THE GREENING OF AMERICA, by Charles A. Reich. Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 294pp., $7.50

In this book, a best-seller in the United States, Charles Reich, a lecturer in law at Yale, takes as his starting point the well known proposition that consciousness is the cement which holds a social structure together. He reasons that if this cement crumbles the structure itself will come tumbling down, and that the disintegration of one form of consciousness involves the emergence of another ("Consciousness 111") which will be appropriate to, and in fact create, a new social structure.

With the surprising omission of women's liberation, Reich gives a reasonably familiar description of the issues leading in this direction: disorder, corruption, hypocrisy, war, poverty, distorted priorities, and law-making by private power; uncontrolled technology and the destruction of environment; decline of democracy and liberty, powerlessness; the artificiality of work and culture; absence of community; loss of self.

He says that "the basis of a Consciousness 111 community must be agreement on major values" (p.283), and that it is necessary to relate specific issues arising to a more general value and to the problem of the modern state or modern society (p.207).

He embraces an exalted vision of man — he "is not part of a machine, not a robot, not a being meant to starve, or be killed in war, or driven like a beast, not an enemy to his own kind and to all other kinds, not a creature to be used, the "hard" questions by avoiding them is increasingly deterministic to state: "It is a necessary to relate specific issues arising to a more general value and to the problem of the modern state or modern society" (p.207).

So far so good; with all of this I agree. But the further Reich goes in elaboration the worse he gets. A central issue, clearly, is the relationship of consciousness and social structure, or, put in philosophic terms, the relationship of the subjective and the objective. It is simply not good enough, however justified from the point of view of redressing a previous emphasis, to substitute, as Reich does, the primacy of conscious for the previous primacy given to structure. The question is the interrelation and interaction between them. And, for one so stressing the role of consciousness so surprisingly deterministic to state: "It is a revolution that will keep on coming whether or not the rebels of the Left do anything: if they feel lazy, they can sit and watch it happen" (p.147).

Of course Reich somewhat qualifies his position, but the overridng impression is that he is urging the comforting view that the best way to be a revolutionary is to do what you feel like doing, so long as it is somewhere in the area of the new life style. While there is a grain of truth in this, it is all far too easy — revolution without tears, as it were. He affirms that he is not avoiding the "hard" questions — he solves them by declaring them irrelevant (p.292).

The realities of class struggle (however classes are defined) are similarly spirited away: "The people of the Movement may grow tired and discouraged, but time and the force of the machine are on their side. And there is nothing on the other side. There are no enemies. There are no people who would not be better off, none who do not, in the depths of their beings, want what Consciousness 111 wants" (p.290).

"There is no class struggle; today there is only one class. In Marx's own terms we are all the proletariat, and there is no longer any ruling class except the machine itself" (p.288). "And even businessmen, once liberated, would like to roll in the grass and lie in the sun. There is no need, then, to fight any group of people in America. They are all fellow sufferers" (p.256).

It is no new thought that the slave owner is also a slave (see for example Angela Davis' lectures on liberation), and that some of them may join the revolution — perhaps a somewhat greater number these days. (Marx noted this long ago, though Reich attributes the opposite view to him). But this has not prevented slave-owners from fighting the most bitter ideological and physical battles to preserve the systems in which they believed, from which they profited, and from which they thought it right to profit. Reich says: "... a revolution today would have to be one age group against another. Is there any modern precedent to such a revolution? Can families be expected to turn against their own children?" (p.230). Has Reich never read historical or literary accounts of the way in which revolution does precisely that, turning parent against child and brother against brother? Has he never heard of destructive divisions within the revolutionary ranks themselves?

At the bottom of this particular illusion seems to lie a mechanical view of the corporate state, and a peculiar, oft-repeated opinion that it operates in accord with some sort of value-free rationality. It is therefore inhuman, says Reich, and one agrees. But again he ignores the fact that it is people with values who run the corporations and the state, and that there is no such thing as a value-free rationality. He thus grossly underestimates the strength of the commitment of the enemies of the revolution, and the lengths to which they will go to maintain "all they hold dear", and the system which puts them "on the top of the heap".

Even if the hard questions of organisation and politics were solved actually, instead of just in thought, by declaring them irrelevant, the sociological and philosophical questions inherent in these problems would remain; but they too are ignored. When in his field of law, which he advances to the forefront of the sources of alienation and oppression, Reich fails to create an appropriate new consciousness. His philosophy of law seems to be rooted in the pre-monopoly past: "The ideal of the rule of law can be realised only in a political-conflict state which places limits upon official power and permits diversity to exist" (p.92). His highest goal is a realised Judeo-Christian ethic instead of a merely proclaimed one (p.287).

The determinism mentioned earlier — the new society will come whether people do anything or nothing — and the overcoming of "hard" questions by avoiding them is shown to be ridiculous by Reich himself when he criticises the views of SDS and various sections of the New Left whose views, he claims, will mislead people and hamper the development of the revolution. It is not a matter of arguing the rights or wrongs of the various positions, but Reich's strictures show that in fact, even in his own terms, politics and the problems of finding and substantiating philosophy, values, strategy, tactics and organisation which will serve the growing revolutionary potential and avoid setbacks, cannot be so easily disposed of, nor false consciousness so readily replaced by the true.

Reich's view of man and projections of what is desirable in future society is "good" utopia, serving as ideal and inspiration. His program for realising it is "bad" utopia because it is illusory and misleading, and likely to result in avoidable reverses for the revolution.

Eric Aarons

Between 1963 and 1968 Teresa Hayter was employed by the Overseas Development Institute in London, which blandly describes itself as "an independent non-government body aiming to ensure wise action in the field of overseas development." In fact, ODI is financed by the Ford Foundation, by British companies with high stakes in the underdeveloped world, and, intermittently, by institutions such as the World Bank, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Nuffield Foundation. The "independence" of ODI has obvious limits which are defined by the aims and interests of the donors. There are of course some tame liberals to be found in ODI, but they merely add to the fiction of "independence". The possibility of a substantial betrayal of the aims and interests of the donors is minimised by appropriate recruiting procedures. But, as is shown in this book, these can never be perfect.

Hayter's experience demonstrates clearly that any betrayal of ODI principles will not be tolerated. Some years ago she wrote a study of French aid. It fell easily within the required ideological framework, and they eagerly published it. Subsequently, she embarked on a study of the World Bank's role in Latin America, financed by the World Bank. This time, however, she failed to come up with a public relations exercise. There was horror at ODI headquarters and in Washington when it was discovered she argued that aid was stunting rather than promoting "development" in Latin America. Pressure was applied immediately by the World Bank and attempts were made by the Director of ODI (who has since emerged as the Director of Information for the World Bank) to persuade her to rewrite the manuscript. At first the World Bank tried to have the study suppressed on the grounds that it was "distorted", "biased", and would be bad for the Bank's image. When this failed, they claimed that Hayter had used "confidential material". Finally, confronted with the need to specify their objections, the Bank reverted to raising the matter of their contractual relations with ODI. It worked like a dream. Obligingly, ODI produced allegations of poor "craftsmanship" to cover up its refusal to publish on political grounds. It was a classic case of the ruthless face of the paymaster behind the liberal facade. Despite its liberal posturings and conscience-salving double talk, ODI emerged as a nothing but a pathetic front for the remaking of power behind the scenes. Hayter's experience was not an isolated one. ODI has set out truths about the nature of foreign aid in Latin America, financed by the World Bank. This time, however, in an extremely systematic way, she has set out truths about the nature of foreign aid in Latin America. Aid is one of the mechanisms of imperialism, used to influence the economic policies of recipients and as a means of supporting particular types.

"Leverage" has attempted to secure financial stability at the cost of liberating development, subordinated the interests of the recipients to those of donors, and tried to prevent fundamental changes in the economic, political and social structures of the underdeveloped countries. (Devastatingly, Sutcliffe quotes President Kennedy who stated in 1961 that "foreign aid is a method by which the United States maintains a position of influence and control around the world, and sustains a good many countries which could definitely collapse, or pass into the Communist bloc").

Despite the fact that Hayter demonstrates convincingly these truths about the nature of foreign aid, one puts down the book wanting more information and more analysis. In the preface she states: The study is basically a liberal critique of aid policies. It developed into an attempt to expose the inconsistencies and conflicting motivations of these policies. But, at the time when I wrote it, I was far from de-mystified." She goes on to identify one of the major weaknesses of the liberal critique: "... the assumption that the well-being of the peoples of the Third World was, or at least could become, the primary consideration in aid policies."

The title of the book is something of a misnomer. It clearly belongs to Hayter's present position as a member of the editorial board of the International Marxist Group's Red Mole. Nowhere in the text is there an account of the nature of contemporary imperialism. Indeed, imperialism is not mentioned once in the text itself. The study would have gained enormously in theoretical power from an awareness of the contradictions of advanced capitalism, in rigorous use of concepts such as exploitation and economic surplus, and from a more systematic account of the relationship between aid and other mechanisms of imperialism such as trade and private foreign investment. One misses a searching analysis of the motives of and conflicts among the aid-givers, of the classes which are supported by and benefit from aid, of the relationship between such classes and government, and of the pressures within the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Agency for International Development. The author admits in the preface that she has not provided us with a really satisfactory analysis. It is to be hoped that the new, de-mystified Teresa Hayter will fill the gap.

JOHN PLAYFORD

AUSTRALIAN LEFT REVIEW—MARCH, 1972

Zhores Aleksandrovich Medvedev is a 46-year old Soviet scientist. He has achieved world-wide honor and respect in biochemistry and gerontology (the study of aging). But unfortunately, scientific fields associated with biology, while being directed ultimately towards the health of the population, have always been good for the health of the Soviet scientists. It was here that the notorious T. D. Lysenko reigned for many years. Many of his scientific opponents finished up in prison or in menial occupations while incalculable damage was done, particularly in Soviet agriculture.

The situation improved after the death of Stalin in 1953, again following the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, and yet again after the removal of Khrushchov in 1964. But not all barriers to progress were yet removed, indeed some became worse in the late 1960's.

This is the setting of this work, The Medvedev Papers, written mainly in the years 1967-69, with a few additions in early 1970. It was circulated for some time in "samizdat", that is, in typed or roneoed copies produced unofficially. Soon after the appearance of the work, Medvedev had an encounter with the mental health authorities. He was sent to an institution where one psychiatrist diagnosed schizophrenia on the grounds of Medvedev's interest in two unrelated fields — gerontology and publicism. This brought the suggestion from other scientists that the psychiatrist in question be awarded a Lenin Prize for the discovery of the "Leonardo da Vinci syndrome". But Medvedev was released after several weeks, an unusual if not unique occurrence.

In this book Medvedev sets out to demonstrate that his country's scientific development is hampered by artificially imposed restrictions on Soviet scientists taking a full part in the world scientific community. He writes: "Nowadays modern science permeates the life of society to such a degree and is so broad that the whole complex of scientific investigations necessary for the development of society. Any serious scientific problem becomes an international one and is worked on simultaneously by scientists in different countries who each keeps careful track of what the others are doing. Isolation leads only to a senseless loss of time and funds".

The bureaucracy requires scientific development, but it wants it to take place in its own way — a way which poses no threat to its own position. So there is progress, but it is stultified, deprived of the full potential forces of international division of labor and the socialistic mode of production.

For example, one area in which bureaucracy and the interests of scientific progress clash is in the development of personal relations between Soviet scientists and their colleagues in the West. As Medvedev writes, "Between those taking part in such a project (as a scientific problem) bonds arise and co-operation is born, sometimes friendship between those who have never met, often controversy. To attempt to make these personal bonds conform to the framework of some official agreement is impossible and senseless. And if some country restricts and hinders these natural bonds, then it is the first to suffer, creating conditions in which its national science must fall far behind".

According to Medvedev, the restrictions hampering Soviet science include an extraordinarily ramified and arbitrary system of travel restrictions for foreign travel, for study or research. Medvedev details the number of delegates to international scientific congresses, and the number of Soviet scientists involved in exchanges for study and research work. Such restrictions cannot be justified on the grounds of currency problems, nor of the possibility of a "brain drain" due to emigration.

He demonstrates that such a passport system exists, and discusses it from the point of view of basic human rights. The practice fails to correspond with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations some 20 years ago. Article 13 reads: "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country".

To Medvedev's account of the damage done to the Soviet Union by the lack of trust in citizens by the bureaucracy, one could add the damage done in Western countries to the prestige of the first land of socialism. Some of the censorship practices with international scientific journals are incredibly short-sighted, or worse. If the censorship disapproves of the political content of an article, private subscription copies of the issue are simply confiscated. The copies destined for libraries are put into special sections where "permission" is required for perusal.

Socialists in capitalist countries will disagree with Medvedev, and many other Soviet dissidents, in their view of advanced Western societies. Medvedev, for example, advances standards of common sense, rational scientific and humane methods of government, but believes them to be capable of fulfillment on both socialist and capitalist bases. His views on this point do not reflect on his deep and passionate humanism, but on his limited knowledge and understanding of modern capitalist society. Thus, he remarks, "The Vietnam war which the USA is waging is a result of faulty decisions by the leaders of the country, who have too much and too arbitrary power in their hands".

There are several factors which operate in the formation of areas of naiveté in the views of discontent Soviet intellectuals. Scientists in general have a problem of obtaining a comprehensive world view from their laboratory windows, and the heavy censorship makes the task immeasurably harder. The kind of critique of advanced Western countries put forward by official Soviet media and by official ideologues does not assist either. One aspect is that the analysis of bourgeois democracy cannot be fully developed when the position of the Soviet leadership on democracy leaves so much to be desired. And Soviet citizens can be forgiven a little cynicism when they are denied passports for foreign travel, but see delegations of communists from countries of bourgeois democracy arriving and departing from Moscow by normal commercial airline companies, complete with their travel documents.

The latter third of the book is entitled "Secrecy of correspondence is guaranteed by law", a quotation from Article 12 of the Constitution of the USSR. Medvedev combines irony, impishness, and the methods of black-footed research to examine the Soviet censorship as it operates in the postal services. Experienced in injecting tagged molecules into test animals, he injects a variety of items of correspondence into the mails and meticulously observes and tabulates the results.

In one humorous passage, he proves that some correspondence is not merely opened and perused, but is passed on to the security and other organs and not the addressee. Even registered letters are diverted in this way. Medvedev speculates with tongue in cheek, that it would theoretically be possible for a person to earn a living by writing such "hot" letters and sending them to "the black office". Then the 7 roubles 22 kopecks compensation the Post Office is obliged to pay for a registered letter which goes astray. But even if Medvedev — unemployed at the time — had tried this apparently lucrative racket — the "black office" had ways and means to stop anyone from getting away with it.

In the course of his book, Medvedev touches on a number of interesting aspects of contemporary Soviet life, for example, on the internal passport system (a topic which is strictly taboo in official literature) and "samizdat". On the latter, Medvedev says that it is "a better estimate of the worth of a book than the official literary criticism". Samizdat relies on the quality of a work being such that the reader is prepared to circulate it, or what is more, painstakingly to type out carbon copies so that others may read it. There is no more sincere form of criticism, and no higher recommendation for The Medvedev Papers.

DAVE DAVIES.