

alliance with the big monopolists who wield enormous economic power and are closely connected with many leaders of the ruling party.”

This influence was revealed in the pressure upon the Nehru Government to dissolve the Kerala State Government which was led by Communists, in the suppression of trade union struggles for higher wages, and in the opposition to drastic land reform.

India's reactionary parties and the right-wing in leading Congress circles have the backing of United States and British imperialism in the pressure for reducing the public sector and increasing

the private sector of production, and to abandon India's policy of non-alignment. Indian monopoly circles hope to make bigger profits from the new gigantic arms programme. The result is that India's poverty-stricken masses are being urged to tighten their belts for further sacrifices.

Whatever happens in the efforts to settle India's differences with China depends primarily on the struggle of its people against foreign domination and Indian monopoly capital. Only then will the real voice of the Indian masses exert itself in the cause of world peace and friendly relations with all countries.

Philosophical Revisionism

William Ash

IN a very interesting little book, *The Philosophy of Man*,¹ Adam Schaff, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Warsaw and a member of the Central Committee of the Polish Working People's Party, applies a Marxist analysis to the ideological ferment which has characterised the intellectual life of Poland over the last few years. This is an important subject for consideration since many propagandists in the so-called "free world" affect to find in Poland the brightest prospects for "liberalisation" and the assertion of "individual freedom". What they really mean, of course, is that the hankering after bourgeois forms of art and philosophy by a section of the Polish intelligentsia encourages the hope that the advance of socialism itself might be retarded there or even reversed.

Professor Schaff believes that a failure to provide an adequate Marxist explanation of mistakes and distortions in the difficult period of laying the foundations of a socialist society enabled certain "moralisers" to turn criticisms of the application of Marxism into an attack on Marxism itself. He also argues that in not developing the full implications of Marxism in respect to individuals and their personal relationships an area of life was left undefended against the invasion of bourgeois ideas. "This deficiency is demonstrated by the fact that the Revisionist tendency in our country has borrowed heavily from Existentialism and has in fact been sailing under its flag."

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Existentialism

It is easy enough to understand why Sartre's French version of Existentialism should be the specific philosophical guise adopted by certain revisionists in Poland. In eastern Europe, where there were no indigenous bourgeois revolutions, middle class intellectuals long tended to look to France as the original source of liberal ideas. It is only natural that in the changed circumstances of today those out of sympathy with the effort to build socialism should once more borrow their ideological weapons from the same armoury. But there is a more particular reason why Sartre's philosophy suits their purpose. Since he has attempted to combine an existentialist account of the plight of the individual with a Marxist account of society and its dynamics, the latter aspect of his thought provides a convenient cover for smuggling in the bourgeois idealism implicit in the former.

In spite of its incorporation of certain Marxist elements, in spite of its superficial differences from earlier schools of thought, existentialism is unquestionably a form of bourgeois idealism. Although Sartre derives a philosophy of anxiety and despair from the absolute freedom of the individual on which optimistic philosophies were once based, this is not because existentialism is any the less bourgeois but only because the bourgeoisie itself no longer enjoys an undisturbed vista of the continuous progress of humanity under its benign rule.

The very fact that in different social contexts the doctrine of the sovereign individual will can result in such different attitudes toward life practically amounts to a refutation of any idea that the individual "is the independent creator of his own destiny". The class character of existentialism is further demonstrated by the nature of those to whom it appeals—certainly not the toiling masses of Venezuela or Vietnam or France itself. It is an earnest of Marxism's promise of a classless society that it speaks a language simple enough to be grasped immediately by the exploited millions who are the agents through struggle of social change and yet sophisticated enough to convince, if so far only partially, as urbane, though good-hearted, a bourgeois intellectual as Sartre.

The Individual and Society

And yet it is not logically possible to combine such disparate elements as existentialism and Marxism in one synthetic philosophy. The basic existentialist contention that "existence is prior to essence" has entirely different consequences from the Marxist thesis that "the social existence of men determines their consciousness". The abstract principle of the priority of existence over essence simply means, as developed by Sartre, that the individual in isolation determines his own being by the free exercise of choice. In so far as his being involves relations with others, he creates those very relationships by the way he chooses to act from an original voluntarism. This, of course, is merely a social application of solipsism, the philosophical cul-de-sac in which bourgeois idealism always finally fetches up.

What looks like a concession on Sartre's part in admitting that only Marxism can account for the dynamics of a society in movement proves to be meaningless as long as he maintains as the starting point of his philosophy the "free individual". Not only is "freedom" an empty term in respect to an individual conceived to begin with as completely detached from social influences, but also no multiplication of such abstract individuals would ever add up to a concrete society. From his existentialist account of the individual there is no logical way for Sartre to advance to the realm of those actual social events of which he is prepared to accept a Marxist analysis.

Marxism, however, which does not philosophise about man in the abstract but deals with specific men as they have developed in this or that actual form of social organisation, is equipped to draw scientific conclusions about society and also to provide a reasonable account of individuals

whose very attitudes are social products. Professor Schaff believes that Marxists, while possessed of the necessary dialectic for explaining the nature of man-in-society, have paid insufficient attention to individual hopes and fears and have thus allowed various forms of religion to win assent for their absolutist answers to certain human questions. Existentialism itself, even when professing to be atheistic, is just such a religion. Instead of postulating a god who has given man freedom of choice in order to condemn him for his action in a world he is not responsible for, Sartre makes man himself his own judge in respect to the use of his freedom of choice in a situation he does not control. Hence the self-loathing and despair which is not unlike the pessimism found in the writings of monks.

But although existentialism cannot solve the questions it raises, Professor Schaff argues that the questions themselves must be considered—"questions of personal responsibility for one's actions, including political action in situations involving conflicts between opposing moral standards; questions also of the individual's place and role in the world, which may be expressed loosely as the meaning of life." Considering such problems in a Marxist way involves deriving from the general principles of historical materialism such propositions of socialist humanism, as:

"the specific understanding of the individual as a social product—as a product of the totality of social relations; the specific understanding of the relation of the individual to society on the basis of a materialist conception of social development; and the recognition that ideals can be realised only under given social conditions, without which recognition they degenerate into utopias. . . . The socialist humanist is persuaded that he can find personal happiness only through the happiness of society."

Socialist Humanism

But this socialist humanism must be clearly distinguished by its concrete and militant nature from moralistic humanism:

"Socialist humanism is concerned with the realisation of humanist aims under the concrete conditions of modern society divided by class struggles. It hence demands not only love for the people, but hatred of their enemies. . . . In real life we are confronted, not with man in general, but with people who defend definite interests and are correspondingly motivated and organised. In real life the exploiters and oppressors are bound to oppose with all their strength the realisation of the humanist ideal, and to try to put an end to the ideology which advocates it. . . . To be a humanist does not mean to love

people in general, to advocate abstract pacifism, to reject all physical struggle. To be a humanist today, when the realisation of humanist ideals is no longer a utopia, is to be a fighter. And he who fights well must hate well."

And "just as the demand for absolute love is a mockery in conditions of struggle, so is the demand for absolute freedom. As long as there are enemies of freedom, as long as they can fight effectively, so long will it be necessary to strive to limit their freedom." Because, as Professor Schaff explains: "the freedom of one class is restricted or even destroyed by the freedom of another, and so they have different conceptions of freedom." As has already been noted, bourgeois philosophy in general takes as its point of departure the freedom of the individual, laying great stress on its liberal ideal of the "free man". But in practice this ideal proves to be the defence, as libertarian, of all social measures which insure the continuing rule of the bourgeoisie and the suppression, as attacks on liberty, of any measures which would establish the freedom of a class opposed to that rule. Arguments about freedom in class-divided societies are thus bedevilled by the fact that the term actually has an entirely different content, depending on which side is using it. In one case it means freedom *to* exploit: in the other, freedom *from* exploitation.

Alienation

While it is usually a simple matter for Marxists to point out the class interest barely concealed by the liberal phraseology employed by spokesmen of the bourgeoisie in the period when they were still confident, the ideological situation is more confusing today. On the one hand, the challenge to capitalism has brought about a bourgeois crisis of faith in its own right and capacity to rule which is reflected in an ever shriller insistence that nothing has changed and business will go on as usual. On the other, the demoralisation of bourgeois society has resulted in a disenchantment with "liberalism" by certain philosophers who have nothing constructive to put in its place. Alienated from the society in which they find themselves, these philosophers can only take alienation itself as the human condition. Loneliness and despair are man's portion and there is nothing much he can do about it. The freedom of the individual, which for those who continue to support the capitalist system is a licence to enjoy privileges at the expense of others, has become for those who no longer believe in capitalism, but believe in nothing else either, the right to be miserable on their own—but miserable in relative comfort of course. In both cases syste-

matic thought is vitiated by extreme philosophical egoism which is simply a reflection of the practical selfishness characterising life in the atomised conditions of bourgeois society.

Alienation is the point of contact between these philosophers whom disillusionment with capitalism has given a negative outlook and Marxists as critics of capitalist society. In his earlier writings Marx himself developed at some length the philosophical implications of alienation; but in his more mature work, as Professor Schaff reminds us, he made little use of the term. The reason for this is that in bourgeois society all men are more or less alienated—the proletariat in their work and the bourgeois intellectuals in their thought; and therefore the concept of alienation tends to blur the issue of class conflict. The appropriation of surplus value, which makes quite clear who exploits whom, is the vital fact about bourgeois society; and all the secondary effects of a social system based on exchange relationships can be considered under the general descriptive term "commodity fetishism". This more concrete analysis enables Marx not only to *explain* the social phenomenon of alienation but to show precisely how it can be *eliminated*, by the successful struggle of the proletariat to end exploitation which involves the end of class distinction. It is not surprising that bourgeois sociologists are prepared to find the writings of the young Marx stimulating and useful while rejecting most of his later work.

The State

Socialism is not built in a day nor do attitudes and ways of thinking conditioned by centuries of class division disappear the moment the economic basis of class has been altered. In the early stages of laying the foundation of socialist society there are temporary periods of confusion resulting from false starts and wrong turnings which may superficially resemble the confusion of a bourgeois society in a state of decay—just as a man climbing a slope and one slithering down it will at one point have the same view of the surrounding country-side. It is this superficial resemblance which has enabled the corrupted ideology of the West to make its appeal to certain intellectuals in Poland. The remedy for this tendency of some artists and intellectuals to look over their shoulders to the West for inspiration does not lie in the imposition of a rigid censorship but in the continued development of socialist relationships and, particularly, the abolition of the antithesis between mental and manual labour in which such deviations from Marxism are rooted.

But at the same time, of course, as Professor

Schaff uncompromisingly states, there can be no question of permitting people to exploit these temporary difficulties by advocating any political retreat from Marxist-Leninist principles. "Those who demanded 'institutional guarantees' for socialism in our country, betraying thereby their desire for the parliamentary system to be introduced, were deeply mistaken." Such people, he argues, conveniently forget the role of the state and its institutions in the conflict between classes over different conceptions of freedom. "The state is always a class instrument. Its function is to guard and serve those conceptions of freedom which follow from the interest of the dominant class." This is proved by the way "the bourgeoisie sweeps parliament itself, together with all the institutional guarantees, off the map, even in countries of old parliamentary tradition, as soon as it appears that this form of rule no longer ensures its domination." What revisionists either consciously or unconsciously choose to ignore in questions of freedom is "the dialectical relationship of democracy and dictatorship as the expression of the conflicts latent in our social structure. Marxism holds that full democracy can be attained only by means of a dictatorship exercised against the enemies of democracy, and regards the dictatorship of the proletariat as a higher form of democracy in comparison with bourgeois democracy." Professor Schaff justifies the continued use of a name emphasising the dictatorial and not the democratic side of a new socialist state on historical grounds. "The Communist movement wanted sharply to distinguish its own from the bourgeois-liberal and social-democratic conceptions of the state. The terminology came into use in controversies concerning the nature of the class struggle under capitalism and of the socialist revolution."

Of course once a socialist revolution has been consolidated, it is important that ever broader masses of people should be drawn into direct participation in deciding public questions; and Professor Schaff is critical of over-caution in this matter by those in leading positions. "It must be

remembered that if too much liberalism is a mistake for which we may pay dearly, the price of checking the progress of democratisation of social life is equally heavy."

Philosophical revisionism is always the ideological reflection of class-compromise or, even, class-collaboration. It is the result of defeatism on the part of those who are overawed by the apparent strength of the class enemy and are thus led to play down the necessity of class struggle.

But overestimating the strength of the class enemy really means underestimating the power of the people—the combined force of the millions who suffer from class depredation. As Professor Schaff concludes his book:

"One may object to socialism in its entirety, one may stubbornly deny its humanism; but the hungry and exploited will sooner or later come to understand that hunger will finally cease in this world of potential abundance only when the system of exploitation is abolished. . . . What enthuses fighters against enslavement are the real perspectives of liberation and the attractiveness of its examples. For the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America the teachers and models will continue to be the Soviet Union and People's China, and certainly not Portugal, Belgium, Great Britain or the United States of America."

It is in the "real perspectives of liberation" and the prospect of true freedom for the great mass of people when imperialism has been smashed that Professor Schaff shows up the dishonest pretensions of bourgeois philosophy with all its talk about the liberty of the individual. As a Marxist he subjects the ideas of bourgeois apologists to the test of concreteness to discover the class interests behind their abstractions and the ideas of revisionists to the test of militancy to prove the insincerity of their professed desire for social change. Concreteness in thought and militancy in the action of class struggle are shown throughout this little book to be the touchstones of true Marxism-Leninism.