thought.

Moreover, Hegel had mistakenly identified all externalisation of man's vital powers in nature and society with alienation because it represented an inferior grade of the Idea's existence. Actually, the objectification of his capacities is normal and necessary to the human being and is the mainspring of all progress. It is perverted into alienation only under certain historical conditions which are not eternal.

Many brilliant thoughts are to be found in the pages of *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*. For example, Marx brings out the differences between the animal and human senses in a way that counterposes his historical materialism to vulgar materialism. Sensation is the basis for human knowledge as well as for the materialist theory of knowledge. Although the human sensory equipment is animal in origin, it develops beyond that. Human senses pass through an historical, social and cultural development which endow us with far more discriminating modes of sensation than any known in the animal state. "The cultivation of the five senses is the work of the whole history of the world to date", he concludes.

Capitalism is to be condemned because it blunts sensitivity instead of sharpening it. The dealer in gems who sees only their market value, and not the beauty and unique character of minerals, "has no mineralogical sensitivity", he writes; he is little different from an animal grubbing for food. The task of civilisation is to develop a specifically human sensitivity "for the whole wealth of human and natural essence".

An entire school of contemporary American sociologists, headed by David Reisman, has based its analysis of the condition of men in "the mass society" on the fact that the average person is bored and depressed by the drudgery of his work in factory or office and finds satisfaction for his individuals needs only in leisure hours. The split between labour and leisure under capitalism was long ago noted by Marx in these manuscripts where he pointed out: "Labour is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being. Therefore he does not affirm himself in his work but denies himself. He does not feel contented but dissatisfied. He does not develop freely his physical and spiritual energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself to be himself outside his work, and in his work he feels

outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working, he is not at home."

Development of the concept of labour

Marx did not leave the concept of labour as treated in these early essays. Extending the range of his criticism of bourgeois political economy and probing deeper into the secrets of capitalist production, he filled out and corrected his original presentation. He developed the features and forms of labour into a brilliant constellation of diversified determinations, reflecting the facets of the many-sided relations of production in their historical evolution.

The younger Marx, swayed by Feuerbach's humanism, analysed capitalist relations by counterposing what is dehumanised to what is truly human. The later Marx viewed them in terms of class oppositions.

Most important was his discovery of the twofold character of labour: the concrete labour which produces use-values and the abstract labour which produces exchange value. In abstract labour Marx found the essence of alienated labour in commodity-producing societies. His discovery, which Engels rightly lauded as Marx's chief contribution to the science of political economy, enabled him to explain the nature of commodities and the source of value as well as such mysteries as the power of money. The distinction between the two kinds of labour asserts itself at every decisive point in his analysis.

Marx took another step beyond his predecessors by distinguishing between labour as a concrete activity which creates specific use-values and labour power, the value-producing property of labour. He demonstrated how the peculiar characteristics of labour power as a commodity make capitalist exploitation possible. He also showed that the exploitation of labour in general, under all modes of class production, is based on the difference between necessary and surplus labour.

It would require a summary of the whole of *Capital* to deal with all of Marx's amplifications of the concept of labour. The pertinent point is this: the complex relations between capital and labour which were sketched in broad outline in the early essays were developed into a network of precise distinctions. The concept of alienated labour was broken down into elements integrated into a comprehensive exposition of the laws of motion of capitalism.

Primitive source of alienation

Before examining the specific causes of alienation under capitalism, it is necessary to note that the phenomenon is rooted in the whole previous history of humanity. The

process by which man becomes oppressed by his own creations has passed through distinct stages of evolution.

The most primitive forms of alienation arise from the disparity between man's needs and wishes and his control over nature. Although they have grown strong enough to counterpose themselves as a collective labouring body against the natural environment, primitive peoples do not have enough productive forces, techniques and knowledge to assert much mastery over the world around them. Their helplessness in material production has its counterpart in the power of magic and religion in their social life and thought.

Religion, as Feuerbach explained and Marx repeated, reverses the real relations between mankind and the world. Man created the gods in his own image. But to the superstitious mind, unaware of unconscious mental processes, it appears that the gods have created men. Deluded by such appearances — and by social manipulators from witch doctors to priests — men prostrate themselves before idols of their own manufacture. The distance between the gods and the mass of worshippers senses as a gauge for estimating the extent of man's alienation from his fellow men and his subjugation to the natural environment.

Alienation is therefore first of all a social expression of the fact that men lack adequate control over the forces of nature and have thereby not yet acquired control over sources of daily sustenance.

Dialectical development of alienation

Alienation has been a general feature of human history. The *alienation of labour*, however, is peculiar to civilisation and is bound up with the institution of private property. In primitive society men are oppressed by nature but not by the products of their labour.

The rudimentary alienation observable in the magic and religion found in savagery and barbarism becomes overlaid and subsequently overwhelmed by another and higher type of alienation engendered by the conditions of class society. With the development of agriculture, stock breeding and craftsmanship, the most advanced sectors of mankind became less directly dependent upon raw nature for their food supplies. They increased their sources of wealth and reduced nature's oppression.

But civilised man's growing control over nature was attended by a loss of control over the basic conditions of his economic activity. So long as production remained simple but collective, as in primitive tribal life, the producers had control over their process of production and the disposition of their product. With the extension of the social division of labour, more and more goods became converted into commodities

and entered exchange in the market.

The producers thereby lost control over their product as it became subject to the laws of the commodity market. In turn, these laws came to rule the producers to such an extent that in time men themselves became commodities to be bought and sold. *Slavery was the first organised system of alienated labour; wage labour will be the last.*

Wage labour is a special type of alienated labour. In this mode of production the labourer becomes the victim of the world market, a slave to the law of supply and demand, to such a degree that he can stand idle and his dependents starve when there is no demand for his labour power as a commodity.

The historical groundwork for the alienation suffered by the working class is private property in the means of production. This enables the owners to appropriate the surplus product of the labourers. There is nothing mysterious about the material origin of alienation in class society. It comes about as a consequence of the separation of the producers from the conditions of production and thereby from what they produce. When the labourers lose control of the material means of production, they forfeit control over their lives, their liberties and their means of development.

Hegel pointed this out when he wrote in the *Philosophy of Right*: "By alienating the whole of my time, as crystallised in my work, and everything I produced, I would be making another's property the substance of my being, my universal activity and actuality, my personality."

This second kind of alienation reaches its apex under capitalism, where every individual involved in the network of production and exchange is ruled by the laws of the world market. These function as coercive external powers over which even the masters of capital have no control, as the fluctuations of the business cycle demonstrate.

The influence of the earlier type of alienation, on the other hand, based upon lack of command over the forces of nature, lessens as technology and science expand with the growth of the productive forces from one stage of civilisation to the next. As Marx wrote: "The miracles of God become superfluous because of the miracles of industry." Today, when man's conquest of nature is conclusive, though far from completed, the influence of unconquered nature as a factor in producing alienation is small compared to its economic causes.

Alienation of labour under capitalism

The alienations imposed by capital upon tabor reinforce and intensify those forms of alienation carried over from the barbarous past by adding to them estrangements bred by capitalism's own peculiar type of exploitation. It is necessary to analyse the economic foundations of capitalist society in order to bring out its characteristic

processes of alienation.

1. Capitalism emerges as a distinct and separate economic formation by wrenching away working people from precapitalist conditions of production. Before capitalism could be established, the mass of direct producers had to be separated from the material means of production and transformed into propertyless proletarians. The processes of expropriation whereby the peasants were uprooted from the land and the social elements fashioned for the wage labour required for capitalist exploitation in Western Europe were summarised by Marx in Chapter XIX of *Capital*.

2. However, the alienation of the producers only begins with the primary accumulation of capital: it is continually reproduced on an ever-extended scale once capital takes over industry, Even before he physically engages in the productive process, the wage-worker finds his labour taken away from him by the stipulations of the labour contract. The worker agrees to hand over his labour to the capitalist in return for the payment of the prevailing wage. The employer is then free to use and exploit this labour as he pleases.

3. During the productive process, by virtue of the peculiar divisions of labour in capitalist enterprise, all the knowledge, will and direction is concentrated in the capitalist and his superintendents. The worker is converted into a mere physical accessory factor of production. "The capitalist represents the unity and will of the social working body" while the workers who make up that body are "dehumanised" and degraded to the status of things. The plan, the process, and the aim of capitalist production all confront the workers as alien, hostile, dominating powers. The auto workers on the assembly line can testify to the truth of this fact.

4. At the end of the industrial process the product which is its result does not belong to the workers who made it but to the capitalist who owns it. In this way the product of labour is torn from the workers and goes into the market to be sold.

5. The capitalist market, which is the totality of commodities and money in their circulation, likewise confronts the working class — whether as sellers of their labour power or as buyers of commodities — as an alien power. Its laws of operation dictate how much they shall get for their labour power, whether it is saleable at all, what their living standards shall be.

The world market is the ultimate arbiter of capitalist society. It not only rules over the wage-slaves; it is greater than the most powerful group of capitalists. The overriding laws of the market dominate all classes like uncontrollable forces of nature which bring weal or woe regardless of anyone's plans or intentions.

6. In addition to the fundamental antagonism between the exploiters and the exploited, the competition characteristic of capitalism's economic activities pits the

members of both classes against one another. The capitalists strive to get the better of their rivals so that the bigger and more efficient devour the smaller and less productive.

The workers who go into the labour market to sell their labour power are compelled to buck one another for available jobs. In the shop and factory they are often obliged to compete against one another under the goad of piecework.

Both capitalists and workers try to mitigate the consequences of their competition by combination. The capitalists set up trusts and monopolies; the workers organise into trade unions. But however much these opposing forms of class organisation modify and restrict competition, they cannot abolish it. The competitiveness eliminated from a monopolised industry springs up more violently in the struggles between one aggregation of capital and another. The workers in one craft, category or country are pitted, contrary to their will, against the workers of another.

These economic circumstances generate unbridled individualism, egotism, and self-seeking throughout bourgeois society. The members of this society, whatever their status, have to live in an atmosphere of mutual hostility rather than of solidarity.

Thus the real basis of the forms of alienation within capitalist society, is found in the contradictory relations of its mode of production and in the class antagonisms arising from them.

The great fetishes of capitalism

Alienation, like all relations, is a two-sided affair and its operation has contradictory consequences. What is taken from the dispossessed is vested in the dispossessors. In religion the feebleness of men on earth is complemented by the omnipotence of the deity who is endowed with all the capacities real people lack. His representatives in society, from the shamans to the clergy, exploit this situation to their advantage.

In economies, the servitude of the labourer is the basis of the freedom of the master; the poverty of the many makes the wealth of the few. In politics, the absence of popular self-rule is made manifest in the despotism of the state.

In *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Marx came to grips for the first time with the mysteries of money. In capitalist society, he remarks, money has displaced religion as the major source of alienation, just as it has displaced the deity as the major object of adoration and attraction. The money form of wealth stands like a whimsical tyrant between the needs of men and their fulfilment. The possessor of money can satisfy the most exorbitant desires while the penniless individual cannot take care of the most elementary needs of food, clothing and shelter.

Money has the magical power of turning things into their opposites. "Gold! Yellow, glittering, precious gold", can, as Shakespeare said, "make black, white; foul, fair; wrong,

right; base, noble; old, young; coward, valiant." The person without artistic taste can buy and hang pictures in his mansion, or put them in a safety vault, while the creator and the genuine appreciator cannot view or enjoy them. The meanest scoundrel can purchase admiration from sycophants while worthy individuals go scorned and unnoticed.

Under capitalism, where everything enters the field of exchange and becomes the object of buying and selling, a man's worth comes to be estimated, not by his really praiseworthy abilities or actions, but by his bank account. A man is "worth" what he owns and a millionaire is "worth" incomparably more than a pauper. A Rothschild is esteemed where a Marx is hated. In this cesspool of universal venality all genuine human values and standards are distorted and desecrated.

Later, in the first chapter of *Capital*, Marx unveiled the secrets of these magical powers of money by tracing them to the forms of value acquired by the commodity in the course of its evolution. The fetishistic character of money is derived from the fetishistic character of the commodity form of value which expresses the relations between independent producers through the medium of things. The fetish of capital which commands men's lives and labour is the ultimate expression of this fetishism of commodities.

If money in the form of capital is the supreme fetish of bourgeois society, the state which enforces the economic conditions of capitalist exploitation comes a close second. State compulsion is most harshly manifested in its penal powers, its tax powers and in its power to conscript for military service. The identity of the ordinary citizen has to be validated by documents stamped by government officials. He needs a certificate to vouch for his birth and to prove that he graduated from school, that he is married or divorced, that he may travel to other countries.

The tyranny of money and the state over the lives of people is reducible in the last analysis to the relative poverty of the social order.

Alienation between the state & society

The alienations embedded in the economic foundations of capitalism manifest themselves in a myriad ways in other parts of the social structure. They are crystallised in the opposition between the state and the members of society. The unity of US capitalism, for example, is embodied in a state organisation which is dominated and directed by representatives of the ruling monopolists.

The alienation of this government from the people in our dollar democracy is the main theme of a study of the rulers and the ruled in the United States recently, made by Professor C. Wright Mills in *The Power Elite*. Its opening paragraph reads: "The powers of ordinary men are circumscribed by the everyday worlds in which they live,

yet even in these rounds of job, family and neighbourhood, they often seem driven by forces they can neither understand nor govern. 'Great changes' are beyond their control, but affect their conduct and outlook none the less. The very framework of modern society confines them to projects not their own, but from every side, such changes now press upon the men and women of the mass society, who accordingly feel that they are without purpose in an epoch in which they are without power."

Mills sums up the extreme polarisation of power in our society by declaring that the big business men, statesmen and brass hats composing the power elite appear to the impotent mass as "all that we are not". To be sure, even under the current conformity, the population is not so stultified and inert as Mills and his fellow academic sociologists make out. The Negro struggle for equality and the periodic strikes among the industrial workers indicate that much is stirring below the surface.

But it cannot be denied that the power of labour is largely untapped, unorganised, and so misdirected that its potential remains hidden even from its possessors. The policies of the union leaders help the spokesmen for "the power elite" to keep the people from envisioning the immense political strength they could wield for their own cause. They thereby keep the working class alienated from its rightful place in American political life as leader and organiser of the whole nation. This role is handed over by default to the capitalist parties.

However, the dispossession of the working class from its historical functions will not be maintained forever. Sooner or later, the labour movement will be obliged to tear loose from its subordination to alien class political organisations and form its independent political party. This will be the beginning of a process of political self-realisation, an ascent to the position of supremacy now held by the capitalist minority. If today the plutocracy is, to the masses "all that we are not", the struggle for socialism can bring about the Great Reversal when "we who have been naught, shall be all".

Alienation of science from society

The basic class antagonisms in economics and politics distort the relations of people in all other domains of life under capitalism from their emotional responses to one another up to their most general ideas. This has been felt and expressed in much of the art and literature of the bourgeois epoch. The estrangement of the creative artist from the bourgeois environment, which buffets him between crass commercialism and cruel indifference, has been a perennial scandal. The cries of protest in the works of such contemporary American writers as Henry Miller and Norman Mailer testify that this remains a running sore.

Something new has been added to this schism between the intellectuals and the

ruling class in our own day. This is the breach that suddenly opened up between the scientists and the monopolists with the advent of the atomic bomb.

Capitalist society in its progressive period was the foster father of modern natural science and for several centuries the two pulled forward together. Most scientists in the English-speaking world took the preestablished harmony of the two so much for granted that they went about their work without concern over its social applications and ultimate consequences. The chain reaction issuing from the release of nuclear energy blasted them out of this blind comfort.

From 1942 on, nuclear physicists have found themselves in the most excruciating dilemma. They were dedicated to the discovery and dissemination of the truth for the good of all mankind. Yet the militarists turned their labour and its results against everything which they, as scientists and scholars, most cherished. "Freedom of science" became a mockery when the results of their research were made top secret and atomic scientists were forcibly isolated "for reasons of state" from their fellows.

The scientists became vassalised to a military machine serving predatory imperialist purposes, just as the industrial workers form part of the profit-making apparatus. Instead of helping to create a better life, their achievements dealt quicker death. Their greater command over matter and energy was cancelled by a total lack of control over its social uses.

What could be more inhuman than for the scientist to become the unwilling agent of the destruction of his own kind and the poisoner of the unborn? No wonder the most sensitive and social-minded have cried out against this violation of their vocation, this impermissible injury to their inner selves. Some have refused as "conscientious objectors" to participate in war-work; others suffered nervous breakdowns; a few even committed suicide.

Those clustered around *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* have been searching — without success — for an effective political solution. Some speak of "their collective guilt", although they are the victims and not the guilty ones. The responsibility for their intolerable predicament rests entirely upon the ruling imperialists who have thrust them into this alienated condition.

This diagnosis indicates the only way in which they can overcome that alienation. That is to join with those forces which are opposed to the imperialists and obliged to fight them.

The humanism of Erich Fromm

While the physical health of the populations in the Western world has been improving, their mental and emotional condition has been deteriorating. This is the thesis of the

recent book *The Sane Society* in which Erich Fromm undertakes a study of the psychopathology of modern life. His work is particularly pertinent because the socialist humanism he advocates is a psychological counterpart of the more literary type of humanism found in *Dissent* and *The New Reasoner*. Fromm correctly takes issue with those analysts who proceed from the premise that capitalism is rational and the task of the individual is to "adjust", that is, conform to its special requirements. On the contrary, he asserts, the system is inherently irrational, as its effects demonstrate. If men are to live productively and at peace with themselves and one another, capitalism has to go.

Fromm borrows the concept of alienation from Marx's early writings as the central tool in his analysis of what is wrong with the sterile and standardised acquisitive society of the 20th century and the main characteristics it produces in people. He makes many astute observations on the ways in which capitalism mangles human personalities.

He professes to criticise capitalism from a socialist standpoint and as an admirer of Marx. But he turns Marx upside down by declaring that Marx had a concept of man "which was essentially a religious and moral one". And Fromm himself tries to replace materialism with moralising as the theoretical basis for socialism.

This former psychoanalyst denies that the basic cause of the sickness of modern society is rooted in the relations of production, as Marxism teaches. They are just as much due to spiritual and psychological causes, he writes. Socialism has to be infused with the wisdom of the great religious leaders who taught that the inner nature of man has to be transformed as much as his external circumstances. He agrees with the Gospels that "the kingdom of heaven is within you … Socialism, and especially Marxism, has stressed the necessity of the inner changes in human beings, without which economic change can never lead to the 'good society'".

Nothing less will do the job than "simultaneous changes in the spheres of industrial and political organisation, of spiritual and psychological orientation, of character structure and of cultural activities". His practical program for curing the ills of modern society rejects the conquest of power by the workers and the nationalisation of industry and planned economy. That is the way to totalitarian regimentation, in his opinion.

He proposes the establishment of small agricultural and industrial "communities of work" as hothouses in which the laboratory conditions will be created for the cultivation of the good life. Capitalist society is to be reconstructed and humanity regenerated through utopian colonies like those advocated by Owen, Fourier, Proudhon and Kropotkin, which were tried and found wanting over a century ago in the United States.

Thus the "communitarian socialism" of this humanist turns out to be a faded copy

of the utopian fantasies of the last century. It is a form of flight from the real facts of modern technology which demand large-scale production on a universal scale to sustain and elevate the expanding population of the globe. It is also an evasion of the pressing tasks involved in eliminating the evils of capitalist reaction and Stalinism, because it alienates itself in theory and in practice from revolutionary Marxism. This is the only social movement, class power and political program that can effectively abolish the rule of monopoly capitalism, uproot Stalinism, and create the material setting for a free and equal social system.

Is alienation everlasting?

Are the alienations from which man suffers incurable? This is the contention of the Catholic Church, pessimistic Protestant theologians like Reinhold Niebuhr, existentialist followers of Kierkegaard, and some interpreters of Freud. They picture man as eternally torn and tormented by irreconcilable aims and impulses, doomed to despair and disappointment in the unending war between his deepest spiritual aspirations and his insuperable limitations as an earthbound mortal.

The historical materialists squarely oppose all such preachers of original sin. Mankind does not have eternal insurmountable failings which have to be compensated for by the fictitious consolations of the church, the mystical intuitions of idealist philosophers, or the infinitely repeated but ever defeated efforts at self-transcendence of the existentialists. The real alienations which cripple and warp humanity have ascertainable historical roots and material causes. Far from being eternal, they have, as has been indicated, already shifted their axis in the course of social development from the contest between society and nature to the conflicts within the social structure.

These internal social antagonisms are not everlasting. They do not spring from any intrinsic and inescapable evil in the nature of mankind as a species. They were generated by specific historico-social conditions which have been uncovered and can be explained.

Now that mankind has acquired superiority over nature through triumphs of technology and science, the next great step is to gain collective control over the blind forces of society. There is only one conscious agency in present-day life strong enough and strategically placed to shoulder and carry through this imperative task, says Marxism. That is the force of alienated labour incorporated in the industrial working class.

The material means for liberating mankind can be brought into existence only through the world socialist revolution which will concentrate political and economic power in the hands of the working people. Planned economy of a socialist type on an

international scale will not only enable mankind to regain mastery over the means of life; it will immeasurably enhance that collective control. The reconstruction of social relations will complete the mastery of nature for social purposes initiated under class society, and thereby abolish the conditions which in the past permitted, and even necessitated, the subjugation of man to man, the rule of the many by the few.

Once everyone's primary needs are capable of satisfaction, abundance reigns, and the labour time required to produce the necessities of life is reduced to the minimum, then the stage will be set for the abolition of all forms of alienation and for the rounded development of all persons, not at the expense of one another, but in fraternal relation.

The abolition of private property must be followed by the wiping out of national barriers. The resultant increase in the productive capacities of society will prepare the way for the elimination of the traditional antagonisms between physical and intellectual workers, between the inhabitants of the city and the country, between the advanced and the undeveloped nations.

These are the indispensable prerequisites for building a harmonious, integrated, inwardly stable and constantly developing system of social relations. When all compulsory inequalities in social status, in conditions of life and labour, and in access to the means of self-development are done away with, then the manifestations of these material inequalities in the alienation of one section of society from another will wither away. This in turn will foster the conditions for the formation of harmonious individuals no longer at war with each other — or within themselves.

Such are the radiant prospects held out by the socialist revolution and its reorganisation of society as projected by the masters of Marxism.

Prime cause of alienation in deformed workers' states

This, too, was the goal toward which the Soviet Union, the product of the first successful workers' revolution, was heading under the Stalinist regime, honest communists believed. Had they not been assured by Stalin that socialism had already been realised in the Soviet Union and it was on the way to the higher stage of communism?

Khrushchev has parroted these claims. But his own disclosures at the 20th Congress and the outbursts of opposition in the Soviet zone since then have ripped through the delusion that a socialist society has already been consummated there. The false ideological structure fabricated by the Communist Party machine lies shattered. How are the pieces to be put together again, and in what pattern?

The first thing that has to be done is to go back and cheek what actually exists in the Soviet Union at its present point of development with the fundamentals of Marxist

theory. In their own way some of the "humane" socialists try to do this. "It was assumed", Thompson, editor of the *New Reasoner*, writes, "that all forms of human oppression were rooted, ultimately, in the economic oppression arising from the private ownership of the means of production; and that once these were socialised, the ending of the other oppressions would *rapidly* ensue." (My italics.)

This proposition of historical materialism retains its full validity, even though the humanist critics question it. What, then, went wrong? Taken by itself, this historical generalisation is an abstract standard which has to be wedded to existing facts and their state of development in order to become concrete and fruitful. *The essence of the matter lies in the verbal modifier, "rapidly"*. Between the ending of capitalist private ownership and the elevation of the nationalised means of production to the level of socialist abundance there has to be a transition period in which features carried over from the old bourgeois order are intermingled with the fundamental institutions of the new society in the making.

In the case of the Soviet Union this intermediate period was neither so short nor so favourable in its setting as the forecasts of Marx and Lenin anticipated. This historical stage has stretched out over four agonisingly difficult decades and is still far from concluded. The obligation of a scientific socialist is to study the real conditions of the economic and social development of the first workers' state over these 40 years in the light of all the guiding generalisations of his method. He must inquire to what extent the material circumstances have approached the theoretical norm; wherein they fell short and why; and then determine the ways and means required to bridge the gap between the existing state of affairs and the ideal standard.

Thompson and his fellow humanists, however, dismayed by the filthy features of Stalinism suddenly bared to their vision, proceed quite differently. They carelessly toss out the historical generalisations, which condense within themselves an immense wealth of experience and analysis of social development, along with their disfigured expressions in real life. This is not the first time that well-intentioned radicals, thrown off balance by the contradiction between the standards of what a workers' state should be and its political degeneration under the Stalinist regime, have rejected both the theoretical norm and the existing reality. After having been cradled so long in illusions, they cannot face the objective historical facts of the Soviet structure.

Marxist sociology, however, demands that the facts as they are be taken as the starting point for theory and action. What are these facts?

In June 1957 Khrushchev swore over TV that there are no contradictions in Soviet society. This was no more credible than his assertion that all was well with the new "collective leadership" — shortly before Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovitch and other

dignitaries were cashiered. The more prudent Mao Tse-tung admitted that certain types of contradiction can exist between the government and the people in the workers' states but that those in China, and by inference the Soviet Union, are exclusively of the non-antagonistic, nonviolent kind.

The divergences between the bureaucrats and the masses in the Soviet Union which have produced the all-powerful states give the lie to these theoretical pretensions of the leaders in Moscow and Peking. How is this estrangement between the rulers and the ruled to be explained?

The taking of power by the workers and public ownership of the means of production, especially in backward countries, cannot in and of itself and all at once usher in socialism. These achievements simply lay down the political and legal conditions for the construction of the new society, In order to arrive at socialism, the productive forces have to be promoted to the point where consumer goods are cheaper and more plentiful than under the most beneficent capitalism.

This cannot be attained within the confines of a single country, as the orthodox Stalinists claim, or by adding up separated national units, each following "its own road to socialism", as the dissident Stalinists maintain. The poverty in consumer goods arising from the inferior productivity of the economy divorced from world resources is the material source for the growth and maintenance of malignant bureaucratic tumours within the most "liberal" of the workers' states.

In principle, in essence, the prime causes of the alienation of labour *under capitalism* — private property in the means of production and the anarchy of the profit system — have been eradicated in the Soviet countries. Thanks to nationalisation of basic industry, control of foreign trade and planned economy, the working people there are no longer separated from the material means of production but are reunited with them in a new and higher form.

However, these anticapitalist measures and methods do not dispose of the problems of Soviet economy. Far from it. To uproot the social alienations inherited from the barbarous past, the workers' states require not only a powerful heavy industry but also a well-proportioned economy that can provide the necessities and comforts of life in increasing volume to all sections of the people.

Not one of the existing postcapitalist states has raised its economy anywhere near that point. These states have not yet even approached the productivity in the sphere of subsistence and the means of culture attained by the most advanced capitalist countries. The prevailing scarcities have resulted in tense struggles among the various sectors of their population over the division of the restricted national income. In these struggles the bureaucratic caste which has cornered all the instruments of political power plays

the commanding role. The rulers decide who gets what and how much. They never forget to place themselves at the head of the table.

There is no exploitation of labour as in capitalist society. But there are sharp distinctions between the haves, who make up a small minority, and the have-nots, the majority of the working population. The manifest inequalities in the distribution of available goods and amenities erode the ties of solidarity between various parts of the population and dig deep-going differences in their living standards, even where these are somewhat improved. In this sense, the product of their labour still escapes the control of the producers themselves. When it enters the domain of distribution, their production passes under the control of the uncontrolled bureaucracy. In this way their own production, concentrated in the hands of omnipotent administrators, once again confronts the masses as an alien and opposing force.

Herein is the principal source, the material basis, of the alienation of rulers and ruled in the degenerated and deformed workers' states of the Soviet zone. Their antagonisms express the growth of two opposing tendencies in the economic structure: one carried over from the bourgeois past, the other preparing the socialist future. The socialist foundations of nationalised industry and planned economy in the field of production are yoked to bureaucratically administered bourgeois standards which determine the maldistribution of the inadequate supplies of consumer goods.

The development of these two contradictory tendencies is responsible for the friction which threatens to flare up into explosive conflicts.

The ultra-bureaucratic state & the workers

Why don't the workers have control over the distribution of their product? Because they have either lost direct democratic control over the state apparatus, as in the Soviet Union, or have yet to acquire it, as in the Eastern European satellites and China. Just as the workers should enjoy higher living standards under socialism than under capitalism, so in a normal workers' state they should participate far more fully in the administration of public functions, enjoy more freedom and have more rights than under the most democratic of the bourgeois regimes.

There was a foretaste, and a solemn pledge, that such would be the case in the seething democracy that characterised the first years of the Soviet Republic. The subsequent political victory of the bureaucratic upstarts reduced to zero the democratic functioning of the Communist Party, the trade unions, the Soviets, the youth and cultural organisations, the army and other institutions. The powers and rights supposedly guaranteed to the people by the Soviet Constitution were in practice nullified by the centralised caste governing through Stalin's one-man dictatorship.

This autocratic system of political repression fortified the economic suppression. Through the spy system and the secret police, the jails and concentration camps, the penal powers of the state were directed far less against the forces of the overturned order than against the workers who were the bearers of the new order.

Instead of being an agency for carrying out the decisions of the people, the ultra-bureaucratised state confronted the workers and peasants, the intellectuals and youth, as well as the subject nationalities, as a parasitic, oppressive and hostile force which they yearn to throw off their backs.

Organisation of industry

Lenin envisaged, and the program of the Bolsheviks stated, that the workers would control and manage industry through their elected representatives. Instead, the division of economic functions which excludes the workers under capitalism from exercising their initiative, intelligence and will has been recreated in new forms under the bureaucratic maladministration of the Soviet economy.

"The universal brain" which supervises production is no longer the capitalists — but it is also not yet the workers as it should be under a genuine Soviet democracy. The hierarchy of bureaucrats arrogated all major powers of decision to themselves under the successive five-year plans. Orders were issued from the single centralised command post in Moscow, even on matters of detail. All science and judgment were vested in appointed officials. Khrushchev's recent decentralisation of industrial management has modified but not essentially changed this setup.

The workers neither propose nor dispose freely of their energies in the labour process. They do not initiate the plan, participate in its formulation, decide its allotments, apply, oversee, and cheek up on its operation and results. They are relegated to the role of passive objects, subjected to unremitting exhortations and harsh forms of pressure to perform their tasks better.

The workers on the job are speeded up by means of piecework and arbitrary setting of work norms. Until the recent reforms they were chained to their jobs in the factories by workbooks and internal passports and liable to severe penalties for infractions of the rules and for being minutes late to work. They have no right to strike against intolerable conditions.

Meanwhile they see the multiplication of parasites in directing positions and gross mismanagement of the nation's resources. Reports by Soviet officials themselves have cited many instances of such industrial waste and disorganisation.

Thus the plan of production which should be collectively adopted and carried through by the producing masses appears as an alien pattern imposed upon them by

heartless functionaries in disregard of their wishes and welfare.

Dictatorship of the lie

The Soviet bureaucracy is itself the living embodiment of a gigantic fraud. This privileged, antisocialist force is obliged to parade as the representative and continuator of the greatest movement for equality and justice in history while riding roughshod over the most elementary needs and feelings of the working people. This immense disparity between its progressive pretensions and its reactionary course is at the bottom of the hypocrisy and deceit that mark Stalinised regimes.

Their dictatorship of the lie permeated every department of Soviet life. From the top to the lower depths the Soviet people were forced to lead double lives: one for public show conforming to the official line of the moment; the other, of suppressed resentment and frustration at their inability to express their real thoughts and emotions lest they be handed over to the Inquisition.

They became alienated from the regime which alienated them from their deepest thoughts and feelings and from one another. "The worst in our system was not the poverty, the lack of the most essential necessities, but the fact that this system made life one great big lie, having to listen to lies, to read lies every hour of the day, all day long, and being forced to lie oneself in turn", a nameless Budapest intellectual complained to a German reporter.

The revulsion against such spiritual degradation was one of the main causes behind the uprising of Hungarian and Polish intellectuals and youth. It is also one of the main themes of the newly awakened, critical-minded generation of Soviet writers. They are articulating as best they can the rankling protest against regimentation of cultural, scientific and artistic activities; against the suffocating atmosphere of double-talking and double-dealing; against official impostures that not only stifle creative work but make even normalised existence difficult.

In the "People's Democracies" of Eastern Europe, in the Baltic countries, the Ukraine and other oppressed nations within the Soviet Union itself there is another source of resentment: the grievance against a Great Russian regime which governs heedless of the special demands, traditions, autonomy and interests of the oppressed nationality.

Cult of the individual

Religion is primarily the product of mankind's lack of control over the forces of nature and society. The socialist movement has as one of its objectives the abolition of the material conditions which permit such degrading fictions to stunt men's outlooks and cramp their lives.

The influence of orthodox religion has been considerably curtailed by atheist education in the Soviet Union since the Revolution. But in its stead there arose that secular "cult of the individual," the deification of Stalin. This revival of idolatry is all the more startling and paradoxical because it emerged, not from the most unenlightened strata of the population, but on the very heights of the ruling Communist Party which was avowedly guided by the materialist philosophy of Marxism. The working class anthem, the *Internationale*, says: "We need no god-given saviours." Yet the Soviet peoples and the communist parties were indoctrinated with the myth of the infallibility of the all-wise "saviour" in the Kremlin.

How did the practices of the Roman and Byzantine empires, which deified its emperors, become duplicated in the first workers' state?

The answer is not to be found in the exceptional virtues or vices of Stalin but rather in the role he performed for the privileged bureaucratic caste. Having elevated itself as the sole ruling power, it could no more practice democracy within its own circle than it could permit democracy in the country as a whole. It was necessary to find other means of solving the internal problems and conflicts. The means had to be in consonance with the methods of rule: autocratic, violent and deceitful.

Stalin took supreme command, and held it unchallenged for so long, because he best fulfilled the assigned function of the ruthless, all-powerful, omniscient arbiter. Just as the bureaucracy settled everything in the country, "the man of steel" decided everything within the bureaucracy and for it.

The power of the gods, indeed, their very existence, was at bottom derived from the powerlessness of the people in the face of society and nature. So the almighty power of the idolised Stalin was based upon the total usurpation of power from the people. The cult of the individual, so persistently inculcated for decades, was its end-product. The raising of Stalin to superhuman heights was the other side of the political degradation of the Soviet workers.

The breakup of the cult of the individual has been brought about by the reverse process: the growing strength of the Soviet working class and the weakening of the positions of the bureaucracy as a result of the postwar developments. Stalin's heirs are trying — without much success — to substitute the more impersonal cult of the bureaucracy under the title of "the collective leadership" for the downgraded cult of the individual.

When the people get off their knees, the high and mighty rulers no longer loom so large. As the workers regain their self-confidence and feel their collective strength, their former prostration before fabricated idols vanishes. The outraged revolutionists of Budapest who pulled down the statue of Stalin on the first day of their uprising

showed by that symbolic act the fate in store for all the bureaucratic overlords.

The cure for bureaucratism

The experience of the postcapitalist regimes over the past 40 years has shown that the danger of bureaucratic distortion and degeneration of the workers states in the transitional period from capitalism to socialism is genuine.

This danger does not flow from any innate evil in a human nature which has an unslakeable thirst for power, as the moralisers insist. It arises from the surrounding material conditions, from the inadequacy of the powers of production to satisfy the wants of the people, even under the most progressive social forms. This economic situation enables the specialists in administration to mount once more upon the backs of the masses and erect their regime, for a time, into an instrument of oppression. The more impoverished and undeveloped the country is, the more menacing this danger becomes. While overproduction is the curse of capitalist economy, underproduction is the curse of the socialised economies.

The causes and character of the malady which has infected the first workers' states indicate the measures that must be taken to counteract it, so far as that is possible under the given circumstances. *The prescription for the cure is nothing less than democratic control of both the government and the economy by the masses of working people.*

The real power must be exercised through councils freely elected by the manual and intellectual workers of city and country. Their democratic rights should include freedom of organisation and propaganda by all parties which recognise and abide by the gains of the revolution; freedom of the press; all public functionaries to be under the control of the electorate with the right of recall of representatives on all levels.

There must be such political reforms as the restoration of democracy within the workers' parties with control of the leadership and policies by their members; the restriction of the income of officials to that of the most skilled workers; the drawing of the people into the administration of public functions; the abolition of the secret police, internal passports, labour camps for political dissenters and other abominations.

In the economic domain the workers must have control over national planning and its execution on all levels and at all stages so that timely reviews can be made of results in the light of actual experience. Wage standards and other means of distribution must be revised so that inequalities can be reduced to the minimum. The trade unions should have the right to strike in order to safeguard the workers against mistakes and abuses of their government.

All nationalities should have the right to be independent or to federate, if desired,

in a fraternal and equal association of states.

Such measures would add up to a revolutionary change in the structure and operation of the existing workers' states, a salutary change from bureaucratic autocracy to workers' democracy.

How is such a transformation to be accomplished' Not by concessions doled out from above by "enlightened absolutism" or a frightened officialdom but through direct action by the working people themselves. They will have to take by revolutionary means the rights of rulership which belong to them, which were promised by the Marxist program, and which were denied them by the bureaucratic usurpers.

Stalinism & capitalism

The "humane" Socialists bracket Stalinism with capitalism because both, they say, subjugate men to things and sacrifice the creative capacities of mankind to the Moloch of economic necessity. Let us agree that, despite their opposing economic foundations, the Stalinist regimes do exhibit many similarities with the states of the capitalist world. But these points of identity do not arise from their common exaltation of things above men. They have a different origin.

Under the guise of defending the free personality against the coercion of things, the neo-humanists are really rebelling against the facts of life formulated in the theory of historical materialism. All societies have been subject to severe economic constraint and must remain so up to the advent of future communism. The less productive a society is and the poorer in the means of subsistence and culture, the harsher these forms of constraint must be. The mass of mankind must labour under this lash until they raise the powers of production to the point where everyone's needs can be taken care of in a work week of 10 hours or less.

This reduction of necessary labour will free people from the traditional social load that has weighed them down and enable them to devote most of their time to general social welfare activity and personal pursuits and pastimes. Recent developments in science, technology and industry from nuclear energy to automation place such a goal within sight. But our society is still quite a distance from this promised land.

The means for such freedom cannot be provided under capitalism. They have not yet been created in the transitional societies that have passed beyond capitalism. So long as the workers have to toil long hours daily to acquire the bare necessities of existence and compete with one another for them, they cannot administer the general affairs of society or properly develop their creative capacities as free human beings. Such social functions as government, the management of industry, the practice of science and the arts will continue to be vested in specialists. Taking advantage of their posts of command,

these specialists have raised themselves above the masses and come to dominate them.

It is out of these economic and social conditions that the ultra-bureaucratic police regimes of the workers' states have arisen. There, as under capitalism, though in different forms, the privileged minority prospers at the expense of the labours of the majority.

The evils of Stalinism do not come from recognising the material limitations of production or acting in accord with them. Even the healthiest workers' regime would have to take these into account. The crimes of Stalinism consist in placing the interests and demands of favoured functionaries before the welfare of the people and above the needs of development towards socialism; in fostering inequalities instead of consciously and consistently diminishing them; in concealing both the privileges of aristocrats and the deprivations of plebeians; in stripping the workers of their democratic rights — and trying to pass off these abominations as "socialism".

The task of eradicating the scourge of bureaucratism in the anticapitalist states is inseparable from the task of abolishing bourgeois rule in capitalist countries. The role of the Kremlin hierarchy has been no less pernicious in foreign affairs than at home. If the menace of imperialist intervention has helped the bureaucracy to maintain its power, its international policies in turn have been a prime political factor in saving capitalist rule from being overthrown by the workers.

By imposing policies of class collaboration upon the communist parties, Stalin rescued tottering capitalist regimes in Western Europe at the end of the Second World War. At the same congress where he made his secret report on Stalin's crimes (omitting this one, among others) Khrushchev made a declaration of policy on "new roads to socialism" which was essentially Stalin's old course rendered more explicit. He stated that Lenin's analysis of the imperialist stage of capitalism and the revolutionary struggle of the workers against it was outmoded by new world-historical conditions. According to Khrushchev, not only are there no conflicts within Soviet society but even the contradictions between monopolist reaction and the workers which provoked revolutionary actions in the past have become softened. The existing capitalist regimes may now, under certain conditions, be magically transformed into People's Democracies by reformist methods and through purely parliamentary channels.

The Stalinist bureaucracy, and the parties it controls do not propose to follow the path of leading the revolutionary activities of the masses to the conquest of power. They rather seek a general agreement with Western capitalists to freeze the present map of the world and its relationship of class forces.

This reciprocal reliance of capitalist rulership upon Stalinist opportunism, and

Stalinist opportunism upon "peace loving" capitalists, whereby one sustains the other at the expense of the world working class, can be broken up only by an international movement of the masses which is both consistently anti-imperialist and anti-Stalinist.

Toward the abolition of alienation

The question of alienation ultimately merges with the long-standing problem of the relation between human freedom and social necessity. Socialism promised freedom, cry the new humanists, but see what terrible despotism it has begotten under Stalinism. "Are men doomed to become the slaves of the times in which they live, even when, after irrepressible and tireless effort, they have climbed so high as to become the masters of the time?" asks the imprisoned ex-communist leader and newly-converted social-democrat Milovan Djilas in the autobiography of his youth, *Land Without Justice*.

How does historical materialism answer this question? The extent of man's freedom in the past was rigidly circumscribed by the degree of effective control society exercised over the material conditions of life. The savage who had to spend most of his waking hours every day of the year chasing after food had little freedom to do anything else. This same restriction upon the scope of human action and cultural development has persisted through civilisation for the bulk of mankind — and for the same economic reasons.

If people suffer today from the tyranny of money or from the tyranny of the state, it is because their productive systems, regardless of its property forms, cannot at their present state of development take care of all their physical and cultural needs. In order to throw off these forms of social coercion, it is necessary to raise the powers of social production — and, in order to raise these powers, it is necessary to get rid of the reactionary social forces which hold them back.

Scientific socialists can agree with the new humanists that it is necessary to live up to the highest moral standards. They recognise that the desires for justice, tolerance, equality and self-respect have become as much a part of civilised life as the needs for food, clothing and shelter. Marxism would not be fit to serve as the philosophical guide of the most enlightened people of our time if it failed to take these demands into account.

But that is only one side of the problem. Until their basic material requirements are actually assured for everyone, the higher activities are stunted and social relations must remain un-humanised. The forces of reaction, whose codes and conduct are governed by the will to defend their power, property, and privileges at any price, determine the moral climate far more than their opponents who have more elevated

aims and ideals.

It would be more "humane" for the Western imperialists to withdraw quietly from their colonial domains, instead of fighting to hold them. But the actions of the French in Algeria again prove that ruthless terror, not peaceful reason, is more likely to prevail.

From the economic, cultural and ethical standpoints, it would be preferable if the monied magnates would recognise that their usefulness is finished and consent to yield their possessions and power to the socialist workers movement by mutual agreement between the contending classes. So far history has not provided any such sensible and straightforward solution to the transition from capitalism to socialism.

The principal task before the Soviet people is to get rid of the archaic monstrosity of their totalitarian political structure. It would be best if the Stalinist leaders would give up their functions as an oppressive ruling caste, grant independence to their satellites, and return complete power to their own people. But the case of Hungary indicates that they are unlikely to cede their commanding positions gracefully, gradually or easily,

"Humane" and "reasonable" solutions to the fundamental social problems of our time are blocked by these bulwarks of reaction. That is why the anticapitalist revolutions in the advanced countries, the anti-imperialist movements in the colonies, and the antibureaucratic struggles in the Soviet zone will have to be brought to successful conclusions before the causes of the antagonisms which plague mankind can be eliminated.

Over a century ago Marx emphasised that men cannot behave according to truly human standards until they live under truly human conditions. Only when the material conditions of their existence are radically transformed, when all their time becomes available for freely chosen pursuits, can they throw off the contradictory relations which have tormented mankind with separatism and conflict.

The aim of socialism is to introduce the rule of reason into all human activities. The alienations from which men suffer have been produced and perpetuated by the unconscious operation of uncontrollable natural and social forces. Socialism will eradicate the sources of alienation by bringing under conscious control all those hitherto unmanageable forces which have crippled mankind, frustrated its deepest aspirations, and thwarted its full and free development in any desired direction.

This process will start by eliminating the irrationality, anarchy and inadequacy of the economic foundations through planned production of the necessities of life and the means of cultural development. In this age of nuclear energy, electronics and automation the linking up of the workers' republics in the industrialised countries with

those in less developed lands, can, within a measurable period, bring the productive powers of society to the point where there can be abundance for all, for the economically retarded as well as for the most advanced peoples.

As this economic goal is approached, the conditions will be prepared for the reduction of all governmental compulsions over the associations and actions of men, culminating in the abolition of man's power over man. The universal elevation of living and educational standards will break down the opposition between workers and intellectuals so that all intelligence can be put to work and all work be performed with the utmost intelligence. In this new form of social production labour can become a joyous and significant enterprise instead of an ordeal.

The progress of science will be planned to create the most worthy conditions for the all-sided improvement of humanity. The supreme aim of socialism is humanistic in the highest and deepest sense. It is nothing less than the remaking of the human race in a thoroughly conscious and scientifically planned manner.

The scientists of socialism will not only penetrate into galactic space. They will invade the remotest hiding places of matter, and especially living matter. They will systematically seek out and subdue the obscure forces at work in their own bodies and psyches, the legacy of blind animal evolution.

With knowledge and power thus acquired, humanity will become the freely creative species it has the potential of becoming. Men will recreate their natural environment, their organisms and their mutual relations as they wish them to be. To human beings of that happier time the welfare of their fellows will be the first law of their own existence.

Labour time & free time

All economy is economy of labour time and man's freedom comes down in the last analysis to freedom from compulsory labour. The expenditure of time and energy in procuring the material means of existence is an inheritance from the animal state which prevents men from leading a completely human life. Mankind will suffer from this alienation so long as it must engage in socially necessary labour.

The Bible says: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." This has been the lot of mankind throughout the ages. The members of primitive communities are the slaves of labour time as well as the members of class society. Savages, however, work only for themselves and not to enrich others.

The labouring force in class society has to produce extra wealth for the owners of the means of production in addition to their own upkeep. They are doubly enslaved by surplus labour time piled upon necessary labour time. The wage workers who are

obliged to create an ever-expanding surplus of value for the masters of capital are more intensively sweated than any other class.

It is not the socialist but the capitalist who looks upon labour as the essence of humanity and its eternal fate. Under capitalism the wage worker is treated, not as a fellow human being, but as a mechanism useful for the production of surplus value. He is a prisoner with a lifetime sentence to hard labour.

Marxism assigns the highest importance to labour activity, recognising that production of wealth beyond the mere means of subsistence has been the material basis for all advancement in civilisation. But Marxism does not make an idol of labour. For all its mighty accomplishments, to work for a living is not the height of human evolution or the ultimate career of mankind. Quite the contrary. Compulsory labour is the mark of social poverty and oppression. *Free time for all is the characteristic of a truly human existence.*

The necessity for labour remains, and may even for a time become more imperious, after capitalist relations are abolished. Although people no longer work for exploiting classes but for a collective economy, they do not yet produce enough to escape the tyranny of labour time. Under such conditions labour time remains the measure of wealth and the regulator of its distribution.

But, contrary to the situation under capitalism, the greater their powers of production grow, the closer the workers come to the hour of their release from servitude to labour. When the production of all the material necessities of life and means of culture will be taken over by automatic methods and mechanisms, requiring the minimum of superintendence, humanity will be freed to develop its distinctively human capacities and relations to the full.

The prehistory of humanity will end and its development on a truly human basis begin, when wealth of all kinds flows as freely as water and is as abundant as air and compulsory labour is supplanted by free time. Then free time enjoyed by all will be the measure of wealth, the guarantee of equality and harmony, the source of unrestricted progress and the annihilator of alienation. This is the goal of socialism, the promise of communism. ■

Appendix

Existentialism & Marxism

By Doug Lorimer

Post-structuralism, the philosophical rationale of contemporary "post-modernist discourse", presents itself as a radically new view of the world. However, in many ways it is simply a reincarnation of existentialism, which conceives of nature and society as dominated by accident and chance and stresses the meaningless of human existence.

The origins of existentialism

Existentialism was born as a bourgeois philosophical response to the crisis that World War I and its aftermath dealt to the superficially optimistic world-view and belief in progressive development of capitalist society inherent in middle-class liberalism. Its most prominent figure was Martin Heidegger.

A philosopher of irrationalism, Heidegger maintained that the chief impediment to human self-development was reason and science, which, he claimed, led to a view of humans only as objects of impersonal investigation and practical manipulation. According to Heidegger, human existence could not be understood through rational-scientific thinking or through social practice, but only by an inward-turning orientation to one's self, particularly in the contemplation of death.

Heidegger was strongly influenced by the 19th century irrationalist philosophers Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzche, and was the disciple of the German idealist philosopher Edmund Husserl.

Kierkegaard previewed many of the themes of 20th century existentialism, though in an explicitly religious context. In opposition to Hegelian determinism, Kierkegaard interpreted human existence in terms of chance and possibility. He believed that growing awareness of truth led to despair owing to the contrast between the brevity of individual human life compared to the "infinity of God". Nietzche developed an anti-

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Doug Lorimer (1953-2013) was a longtime leader of the Democratic Socialist Party.

rationalist, atheistic humanism based on an extreme individualism that distrusted all group action.

Husserl founded the philosophy of phenomenology, which he claimed superseded both materialism and idealism by rejecting all "presuppositions". He sought to eliminate any theory of knowledge and called for suspending belief about any previously known fact in the study of a particular phenomenon. The internal logic of a phenomenon was to be reconstructed from the appearances of it available to the observer. Thus far the method appeared to parallel empiricism, but Husserl then asserted that the aim of such investigation was to intuitively grasp the real essence of the phenomenon under observation. During the period of study, no consideration was to be given to the reality or non-reality of the object under examination. Thus, dreams, fantasies, and illusions were to be examined with a seriousness equal to that given to objectively indisputable existences. By 1907 Husserl had become an avowed subjective idealist, asserting that objects had no existence outside of human consciousness.

In 1928 Husserl was stripped of his university post in Freiburg, Germany, because of his Jewish origins. He spent the last years of his life as a pariah in Nazi Germany, although he was not arrested.

Martin Heidegger accepted the chair of philosophy at the University of Freiburg after his mentor was forced to relinquish it by the growing Nazi movement. Heidegger was himself a political reactionary. He supported Hitler, which led to his disgrace at the end of World War II, and his retirement in 1951 after a life of rural seclusion.

Heidegger's existentialist ideas, however, deeply influenced the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, who was to become the best known populariser of the ideas of existentialism.

Sartrean existentialism

In his early theoretical writings, culminating in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) Sartre summed up existentialism's deeply pessimistic view of life in the phrases "life is hell" and "hell is other people". By 1947, however, Sartre had begun to evolve away from the gloom and despair this view implied. He now argued that while the world was "hell" it was human beings who created the world. This implied a move away from passive self-contemplation toward an active striving for freedom, in which human action could overcome both "hells". However, this shift was still confined to a subjectivist and individualistic framework — a demand for absolute personal freedom.

From the late 1950s on, Sartre tried to marry his existentialist philosophy with the revolutionary doctrine of Marxism. In his 1960 philosophical treatise *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, for example, Sartre declared that existentialism was a subordinate

branch of Marxism which aspired to "renew" and "enrich" it.

But this "enriching" involved discarding the materialist, sociohistorical outlook of Marxism in favour of a subjectivist, individualistic approach to philosophy, sociology, morality and politics.

The whole of Sartre's philosophy revolved around the absolute primacy of the individual subject over everything objective, whether natural or social. The truth and value of human existence are to be sought exclusively within the existence of the isolated individual. "If we refuse to see the original dialectical movement in the individual and in his enterprise of producing his life, of objectifying himself, then we shall have to give up dialectic or else make of it the immanent law of history", Sartre wrote in the lengthy preface to his *Critique*.[1] That is, Sartre located dialectical development exclusively within human practice. Moreover, he considered that the dialectical development of society proceeds from the actions of the isolated individual, rather from the objective realities, laws and necessities of social life.

Marxism takes a diametrically opposite point of view: The thoughts and actions of the individual are determined by the dialectical development of society. The isolated individual — so central to existentialism's world view — is an abstraction. As Marx himself observed in his "Theses on Feuerbach" (1845): "The human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations."[2] That is, the individual, with his or her own particular personality, is the product of society. Everything distinctive about humans, from tool-making, speech and abstract thinking, to the latest products of art and technology, is the result of millions of years of social practice. Human social practice in turn is an historical outgrowth of the dialectical development of nature; the organic developing out of the inorganic; the human from the animal.

Nature, humanity, social life and labour are inseparably interconnected. What separated humanity from the rest of animal life was the practice of labour — the regular, collective production of means of subsistence through the use and fashioning of tools. Through labour prehuman primates began to transform their natural environment to serve their needs, and in the process they transformed themselves and their descendants into a qualitatively new species.

Fundamental changes in the organisation of the labour process are the basis for the dialectical development of society. Subjective components of this development — individual psychology, for example —are integral and subordinate elements of this objective historical process. Thus society is more than the sum of its individuals because it is a product of collective activity. It is only in and through society that we develop as individuals.

Existentialism, on the other hand, pictures the individual as essentially divorced from other people, confronted by an inert, irrational and hostile social environment. It champions the spontaneity of the individual against any established institution or organised movement. It is equally hostile to the social institutions of bourgeois society and to the working class's collective struggle against them. Rather than being a guide to revolutionary action, it is a philosophy that justifies the individualistic non-conformism of middle-class intellectuals.

Althusserian structuralism

In a series of essays written in the mid-1960s, French philosophy professor Louis Althusser attacked the views of the "Marxist" existentialists. However, Althusser did not defend orthodox Marxism against the later existentialists' subjective dialectics and individualistic humanism. Rather, he substituted an interpretation of Marxism that was heavily influenced by the antidialectical structuralist school of bourgeois sociology.

Whereas the "Marxist" existentialists were fixated with individual human subjects to the exclusion of social structures, Althusser produced, as Perry Anderson has noted, "a version of Marxism in which subjects were abolished altogether, save as the illusory effects of ideological structures".[3] In contrast to the former, who sought to "Hegelianise" Marxism by purging it of its materialist outlook, Althusser sought to "de-Hegelianise" Marxism, i.e., to purge it of dialectics.

"For Hegel's 'pure' principle of consciousness", Althusser argued, orthodox Marxists, "have substituted *another simple principle*, its opposite: material life, the economy …"[4] In opposition to Marx's materialist approach to social life — his recognition that the "mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life process in general"[5] — Althusser substituted an eclectic approach in which each aspect of a given social formation was regarded as a separate structure undetermined by any other. Instead of Marx's dialectical method of analysing the interconnections between social phenomena, and uncovering the underlying laws of development (contradictions) governing the origin and evolution of a given social formation, Althusser adopted the structuralist approach of analysing social phenomena in a purely synchronic and static manner.

While travelling a somewhat different road, Althusser thus arrived at the same destination as the "Marxist" existentialists he sought to combat: adoption of the liberal-pragmatist view that there are no determining laws of historical development; that there is only historical particularity produced by the accidental conjuncture of multiple and separate events.

While remaining a member of the French Communist Party, Althusser displayed

strong sympathies for Maoism. The latter's hostility to "bourgeois" humanism, its rejection of the determinative role of the productive forces in the historical process, its idealist and voluntarist conception of the class struggle, in which subjective factors (ideology and culture) take precedence over objective factors (class relations) were all highly attractive to Althusser. As a result, Althusser's structuralist interpretation of Marxism gained wide popularity among the radicalised middle-class intellectuals who were also attracted to the pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric of the Mao regime during the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" (1966-76), which also coincided with an upsurge of student and worker struggles in the West.

However, in the wake of the increasingly right-wing evolution of Mao's foreign policy from the early 1970s on (as his regime moved to take up Washington's offer of a "detente" with China) and the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy's repudiation of the policies of the Cultural Revolution after Mao's death in 1976 (and its exposure of the brutality and hypocrisy of these policies), Althusser's "Marxist" structuralism waned in popularity among the former student radicals of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Existentialism & post-structuralism

In the 1980s, the generation of middle-class youth who had radicalised in the 1960s and early 1970s had begun to enter middle age, and increasingly occupied comfortable middle-class careers in academia, in the public service and in lower managerial positions in the private sector. Their former hopes of a socialist revolution in the West had vanished. Indeed, they had ceased to even believe in the desirability of such a revolution, accepting the liberal argument that its inevitable outcome could only be a stagnant, totalitarian society, as exemplified by sclerotic Brezhnev regime in the Soviet Union. The rising prosperity of Western middle-class professionals during the 1980s — a result of the debt-driven consumption-oriented "boom" of the Reagan-Thatcher era — combined with a sense of impending global catastrophes (nuclear war, ecological collapse), plus the rejection of socialism by many of its most articulate members, to create the climate for a resurgence of many of the intellectual themes of Heideggerian existentialism, under the name of "post-structuralism".

The influence that Heidegger has exerted on the leading poststructuralists is openly acknowledged by them. Jacques Derrida, for example, explicitly situates his work as a continuation of Heidegger's thought. Michel Foucault stated not long before his death: "Heidegger has always been for me the essential philosopher."[6]

In the light of this, George' Novack's Marxist critique of existentialism continues to have relevance today.■

Notes

About the author

1 Novack, *Polemics in Marxist Philosophy* (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1978), p. 37.

Uneven & Combined Development in History

1 Lenin, "Letters from Afar", *Collected Works*, Vol. 23 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1964), p. 302. (The translation is slightly different to that given here.)

2 Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (Monad Press: New York, 1980), Vol. 1, p. 5.

3 Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works*, Vol. I (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1977), p. 635.

4 Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. 1, p. 5.

5 Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1972), p. 299.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 300.

Is Nature Dialectical?

1 The stenograph of this debate was published as *Marxisme et Existentialisme* (Libraire Plon: Paris, 1962).

Trotsky's Views on Dialectical Materialism

1 Trotsky's contributions to the theoretical debate are collected in the book *In Defence of Marxism* (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1973); Burnham's article "Science and Style" is included as an appendix.

2 *In Defence of Marxism*, p. 196.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

7 Ibid. p. 51.

8 Trotsky, "Radio, Science, Technology and Society", *Problems of Everyday Life* (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1973), pp. 252-253.
9 Trotsky, *My Life* (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1970), p. 122.
10 Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution & Results and Prospects* (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1969), p. 64.
11 *Ibid.*, p. 65.
12 *Ibid.*, p. 63.
13 Trotsky, *Marxism in Our Time* (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1970), pp. 8-9.
14 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
15 *In Defence of Marxism*, p. 129.
16 *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119.
17 *Ibid.*, p. 119.
18 Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (Monad Press: New York, 1980), Vol. 1, p. 52.
19 Trotsky, "What Is National Socialism?", *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1971), p. 399.
20 *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. 1, p. 52.
21 *Ibid.*, p. 95.
22 Trotsky, *The Case of Leon Trotsky* (Merit Publishers: New York, 1968), p. 581.
23 Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. 1, p. 93.
24 Trotsky, *My Life*, pp. 334-335.
25 Trotsky, "Testament", *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)* (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1973), pp. 158-159.
26 *Ibid.*, p. 159.

Appendix: Existentialism & Marxism

1 Sartre, *The Problem of Method* (Methuen; London, 1964), p. 161.
2 Marx et al, Marxism, *Socialism and Religion* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 2001), p. 22.
3 Anderson, *In The Tracks of Historical Materialism* (Verso Books: London, 1983), p. 14.
4 Althusser, *For Marx* (Pantheon; New York, 1969), p. 108.
5 Marx, "Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*", *Selected Works*, Vol. 1 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1969), p. 503.
6 Quoted in Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism* (Polity Press: London, 1989), p. 72.■

Beginning with the aptly-named essay on "the long view of history", this collection of writings brings a dynamic Marxist perspective to key questions of historical development.

Humanity's climb to civilisation, the role of the individual in making history, uneven and combined development, transitional formations, and the relationship between sociology and Marxism are some of the topics addressed.

Other articles take up important philosophical issues such as the compatibility of Marxism and existentialism, the applicability of dialectical materialism to nature, and alienation.

Radicalising during the Depression, George Novack (1905-92) was a longtime activist in the US Socialist Workers Party. He wrote widely from a Marxist standpoint on key questions of history and philosophy.

Resistance books