
“Our soldiers must hate. A people without hatred cannot vanquish a brutal enemy.”

Che Guevara

“Everybody get together and love one another, Right Now”

Contemporary pop song.

THESE TWO SENTIMENTS expressed by people widely separated in social space and time nevertheless (one might say therefore) express poignantly the complexity of the present world situation, in which even those who have a common ground (that they see the need for change) differ in their situations and therefore inevitably in the solutions offered. Each expresses the need for an overthrowing of repressive relations between people, but the circumstances are so different that the methods of fighting repression will inevitably be poles apart. One could take the attitude that one is right and one wrong, or that each may be right for a particular set of circumstances. Whichever attitude, or whichever viewpoint one supports, one is still faced with the fact that the viewpoints themselves, and those who support them, are all elements in the world social process. The complex interactions between all these elements, or what we might call a process of processes, can, from the revolutionary point of view, be called the dialectic of man’s social system. Hopefully, although not necessarily, it is a dialectic of liberation for man.

It was (and is) a feature of dogmatic “marxism” that the social dialectic was reduced to a single dimension — capitalist class vs. working class. The implication was that if you understood this you understood everything. Thus artistic expression could be divided into bourgeois and proletarian streams and if a revolutionary worker advocated policies different to yours, then he was a class enemy or, at the very least, a victim of bourgeois ideas. The complexity of human interactions and of people’s ideas were thus denied, and with that went any necessity to analyse different realms of social reality. Thus the psychology (“It’s a bourgeois science”) of human activities was ignored and, along with it, the analysis of conflicts and antagonisms within classes.

1 As cited by Gerassi: The Dialectics of Liberation p. 89.

2 Naturally, I would support Che Guevara’s as more realistic a way of solving the immediate tasks (and therefore of the dialectic). The feelings in the pop song overlook crucial features of western society and in that sense the song’s call is undialectical. Yet the song expresses a common feeling amongst the alienated young who need to overcome the isolation they feel in a repressive society. Because the feeling is a common one, and because the solution proposed in the song is a common reaction to that problem, then this is a step in the working out of the dialectic.

3 I cannot agree with Marcuse that “all dialectic is liberation” (p. 175) unless it is by definition. For in the working out of the dialectic we must allow of a tragic end, in which the forces for liberation are defeated by stronger countering forces within the process, e.g. a nuclear holocaust.

This is the second part of the article which appeared in ALR No. 29.
Perhaps two of the most obvious victims of this "class approach" were the questions of sexual and racial oppression. These were seen as of secondary importance, rather than as issues in their own right, inextricably linked with the revolutionary process. We still have young revolutionaries who will say when questions of women's or black liberation come up "They're just class questions. The place of women and blacks is with their husbands/white workmates in the fight against the capitalists". That the white (work)mates may cruelly exploit/oppress/repress their women or black workers is apparently not relevant. The other side of this coin was the isolation of most intellectuals, including many who adopted left or revolutionary viewpoints, from social praxis.

Today, we are still suffering from this historical legacy. One of the more obvious manifestations is the continuing gap between theory and praxis — between "theorists" and "activists". A conference of the left at which both theoretical issues and practical problems are discussed at a high level with both intelligence and a sense of commitment is rare, if it occurs at all. In the last two weeks of July 1967, there was held in London the Congress on "The Dialectics of Liberation". From the book in which some of the key papers are published, it would seem that this Congress was a welcome departure from the existing mould. For not only are the papers of the highest quality, they also cover a wide range of theoretical and practical issues. The perspective of each contributor differs from the others, yet together they make a coherent whole. The book is a fairly comprehensive critique of present-day class society from the philosophical-sociological right through to the politico-economical aspects. Stokely Carmichael adds to this an element of flesh and blood gut politics — my only criticism of the book is that there were not more activist papers dealing with the practical problems of the revolution.

_The Dialectics of Liberation_ is not only excellent in its approach, it is also invaluable in the genuinely new insights it provides in our understanding of man and society and in suggesting the directions which future reorientations of the revolution may have to take. The first, and in many ways, the pivotal paper is R. D. Laing's "The Obvious". Because of its far-reaching implications, this paper is hard to summarise. Suffice it to say that Laing attempts fairly successfully to link events on the individual psychological level (the "micro-political" context) to the characteristics of the macro social system. Laing very effectively sets out the main features of personal action and interaction in a sick society. His central argument (take note all "bourgeois" psychologists) is that

For far too long psychologists have given a disproportionate amount of time and effort to the psychopathology of the abnormal. We need to catch up on the _normal_ psychological correlates of the _normal_ state of affairs, of which Vietnam is one of the most obvious _normal_ manifestations. (p. 27).

Or, as Stokely Carmichael puts it

... the psychologists ought to stop investigating and examining people of colour, they ought to investigate and examine their own corrupt society.4 (p. 174).

It is Laing's analysis of the normal state of affairs in relations between people

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4 We should notice here the vast difference in quality between Clancy's accusations (see first half of this article, _ALR_ No. 29) and the critiques of Laing and Carmichael.
(especially in the crucial group, the family) which is his main contribution to an understanding and critique of modern society. Laing's anti-psychiatry methods and theories have been criticised by others in the field, and many of his ideas are not necessarily completely correct. Undoubtedly, Laing's theorising is sometimes loose and not always based on conclusive evidence; but equally, his ideas are suggestive of lines of future research which up till now have been largely ignored by most psychologists and psychiatrists.

However, it is Laing's method of approaching the problem which is important and represents a break-through from traditional approaches. Laing looks at the whole social context of the individual for an explanation of his insanity, not for something (biochemical or whatever) which most psychologists assume must exist inside him. One of the major contributions of Laing and the anti-psychiatry school to the understanding of social behaviour is their theory of scapegoating. This theory holds that many "insane" (or queer, or peculiar) people are actually the scapegoats for a small social group in a certain state of its development, driven by the group itself into modes of behaviour which the group labels as intolerable and proceeds to punish. The punishment may take the form of institutional violence (gaol, asylum) or a less formal (but no less injurious) rejection.5

Laing is open to the criticism that his theories are often speculative rather than proven. In particular, they leave open questions such as who is scapegoating whom in any specific situation without providing criteria by which one might judge. How important this criticism is, is open to debate. What is certain is that Laing and the whole anti-psychiatry school have opened up a new way of looking at society which is of extreme importance for the further development of a revolutionary critique of capitalism.

In "Conscious Purpose Versus Nature", Gregory Bateson is not altogether successful in his attempt to outline how the advent of consciousness in the material world has affected that world and posed certain dangers to it. What he does do very well, however, is to show that we are suffering from a lack of systemic, cybernetic understanding of the universe and how, by imposing on the world our ignorant purposes, we threaten our own survival. "Conscious purpose is now empowered to upset the balances of the body, of society and of the biological world around us. A pathology — a loss of balance — is threatened." (p. 43). That such a threat exists, and that it flows very powerfully from existing human characteristics is undeniable; whether Bateson's pessimism: "We have . . . the curious twist in the systemic nature of the individual man whereby consciousness is, almost of necessity, blinded to the systemic nature of the man himself" (p. 43) is justified is another matter. That people such as Bateson can speak about and warn of the dangers surely suggests that the "necessity" is not such, but rather a function of existing society. As Marx might say, having once recognised the problem, we are now free to attempt a solution.

Jules Henry's paper "Social and Psychological Preparation for War" is one of the best in an excellent collection. It is a central paper in that it links the economic, political and psychological spheres, providing a perspective from which the other papers can be viewed. Apart from Paul Sweezy, Henry comes

5 See Laing and Esterson Sanity, Madness and the Family, and the books referred to in the previous article.
the closest to a classical “marxist” analysis of Western society, combining this
with analyses which owe much to modern sociology and psychology. It is this
combination that makes Henry's contribution unique — his paper approaches
(given its briefness) the all-round critique of capitalism which is necessary.

One of the best sections of the paper is that dealing with the question of
freedom in society. Henry points out that all societies limit the options
available to the individual but that modern capitalism has succeeded in limiting
the options and horizons of the people to a frightening degree. He combines
this tellingly with an analysis which shows that the American economy needs
war to keep going. As Henry neatly says “This means that under the present
system man has no choice but to make war upon himself.” (p. 54). This paper
also takes a sideswipe at the bourgeois social scientists: “... there is, for
example, no commitment in anthropology or sociology to any point of view”
(p. 67). Henry quite correctly links this to a universal social phenomenon of our
time — what he calls the prevalence of “short-run perceptions”. “This superfi-
ciality, this fundamental impenetrability of the soul, is due to the evanescent
quality of modern life and to the basic depression of modern man.” (p. 67).

Where Laing and others analyse the psychological aspects of politics, and
Henry combines this with an economic analysis of the system, John Gerassi and
Paul Sweezy, in two brilliant papers, concentrate on a political and economic
analysis of imperialism. There has been much excellent work recently on
American imperialism, some of the best of it by Gerassi.6 But for a brief
exposition of the facts about US imperialism and a trenchant indictment of it,
it would be hard to beat Gerassi's paper “Imperialism and Revolution in
America”. There is little need here to summarise the paper, but I must say
that within it Gerassi makes one of the most pointed attacks on American
liberals I have seen. Gerassi tells the story of a Bolivian peasant woman he
once met who did not feed her youngest of five children because there was
not enough food and he, being the weakest, would die anyway. As he says
“When you are forced into this kind of choice, you hate — the hate that Che
Guevara talks about, the hate that leads you to kill”. (p. 8).

Gerassi points out the essential dilemma for white Anglo-Saxon revolution-
aries: “Our hatred is intellectual, not the hatred that comes from having to
choose not to feed one out of five children”. Gerassi warns the hippies, us and
himself:

But should we become threatening, then we'll be hit. If the US can smash
people all over the world with guns and napalm, it certainly is not going
to be gentle about the way it tries to suppress hippies. (p. 90).

Of all the contributors, Gerassi is the only one who explicitly states his recog-
nition of the different yet related tasks of revolutionaries within and without
imperialism:

... for those who suffer from lack of necessities, liberation is to fight;
while for those who have the necessities and more, liberation is to break
the restrictions and establish a new society that will allow all men to talk
about their souls”. (p. 94).

Paul Sweezy's “The Future of Capitalism” is an important economic analysis
of early and modern capitalism. Sweezy combats what he sees as various in-

6 The Great Fear in Latin America, Collier, 1967.
correct theories about capitalism, held by bourgeois economists and by theorists of eastern European communism (and, by implication, those who accept their analysis). Sweezy challenges even some previous marxist theories which hold that, after capitalism developed in western Europe, it then became imperialist. Following analyses such as Cox's *The Foundations of Capitalism*, Sweezy puts forward the view that capitalism was imperialist right from the start.7

Paul Goodman, at 60, is a kind of liberal anarchist equivalent of Herbert Marcuse. His writings have appeal for many of today's young radicals, and there is no doubt that he senses the pulse of the age more perceptively than many (one might say most) half his age. There is a compelling quality about many of his arguments, particularly those about power, yet many others of them seem naive in the extreme. In "Objective Values", Goodman sets out his political credo clearly and succinctly. Because of his over-hasty rejection of marxist theories of class and class struggle, and his idealistic belief in "the international of the young" many marxist revolutionaries may be inclined to ignore him altogether. This would be as dangerous and unwarranted a rejection as is Goodman's own of marxism, for Goodman has much to teach us. He particularly has much to teach dogmatic marxists (of both the "old" and "new" varieties).

Goodman emphasises the common problems facing all present-day societies — the misuse of technology, the abuse of the planet's ecology and the over-centralisation of control and power. Though several tendencies of revolutionary marxism (including the CPA) recognise and have developed theories about these problems, most tendencies tend to reject them as non-existent, unimportant or, worse, as capitalist red herrings. Others pay lip service, but in effect, refrain from developing new forms of struggle to combat the new dangers. The world has a very good chance of ceasing to exist in the next fifty years, yet with a blindness to reality which is falsely labelled "revolutionary optimism" dogmatic marxists of all shades go on repeating the slogans of yesteryear in the belief that the capitalists are too sensible to destroy themselves as well as the rest of us, an assumption which might be true but, equally might not. Revolutionaries (and this the dogmatists simply do not understand) have no right to make assumptions.

Like most anarchists, Goodman is very entertaining in his denunciations and perceptive in his posing of the problem. When he comes to analyse the system in detail and provide some solutions, however, he comes somewhat unstuck. His virtual denial of America's need for economic imperialism (p. 118-121) is fantastic and his belief in the young of the world as the new revolutionary force is not exactly based on hard fact.8 Goodman would benefit 7 Before one could say he was right, Sweezy would have several points to explain, e.g. why did capitalism develop first in Britain and not in Spain. equally, if not not more, the beneficiary of colonial plunder. Sweezy seems to ignore the role of technology, but his theory is worth consideration.

8 A more sober estimate of the present state of the sub- and counter-cultures of the young is given by Richard Neville (Old Mole No. 8, March 1971, p. 14). Neville savagely exposes the brutalisation which has taken place in sections of the youth culture. The article demonstrates that there will be no short cut to revolution via flower power, pot and acid. "Love everybody" is not a slogan which can provide a stable basis for a revolutionary movement. The consciousness of the young will have to be somewhat greater than that.
here from a healthy dose of non-dogmatic marxism. On the other hand, Goodman's outline of how future society ought to work, and his criticisms of romanticism amongst young radicals are relevant and to the point. They also demonstrate an integrity and lack of opportunism which is all too rare. One suspects that Goodman views himself as a devil's advocate — we would do well to accept him as such rather than as the devil which many would probably see him as.

Stokely Carmichael was brought to the conference as a representative of revolutionary activists. His paper represents all that is best in the black power movement, but also much that is worst. His analysis of racism, which is a mixture of Marx, Fanon and American black power theorists, is perceptive and telling, yet he cannot avoid the trap which so many of his movement fall into. That is, the reduction of all political events to a racial dimension. "The proletariat has become the Third World, and the bourgeoisie is white western society". (p. 165). To a black American, this may well be an observable fact, but his perceptions are just as relative as those of his white counterpart who puts it all down to the class struggle. What is important about Carmichael's speech is that we learn just what his perceptions are, which is more than many who call themselves revolutionaries ever bother to find out.9

If Stokely Carmichael seems "irrational" to white radicals, then his irrationality is merely the corollary of the outrageous irrationality of the system itself. But it is more than this, it is the rational outcome of the system's own irrationality, and therein lies the key to understanding (and supporting) the black power movement as an essential part of the dialectic of liberation. There is an uncomfortable truth about much of what Carmichael is saying (apparently he caused quite a stir at the conference) and many white radicals cannot take it. (A similar reaction can be observed amongst whites who listen to aboriginal militant Paul Coe). While we should not, in our guilt, concede to a new form of racism, nor should we fail to recognise the racial dimension in the struggle for the liberation of us all. Despite the brilliance of his oratory and his insights into the racial problem, one can detect in the speech the seeds of a failure to recognise anything other than racial conflict which led to Carmichael's demise in the American movement and his resignation from the Black Panther Party.10

Moving into the realm of the philosophical, we have two excellent papers by Lucien Goldmann and Herbert Marcuse. In "Criticism and Dogmatism in Literature", Goldmann has not over much to say about literature as such, but an important amount on the problems of consciousness and knowledge. Basing himself on the present level of economic development and the critique of modern capitalism set out by Marcuse in One Dimensional Man Goldmann argues strongly that

... the problem of attaining consciousness and of giving it expression has today assumed an importance that is decisive — or at any rate decisive in a different way than it was, say, at the time when Marx elaborated his theoretical thought (p. 129).

9 If one is to believe even some of what Ralph Ellison is saying in Invisible Man (Penguin, 1965) then past relations between black and white revolutionaries in the US were a little sick, to say the least.

In some ways, he is restating in modern terms what Lenin was talking about in *What is To Be Done*. After the past decades of economism (in the true sense in which Lenin used it, i.e. the failure to inject a political consciousness into the working class by subservience to the spontaneous movements of the class) this is timely enough, but Goldmann does more than this. His analysis of modern capitalism and the particular need for consciousness today is well worth reading.

Goldmann's second theme is the structure of knowledge in which he makes an interesting summary of dialectical epistemology, comparing it with Freud's *libido* theory of cultural creation. Finally, his section on Criticism and Dogmatism is also worth the effort needed to understand it, particularly where he formulates the relation between criticism and dogmatism.

In “Liberation from the Affluent Society” Herbert Marcuse achieves one of his best summaries of his own theories. His incisive analysis of repression in the advanced west and the possible alternatives to it, provides a philosophical basis for a renewed theoretical attack on capitalism and capitalist ideology. Marcuse is especially worth reading for his precise formulations of problems and solutions. For instance, he states very well the need for capitalism to increasingly protect itself against the revolutionary possibilities by formal and informal repression.

I think we are faced with a situation in which this advanced capitalist society has reached a point where quantitative change can technically be turned into qualitative change, into authentic liberation. And it is precisely against this truly fatal possibility that the affluent society, advanced capitalism, is mobilised and organised on all fronts, at home as well as abroad. (pp. 179-180).

This concept of neo-capitalism being “mobilised against the possibilities” is extremely important, and its propagation in a form understandable to the masses is a necessity for the full exposure of capitalist society. Marcuse seems to have slightly modified some of his views about the role of intellectuals in the revolution. Certainly, one cannot disagree with his statements that the revolutionary intellectuals must see themselves as educators and initiators. He correctly hits out at the opposite yet related illnesses which afflict revolutionaries:

Our role as intellectuals is a limited role. On no account should we succumb to any illusions. But even worse than this is to succumb to the widespread defeatism which we witness. (p. 191).

Finally, in “Beyond Words”, David Cooper discusses problems as a basis for planning actions. His discussion of the individual identity in its relation to any illusions. But even worse than this is to succumb to the widespread defeatism which we witness. (p. 191).

It should be said in passing that the accusations from certain dogmatic quarters that Marcuse is a CIA spy and provocateur, or something akin to it, should be nailed once and for all for their absurdity. This story was started in US Maoist circles and taken up in various groups around the world. At one stage it was even raised by the opposition within the CPA as an “argument”. It is always possible, of course, that Marcuse is a CIA agent (it is always possible that anyone might be — if you use criteria such as the number of revolutionaries murdered, Stalin could be the world's leading contender) but, if so, then he is being paid by the wrong organisation. For the fact of the matter is that the content of Marcuse's writings is profoundly revolutionary in all senses of the term and it is precisely the content which the dogmatists do not attempt to criticise, because they cannot.
to politics stems from the existentialist school and is an aspect of politics that deserves far more study.

The Dialectics of Liberation is a truly revolutionary book and is essential reading for anyone wishing to understand the roots of revolution in our society. Rarely in the space of two hundred pages will one find such a comprehensive yet penetrating analysis of all aspects of our contemporary sickness and the possibilities for an alternative. My major criticism of the book is that, whereas it lays bare the diseased structure of world society (that is: poses the problem) in a way which few can match, it fails to attempt an outline of a solution I do not mean by this calls to action, immediate programs, etc. (although we could do with some of these, too) but rather an attempt to perceive what social forces are likely to move when and how and where in response to the contradictions whose existence the various authors so ably demonstrate.12

For this is the great problem which the revolution faces, the huge obstacle which blocks the path of the dialectic: although the left's understanding of society and its ills is not good enough and must be improved, it is still miles ahead of the vast masses of mankind — so far, in fact, that the difference is frightening. How to expand the consciousness of mankind, particularly that part of it in the west, is the key task before us. Praxis is just as crucial an element in the dialectic as theory, and if theory is poverty-stricken, praxis is more so, partly due to the opting out of many who regard themselves as "theorists". The activists must get some theory and the philosophers must leap out of their defeatist armchairs (even if it is only to a desk to write a good book) for nothing less than the future of man and his planet is at stake. Those who react to this as a mere cliche should read the book.

Finally, to return to my original theme. The Dialectics of Liberation opens up new avenues of thought for revolutionary theory, and at the same time provides a genuine alternative to bourgeois sociology. It is no accident that so many of those who contributed to this critique are themselves social scientists, but social scientists who have sharp differences with many of their colleagues. Only by a full understanding of all the issues, not by off the cuff dismissals, can one develop a revolutionary social science and, hence, make a revolution. There is a bourgeois sociology and books such as this help to expose its inadequacies. Equally, there are those revolutionaries who do not understand and therefore cannot distinguish what is bourgeois and what is not in social science. They are as much a problem in the dialectic of liberation as the "bourgeois" sociologists they pretend to criticise.

BRIAN AARONS


IT IS NOW BECOMING increasingly fashionable amongst members of the Australian New Left to deride "dry, old marxists" whilst making complimentary grunts about the brilliance of such doyens of the Yippie Left as Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffmann. The persons who express such views, as

12 Of all the authors, Gerassi is the only one to raise the need for genuinely revolutionary organisation, free from the Stalinism of the past.