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a Journal of Dialectical and Historical Materialism

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a Journal of Dialectical and Historical Materialism

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In Memoriam
John Somerville
1905–1994

John Somerville was born in New York City on March 13, 1905, and died in El Cajon, California, on January 8, 1994. He earned three degrees in philosophy from Columbia University, receiving his Ph.D. in 1938. From 1935 to 1937, on a fellowship in the USSR, he studied Soviet philosophy in theory and practice. There he and his wife, Rose Maurer Somerville (who would later earn her doctorate in sociology), made use of their mastery of the Russian language as well as their technical training.

This project laid down the foundation and direction of John Somerville's life and career: the analysis and evaluation of philosophical concepts in their application to the solution of social problems both national and international. The product of this study was *Soviet Philosophy* (1946) which was, in the author's words, "the first Western book on Soviet philosophy from an examination of original sources."

From 1939 to 1967 at Hunter College (City University of New York) John Somerville advanced from instructor to professor emeritus, and at various times during that period and afterwards lectured at many universities at home and abroad. He founded and was editor in chief of the translation quarterly, *Soviet Studies in Philosophy* (now *Russian Studies in Philosophy*), from 1962 until 1987. In 1967 he published *The Philosophy of Marxism: An Exposition* (reprinted in 1981 and 1983 by MEP Publications), widely used as a college text. After

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retirement from CUNY, he taught at the United States International University (1967–1972).

During and after World War II his work was marked by studies and activities for a just and durable peace. *The Philosophy of Peace* (1949), republished in 1954 with introductory letters from Albert Einstein and Thomas Mann, sounded a lifelong theme that would run through many variations. Similarly his participation in the early 1950s in three UNESCO projects signified the breadth of a concern that would last throughout his life.

During the 1950s the Cold War hysteria against communism abroad turned viciously against liberals and radicals at home, and the federal government under the Smith Act indicted several Communists for teaching the overthrow of the government by force and violence. In response, Professor Somerville testified at three trials as an expert witness on the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism, exposing the government's distorted interpretations. Forbidden at the trials to introduce any reference to the American Declaration of Independence, he elucidated the principles of democracy and revolution in his book, *The Communist Trials and the American Tradition* (1956).

His growing anxiety over international misunderstanding and the precarious peace led him in 1962 to join others of the American Philosophical Association (APA) in the founding of the Society for the Philosophical Study of Dialectical Materialism (later, the Society for the Philosophical Study of Marxism, or SPSM). In spite of the refusal of the Department of State to grant visas to Soviet philosophers, he succeeded in arranging the first full dialogue on U.S. soil between U.S. and Soviet philosophers at the 1963 APA Convention in Washington, D.C.

Through his enterprise, the first binational conference of U.S. and Soviet philosophers (he being cochair) was convened at the Thirteenth World Congress of Philosophy in August 1963 in Mexico City. Other exchanges of Soviet and U.S. philosophers followed. Somerville served as president of SPSM for many years and coedited two of its volumes of proceedings.

As the nuclear arms race escalated toward doomsday, he became increasingly skeptical of the Soviet and U.S. doctrine of a "just war," and even the value of the alternative of "peaceful

coexistence” in a world armed with nuclear weapons. He realized the need for a more radical initiative. At the Seventeenth World Congress of Philosophy in Montreal in 1983, he took the lead in forming the International Philosophers for the Prevention of Nuclear Omnicide (IPPNO), organizing the first conference in 1986 in St. Louis. Highlighting his own term “omnicide,” he argued that “war” in the nuclear context had become a deceptive and obsolete word, because in the past its usage presupposed the existence of survivors after war’s destruction, whereas today all life on the planet can be irreversibly exterminated by the nuclear exchange already prepared.

Out of this concern came many articles and books like *The Peace Revolution: Ethos and Social Progress* (1975), *The Crisis: The True Story about How the World Almost Ended, a Play in Four Acts* (1976), and *The Last Inquest* (1992). In honor of this work he received the Peace Essay Prize of the Institute of World Order, the Gandhi Peace Award, and the Peace Award of the Bertrand Russell Society.

Somerville situated his thought and work in the tradition of Socrates, Spinoza, Marx, Comte, Bertrand Russell, and other philosophers whose schisms with social convention put them in trouble with received opinion, cautious institutions, and established law. Their preeminent care was not “What is philosophy?” but “What is going on in the world of human society and what can be done about it?” They sought “the relationship of philosophical theory to social and political practice.” In this role John Somerville identified and defined some of the earth-shaking issues of his lifetime and courageously struggled to deal with them in constructive ways. The individual practice of philosophy for him meant philosophy *in* social practice.

Besides the record of his thought and deeds, he has left us the memory of his person—composed, passionate, responsible, cheerful, serious, militant, irenic, independent, gentle—philosopher of peace in a world where philosophy and peace need each other to survive and thrive.

In 1991, when he was convinced he had not much more time to live, he asked that the following memorial minute be presented to the American Philosophical Association: “Instead of

listing my works and activities as an international philosopher, let me try to share a thought with the APA concerning the role and nature of an international philosopher. Such a philosopher must be a critic of the national priorities of his or her own government when such criticism is merited, especially when the policies threaten human existence. In my lifetime the APA has shown a very poor and backward attitude in this regard. Try to understand this fact, and to improve the APA's ongoing record."

John Somerville is survived by his wife, Dr. Rose Maurer Somerville, his sons, Greg and Kent, and two granddaughters.

Howard L. Parsons, Emeritus
University of Bridgeport

The Philosophical Pioneer of the Nuclear Age

The following obituary by Professor Shingo Shibata, well-known Japanese Marxist philosopher, appeared in numerous newspapers throughout Japan.

Who is the most representative philosopher of the United States today? Many people might mention the name of John Dewey. But it seems to me that we had rather better mention another "John," that is, John Somerville. Why? The reasons are as follows:

Firstly, it was John Somerville as a first-class philosopher who revived the spirit of the Declaration of Independence to our times and untiringly continued to accuse from the standpoint of this newly revived spirit of the Declaration the successive presidents of the United States for their oppression of human rights as well as their nuclear policy.

Secondly, he was the philosophical pioneer who deeply understood and considered the implications of Hiroshima and

proposed to divide world history into two ages, that is, “Before Hiroshima” and “After Hiroshima.” He was one of the few pioneering thinkers who insisted upon a “philosophical revolution” in the nuclear age.

According to Dr. Somerville, a nuclear war is no longer a kind of war. It is nothing but “omnicide.” This word was coined by him as one of the most important keywords that symbolize the danger of the nuclear age. He placed the prevention of it as the first and most urgent among the philosophical tasks in our age.

He applied his idea of the “philosophical revolution” to his way of life and united his theory and practice into an integrity. Since August 1978, he has come to Hiroshima and Nagasaki to attend observances and to appeal to the public here and abroad for his “revolution of philosophy.” He expressed his solidarity with the Japanese people’s campaign against A and H bombs. He also did his best to convey to the people of the United States and, indeed, of the world the long-cherished hope of the Hibakusha [the survivors of the atomic bombings] for a world without nuclear weaponry.

There are very few thinkers in the United States and perhaps even in Japan who so untiringly and consistently set the elimination of nuclear weapons as the most urgent philosophical task decade after decade. It is natural that Dr. Somerville received the Bertrand Russell Peace Award and the Gandhi Peace Prize.

It seems to me that John Somerville was better and more widely read and understood in Japan than in the United States. Most of his books were published in Japanese, with two of them as the Iwanami-Shinsho Series, a kind of popular pocket-sized book series with wide circulation similar to the Penguin Books. His contribution is highly evaluated and appreciated in many sources, including the prestigious *Who’s Who in the West* as well as *The Concise Dictionary of Philosophy*, edited and published by the Iwanami-Shoten Publishers, one of the most prestigious publishers in Japan.

When I was a student at the University of Tokyo, I had an opportunity to read his pioneering book, *The Philosophy of Peace* (1949), with much admiration. It motivated me to write to

him. Since then for the past forty years or more I was inspired and taught by Dr. Somerville what needed to be done to revive the spirit of the Declaration of Independence in our nuclear age. I am sure that many of our Japanese readers were greatly moved by the conscience of “another America” that found expression in his many writings and speeches.

John Somerville was one of the most excellent among those philosophers of the United States who contributed to true friendship between the American and Japanese people. I am sorry, however, to have to report that at the age of 88 on January 8, 1994, he suddenly passed away of pneumonia from a world still under the threat of nuclear omnicide. In the name of his many friends and readers in Japan, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express our sincere condolences over his death and also our thanks for his precious philosophical and practical contributions.

It is still our urgent and important task and duty to respect the philosophical legacy of Dr. John Somerville, the “philosopher of the nuclear age.” We must seek to realize his ideal to save this world from nuclear omnicide.

Shingo Shibata, Emeritus
Hiroshima University

Rediscovering Marxism's Heritage: Rosa Luxemburg and the Revolutionary Party

David B. Reynolds

In recent years the Left has begun to reevaluate Marxism's history and to rediscover those experiences different from Lenin or the Russian Revolution. Rosa Luxemburg has been an important figure in this regard. Her concept of a revolutionary party contrasts markedly with the classic "Leninist" vanguard. Indeed, Luxemburg has often served as the democratic alternative to the "authoritarian party." However, Luxemburg's conception of the party is as misunderstood as it is important. While many scholars highlight the favorable aspects of Luxemburg's thought—the mass party, her defense of liberal rights, the mass strike, etc.—they often fail to analyze these elements beyond a surface level. As such, Luxemburg's thought serves solely as a collection of prescriptions and models to contrast with Lenin. Such an analysis misses the theory that underlay these prescriptions, yet this deeper theoretical level is key to understanding Rosa Luxemburg's "democratic alternative."

To understand Luxemburg at a theoretical level one must approach her first and foremost as an orthodox Marxist. Unfortunately, many interpreters fail to do this. This failure can take two different forms. One is simply to downplay or ignore Luxemburg's Marxism altogether. She thus becomes a kind of profound democrat or radical liberal. Such portrayals fail to understand that Luxemburg's "democratic" strategies did not flow from a belief in democracy as an abstract norm. Rather they were the logical outcome of her specific vision of socialist

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revolution, a vision whose goal was the seizure of power by a class-conscious proletariat. Democracy was a means to this end.

Scholars have also failed to understand Luxemburg at a theoretical level because they do not comprehend the degree of her orthodoxy. Luxemburg's thought, more than that of many other revolutionary Marxists, follows directly Marx's own political approach. Evidence of this orthodoxy is apparent even before one delves into the details of her ideas. First, unlike Lenin and other revolutionaries from less-developed countries, Luxemburg operated in conditions similar to Marx's: proletarian struggle in the industrialized countries. Second, Luxemburg devoted considerable activity to attacking revisionist and opportunist currents. Luxemburg always depicted her efforts in terms of defending the revolutionary Marxist tradition against efforts to destroy it.

In short, one cannot approach Luxemburg accurately except through her orthodoxy. Thus the researcher must appreciate the view of Marx held by Luxemburg. Unfortunately many scholars fail in this regard. They approach Luxemburg with a preconceived understanding (or misunderstanding) of Marx quite different from hers. For example, many interpretations of Marx tend to de-emphasize his specifically political side. Yet Luxemburg's most important contributions apply and build directly upon this side of Marx.

Regardless of the source, the failure to appreciate Luxemburg's theoretical basis results in a number of serious problems. One is to caricature her specific prescriptions. For example, her position on the mass strike has often been portrayed as an unbounded faith in the ability of the masses. Similarly, a profound reliance upon spontaneity is attributed to her. These common interpretations completely miss the complex and dialectical nature of her vision of revolution. Luxemburg was neither an anarchist nor a utopian believer in mass revolt. Both the mass strike and elements of spontaneity grew directly from her orthodox Marxism. Luxemburg must be evaluated at the sophisticated level at which she operated.

A second problem is a common tendency to misrepresent Luxemburg's dispute with Lenin. The distance between the two has often been vastly exaggerated. Indeed, the two are

commonly portrayed as members of two different camps: Luxemburg the democratic believer in the masses and Lenin the authoritarian elitist who held the masses in contempt. That such a portrayal is inaccurate is readily apparent in the two figures' references to each other. Lenin never attacked Luxemburg as an anarchist or utopian democrat, nor did Luxemburg ever reject the need for a single revolutionary party. Neither ever accused the other of the great sin they saw in so many of their contemporaries: revisionism, i.e., forsaking revolutionary Marxism for utopian reformist schemes. Clearly, Luxemburg and Lenin considered each other as members of the same camp.¹ The common portrayal of Luxemburg as the democratic alternative to an authoritarian Lenin reveals a superficial understanding of both. (For an interpretation of Lenin that parallels the approach toward Marxism taken here (see Reynolds 1992).

The task of clarifying Luxemburg's thought does not simply concern historical validity. Luxemburg is representative of the revolutionary Marxist tradition in the industrialized countries. She is the best known revolutionary theorist to have experienced an actual revolution in such countries: Germany in 1918–19. Unfortunately, this revolution failed and the proletarian movement in the industrialized capitalist countries was ultimately co-opted and/or greatly weakened. In the process much of the distinctly political side of the Marxist tradition to which Luxemburg adhered has been forgotten. People instead look to those examples that have succeeded. Traditions such as "Leninism" and Maoism have thus emerged as the most common examples of revolutionary practice. Unfortunately, the hegemony of these models has proven quite injurious to politics in these lands. The weaknesses and negative experiences of these traditions have been disillusioning to many who had been attracted to the prospect of socialist revolution. Many of those not disillusioned still use these models as their guide. These traditions, however, represent a Marxism adapted to conditions quite different from those in the industrialized countries and are inappropriate models on which to base revolutionary political activity there. One example of this problem is the question of democracy. Marxist politics is often associated with intentional

or unintentional authoritarianism, a lack of liberal rights, and one-party rule. As will be seen below, however, liberal rights and genuine democracy are fundamental to Marxism not simply as a goal, but as a central part of its political practice.

As a major figure in revolutionary struggle, Luxemburg can serve as an important key to Marxism's recovery of its own heritage. Luxemburg's vision of a revolutionary party is very relevant to understanding revolutionary strategy in the industrialized countries.

The basis of Marxist mass politics

In "Militia and Militarism" Luxemburg wrote:

Society's objective development merely gives us *the pre-conditions* of a higher level of development, but that without our conscious interference, without *political struggle* of the working class for a socialist transformation or for a militia, neither the one nor the other will ever come about. (1971, 144)

Luxemburg's understanding of socialist revolution followed Marx's closely. Like Marx, Luxemburg envisioned revolution as a process by which ordinary workers, now politicized, seized and exercised power. In 1918 she wrote:

The establishment of a socialist order of society is the mightiest task which has ever fallen to a class and to a revolution in the history of the world. This task requires a complete transformation of the state and a complete overthrow of the economic and social foundations of society.

This transformation and this overthrow cannot be decreed by any bureau, committee, or parliament. It can be begun and carried out only by the masses of people themselves.

In all previous revolutions a small minority of the people led the revolutionary struggle, gave it aim and direction, and used the mass only as an instrument to carry its interests, the interest of the minority, through to victory. The socialist revolution is the first which is in the

interests of the great majority and can be brought to victory only by the great majority of the working people themselves.

The mass of the proletariat must do more than stake out clearly the aims and direction of the revolution. It must also personally, by its own activity, bring socialism step by step into life. (1971, 368)

She put it much more directly in *In Memory of the Proletariat Party*:

Socialist revolution can only be completed by the working class, that only the mass struggle, the organization of the proletariat and its enlightenment can bring about the conditions necessary for the future society. (1971, 196)

As did Marx, Luxemburg saw this enlightenment (or class consciousness) required by the proletariat to seize power as developing primarily through life experience. In *The Crisis in German Social Democracy* (or Junius pamphlet) Luxemburg put it very concisely: "Historical experience is its [the proletariat's] only teacher." (1971, 324)

Like Marx, Luxemburg, therefore, saw all demands and actions in a dual manner: (a) their immediate effect and (b) their impact upon the class consciousness of the proletariat. Luxemburg's attack upon revisionism in *Social Reform or Revolution* amply demonstrated this approach. The work is a classic defense of orthodox Marxism. Despite the work's title, Luxemburg's criticism does not pose an opposition between revolution and reforms. Indeed, *Social Reform or Revolution* begins with the statement that

the practical daily struggle for reforms . . . offers Social Democracy the only means of engaging in the proletarian class struggle and working in the direction of the final goal—the conquest of political power and the suppression of wage labor. For Social Democracy there exists an indissoluble tie between social reforms and revolution. The struggle for reforms is its means; the social revolution, its goal. (1971, 52)

Luxemburg attacked revisionism not over the reforms themselves, but over the role attributed to reforms for the achievement of socialism. For revisionists such as Bernstein, the material changes brought about by the reforms would themselves directly introduce socialism. Luxemburg saw their aim in supporting reforms to be a means for the “progressive introduction of socialism” (1971, 72), while for her the reforms served to educate the proletariat. Only the deliberate action of the proletariat and not incremental reforms would establish socialism. She put the contrast in this way:

At present, the trade-union and the parliamentary struggles are considered as means of gradually guiding and educating the proletariat for the taking of political power. From the revisionist standpoint, this conquest is impossible and useless; therefore, trade-union and parliamentary activity are to be carried on only for their immediate results, that is the bettering of the material situation of the worker, the gradual reduction of capitalist exploitation and the extension of social control. (1971, 85)

The revisionist position placed the entire agenda of social democracy into jeopardy.

The great socialist significance of trade-union and parliamentary struggles is that through them the awareness, the consciousness, of the proletariat becomes socialist, and it is organized as a class. But if they are considered as instruments for the direct socialization of the capitalist economy, they lose not only their supposed effectiveness, but also cease to be a means of preparing the working class for the proletarian conquest of power. (1971, 86)

Like Marx, Luxemburg saw education through experience as the central process in mass politics—so central that she applied it even to the actual act of seizing power. In reply to revisionist worries about premature revolution, Luxemburg argued that the proletariat would always achieve power “too early.” Her argument reflected quite well her entire approach. She wrote:

In the first place, it is impossible to imagine that a transformation as formidable as the passage from

capitalist society to socialist society can be realized in one act, by a victorious blow of the proletariat. To consider that as possible is again to lend credence to pure Blanquist conceptions. The socialist transformation presupposes a long and stubborn struggle in the course of which, quite probably, the proletariat will be repulsed more than once, so that, from the viewpoint of the final outcome of the struggle, it will have necessarily come to power “too early” the first time.

In the second place, however, it will also be impossible to avoid the “premature” seizure of state power precisely because the “premature” attacks of the proletariat constitute a factor, and indeed a very important factor, creating the political conditions of the final victory. In the course of the political crisis accompanying its seizure of power, in the fire of long and stubborn struggles, the proletariat will acquire the degree of political maturity permitting it to obtain the definitive victory. (1971, 122–23)

In other words the proletariat can only learn to rule by actually ruling.

The role of the party

Given what has been said thus far, a revolutionary party may seem unnecessary or trivial. Indeed, one could interpret the notion that class consciousness develops through life experience as a self-contained process. If consciousness comes from the life activity and struggle of the mass of the proletariat, then seemingly the revolutionary intellectual can do very little. Such an interpretation, however, oversimplifies a complex process. It construes the primary driving force as the sole variable. For revolutionaries, its political prescription is passivity. Certainly, this was neither Marx’s nor Luxemburg’s approach. Although both envisioned the education of the proletariat as a macrohistorical process, neither were fatalists who sat back and waited for the revolution. Indeed, both their lives represented active attempts to intervene in the historical process. Nor did either envision their roles in some kind of secondary sense—as mere support for the proletariat’s daily struggles. For both, the development of class

consciousness was a complex process. The party had a key role within this complexity—a role whose importance should not be understated.

For Luxemburg, the revolutionary party's role originates from a fundamental discrepancy within the development of class consciousness. While life experience serves as the engine of political development, it rarely produces full socialist consciousness by itself. This contradiction can be solved by the introduction of theory. Theory provides a general vision of the forces at work in society and of the possibilities beyond the present. When such a vision interacts with the school of real life experience, it pushes that experience to its maximum potential. In short, without theory life experience remains trapped in surface appearances and the immediate, only generating incomplete forms of consciousness. This relationship between theory and experience is dialectical. Without experience, theory has no meaning; without theory neither capitalism nor socialism are fully comprehensible. In other words, theory provides a vision of socialism; yet socialism cannot be understood without life experience.

Rosa Luxemburg believed quite strongly in the ability of ordinary workers to use theory. In a 1908 defence of the Party School she argued:

They [Eisner and Maurenbrecher] think that the materialist concept of history, as they understand it, has on them [workers] the effect of crippling their ability to act and they therefore think that theory should not be taught at the Party School, but hard facts, the hard facts of life. They haven't the faintest idea that the proletariat knows the hard facts from its everyday life, the proletariat knows the "hard facts" better than Eisner. What the masses lack is general enlightenment, the theory which gives us the possibility of systematizing the hard facts and forging them into a deadly weapon to use against our opponents. (1971, 281–82)

The party's role should be apparent. It provides an organizational structure through which theory interacts with daily

struggle. It serves as the mechanism by which theory manifests itself to life experience. The general task of providing theory, however, can be understood and misunderstood in a number of ways. One analogy to the party's role is that of a formal teacher. As with the party, a teacher's overall task is clear, yet the actual methods of formal education can vary considerably from the most authoritarian to the most dynamic. Clearly, for Luxemburg the party was not a teacher who handed down eternal truths to students. Like Marx, Luxemburg believed that theory was a tool, not a self-contained program, blueprint, or formula. Certainly, truth did not exist with a capital "T."

Luxemburg's teacher, therefore, promoted critical understanding of one's life experience. In the end, students must act on their own reality. Luxemburg's classroom was not rigid and paternalistic, but dynamic and interactive. The teacher's task was to help students' teach themselves. Likewise the party's task was to provide theoretical insight that the proletariat could use for its own struggle. For Luxemburg, the party did not disseminate the "True" revolutionary understanding, but rather helped the proletariat develop a critical understanding of its own experiences. The party led by example. It did not organize the proletariat into an extensive apparatus that it organizationally controlled. The party was only one group in an entire range of proletarian organizations. Therefore, ultimately workers had to decide for themselves what to do.

Stating that the party must dynamically provide theory still leaves many issues unclear. A greater sense of the party's role can be established by moving from an abstract, ahistorical level to specific concerns within Luxemburg's writings. This will be done in two ways: first, the role of the party will be examined in the negative, i.e., what its primary role is not; second, its role will be dealt with in the positive through two historical topics: the mass strike and the German Revolution of 1919.

The party's role is not to seize power

In the contemporary world of "Marxist-Leninist" revolutions the notion that the party's primary task is not to take power may seem astonishing. However, this position flows directly from

Luxemburg's (and Marx's) assumptions concerning revolution. For Luxemburg, the seizure of state power by a revolutionary party could not achieve socialism. The reason for this was quite straightforward: socialism cannot be decreed; it cannot come from a piece of legislation. Luxemburg did not derive this view from some normative concern for "democracy" or against "authoritarianism." Rather she simply recognized the complexity of contemporary society. Capitalism, as a social totality, shapes all aspects of life. Establishing an alternative to such an entirety cannot come from the minds of a small group of individuals, no matter how gifted or revolutionary. One simply cannot envision all the implications and possibilities in advance. The only people who can alter an entire society are the members of that society as a whole. Thus socialism can only develop at the level of daily life and through the process of living. As Luxemburg put it:

The struggle for socialism has to be fought out by the masses, by the masses alone, breast to breast against capitalism, in every factory, by every proletarian against his employer. Only then will it be a socialist revolution.

Certainly, the thoughtless had a different picture of the course of events. They imagined it would be only necessary to overthrow the old government, to set up a socialist government at the head of affairs, and then to inaugurate socialism by decree. Once again, that was an illusion. Socialism will not and cannot be created by decrees; nor can it be established by any government, however socialistic. Socialism must be created by the masses, by every proletarian. Where the chains of capitalism are forged, there they must be broken. (1971, 396–97)

For Luxemburg, that many were confused on this point was not surprising. For one thing, the socialist revolution is unlike any revolution of the past.

History is not going to make our revolution an easy matter like the bourgeois revolutions in which it sufficed to overthrow that official power at the center and to replace a dozen or so persons. We have to work from beneath. . . .

There at the base, where the individual employer confronts his wage slaves; at the base, where all the executive organs of political class rule confront the object of this rule, the masses; there step by step, we must seize the means of power from the rulers, and take them into our own hands. (1971, 407)

Luxemburg's position on the party's relationship to the struggle for power is further clarified by her position on two related phenomena: elite conspiracy notions of revolution and the role of parliamentary struggle. In *In Memory of the Proletariat Party* Luxemburg went to great lengths to separate revolutionary Marxism from elite conspiracy. She referred to the latter notions as Blanquism, which she characterized as follows:

The basic idea of this strategy is the limitless belief in the ability of political rule to carry out, at any time, any economic or social change in the social organism considered good and useful. (1971, 191)

By placing the seizure of power at the center of its task, Blanquism fundamentally distorts the problematic of revolution. As such it renders itself ineffective by failing to develop the real driving force of change: the population itself. Within the Blanquist concept of revolution the masses emerge only at the revolutionary moment as a force propelling the conspiracy into power. In Luxemburg's words:

"Indeed," one must remark with Engels, "an easier and more pleasant revolution could not be imagined." No longer is there discussion about preparatory work of enlightenment and organization of the working class. On the contrary, one postulates that the mass of the people have an inherent inclination toward change in the social order. From this viewpoint, all partial changes within the existing system of government, such as democratization of the state, naturally appear to be insignificant trivialities and a waste of time (1971, 204).

Having failed to help prepare the masses to rule, Blanquism, if it ever does come to power, will not result in socialism, but

dictatorship. Since the self-activity of the masses has not been cultivated, change is only sustained by dictatorial force. Again she quoted Engels:

Since Blanqui conceived every revolution as a blow struck by a small revolutionary minority, the necessity of a dictatorship after the success of the venture follows directly—the dictatorship, of course, not of the entire revolutionary class, the proletariat, but rather of the small number of those who had “struck the revolutionary blow” and who had been organized previously under the dictatorship of one or several others. (1971, 192)

This contrast between seizing power and educating the proletariat to seize power is nowhere clearer than in Luxemburg’s view of parliamentary struggle. Until 1918 Luxemburg was a member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). By the eve of World War I this party had grown to slightly under one million members and had won twenty-eight percent of the seats in the national legislature, making it the largest party in Germany. “Common sense” would view the SPD’s motivation for participating in electoral struggle as a desire to be elected into office. Nowhere, however, in Luxemburg’s major writings does she portray the SPD’s mission in this manner. For Luxemburg the main value of parliamentary struggle, as of anything else, was to help prepare the proletariat to take power. In *Social Reform or Revolution* she argued:

It [liberal democracy] is necessary, first of all, because it creates the political forms (self-government, electoral rights, etc.) which will serve the proletariat as springboards and fulcrums in its transformation of bourgeois society. Second, however, it is indispensable because only in it, in the struggle for democracy and the use of its rights, can the proletariat become conscious of its class interest and its historical task.

In a word, democracy is indispensable not because it renders *superfluous* the conquest of power by the proletariat but, on the contrary, because it renders this conquest of power *necessary* as well as *possible*. (1971, 119)

The party's activities within the bourgeois state had to reflect this primary task of developing the proletariat. For example, in *Militia and Militarism* Luxemburg strongly advocated that debates within the SPD parliamentary delegation be open and public. Her reasoning was as follows:

But for Social Democracy, the parliamentary struggle of its delegation is much more important from a purely agitational point of view than from a practical one. What is important is not the formal vote of a majority of the delegation on any particular issue, but rather the discussion itself, the clarification of the situation. (1971, 149)

In the long run, votes in a bourgeois parliament would not bring about socialism. Public socialist debate, however, would help foster socialist consciousness. Closed proceedings would not only miss an opportunity to expose the masses to socialist ideas, but would combat erroneous views in an ineffective manner. Since Social Democracy was a mass movement, erroneous positions could only be overcome through mass debate. Thus, for example, Luxemburg argued that Max Schippel's views supporting the German military should be combated in the following manner: "On the contrary, only by carrying the discussion to the broadest circles of the Party can the successful spread of Schippel's views be prevented (1971, 148).

Two decades later, in 1919, Luxemburg reiterated the value of electoral struggle when she argued for participation by the Spartacus League in the proposed National Assembly (a position that was defeated). Contrary to some interpretations, Luxemburg did not defend participation out of some love of democracy. The opposing position argued that the National Assembly was a shame, a mere fig leaf to hide bourgeois rule, and thus something to be bypassed. While acknowledging much of the truth of this position, Luxemburg argued that the workers were not yet politically mature, and therefore the electoral experience would serve as a "new school of education for the working class." (1971, 399, 362, also Nettl 1966, 757)

For Luxemburg, liberal democracy was not simply a helpful tool, but an indispensable precondition for socialism. The reason

for this was not because a socialist party would be voted into office, but because only through experience of liberal democracy and organizing within its relative freedoms would the proletariat reach the degree of maturity necessary to rule. In *In Memory of the Proletariat Party* Luxemburg described the relationship between the proletariat and liberal democracy in a dialectical manner. She wrote:

The working class cannot attain to any organization or consciousness without specific political conditions which allow an open class struggle, that is without democratic institutions within the framework of the state. And conversely, the attaining of democratic institutions in the state and their spread into the working class is—at a certain historical moment, in a certain phase of the development of class antagonism—impossible without the active struggle of a conscious and organized proletariat. (1971, 180)

Thus a socialist party should not ignore the struggle for liberal democracy, but instead help push it to its ultimate extremes. Liberal democracy was not a luxury, but a critical need.

The mass strike

Luxemburg laid out her position on the mass strike in *Mass Strikes, Party, and Trade Unions*. The pamphlet assesses the significance, for socialist revolution, of the 1905 revolution in Russia. Luxemburg argued that a new, advanced form of proletarian struggle had emerged—one directly connected to a period of revolutionary activity. This new form, the mass strike, provided a solution to a fundamental problem facing Social Democracy: how to move from struggle within the system to struggle against the system. Although the struggle for reforms served as the only way to develop the proletariat's political ability, it did not itself lead to revolution. The distinction between pushing for partial change within the system and open rebellion is very real to those involved. The latter entails a dramatic increase in the levels of risk and commitment, for example. The fundamental question underlying Luxemburg's discussion is how to bring people to this higher stage.

The problem of transition is experienced differently by the unorganized and the organized sections of the proletariat. In Germany, despite the tremendous gains made in union organization and despite the SPD's constituency of over four million votes, the majority of the German working class remained unorganized. In short, parliamentary and trade-union struggle had revealed major limitations. They had failed to bring the majority of the population into self-conscious class struggle. Luxemburg stated the problem as follows:

Before the workers can engage in any direct class struggle they must all be organized. The circumstances, the conditions, of capitalist development and of the bourgeois state make it impossible that, in the normal course of things, without stormy class struggles, certain sections—and these the greatest, the most important, the lowest and the most oppressed by capital, and by the state—can be organized at all. (1970, 196)

There is a hint here of the solution to this problem. Luxemburg, in effect, returned to Marx's great dictum: in the course of revolutionary activity one changes oneself as one changes conditions. Therefore, full revolutionary consciousness would develop in the majority of the masses only through the actual experience of revolutionary mass struggle. Not the "normal course of things" but an actual revolution would win the mass of unorganized to the cause of socialism and prepare them to take power. In Luxemburg's words:

Only in the period of the revolution, when the social foundations and the walls of the class society are shaken and subjected to a constant process of dislocation, can any political class action of the proletariat in a few hours arouse whole, hitherto unmoved strata of the working class from their passivity. (1971, 243)

Or put another way:

Six months of a revolutionary period will complete the work of the training of these as yet unorganized masses which ten years of public demonstrations and distribution

of leaflets would be unable to do. And when conditions in Germany have reached the critical stage for such a period, the sections which are today unorganized and backward will, in the struggle, prove themselves the most radical, the most impetuous element, and not one that will have to be dragged along. (1970, 199-200)

For the mass of organized workers the problem of transition was more subtle. While prior experience of struggle may have generated high class consciousness among many of these workers, the consciousness of others may still be incomplete. Many unionized workers may still envision their struggle in terms of wresting greater concessions from the existing system. Luxemburg formulated the problem for the organized worker as follows:

In the case of the enlightened German worker the class consciousness implanted by the social democrats is *theoretical and latent*: in the period ruled by bourgeois parliamentarism it cannot, as a rule, actively participate in a direct mass action. . . . In the revolution when the masses themselves appear upon the political battlefield this class consciousness becomes *practical and active*. (1970, 199)

Or to place it in more vivid language:

But in the storm of the revolutionary period, the proletarian is transformed from a provident family man demanding support into a “revolutionary romantic” for whom even the highest good, namely life—not to speak of well-being—has little value in comparison with the ideals of the struggle. (1971, 247)

Thus only during a revolutionary period would the seeds of years of life experience come to full fruition.

The events in Russia convinced Luxemburg that this necessary revolutionary period would manifest itself in the phenomenon of the mass strike. The term “mass strike” can be somewhat misleading. The mass strike was not a single event, but a period of struggle. In Russia this period began at least as

early as 1902 and continued to 1906. Luxemburg did not characterize the mass strike as a single kind of action or tactic. Indeed, it could encompass a wide variety of actual forms of struggle. For Luxemburg the mass strike signified a new and revolutionary level of activity among the proletariat. In Luxemburg's words: "It is completely absurd to think of the mass strike as an act, an isolated action. The mass strike is rather the sign, the totality-concept of a whole period of the class struggle lasting for years, perhaps decades" (1971, 237).

Beginning with local economic struggles, the mass strike takes form as activity rapidly moves into the political arena. In Russia politicization included demands for the abolition of absolutism and the institution of liberal democracy. Throughout the mass-strike period political and economic struggle intermingle. Luxemburg wrote:

The progress of the movement on the whole is not expressed in the fact that the initial economic stage is left out, but rather in the rapidity with which all the stages to the political demonstration are run through, and in the extremity of the point to which the strike moves forward.

But the movement on the whole does not proceed merely from the economic to the political struggle, but also vice-versa. Each of the great political mass actions, after it has attained its political zenith, breaks up into a mass of economic strikes. And this applies not only to each one of the great mass strikes, but also to the revolution generally. With the extension, clarification, and intensification of the potency of the political struggle, the economic struggle not only does not recede, but rather it extends, organizes itself, and intensifies its potency in an equal measure. Between the two there is a complete reciprocal action. (1971, 241)

Although the forms of action may change, the unifying characteristic of the mass strike is the level of activity among the masses. During the mass strike the masses personally enter into the political arena as independent actors. Through this struggle they prepare themselves to rule. Only this experience of

revolutionary activity teaches the proletariat to be revolutionary. Referring to 1905 revolution in Russia, Luxemburg wrote: "In short, the element of spontaneity plays such a prominent role in the mass strikes in Russia not because the Russian proletariat is "unschooled" but because revolutions allow no one to play school-master to them" (1971, 245).

Luxemburg's use of the word *spontaneity* has caused much misinterpretation of her basic position. Many have interpreted Luxemburg's theory of the mass strike and of revolution in general as a kind of anarchism or spontaneitism. She supposedly possessed an "unbounded faith" in the ability of the masses. Such interpretations, however, miss the complexity of Luxemburg's thought. This point will become clearer if we consider the party's role in the mass strike.

The party's role can be discussed at two levels: the outbreak of the strike and the actual mass-strike period. The party's role in regard to the outbreak is clear: it cannot initiate the mass strike, but must foster the subjective preconditions for the strike. The party cannot initiate the mass strike simply because by its very complex and mass nature it is not something that can be called into action. Its outbreak reflects the development of material conditions and the consciousness of the proletariat. Luxemburg wrote:

Therefore, if the Russian Revolution teaches us anything, it is above all that the mass strike is not artificially "made," not "decided" out of the blue, not "propagated," but rather that it is an historical phenomenon which at a certain moment follows with historical necessity from the social relations.

If anyone were to undertake to make the mass strike in general . . . to go house to house peddling this "idea" in order gradually to win the working class to it, it would be as idle, as profitless, and as crazy an occupation as it would be to seek to make the idea of the revolution or of the barricade struggle into the object of a particular agitation. (1971, 231–32)

Many scholars have used Luxemburg's position that the mass

strike cannot be called as evidence of her supposed spontaneism. However, initiating the mass strike is not the only potential task. For the mass strike to become possible, certain preconditions must already exist. The party must help foster these conditions. For example, a nucleus of worker militants must exist who can spread a revolutionary program and effectively influence the great mass of the unorganized proletariat. In a statement quite different from her supposed faith in spontaneity Luxemburg wrote:

Of course, even during the revolution the mass strikes do not fall down from heaven. In one way or another they must be made by the workers. The resolution and determination of the workers also play a role, and indeed the initiative as well as the further direction naturally fall to the most organized and most enlightened Social Democratic kernel of the proletariat. (1971, 244)

At a more general level the party must promote a collective level of consciousness sufficient to make the mass strike possible. Just as full socialist consciousness requires the experience of revolutionary activity, an outbreak of revolutionary activity requires some degree of developed class consciousness. In other words, consciousness and revolutionary activity exist in a dialectical relationship. The party's efforts to improve the ideological and organizational level of the masses are, therefore, crucial.

The distinctive, bounded, and yet critical nature of the party's role becomes even clearer during the actual period of mass strike. As the discussion of the mass strike's outbreak has already indicated, Luxemburg did not abandon the need for strong technical leadership. Rather she moved its focus from the formulation of grandiose schemes of initiating or organizing the revolution, to providing initiative and direction within individual and local actions. Technical leadership is a decentralized mass phenomenon, and it is not an exclusive function of the party. Rather it can be found throughout the proletariat's organizations. Indeed, Luxemburg did not view such leadership as the party's main task. Strong centralized technical leadership from a single party was undynamic and counterproductive. Thus, the party

should not envision its role as providing organizational, moment-to-moment direction and initiative. The party was not the brain of a military organization. Continuing on the above quote, Luxemburg argued:

There are quite definite limits to initiative and conscious direction. During the revolution itself it is extremely difficult for any leading organ of the proletarian movement to foresee and to calculate which occasions and moments can lead to explosions and which cannot. Here also initiative and leadership do not consist in issuing commands according to one's mood, but in the most adroit adaptability to the given situation, and in the closest possible contact with the mood of the masses.

As we have seen, the element of spontaneity plays a great role in all the Russian mass strikes, without exception, either as driving force or restraining influence. This is not because Russian Social Democracy is still young or weak, but rather because in each individual act of the struggle so many important economic, political, and social, general and local, material and psychological moments are brought into play that no single act can be arranged and resolved like a mathematical problem. . . . In short, the element of spontaneity plays such a prominent role in the mass strikes in Russia not because the Russian proletariat is "unschooled" but because revolutions allow no one to play school-master to them. (1971, 245)

Luxemburg, however, did not consider technical leadership as the sole possible leadership role. For her, leadership was a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that could not be reduced to a single function. The party's primary role originated in a distinct and unique form of leadership. As the possessor of theory, the party must provide the mass movement with theoretical support. Luxemburg referred to this role as political leadership. She described political leadership in the following terms:

To give slogans, the direction of the struggle; to organize the tactics of the political struggle in such a way that in

every phase and in every moment of the struggle the whole sum of the available and already released active power of the proletariat will be realized and find expression in the battle stance of the party; to see that the resoluteness and acuteness of the tactics of Social Democracy never fall below the level of the actual relation of forces but rather rise above it—that is the most important task of the “leadership” in the period of the mass strike. (1971, 247)

The above formulation breaks down into two specific areas: tactics and direction. The party does not invent tactics, but expresses them at a general level. New tactics originate from historical conditions. They are produced by the proletariat itself in the course of daily struggle. As she put it in *Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy*:

The limited role of the conscious initiative of the party’s direction in the formation of tactics can be seen in Germany and in all other countries. In general, the tactical policy of Social Democracy, in its main lines, is not “invented,” it is the product of a progressive series of great creative acts in the often rudimentary experiments of the class struggle. Here too unconsciousness comes before conscious, the logic of the objective historical process before the subjective logic of its bearers. (1971, 293)

As the last sentence anticipates, the party must aid the proletariat to become self-conscious of its own tactics—to make the unconscious, conscious. The party interprets new tactics, understands their significance, and realizes when the struggle has entered a new stage. It in turn expresses such knowledge to the masses. The masses then use this knowledge to make their actions more deliberate and self-conscious.

The actual act of writing *Mass Strikes, Party, and Trade Unions* is an example of this practice. Luxemburg did not invent the mass strike. It grew out of the 1905 revolution in Russia. Luxemburg’s pamphlet pointed to the historical importance of the new phenomenon. She argued that while once denounced as

an anarchist fantasy, the mass strike had been converted by contemporary historical conditions into the highest form of class struggle. By writing her pamphlet, Luxemburg sought to clarify the meaning and significance of the Russian experience for the German proletariat.

In terms of direction, the party has two major tasks. First, it must declare the situation for what it is. For example, when the hour of revolution approaches, the party should be in the forefront—proclaiming the revolution. Another example is Luxemburg's position on the SPD's response to World War I. Her argument again reveals the party's distinct and clearly limited leadership role. In the Junius pamphlet she argued that debating whether or not the party should have declared a general strike or mass draft evasion states the issue in the wrong way. She argued that "mass movements in great historical crises cannot be initiated by such primitive measures" and:

What the social democracy as the advanced guard of the class-conscious proletariat should have been able to give was not ridiculous precepts and technical recipes, but a political slogan, clearness concerning the political problems and interests of the proletariat in times of war. (1970, 315, 316)

In short, the party should have condemned the war for what it was: a struggle within imperialism that used the working class as cannon fodder. Instead, the SPD capitulated by supporting the war effort. Thus, the SPD followed rather than led the proletariat.

Second, in addition to clarifying the current situation, the party must maintain a focus upon the end goal: socialism. As she put it in the Junius pamphlet: "Marxist theory gave to the working class of the whole world a compass by which to fix its tactics from hour to hour in its journey toward the one unchanging goal" (1971, 325). Without the final goal, the movement cannot live up to its full potential. The party must serve as the chief expression of that goal.

To summarize, political leadership does not mean the party controls the activity of the masses, but rather that it provides that

activity with a clarity of vision and purpose. This is what theory provides and this what the party represents. Declaring the situation and maintaining a focus upon the final goal does not imply constant inflammatory rhetoric. For example, proclaiming the revolution in the absence of a revolutionary situation simply relegates the party to effective insignificance. Luxemburg believed that Social Democracy operated between two dangerous reefs: the abandonment of its mass character and the abandonment of the final goal—the fall into sectarianism on the one hand or anarchism and opportunism on the other. The party could best navigate these waters by maintaining close contact with the most advanced section of the proletariat. Party activity should be gauged around these workers. Moving ahead of them relegates the party to sectarianism. Moving behind them—orienting party activity on the average or backward workers—eliminates the party as a revolutionary force. It becomes the tail, not the head of the movement. The revisionist trend in Social Democracy was an example of the latter.

Luxemburg summarized her position on the party's role both in tactics and direction well when she wrote:

The social democrats are the most enlightened, most class conscious vanguard of the proletariat. They cannot and dare not wait . . . for the advent of the "revolutionary situation." . . . [T]hey must now, as always hasten the development of things and endeavor to accelerate events. This they cannot do, however, by suddenly issuing the "slogan" for a mass strike at random at any odd moment, but first and foremost, by making clear to the widest layers of the proletariat the inevitable advent of this revolutionary period, the inner social forces making for it and the political consequences of it. If the widest proletarian layer should be won for a political mass action of the social democrats, and if vice versa, the social democrats should seize and maintain the real leadership of a mass movement—should they become, in a political sense, the rulers of the whole movement, then they must, with utmost clearness, consistency and resoluteness, inform the

German proletariat of their tactics and aims in the period of coming struggle. (1970, 200)

The party's role is, thus, distinct and bounded. Contrary to accusations of spontaneism or anarchism, however, Luxemburg clearly felt that the party's role was critical. At no time should the party simply follow the masses—only providing support for their daily struggles. Political leadership implied active intervention. The party must provide the theoretical tools and the macrohistorical perspective indispensable for sophisticated revolutionary consciousness and activity. Luxemburg placed the party's importance as follows:

A consistent, resolute, and progressive tactic on the part of Social Democracy produces in the masses the feeling of security, self-confidence, and the desire for struggle; a vacillating, weak tactic based on the underestimation of the proletariat has a crippling and confusing effect upon the masses. In the first case, mass strikes break out "of their own accord" and always "opportunistly"; in the second case they remain ineffective even amidst direct summons by the leadership to mass strikes. (1971, 247)

While the party cannot create a situation, its actions will either help push the situation to its maximum potential or seriously break and dampen it. Within the SPD Luxemburg certainly witnessed enough of the latter. Indeed, at the very moment of revolution in 1919, the SPD actually sided with the forces of counter-revolution. Before we move on to this period, one further point needs to be made.

Luxemburg considered the mass strike as the beginning of open revolutionary struggle. Luxemburg clearly held a definition of revolution quite different from conventional wisdom. Webster's *New World Dictionary* defines revolution as the following: "overthrow of a government, form of government, or social system by those governed and usually by forceful means, with another government or system taking its place."

Such a definition focuses upon revolution first and foremost as an act of destruction: the downfall of a ruling order and its

replacement by another. For Luxemburg, however, revolution signified first and foremost the full and direct participation of the masses in political struggle. Revolution is not the negative act of destruction, but the positive act of mass activity. For Luxemburg, what characterized revolution, and socialism, was not the downfall of the old state, but the level of activity that the masses had achieved. The replacement of the old institutions and social structure flows from this activity. As she often commented: first there was the “act.”

The German revolution

In 1918, amid a wave of strikes and mutinies, the German state collapsed. The kaiser abdicated and the SPD came to power as the majority party in the new republic. Yet, revolutionary upheavals continued. Throughout the second half of 1918 and into the first month of the following year, workers’ and soldiers’ councils sprang up in many major cities. Released from prison on 9 November 1918, Luxemburg actively participated in this upheaval. Until her death in January, she served as a major leader within the Spartacus League. Formed during the war as an oppositional group within the SPD, the Spartacus League declared itself an independent party in December 1918. Through the Spartacus League, Luxemburg was able to participate directly in party work during an actual revolution. Her writings in connection with the Spartacus League illustrate all the elements of her concept of the party’s role. Two pamphlets, *What Does the Spartacus League Want?* and *Our Program and the Political Situation*, provide a vision of a proletarian seizure of power. Much of her analysis paralleled Marx’s writing on the Paris Commune. Unlike the Commune, however, a revolutionary party was now a key ingredient.

Central to both articles was the concept of dual power—the creation of alternative sources of power running parallel to the existing state and ultimately displacing it. Mirroring the Russian experience, the revolution created dual power through the establishment of workers’ and soldiers’ councils. For Luxemburg this was the central act of the revolution. She wrote:

The only source of union, the persistent and saving principle, was the motto: "Form Workers' and Soldiers' Councils." That was the key notion in this revolution which, in spite of the inadequacy and weakness of the opening phases, immediately gave it a stamp of a proletarian socialist revolution. (1971, 389)

The councils provided the basis for a new state system. In *What Does the Spartacus League Want?* Luxemburg laid out the basic demands of the Spartacus League. Central to these demands were the workers' and soldiers' councils, which were to replace the municipal councils and, in turn, elect a central council to take over the function of the parliament. In an echo of the Paris Commune, the right to recall any representative was instituted.

Luxemburg believed that the councils institutionalized and represented the proletariat's exercise of direct political power. Like the Paris Commune, they did not signify an end to the class struggle. Rather the class struggle had entered a new level. Although the Spartacus League called for the seizure of the economy's commanding heights, true socialization would and could not be decreed. It had to be achieved by the workers themselves in "every shop, with direct mass pressure, with strikes and with the creation of its own permanent representative organs" (1971, 369). Later, in *Our Program and the Political Situation*, Luxemburg quotes the *Communist Manifesto*: "The proletariat will use its political supremacy to gradually wrest all capital from the bourgeoisie" (1971, 378).

Although the workers' and soldiers' councils were to take over state power, this was not their sole purpose. Even at the moment of revolution the proletariat's education through experience was prominent in Luxemburg's thought:

We must make the masses understand that the workers' and soldiers' councils are in all senses the lever of the machinery of state, that it must take over all power in one stream—the socialist revolution. The masses of workers who are already organized in workers' and soldiers' councils are still miles away from having adopted such an outlook, and only isolated proletarian minorities are

clearly conscious of their task. But this is not a lack, but rather the normal state of affairs. The masses must learn how to use power by using power. There is no other way to teach them. (1971, 406)

In both pamphlets Luxemburg translated her theoretical position on the party's role into practice. She did personally exactly what she felt a party should do. Luxemburg proclaimed the situation for what it was and pointed to the relevant methods of struggle. She did not invent the workers' and soldiers' councils, nor did she lay out a concrete program for their creation. Indeed, the councils began to spring up before she was released from prison. Luxemburg simply specified their significance and maximum potential. In other words, she tried to help the masses realize that they already held the key to state power. In doing so she encouraged them not to propel the Spartacus League into power, but to take it themselves.

The above statement must be qualified by with the following statement from *What Does the Spartacus League Want?*

The Spartacus League will never take over governmental power except in response to the clear, unambiguous will of the great majority of the proletarian mass of all Germany, never except by the proletariat's conscious affirmation of the views, aims, and methods of struggle of the Spartacus League. (1971, 376)

At first glance this statement seems to advocate the taking of power by the party itself and not by the proletariat. A possible clarification is provided two paragraphs later: "The victory of the Spartacus League comes not at the beginning, but at the end of the revolution: it is identical with the victory of the great million-strong masses of the socialist proletariat."

In light of the concept of dual power, what Luxemburg may have envisioned was that the Spartacus League would seize nothing more than the utmost trappings of government—hence her use of the specific term *governmental* power. The growth of workers' and soldiers' councils would gradually undermine the old state. Throughout the revolutionary period power would

gradually move from this state into the mass of workers as they became self-consciously active. The final act in this drama would have been to topple the now empty shell of the central government. This is perhaps what the Spartacus is doing when it “takes over governmental power”—presumably to prepare the way for the election of a central council. In *Our Program and the Political Situation* Luxemburg makes clear that the overthrow of the central government is only the final act in the revolutionary drama:

We must prepare from the base up; we must give the workers’ and soldiers’ councils so much strength that the overthrow of the Ebert-Scheidmann or any similar government will merely be the final act in the drama. Thus the conquest of power will not be effected with one blow. (1971, 405)

This interpretation is reinforced by Luxemburg’s use of the term *socialist proletariat* in the second to last quotation. Luxemburg only used such a term in the context of the actual revolution. It seems to indicate a proletariat that had achieved the socialist consciousness enabling it to rule.

The revolutionary struggles of 1918 and early 1919 were defeated. In her last article before her death, “Order Reigns in Berlin,” Luxemburg assessed the meaning of this defeat. She begins by admitting that the material conditions were insufficient for revolution. The political immaturity of the mass of soldiers made them ready tools of counterrevolution. Even the economic struggles were still in their infancy. The revolution had been provoked by the willingness of the SPD’s leadership to cooperate with counterrevolution. In fact, the troops that crushed the revolution came from an SPD-led government. The former pride of the International had betrayed the working class. Thus the defeat was not simply the result of unripe conditions; it was also a failure of leadership. At the critical moment the former vanguard of the proletariat tried to suppress the revolution. At the same time the Spartacus League was only a infant organization. Thus, Social Democracy was fragmented between two camps. In such an atmosphere, the proletariat’s energy and activity could not

live up to the full potential. Rather than going down in an educational clear-cut confrontation, the revolution was thus crushed amid throes of passivity and indecisiveness.

Luxemburg could only hope that despite the failure of leadership this defeat, like those in of the past, would prove another step in the proletariat's maturation. In her last published words:

The leadership failed. But the leadership can and must be created anew by the masses and out of the masses. The masses are the crucial factor; they are the rock on which the ultimate victory of the revolution will be built. The masses were up to the task. They fashioned this "defeat" into a part of those historical defeats which constitute the pride and power of international socialism. And that is why this "defeat" is the seed of future triumph.

"Order reigns in Berlin!" You stupid lackeys! Your "order" is built on sand. The revolution will "raise itself up again clashing," and to your horror it will proclaim to the sound of trumpets:

I was, I am, I shall be. (1971, 415)

Conclusion

Although Rosa Luxemburg died over six decades ago, her basic approach to revolutionary politics has a relevance for those of us seeking fundamental change in the United States today. For one thing, her ideas can help us better understand and appreciate our own radical tradition. For example, many of the positions taken by members of the left wing of the old U.S. Socialist Party during its heyday have much in common with Luxemburg's views on revolution and the role of the party. (See, for instance, the statements made by Schenectady Socialist Walter Lippman reprinted in Stave 1975.) Before the Socialist Party, the left wing of the Populist movement similarly articulated theories and practices of political action that placed a premium on the ideals of mass education and self-emancipation. (See Mitchell for a detailed account of Populist educational strategies; Goodwyn's influential interpretation of Populism also highlights very Luxemburgian elements.)

Obviously, since the struggle against capitalism continues, Luxemburg's vision of the revolutionary process still has much to say for working-class politics. As the rise of the so-called new social movements has made clear, however, revolutionary politics encompasses not simply class dynamics, but also those of gender, race, and sexual preference as well. Luxemburg's basic emphasis on mass education through experience; on the important, yet bounded, role of political leadership; and on revolution through self-emancipation has relevance for these other revolutionary projects as well. For example, when well-known German feminist and Marxist Frigga Haug sought in Rosa Luxemburg a relevance for the contemporary women's movement, she turned to precisely the elements that we have highlighted above. Noting that Luxemburg had very little to say about the actual oppression of women, Haug nevertheless finds her conception of revolution directly relevant to the women's movement. Luxemburg's basic approach makes revolutionary change possible by highlighting a process of self-emancipation that grows out of women's experience in struggle. Haug concludes:

The search for useful ideas for a women's politics led us to Rosa Luxemburg. She led us unexpectedly to a project for revolutionizing politics in general. Wherever we were able to find something useful or important for women's politics it turned out to imply a critique of views which think of politics as something coming from above, of the party as a form which those lower down have to serve, as a bureaucratically sclerotic structure, a tool for ensuring the passivity of the masses. Rosa Luxemburg's teachings make plain that where fixed images are built into dominant forms of oppression, political struggle must be conducted at every level. It includes the use of language, the experiences of the many in social relations where spontaneous feelings attach themselves to the very bonds from which people must liberate themselves. . . . The ability to bring about change grows out of people's own activity. (Haug 1992, 250)

The elements of Luxemburg's thought highlighted in this

essay have the potential to serve as the basis for a universal conception of emancipation. An exploration of the distinctly revolutionary intellectual traditions that have grown from a wide variety of movements organized around such issues as race, gender, the environment, and sexual preference would reveal common notions of self-emancipation driven by mass education and transformation through life experience. Realizing the potential common ground that Luxemburg points us to can serve as the first step toward bringing together an often-fragmented U.S. Left.

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NOTES

1. Space does not permit discussion of Luxemburg's specific critique of Lenin. The two main documents in this regard are "Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy" (in 1971) and "The Russian Revolution" (in 1970). Both criticized Lenin on very specific grounds, not his approach in general in which he closely followed Luxemburg's own Marxist vision. The former document has often been erroneously seen as a classic critique of Lenin's supposed development of the vanguard party in *What Is To Be Done?* Luxemburg actually wrote it, however, in response to Lenin's earlier *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*. In it she criticized Lenin, not for his desire to develop some degree of general centralization and unity within the movement, but for seeking to do so at a premature historical moment and through the mechanism of the central committee. While correctly identifying the negative impact such methods might have upon the democratic mechanisms of self-emancipation, Luxemburg does not address Lenin's later arguments in *What Is To Be Done?* that the specific timing and mechanism used for developing some degree of unity were made necessary by the conditions of authoritarianism within which Russian Social Democracy had to operate. In "The Russian Revolution" Luxemburg sharply criticized Bolshevik policies that infringed upon liberal democratic rights. She based her defense of these freedoms, however, not on liberal ideals, but on her specifically Marxist vision of the revolutionary process. Liberal freedoms were necessary for the working class to develop its political abilities. Furthermore, Luxemburg did not locate the source of Bolshevik actions in some monolithic "Leninist" vanguardism. Rather she saw such actions as forced upon the Bolsheviks by the historical conditions in which they had to operate. Her concern was not with the specific actions so much as the fact that some Bolsheviks were

justifying their actions as revolutionary virtues rather than as undesirable measures that ran counter to the revolutionary vision but were made necessary by the historical moment. Her critique in this regard was a haunting premonition of Marxism's degeneration under Stalinism.

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**Valuing Tradition, Valuing History:
Reading Thomas McGrath's *Letter to an
Imaginary Friend***

Donald Smith

For the purposes of this paper I make a provisional distinction between tradition and history, to set these up in a dialectic. Traditions are the name for the stories people tell about experience, stories always also for the purpose of achieving power for the tellers, achieving security and perspective; traditions offer subject positions for people to take up. History, on the other hand, is the name for what by definition remains forgotten by traditions, the effects of context that would undermine any story. Some of us may be content, say, just to sing along with Pete Seeger's question, "When will they ever learn?"—but history, that ghost, still threatens even this moment of solidarity from the shadow it would cast if taken as a "we happy few" construction, with what it has always cost, and what it may be costing even now, not to have learned. Who can say who is "they"? Thomas McGrath, radical poet, can; he writes about such a "they," figuring history as one whom those in power have forgotten, in the poem "Blues for Warren":

They are shadowed by a sinister familiar they remember but
cannot place,
He appears in their nightmares; if they think of his name
they are certain to fall from grace.

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And between one pole and the other, as between desire and desire,
The Socially Necessary Man is hanging in chains of fire. (1947, 86; 1988,
37)

History threatens many kinds of power—to unchain this Prometheus, even to listen to him in his pain, would be to ask for more trouble than most of us would wish to see, whatever our traditions. Traditions hail, after all, they offer that “grace,” but history does not, and can never be made to serve the interests of such powers. While traditions construct, history deconstructs; history offers pain just where traditions offer comfort.

In his long poem *Letter to an Imaginary Friend* especially, McGrath works both sides of this dialectic, pursuing a poetry that would thus witness to each side more accurately, and more usefully. He thus writes Left traditions as more local to experience than they probably could be written otherwise, often in the words of people he has known, effectively contextualized in quotations from conversations. And he witnesses to history as effectively as any poet of his time, showing that this pain history offers and the way it undermines traditions need not, as is sometimes assumed, breed fatalism and forestall political action, but rather enable, even require, action.

McGrath’s declared purpose in the *Letter* is to make a tradition, the legend, the commune. Throughout the poem, whenever he returns out of memory to his desk, wherever that desk is at the time, he is likely to return to that declaration. He is continually revising it. He writes, for example, near the end of Part 2:

I have come here—too young for this world and too old for the next—
From my violent acres crying for incarnation, to claim you,
To found our hungry legend in the field of bread, to find
Our bread in the bank of hunger, in the lame streets of the dawn,
To find our sign past sleep or these sleepy reveries of an insomniac Harp. ‘.‘.

—have come to claim you, to build, on the angry winds of the renegade
Angels, the four blueblowers of the compass points, this stand
For the round song and the commune. (1970, 212)

“I have com ~ to claim you”: in the verbs this purpose is clear, to hail and claim your allegiance to “the round song and commune.” The dialectic between tradition and history is written in their sound play: “I have come/to claim/ to found/to find/to

build"—and ultimately to be built. But this is not just a pledge of allegiance to any available tradition. These verbs are laced with impossibilities for objects: that the land itself should have to cry out to become real, that the commune's tasks are to find bread in hunger, and to take our stand on the wind. And they are, of course, almost all infinitives, a la Tennyson's "Ulysses"—but whereas the point is sometimes made about Tennyson's poem that those infinitives reflect the old man's "exhaustion," here they reflect rather the sense in which the voice of McGrath's poetry has never been young (the way Whitman's, for example, has been), and the way in which he would be still older if he could: "I have come here—too young for this world." These objects also make antitheses that, rhetorically, would spur to action. Revolutionary purpose is not undermined by asking historical questions, no matter how cherished the tradition undermined; here is no implied rhetoric of quietism, but a grasp of necessity. McGrath's voice keeps its edge—which is not the same thing as youth—by keeping a weather eye on history.

Thus these infinitives reflect the revolutionary purpose for radical poetry McGrath describes in his ode, "Against the False Magicians." I quote the poem's third stanza, that part of the form called the "stand"; that this stand would echo that "stand / For the round song and the commune" need not be an accident:

It is the charm which the potential has
That is the proper aura for the poem.
Though ceremony fail, though each of your gray hairs
Help string a harp in the landlord's heaven,
And every battle, every augury,
Argue defeat, and if defeat itself
Bring all the darkness level with our eyes—
It is the poem provides the proper charm,
Spelling resistance and the living will,
To bring to dance a stony field of fact
And set against terror exile or despair
The rituals of our humanity. (1988, 65)

"Though ceremony fail," though any tradition fail—or, putting it another way, *betray* revolutionary purpose—there is still this charm that the poem may have. And McGrath is not afraid, as some of us today would be, to end his poem on the word

“humanity.” He speaks of a “we” this time, and in such language. The commune must be material and human, or what is called the commune will be only another grab for power, and the struggle will have to go on again; but as McGrath writes to end “The Seekers,” the first poem of his first book, *To Walk a Crooked Mile*, “in any case / We’ll have to walk because we’re going farther.” (1947, 15; 1988, 19)—walk, not ride on a forgetful, constructed tradition.

All of this suggests that for McGrath this dialectic between tradition and history is not just, or even primarily, a hermeneutic circle—as if radical poetry were only a kind of come-along, ratcheting the poet (if no one else) ever closer to the never quite attainable “right” interpretation of culture. “Right,” here, has as much an ethical sense as an interpretive one—to justify, as it were, the ways of tradition to history. McGrath is such an effective witness to history because he treats this dialectic in another way, as a matter of evaluation not interpretation, purposes rather than perception, and as a result of making judgments—always contingent, of course—out of experience, that old voice, rather than, say, indulging in that childish sense of wonder generated out of willful, unnecessary defamiliarization.

On opening the *Letter*, the first words the reader comes across are an epigraph from Henry David Thoreau:

Whenever I see my Friend I speak to him; but the expecter, the man with the ears, is not he. They will complain that you are too hard. O ye that would have the cocoanut wrong side outwards, when next I weep I will let you know.

This is the Thoreau who can speak of reformers and philanthropists as comically deluded folks—“If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life” (1966, 50); his tone here is like the one McGrath uses when he speaks of “politicos.” “The expecter” is the one whose purpose is to hail above all, whose interest is in the coherence of his interpretation, in protecting his tradition and enjoying the power it bestows; he listens only for what he wants to hear, and thus often cannot see the man standing in front of him. An individualist character in McGrath’s

But this story is not set up here just to be interpreted, a metaphor to be unpacked into a description of the whole world, but first to be evaluated. The question is not just “How are we today descendants of these hunters? How are they still in us?” but also “What use ought we to make of this story, if our goal is revolution? How should we value this memory?” The purposes and the tone of what follows are crucial:

Aye, long ago. A long journey ago,
Most of it lost in the dark, in a ruck of tourists,
In the night of the compass, companioned by tame wolves, plagued
By theories, flies, visions, by the anthropophagi . . .

—by traditions. McGrath’s speaker addresses the one—the imaginary friend—whose first response to this piece of myth might be to say, commonsensically enough, “Well, that was a long time ago.” The reader is presented with one side of a conversation, in the hope that he or she might take up the other. It is important that this is a conversation, not so much the high-modernist kind where the speaker responds to the quotations as literature, the speaker as exegete or pointedly not as exegete, the quotations set up to trace an eclectic body of reading for which claims are made (or pointedly not made) about “cultural literacy,” but rather the kind of conversation Cary Nelson describes in *Repression and Recovery*: American radical poetry as a group effort of witnessing to history, its intertextuality traceable through newspapers and journals. McGrath would engage his imaginary friend in this kind of conversation.

McGrath’s speaker and his friend apparently agree that it is important to remember that this was long ago; this agreement is a meeting place for them, a place they can scout together to see if the commune might be built there. I think that this remembering is not the same thing as interpretation, it sets limits to interpretation: it is *not* to say that we can be today, like those hunters, at the beginning of everything. That “Aye, long ago” might sound weary in tone, but look how these words enable the flood of images that follows, the energy of the poem, an initial burst of catalogue: Parts 3 and 4 of the poem will take this energy to hilarious extremes (McGrath 1985). This is no invitation to rest.

For the speaker and his friend that story is to be valued for reminding them that in the place they seek, the place that has not yet been found or founded, the wolves are not tame (any more than McGrath's horses Ringo and Outlaw are tame). Just a compass cannot, among such iron rivers, tell enough to be relied upon to get them there. The place they would find is not a place for tourists; there are no accommodations there, no Baedeker for it. McGrath writes in the poem, "The Tourists," with the conversation figured in call-and-response:

Where are they going, Brother, what do they look for,
With their cars so new and their hopes so strong?
The place they seek, Brother, they cannot remember,
Marveling sweetly along. (1947, 20)

"Visions, flies, theories," Baedekers, cars, and marveling rather obscure the way and enable forgetting: what is needed is to seek on foot and together in spite of all these.

Against such forgetting, McGrath would have something to say for literary critics as well, something for the current academic debates around issues of canonicity and literary history—that is, tradition. In Part 1 of the *Letter* he recollects his days as a student of Cleanth Brooks's student at Louisiana State University:

And they all put in together and they got up
A tradition. They got hold of Donne, and before they had got done
They damn near had him.

And they got hold of Agrarianism—
Salvation—40 acres and a mule—the Protestant Heaven,
Free Enterprise! Kind of intellectual ribbon-development—
.
But it came in handy, later,

That tradition. The metaphysical poets
Of the Second Coming had it for God or Sense—
Had it in place of a backbone: and many's the scarecrow,
Many's the Raggedy Man it's propped up stiff as a corpse.

And, a little later:

O architectonic colloquoy! O gothick Pile
Of talk! How, out of religion and poetry
And reverence for the land the good life comes.
Some with myth, some with Visions out of

That book by Yeats would dance the seasons round
In a sweet concord.

But never the actual seasons—
Not the threshing floor of Fall nor the tall night of the Winter—
Woodcutting time—nor Spring with the chime and jingle
Of mended harness on real and farting horses,
Nor the snort of the tractor in the Summer fallow.
Not the true run of the seasons. (1970, 60, 62)

In this encounter between radical poet and Southern Agrarianism, it is the communist McGrath who judges Agrarianists unequal to the task of finding a sense of place—their first claim and main concern. If this seems ironic, consider that it takes history to make a place, and history is on the other side of the dialectic from tradition. And even then, what happens needs to be evaluated: the difference in the last lines above is that the real run of the seasons is also in the *work* involved—a fact inconsistent with that kind of reverence, that definition of the good life; in the tasks that don't always feel like sweet concord, and that can't be well performed, after all, by hollow men.

McGrath's purpose in witnessing to history is to help found the commune among people who can listen and speak—that is, work—in spite of traditions, and this is a dangerous purpose in many ways. For this witnessing has to be personal, too: there are souls at stake all around, ghosts in a world where, everywhere, offers of power and blissful forgetfulness can be hard to resist. Knuckling under and joining that flow may often look like the social thing to do; it might even sometimes look like socialism. In the end, though, what it takes to treat others, living or dead, the way the commune would require, the socially necessary way, is another kind of resistance.

Early in Part 2 McGrath writes, now in conversation with the voices who name his speaker, wryly, “resurrection man”:

And always, as I go forward,
And older I hear behind me, intolerable, the ghostlight footsteps—
Jimmy perhaps; or Jack; my father; Cal; Mac maybe—
The dead and the living—and to turn back toward them—that loved past—
Would be to offer my body to the loud crows and the crass
Lewd jackals of time and money, the academy of dream-scalpers, the mad
Congressional Committees on Fame, to be put on a criss-cross for not wearing

(Net where we strangle) and the Naked Man of the Round Dance. . .

To elaborate the iconic dynamite of the authentic class struggle
In other words to change the world

—Nothing less. (108)

To keep clear the place of the commune would require making that fence of ghosts. In this declaration lie real hope and revolutionary purpose, not in spite of but because of the ghosts that still remain “intolerable.” These ghosts will not speak just to comfort us: to assume that they must is to dispense with Circe’s ritual; it is to forget them and offend them, and then they will remain silent. In that assumption we would present to them the picture of one who cannot listen, one talking for his own entertainment, and therefore one who cannot be met upon the ground of the commune—one deader than they, as it happens.

These ghosts do not speak to protect us in our power, in McGrath’s phrase from the poem “The Restless Night,” in our “immortality which is only lifelong” (1988, 95). They rather accuse, as Elpenor’s request of a proper burial is a stinging accusation to Odysseus—whose hopes all depend on doing the socially necessary thing. The building of that fence is not like getting up a tradition or theory or interpretation, for any such construction will still be haunted by what it cannot place. The fence is to be interposed—that is, *placed* as much as built; it is the iconic dynamite, rather, that is to be elaborated. This is work of another kind, the revolutionary demolition work that always requires the dynamite of history to clear space for the commune; it requires knowing how to use that dynamite, and how to see that place: valuing tradition, valuing history.

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An Interview with Barrows Dunham

Fred Whitehead

Introduction

I have a confession to make. My first acquaintance with the name of Barrows Dunham was in the 1960s, when I was a graduate student in New York City. In those days, Fourth Avenue was lined with used book stores, for several blocks below Union Square. Right off the Square was the Jefferson Bookstore; long tied to the Communist Party, its walls were lined with large portraits of revolutionary heroes: Marx, Engels, Lenin, and others. In these shops I often met with Dunham's books, especially *Man Against Myth*; I glanced through, but did not read them. I surmised that Dunham must have been pretty popular on the Left in the late 1940s or so, but I thought no more of him.

Twenty years later, after I had moved back home to the Midwest, I came across a copy of Dunham's *Heroes and Heretics: A Political History of Western Thought*. As I was getting more interested in philosophy at that time, I bought it. Sitting at a picnic table in my back yard on Labor Day, 1985, I began reading. The book was so stunningly well written that I was actually exclaiming aloud as I went along. I immediately regretted my prior neglect of his work, and wondered if Barrows Dunham was even still alive. Noting that he had signed the preface from Cynwyd, Pennsylvania, in September of 1963, I called up information, and found that he was indeed listed. I telephoned, two decades late as it were, and thanked him for his book. He gracefully accepted the appreciation, and I resolved to try to bring

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him to the community college where I was teaching night courses.

In 1986, Barrows Dunham, accompanied by his wife Alice, a distinguished painter, came out to Kansas City to give two days of lectures. I learned more of his story at first hand then. He was born in 1905, the son of James Henry Dunham, dean of the college of liberal arts at Temple University. At Princeton, he pursued the study of philosophy, completing a doctoral dissertation on Kant's ethics in 1933. The advent of the Great Depression made a powerful impact on him, and the currents of the time soon led him to Marxism. In 1937 he joined the philosophy department at Temple.

His first book, *Man Against Myth*, was published in 1947. It exposed a number of prevalent concepts as erroneous: "That Thinking Makes It So," "That There Are Superior and Inferior Races," "That There Are Two Sides To Every Question," and so on. Some chapters dealt with influential schools of modern philosophy; in "That All Problems Are Merely Verbal," Dunham took issue with logical positivism. In "That You Cannot Mix Art and Politics," he criticized bourgeois escapism in aesthetics. In *Giant in Chains* (1953), Dunham went after relativism and pragmatism, among other schools. "Our purpose in these pages," he wrote, "is to consider philosophy as the theory of human deliverance—of deliverance, that is to say, for mankind as a whole." In this effort, Dunham is similar to Ernst Bloch, who proposed a "principle of hope" in answer to the crimes, and evasions, of the twentieth century.

Dunham's style was somehow both down-to-earth and elegant. I was reminded of the credo of the novelist Truman Nelson, who once told me that he had never written anything that the common worker couldn't understand, if he wanted to. I was also reminded of Hume, who urged us to be philosophers, but to remain human at the same time. From Hume and the other Enlightenment philosophers, Dunham derived his graceful clarity, his wit, and his engagement with the problems of his times. When so many of his colleagues lapsed into jargon-laden obscurity, Dunham wrote like Jefferson or Paine.

In the hysteria of the McCarthy period, Dunham was fired

from Temple University for refusing to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Even though he had left the Communist Party at the end of World War II, he declined on principle to discuss his ideas or associates. I. F. Stone attended his trial for contempt of Congress, and wrote: "A full professor, head of his department, a philosopher of distinction, author of several well-known works was dismissed from his post, despite tenure, on legal grounds which have failed to be sustained in court. Since the trustees misread the law, justice calls for Professor Dunham's reinstatement." That was in 1955.

In spite of the acquittal, Dunham was not rehired at Temple. The American Association of University Professors failed to act on his behalf. For almost twenty years, Dunham did not teach anywhere. In response to a comment that he was "arrogant," he commenced work on *Heroes and Heretics*—in my view, his masterpiece. It was published in 1964. Beginning with the Egyptian heretic Akhnaton, this book surveys the entire field of Western philosophy, concluding with the great U.S. socialist Eugene Debs. Its guiding theme is the dialectical struggle between the Orthodox and the Heretics, taking various forms over the centuries, but always consisting of a conflict between Authority and the Truth. Among other things, Dunham suffused many ancient controversies with vitality, for instance, those of the patristic period, which had always seemed to me obscure and dry-as-dust. Without lapsing into vulgar determinism, Dunham demonstrated the intricate connection between human thought and human society.

Consider his summation of Descartes:

The one realm, science, where human liberty is inalienable was now yours to occupy; and while you sat upon these mountaintops, free and visionary as an eagle, you suddenly perceived, in a double ecstasy of logic and intuition, that in order to doubt all authorities, together with all the assertions issuing therefrom, you had first to exist. Never mind that this argument secretly assumed there was a *you*. It seemed clear; it seemed cogent; and it did in fact shatter chains. The effect on Europe was enormous, rather like

the sliding of a glacier into the sea. Everything frozen began to melt, everything motionless to move. (326–27)

Dunham's gift here is to express the drama of a historical moment, when the philosopher sets the direction of his era, when his era shifts forward on a continental scale. There's a fine parallel in Arnold Hauser's *Social History of Art*, similarly ambitious in scope and achievement, avoiding reductionism, and explicating the ties between intellectual culture and its essential social matrix.

In the same year as Dunham's Kansas City lectures, Oxford published Ellen Schrecker's *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities*. In her analysis of scores of academic freedom cases (and there were hundreds of them), she gave some prominence to Dunham's struggle at Temple. In 1989 the University of California Press issued *It Did Happen Here*, a collection of oral histories of political repression in the United States, including Dunham's. These accounts, along with Fred Zimring's 1981 doctoral dissertation, concentrated on Dunham in the 1950s. In the fall of 1990, when I gave a lecture at Washington College in Maryland, I was able to visit Barrows and Alice again, at their home in Cynwyd, near Philadelphia. On that occasion, I wanted to take up philosophical and political issues that were on his mind today. It appeared that socialism had collapsed in Europe; Marxism was everywhere in retreat, both as a philosophy, and as a political reality. In France, the United States, Britain, and elsewhere, many 1960s radicals had either dropped out, or had become neoconservatives. As Barrows Dunham had for many decades tried to make leftist philosophy relevant to the lives of everyday people, what sense could he make of all this? The interview that follows presents his answers. I hope that in some small way, its publication will bring some long overdue attention to the dean of U.S. Marxist philosophers.

Kansas City, Kansas

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Interview

Cynwyd, Pennsylvania
November 16, 1990

- AD: You look somewhat puzzled.
BD: Yes. Yesterday's puzzle was a fraud.
AD: Why?
BD: What was a bachelor thinking at a wedding? He was thinking that he was unaltarable—a-l-t-a-r-unaltarable. I couldn't get that. I don't think anybody could be expected to get it. Now the thing is that what we know about our knowledge, and our knowledge can be an

object of knowledge in itself, you see. What we know about it is that it is constantly subject to revision. And that must mean that at any given time some, perhaps all, of the statements composing a science are a little inaccurate and require to be revised. But if they're a little inaccurate, then they have to be wrong, don't they? On the other hand, they're true as far as they go. So they're both true and not true at the same time. That seems to me to be fairly sound. What to do with that I just don't know. Too much to expect that every statement, even the great, great illuminating ones; the ones that enlighten the whole branches of knowledge, let's say like Mendel's laws of heredity. A great generalization like that, or Darwin's evolutionary hypothesis, or Marx's application of the evolutionary theory to history and to the structure of nations or of commonwealths, let's call them. Marx's notion of class conflict, the conflict of classes in a given society, works for a resolution of a conflict, and has to produce in the course of finding the resolution of that particular conflict that it produces a new society. Those are all examples of the great generalizations. Newton had some which have had to be revised some but they're a fine example of what we mean by a statement that's true as far as it goes but since it doesn't go the rest of the way, it's false. Or at least not true. True and not true. Maybe we better put it in those terms. True and not true, rather than true and false. False seems like something completely gone.

FW: Doesn't a triangle have three sides no matter what, though?

BD: Yeah, sure.

FW: I mean it always did. The law of gravity always existed.

BD: Yes.

FW: So, in a way what we're trying to do is to move closer to the truth.

BD: As far as I know, there's nothing wrong about the pull of earth on the objects on the earth, or falling toward it, or

whatever. So it may be that there are some statements that are free of being not true. But it is very frequently, perhaps more frequently the case, that you have things that are true and not true that need revisiting or revising. Perhaps Marx's whole theory of the development of class conflict towards the new society needs some restating now in view of what has just happened in Europe. . . .

FW: What do you think needs to be restated?

BD: Well, now let's see. A thing like that it's hard to tell because they never really had communism. Their communist parties were all fraudulent. They were made up as a result of the war. The Russians wanted a friendly nation on the Polish border so they seized Poland and they had to set up a state there. So they set up this thing. In other words, the Poles didn't make their own revolution. Their revolution was imposed on them. That's generally unsuccessful. You expect that to be unsuccessful. And the same way with the East Germans. And since they didn't know how to do it, and it hadn't been a native movement, it didn't have the kind of people that were dedicated to it and so the people that did have apparently began to feather their nests, some out of prestige and the positions of prestige that they fell into. There was no Lenin involved in any of this, nor any Stalin either. So they just plumbered it. And apparently something of the sort was going on in the Soviet Union too, itself. When we were in the Soviet Union in '59, and we were guests of the Moscow Institute of Philosophy, we learned that the philosophers had been given the social task of preparing the population of the Soviet Union for life in an economy of abundance which they said they expected in twenty-five years. Add twenty-five to fifty-nine. What have you got? 1984, haven't you? So we ought to be six years now in an economy of abundance. Nothing of the sort occurred, and in fact, the opposite occurred. And the philosophers were doing that. They had spaced out, handed out the work. Some

were working on journals in other countries, journals dealing with leisure time and what to do with it. Books. They were discussing it. I wasn't in on any discussions of this sort. Now that was all based on Marx's old essay called the Critique of the Gotha Program, in which he forecast in a general way, and he said you could only do it in a general way, what the future would be; say you achieve socialism by knocking out the bourgeoisie and reconstituting the economy on socialist lines. And in a fairly short space of time, you've got an economy of abundance because there's nothing to limit production the way production is limited under capitalism. Capitalists can produce any amount of things but they can't sell. They haven't the means of distributing them and so the thing jams there all the time.

AD: But what I don't understand is why there's been this terrible jam up.

BD: I don't know. That's what I don't know and what would have to be determined. Anyhow, they had read this, I think and so they said, well gosh, we've come out of this war and there's nothing to prevent us from going on to an economy of plenty and they figured out twenty-five years would be the time. This is all book learning. And yet if events followed the course that the theory predicted, it would have been this. They would be in it. There were various things which prevented it. I think the amount of pressure, military pressure that we kept up fighting wars, anti-communist wars all over the world, in Korea, and in Vietnam and all those, the Soviet Union had to come up with armaments for their side and so there wasn't a chance in hell of having an economy of plenty. So the population of the Soviet Union never had a chance to have any fun with socialism. They always were fighting for it. Now whether our guys were smart enough to know that and to keep the pressure on in that way, it worked. If that was their policy I'm sorry to say it worked. So there are a lot of true false statements involved in all of that theory, you see.

- FW: So the question is, is Socialism true and not true?
- BD: Yes. Exactly. Now they didn't really have it, you see. They came pretty close some of them. I think maybe under Stalin, under Lenin and Stalin they came as close as they could in those days. And then of course they had the terrible war itself which cost them twenty million people and the suffering, enormous suffering and the psychological impact of that must have been extraordinary. When I think of all of that, I can find no surprise in the demoralization that has finally come across. I've been sort of looking for it for a long time. Yet they were never permitted even that. They had to be optimists throughout pretty delicate business, running a country like that. Always to be on the front line of history, always to be under attack because you're farther out than anybody else.
- FW: Well, don't you think that the bureaucracy is what really did them in? It was an ancient bureaucratic society, there'd been a bureaucracy there for hundreds of years and it was
- BD: That's one of the things, no doubt, but I don't go for that as a general explanation. Anyway, this all has to do with being an example of a group of statements, descriptive statements that seem to have been true and false.
- FW: What about under capitalism? is a democracy. Under capitalism you have freedom.
- BD: Well, you don't, of course.
- FW: Well, but is that another case of where it's on the books but it doesn't exactly work out that way?
- BD: Well, it's a fraud. It's absolutely false.
- FW: What I'm getting at, you can get say what you want. You have freedom to speak, but there's no
- BD: Not really.
- FW: You're free, but there's no guarantee you'll be able to eat.
- BD: Right.
- FW: So everyone thinks that you have freedom but the content is that this freedom is greatly limited, which

produces contradictions. And, something cannot be *P* and *not-P* at the same time, so we're told, and yet you find instances of this all over the place. Now my question is, do you think this is inherent in the human condition. I mean, has it always been there?

BD: What? The inability to achieve a social life?

FW: No, that something is true and not true at the same time.

BD: No, I think that's not only sociological, I think it's ontological. That's the way the world is. The world is off its rocker.

FW: When did that start?

BD: From the very beginning. Everything's a little lopsided, you know that. Everything is, and that's what makes the world such a delightful place and it means that laughter is a form of knowledge. That's the point I like to make. Laughter is a form of knowledge. It's your awareness that the world is off its rocker. I've got a third grandson who's like that, very sensitive, without knowing what he was being. My favorite anecdote about him is that I was once going to write him a letter. I thought it'd be nice to set up a correspondence with this kid that could go on. I could get a letter grandson to grandfather, to grandson. I never got the first letter written, so I thought well, now I'll call him on the phone. So I did and I told him I had intended to write him a letter and I decided to telephone instead. He said, "Oh yes, and you don't have to worry about spelling." Now he sees where the universe was off its rocker. The fact that I would be worrying about spelling in any case, that's an absurdity. But the implications of all of that and he can go along this tack all the time. He was then employed by the UPI to do sports. They've since promoted him to doing political reporting. But he and all the good sportswriters have been keenly aware that the universe is off its rocker and they're quite funny. Sportswriters are particularly good writers, or have been. And in fact, sports is an area in which you can do all of this. It's even more obvious that things are off their rocker. And the kind of people who become publicly

interesting in sports, they're all a little bit off, maybe more than a little.

FW: Well, one of the things about sports in the United States . . . I'll try this out on you, is that it seems to me a kind of escapism that a lot of people . . .

BD: Oh, sure.

FW: . . . I mean it does have pleasure and that's sort of what sports is all about.

BD: And it's got social-mindedness. The one area where you can have competition usually, without suffering. A quarrel between a Red Sox fan and a Cincinnati Reds fan, let's say, is not like a quarrel between a Democrat and a Republican assuming that they take those things seriously anymore, which I don't know. They aren't going to be anywhere near armed violence and it's an area in which everybody is interested and is asked to be interested, isn't it? You can always talk sports with somebody. Sports and the weather, you can talk about without offending, without risking being offended. In this theory there is nothing wrong with the logic that descends from Aristotle. There's nothing wrong with the law of contradiction. I mean the law of identity A is A , all right. But A is also not a changeless thing but a process, and so A is always becoming *not-A*. And it's the intrusion of the *not-A* on the A which goes on all the time, producing the effect of a statement being true and false at the same time.

FW: What about this problem: in science, there's this kind of cumulative effect. In other words, $2+2=4$ and $4+4=8$, and after a while you move from the accumulation of isolated things like that to the theory of arithmetic. Or you have geometry; we haven't always had geometry, but the universe always had geometrical patterns, crystals and that sort of thing. So I guess the problem is, if this is inherent in the universe, this growth of knowledge, or A is also A and *not-A*; somehow there's a difference between that in society and a difference in nature. Because I think in nature you do have a cumulative

thing. In other words, we didn't always understand all the elements, but people after a while figured out that there was copper and there was iron and they didn't understand why they behaved the way that they did, but they knew something about it. And finally, in the nineteenth century, we have an entire theory of elements well developed and well grasped. But we don't have that same cumulative effect in society. So the question is, is there progress in human society?

BD: Well I think there's that, all right. A lot is known about human society now that wasn't known before.

FW: We've also developed a means of destruction beyond anything that ever existed before.

BD: Yes. We have indeed.

FW: So the question is, if we were all Australian aborigines, we might have a subsistence living but we also wouldn't have the means of destroying each other.

BD: Right.

FW: So, in other words, in a way you can say we've developed an enormous capacity but what we have are people who have consumer consciousness and through the shopping centers and I really wonder if that's an advance. The same question occurred in Rome.

BD: In some ways, it is. It's an advance over scarcity. Calculus is the logic, the mathematics of change, isn't it?

FW: Yes.

BD: And it has added to plain geometry which was the mathematics of changelessness.

FW: Yes.

BD: Our traditional logic compares with plain geometry or the ordinary geometries of all those things that are the old static relationships. But we haven't developed logic in the way we have developed the mathematics of change.

FW: What about Hegel, though—thesis, antithesis, synthesis?

BD: Well, that's a general description. I'm thinking of details. The traditional logic has been developed into quite a lot of details and they're working on that all the

time, refining it. But nobody produces a dialectical logic that had anything like the dimensions. You don't even have the symbols. I used to speculate maybe you could use two fists knocking against each other to illustrate contradiction. And then if you showed the fingers intertwined like that you would get the result of the interaction. But I don't see I can get anywhere with that. One of the arguments against evolution back one hundred and fifty years ago was the Platonic doctrine of the absolute meaning, absolute meanings of the terms, a fish is always a fish, you see. How are you going to relate that to men, because a man is always a man. He shows gills as an embryo. But in terms of a Platonic logic there can't be evolution. It's either got to be a fish or a man, or maybe a hybrid.

FW: Well, you had a kind of magical notion in Ovid's metamorphosis and the myths and some of these transformation legends and all of that.

BD: Yes. Change has always bothered people. The rest of it seems so clear.

FW: Well, if you take something like a scientific statement, $2+2=4$, o.k., and if you ask people is this true, the assent would probably be universal. Right?

BD: Well . . .

FW: And it meets the test of experience. In other words, you have two apples here and you put two apples and you put them together and you go away for five minutes, you come back and you count them. There's always four. So after awhile, you assume that this is true and will always be true. And it always has been true. See what I'm getting at? Whereas, if you take something, a statement like slavery is evil, does that have the same truth or falsehood to it?

BD: Well, that's what the debate is about. I think I would want to say yes, it's as clear as that.

FW: But, if you're a slave owner, you think slavery's good. We were talking about Jefferson Davis and he advanced the defense . . .

BD: Oh, sure.

FW: Are you saying that that's the same category as someone who says $2+2$ is 5?

BD: Yes, sure. He can wiggle the whole thing around. He can get a whole new mathematics in which $2+2=5$, can't he? He can do that.

FW: Yes.

BD: I don't know just what that kind of math that would be. But a mathematician would say $2+2=4$ according to that kind of mathematics but they wouldn't want you to limit them to that. The other day I compared knowledge getting to a wrestling bout. Did I mention that last night? The universe behaves with a certain degree of regularity and behavior according to those regularities you can expect, just as if you're facing a wrestling opponent, you know that he knows all the main moves. But what you don't know is which one he's going to show you next. And you don't know that till you see it. And that leads into another thing that's struck me forcibly. That's the presence of novelty in experience. I think it is the case that each new stage you go into, if you don't, you don't have change; each successive change has something in it new, absolutely new; that is, it never occurred before. If it were merely something that had occurred before this would make mere repetition and repetition would all collapse ultimately into one and the same thing. There'd be no change. So that I think we have to suppose that in the process of change there, in every stage, there is something new, absolutely new in the sense that it never existed before. Now then, the question is can you fore-know that newness, that new thing? Then I think you have to say no, you can't, because it wouldn't be absolutely new if you could foresee it, if you could foretell it. Now if you can't foretell, if there is an eerie moment of change, something you can't foretell, that means that all knowledge-getting is mere adventure. It's got this element of mere adventure in it and you're not going to be

able to be sure about anything. Now this argument I feel is a little too abstract. I don't like an argument that is that much detached from empirical data. It appears to me to be arguing too much just from definitions and terms. Nevertheless, the argument is there's something new all the time. It's in the nature of the new that it cannot be foreknown. Consequently, we are all the time confronted with something we cannot foreknow. And that's where the wrestling match idea comes in. You don't know what this guy's going to throw on you. You might make a study of his habits to get some clue. But even so . . .

FW: Is that how capitalism works?

BD: Yeah, I think it's, it's loose that way. It's loose. It's just that way. And that's one of the things that fascinates people with it. Socialism is too similar. Too much the same old thing. What capitalism does is to give you a big shot, dealing with billions, and you have to know all the equipment for dealing with them, and for making them do as you want them to do, that's a constant, that's like wild west stuff. That's riding broncos. That's bang, bang, bang, bang. Well, that's one of the nasty things about capitalism too. I mean you get ruined and you ruin other people with it. And only a handful can really be out there rootin' and tootin'. But you have to grant it's an exciting system all right.

FW: What about all the people that in the USSR that are advocating a free market and all that?

BD: Well they, they're attracted by this. They didn't get the plenty that socialism was to have provided. They probably were taught they could go to programs sometime in their education. And behold, it didn't happen. And they think there are all these jerks in there creaming it off and the jerks were in there creaming it off apparently.

FW: Well that demoralized everybody; they believed in the morality of socialism, they read about it, but then it wasn't the case.

BD: That's right.

- FW: And so they just want to junk the whole thing without realizing that it had gotten distorted. I think there's a big battle opening up there between Gorbachev and some of these people that at least say they believe in socialism. And other people they are plainly opportunists, that want to just get a big piece of some new action.
- BD: Yeah, like this guy who's president of Russian Republic. What's his name—Yeltsin. He's a typical American ward heeler. I distrust him entirely. In fact, he came over here and behaved just like one. And that Sakharov guy who they made such a fuss over. When he came over here the first thing he did was to go see Teller, this Hungarian Nazi. So he's a Nazi too, this Sakharov guy. You don't need many signs to identify a Nazi. Not if you lived through the epoch I've lived through. Yeah, sure it's a routin'-tootin' universe. It's exactly the universe that William James described. The universe with the lid off, as he called it. He was very good at those catchy descriptions.
- FW: One thing that surprised me in some of my discussions with Russians that are coming over here now is that they have gotten the Marxist theory some place along the line. But they're forgetting astonishing parts of it. For example, the labor theory of value. They have the notion that the market will somehow create wealth. And I've asked them, well, don't you remember the labor theory of value that if you produce things, then you get things? And if you don't produce them, you can't get them. They look at me like they're surprised and it's quite astonishing to visit with these guys.
- BD: I guess that the education must have suffered a sinking . . .
- FW: Well, on that particular point, is the labor theory of value something that you accept philosophically.? Does it seem sound to you?
- BD: It does, yes. I think it must be sound because the bourgeois economists are all against it.

FW: Well, if it's true then why doesn't everybody function according to it? If it's true and everybody knows that $2+2=4$, but if you talk about the labor theory of value they say, well, I don't know about that.

The background of U.S. philosophy

FW: What do you think of the condition of U.S. philosophy today?

BD: I don't know what it is as a matter of fact. I'm not going to have an opinion about it. All the guys I used to deal with are gone now. And their theories are gone. And history and the passage of events takes care of things more than argumentation does. Existentialism for instance came and went. It arrived in the U.S.A. about 1948. I had got a Ph.D. by then and in all of my studies for the Ph.D. I never encountered the name of this guy, Kierkegaard, who is their great saint. If he turned up anywhere it would be in a footnote. Well, this came to be quite a shocker and you had to learn about him. He was, I think, a crook. So time went by and time went by, and existentialism was swept into the dust bin of history.

FW: What was that story about and the woman he fell in love with?

BD: He got her pregnant and she had thought that this was to reach its consummation in marriage. After he found out that she was pregnant, he suddenly got a command from God direct that he was not to marry. God forbade his marrying. I think that was much too convenient to be on the good side of God's prohibitions. Not many people have that lucky position. Anyhow, he wrote in his memoirs that he went off to Berlin and there he prayed for her once and sometimes even twice a day. He was an arrogant son-of-a-bitch, he was. And that kind of behavior exactly suits the self-servingness of existentialist theory. Then the logical empiricists, they used to call themselves, that tradition is still going. That's the Wittgensteinian tradition. And that's still going. But it's had to pull some of its horns in. They had to give up

their theory that you can't discuss ethics. That theory that you can't discuss ethics removed from human discourse all the most interesting questions and left the world as a kind of desert, as if you had to talk nothing but mathematics all the time.

FW: Well, how do you view the world?

BD: Well, let's see. It's a lively place all right. And I think, I take a favorable view of human opportunities in it. I think probably we'll make it through; probably we'll escape annihilation, self-annihilation. We actually did recently. We actually did call off what was called the Cold War and that was headed for the extinction of the human race and getting closer all the time. Gorbachev recognized that and worked toward cooling it off. Making a lot of sacrifices in the course of doing that. Weakening the Russian position in order to keep the human race alive. So since we put an end to that direct movement toward the extinction of the race, it seems to me we could probably do it again if we had to. We might stumble into it nevertheless of course.

FW: One thing that struck me about all of the Berlin Wall coming down and so on was that a rather extraordinary social change occurred without murder and killing and war and all that. I mean we always thought that it was going to happen that way and it's pretty surprising to me.

BD: Yes, the Communist governments all gave up without a fight. Without putting their populations through bloodshed. That's an important fact. What the motive behind it was I wouldn't be able to say. But it would be interesting to know.

FW: Well, there was a big dispute, you know, Honecker wanted to have the Chinese solution in East Germany, and just start shooting and there was a big split within the Communist party, within the Socialist Unity party and in fact, it was the majority within that party that said let it go. There is a statement I read about from Dreiser, he said how wonderful it was to discover America but

how much more wonderful it would be to lose it. Sometimes, you just kind of put the six shooters away.

BD: Yes. Yes. There is a, I think, weariness with violence that is very widely felt and a sense also that it doesn't get what it seems as though it might get. The gains I mean.

AD: I think you'll have to ask your president about that.

FW: Well it's evident in this whole business about the Persian Gulf that he and some of his close associates badly want some kind of war that will restore their kind of imperial mission. But, for example, Senator Mitchell, who is the majority leader in the Senate finally came around two days ago and said the Constitution does not permit the president to go to war without congressional authority.

BD: That's right.

FW: And they could have said that in August but what's interesting is that there's this feeling in the country, very widespread, that we really don't want to go through Vietnam again in essence.

BD: That's right.

FW: Not even to risk it, you see.

BD: Senator Moynihan, who, I heard it quoted, said this would be total failure and not pretty to watch. And it would be self-inflicted. That's right, I think he's dead right on that.

FW: I have another question that pertains to something I'm working on. The remarkable influence of religion in American life. Why do you think that's been so? We had Tom Paine here who came in and tried to establish the country on a rational basis. Yet, you get this panoply of irrational beliefs.

BD: Well, you get notice of those but I think a majority of the American population are not members of any church whatever. And mostly it's a little-known thing. If you want to do it you do it. I grant you of course, but then the church and other religious bodies can always get the front pages in the newspaper. But I don't think we're particularly a pious nation. Where did I go to learn impiety? I didn't go anywhere. I learned it right here. Among

intellectuals, I think there's hardly ever anything discussed of a religious nature. In my whole life I've only occasionally stumbled into discussions of that sort.

FW: Well, a lot of my students apparently believe that they couldn't be moral without having a religious belief of some sort. I mean it's quite widespread.

BD: Well that's where religion survives, in its connection with ethics. Then that's all right. I don't mix it up too badly.

FW: If I read your books correctly, what you have tried to elaborate is a humanist philosophy. While I never did much graduate work in philosophy, I read quite a bit; it was the aridity of the feeling and the abstraction of it. Was your mission conceived to answer that?

BD: Well, that's the way the history of philosophy seems to me to be. It's mainly a political debate connected with actual strife quite often. So, what was the point of the struggle between Athanasius and Arius over the trinity vs. the monotheistic version? Athanasius was driven from his bishopric in Alexandria seventeen times and he came back every time. And finally Arius conked out. Died and left the field to Athanasius. So we're trinitarians and we could have been unitarians, imagine that. What a fate that would have been.

FW: Someone told a story about the Ku Klux Klan burning crosses. . . . Since in a particular town there weren't any Blacks or Jews or Catholics, so they burned a question mark in front of the local unitarian church.

BD: That's fairly witty. In the old days I spoke quite often in the unitarian church in Los Angeles where Steve Fritchman was pastor. I always amused myself by getting the word "God" into my speech sometime or another. So that they did hear it once in awhile. Whether other people did, I don't know. I could have fun with Steve. That way he could have fun with me too.

FW: Well one thing that bothers me about my students is what the future will be in terms of thinking. I often reflect on people like Jefferson and Paine, William

Maclure and Thomas Say. There was William Maclure, who was the greatest geologist in the United States; he published the first geological map of the country. He and Robert Owen went to the wilderness and started a new society and founded the Workingmen's Institute in New Harmony, Indiana. I think we've lost some sense of adventure about our intellectual enterprise and purpose. One thing I find impressive about your work is that you have elaborated a philosophical content of integrity and kindness, joy, and so on.

BD: Well, I hope so.

FW: How did you do that in the middle of McCarthyism? It wasn't a very joyful time.

BD: Well, it's the time when you're thrust up against basics. What you're really in there fighting for. And besides, they are such a scum of the human race, you can't associate with that. You're caught up in some kind of relation with them to be sure. But they are ignoramuses. They were low-life characters. They were really unfit for human society, and they sort of knew that they were. They had a kind of embarrassed obliquity, let's say. They were unfit, just unfit. So you were standing up for common decency and that's fairly joyful, besides it was fun. A lot of it was extremely funny. I don't mean fun in the sense of good times, it was that too, but absurdity, the universe being off its rocker was well illustrated in the behavior of these guys. When you think of how McCarthy was brought low violently when he called this black lady named Annie Moss, I think it was, and they had got the wrong Annie Moss. They didn't know that so he started challenging her on what did she think of Karl Marx, and she said "Who 'dat?" And that was the end of the hearing. And I like to date the end of McCarthy from that moment. Something had to happen in which the full absurdity would be manifest and there it was. They got this innocent, nice homebody who simply said "Who 'dat?" and the whole house of cards came tumbling down. The hearing was abruptly cancelled and

I think this phony liberal Symington stalked out. He got caught in the disgrace of it and it served him right for serving in anything of that sort. He could hardly expect to touch pitch and not be defiled, but they behaved as if they didn't. One of the things we lacked was a satirist, a Jonathan Swift who could have driven these guys to cover with a single pamphlet like "A Modest Proposal" that Swift did. They were acting clowns satirizing the human race; the worst attributes of human beings. It was true of course they could create this solemn atmosphere, terribly solemn atmosphere which was full of threats, of course. The solemnity derived from the threats in which you didn't feel like laughing, although you were aware that the thing was utterly absurd. It related to reality as comedy relates to reality.

FW: Did you pass through times of despair and depression during all that? Did you think it was hopeless?

BD: No, no, no, I never thought that. Because I'd been too young to be in the Palmer raids of the 1920s and the failure of the antisocialist, anticommunist things in the 1920s. I don't think Americans go that way in the long run, or even the short run. I think the Americans know better perhaps than a lot of other nations what it's like to be hounded by government. I don't think there's another population more skeptical of government and I was betting on that and of course it came out in the end that that's how it was. That's how it was.

FW: Tom McGrath was writing poems against McCarthy and satires and so on but no one ever read them. Now we've read them and now we're starting to know more of his work but I think there's been a tremendous control of culture in this country.

BD: Oh sure, oh yes.

FW: Which is kind of unprecedented in the world. It used to be that you could publish a pamphlet and that would make a difference. But now I'm concerned about what I would call the philosophy of consumerism and whether

or not we have instead of the labor theory of value a consumption theory of value that fills up our heads.

BD: Yeah, you're talking about the law of supply and demand, aren't you? That's the consumer's, he's willing to pay more if there are fewer examples and more competition for them.

FW: I'm thinking of the shopping centers. Every once in awhile I catch myself reading Aristotle and Hume and Plato and all these people and getting excited and then I go to a shopping center and I look around and I say, the end of the world is at hand. You go to the philosophy section of the bookstores and you see Kahil Gibran and all these books on metaphysics and religion. Books on how to feel better about yourself and all this sort of thing. Dale Carnegie. Tocqueville said of all nations, the Americans are the least philosophical.

BD: That's very likely. That's why pragmatism is their philosophy, has been their philosophy. That's a non-philosophy. That's a philosophy of how to do without theory; in other words, how to do without philosophy. That's the way we are. And if you want to do anything with it, you've got to take it as it is instead of yelping about it. But there's a great reward; you can't expect to do a great deal by books but you keep a certain stream of ideas flowing. I don't want to be wildly patriotic but I do think that Americans come out pretty well in the end. I expected them never to embrace fascism. There's going to be something in the prohibitory behavior of fascists that's going to put them off. They won't go for it. And they haven't gone for it yet. Sections of them have and they always leave the impression that maybe it's coming, maybe it's coming. I'll bet not.

FW: In my own teaching, in my own thinking about the country there's this kind of extraordinary discordance between what's in my head, and the actual state of American culture. I share a lot of the same furniture that Barrows Dunham has in his head. You go back and read all these people, you wander around, and they're you.

You possess all that. But on the other hand, when I talk in my classes, a lot of my students think it's an extraordinary thing that they have to read a book and remember what's in it. And the sad part of it is that they're sort of rendered unable to do this. It's like dealing with people that have some terrible injury that you help them along, step by step in hopes that they'll be functional in some fashion. I'm not saying it's impossible, but what bothers me about the American philosophical profession is that it has dealt with a lot of fine points and things that are not in the culture. It's this tremendous body of literature which has nothing to do with what's out there. And the challenge is to flush this out and to develop what I call the freethought tradition and build that up again. Extraordinarily difficult to do because of the culture we're up against.

BD: Among philosophers you probably find that the old man giving you the greatest difficulty would be Wittgenstein, who worked out the theme of pronouncing certain statements to be meaningless. That was a whole new thing and chaps like theologians let us say, they had long been used to being told that what they said was false. But the Wittgensteinians told them that they weren't saying anything. So that puts the dispute way, way back and he said you've got to prove that you're saying something. But they had it fixed that you couldn't prove that. The test was if the subject could be empirically examined and tested then you were saying something that had meaning. If it couldn't be, then it didn't. One exception would be statements that are definitions where the predicate defines the subject and so that's got to have meaning. So in theology God is a such-and-such kind of being. That would be a meaningful statement because the predicate defines the subject but "there is a God" would be a meaningless statement because there's no empirical test that can be set up. Ten angels can stand on the point of a pin; that's a meaningless statement because it couldn't

be tested, empirically tested. And hardly anything in theology would be capable of empirical testing so the whole thing would be empty. And they went through all the great subjects that people have been talking about for centuries, throwing this out, throwing that out, all mental philosophy as it used to be called, all moral philosophy because you can't make tests about moral judgments. And this was great stuff especially in the 30s when fascism was on the rise and these guys were being exhorted to join the antifascist struggle. They didn't want to do that. They wanted to keep going on their quiet philosophical Wittgensteinian style.

FW: Within the profession did you take a stand and urge, go to meetings and urge statements and that sort of thing?

BD: A little. A little.

FW: Meridel LeSueur talks about ambiguity in literature and literary criticism which was all a big thing.

BD: Yes.

FW: She said that at the University of Minnesota, you had Allen Tate, and John Crowe Ransom and some of these fellows there; how to work very hard without saying anything. Without being able to determine a meaning, and so I suppose that may relate to what you're saying about bourgeois culture. Bourgeois philosophy aims at the same result.

BD: Yes, they were all absolved from having to do anything about the world. No wonder it caught on like wild fire. You didn't have to give any money to good causes, you didn't have to give any time because all those statements were meaningless. That's much more severe than calling them wrong, morally wrong or anything like that. If they're not saying anything, well, you can just chuckle and pass it by.

FW: What did they say about statements like "slavery is evil"; that evil is without content?

BD: No, no. They would say that that's how you felt about it. They would say, this is one of the theories, I called it the

sighs and grunts theory. If you said slavery is wrong, it's as if you were saying slavery (ugh); you're grunting dislike. If you say love, that's wonderful, ahh, sigh of approval. But all you would be doing would be grunting disapproval or sighing approval and you can't argue about grunts. Against a grunt you would put up a sigh I suppose. And against a sigh you would put up a grunt. That threw out the whole of ethical theory. Well, if you were taking ethics too seriously it would be quite a relief, but not to have to take it at all! One useful thing that I think these guys did was their insistence on finding out what a term really means. And that works against the fascist technique of making it mean anything they please.

FW: Well, do you think that bourgeois philosophy has sort of lost it? I mean, the bourgeoisie came into the world and the great pages in the manifesto where Marx describes everything it did, drown the most heavenly ecstasies in the icy waters of egotistical calculation.

BD: They've lost all of that. And once they got it all they sat about enjoying it and I think that's the Hegelian version. That's a static universe. To accept a static universe you have to be satisfied with it. And I think that that expresses the satisfaction of the bourgeoisie, this is by this time midnineteenth century, with what it had got. Then when that began coming apart as in especially in the first world war, which was carnage personified—a dreadful, dreadful thing.

FW: Their world view went too? Like *The Magic Mountain* . . .

BD: Since then they've been scrimmaging around.

FW: Do you think it's possible for socialism to become true and for capitalism to become false?

BD: Well, some of the statements in capitalism are plainly false now. That you can manufacture truth as you manufacture commodities. You can make a thing true by thinking it hard enough. That you can have a stable soci-

ety based on it. You can't have that, you have a tumultuous society, based on grabbing.

FW: Do you think that we'll arrive at a time when people say socialism represents truth and the way that we want to go, and capitalism is. . .

BD: They probably won't use those words, but they'll be saying the same thing. Not in America you won't be able to use those words. What words you will use I'm not so sure. I'll leave that to some future leader and spellbinder. Perhaps just call it love. Love as against strife. Shall we launch a thing like that. If you could come out of that Greek, as you've got it, "Eupraxophy." . . .

FW: Yes.

BD: And we use a nice four letter word—Love. Strife's got six letters.

FW: According to Heraclitus, you always have strife.

BD: He meant movement. In the sense in which he meant it, you always will have it, sure. He's probably the greatest of the Greek philosophers. The greatest of the pre-Socratics anyway. You realize how close he came to the latest theory of the world in which your matter is energy and E equals mass times the square of the speed of light. This universe is one universe for everybody, I'm quoting him now, and it has been and always will be an eternal fire kindling in fixed measures and dwindling in fixed measures. In other words, it's a radioactive universe, it's a radioactive affair and you can measure it. He's way ahead of the other Greeks and way ahead of everybody until Einstein. He's quite a fellow.

FW: Don't you think the Right has a strategy in the United States and the left doesn't?

BD: Well, a more successful one, if that's what you mean. But the reactionaries have the advantage that they can seize on things that are sort of homespun, that people are already used to. These are ideas that sprang out of the society, out of capitalist society when it was new. And people have lived with them. They're exhilarated by

Wild West, what we used to call wild west stories and we're going to get in there and mop up.

The poetry

FW: I wonder if you could read something of your poetry. . . .

BD: Well, some of these are political and expressed my feelings. This is on Harry Truman, our president.

He was a little man from the County of Nowhere
Remember if you can, he paused but a moment here.
He came only by chance like garbage flung at a wall.
Death was the circumstance or he had not come at all.
And dead millions might, alive, be loving and being
loved,
Or being given give, or move as the heart is moved.
But he came from Nowhere by an accident of death,
And we have evermore care, and they have never-
more breath.

I loathed that man. He's the guy who went on to create the hydrogen bomb so I used to call him Hydrogen Harry or Harry Hydrogen.

Old Evil spat upon the world
And scuffed the golden doors.
A plague across our planet hurled
The leprous senators.

And bitter was the food we ate
And poisonous our tea.
The angels gently retched, and yet
Their wondrous wings waved free.

Then waved also the souls of men
Like shadows in a room,
When little Harry Hydrogen
Proclaimed the earth a tomb.

That's another one. Now I guess I will do "The

Economic Interpretation of History.” I like to do rhymes and use the old stanza forms. This is quite formal. Formality contrasts a little with the content.

When Ilium was set on fire
And all her towers fell toward the sea,
When Paris died of his desire
And Helen sank to chastity,

When mighty Agamemnon shook
His pinewood spear of fearful size,
And quietly Clytemnestra took
Her paramour between her thighs,

When damned ghosts within the gloom
Murmured their griefs across the plain,
When every triumph led to doom
And every slayer joined the slain,

What were these far-off troubles sung
By Homer and by Aeschylus,
Of quarreling gods and heroes sprung,
What mean these struggles now to us?

The woes of Atreus never cease,
The woes of Priam still unfold.
It was not love of Troy or Greece,
But everlasting love of gold.

That’s the economic interpretation of history. I think that’s about it. I can’t remember anything else offhand. There are several more.

FW: Why do you think Plato wanted to get rid of the poets?

BD: Well, he thought they were corruptive. They didn’t think rationally. They thought with their blood. I’m using a Nazi equivalent.

FW: I think it was different. I think he was afraid they’d write poems about the guardians.

BD: Well, he may have.

FW: It doesn’t say that but that’s always been my notion of it.

BD: Well, it would fit in what he thought, that they were capable of anything. Sure. It's one of the oddities seeing that he was himself a poet. He might be expected to have spoken for them rather than against them. I mean there is Greek poetry attributed to him.

FW: When did you start writing poetry?

BD: When I was nine years old. We didn't go to school Saturdays so that was a vacant time and I had to fill it in various ways. One day I was casting around for something to do and thought I'd write a poem. And I was feeling very supportive of my school. I had just changed from a public school to a private one. The William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia which was founded in 1689. It just celebrated its three hundredth anniversary last year. I don't remember the full poem. It had three verses. But the last verse went like this:

Our own very great headmaster
we honor very much.
Because we think in all the world
there is no other such.

Well, there's a rhyme for you. I've been stuck with looking for rhymes ever since. So that poem was duly written out and submitted to the headmaster himself, who was properly pleased. He was a pretty old guy then; he was within a year or two of retirement and death for that matter. He was, I guess, at the beginning of his eighties. Rufus Mott Jones his name was. You can tell from the name that he was a Quaker.

FW: Well, thank you for the poems. I've always been rather curious about that. I don't think there are too many philosophers that write poetry anymore. You can hardly call what they do prose when you come right down to it. You don't know what it is.

BD: Well some of them are very good writers.

FW: Who?

BD: Oh the great ones are all fine writers . . .

FW: Oh I know, but today . . .

BD: Russell . . . Whitehead in his way is a fine writer.

FW: How did you form your style of writing?

BD: Well, it begins with my father who was a Presbyterian minister and then a university dean. And he had quite a hortatory style and he could work you up to quite a pitch. Audiences. I was right along with them, admiring him and almost worshipping him. So I suppose my first efforts were modeled on that hortatory stuff. I was a long time shaking that off. I must have been twenty or twenty-one years old before I fully shook that off. Term papers I used to write in my courses tended to be hortatory. I had a theme called Courage that I worked on. Then in the summer of 1924 we were traveling in Europe. It was my first trip over and I had the volume of Everyman's library of Macaulay's essays. I was reading that and he has a style quite hortatory also, but a little bit subdued. And I was impressed by that and I think that produced a change. And then Addison, I became an admirer of Addison and Hume and the eighteenth-century style, wit, and what shall I say, and gentle, elegant prose writing in which the emotions were more or less hidden, kept down. And then more and more writers that I read and liked—Lytton Strachey, for instance. My whole treatment of history derives from him and the taste he had for drawing the portraits of the Victorians. That's a great book I think: *Eminent Victorians*. And so it isn't that you directly imitate, it's that you sort of absorb the feel. There's a wonderful passage in Strachey's essay on Carlyle [in *Biographical Essays*] in which he epitomizes the Victorian Age, mentioning details and also mentioning generalized things. I can't quote the whole thing but he lists the various things, pet dogs jumping out of windows, and the cooks reeling drunk in areas, and dinner might be served at any time between two and six. Then you come to the end of it and "the beds were full of bugs and disasters." It's a wonderful piece of writing and ends with that wildly funny summary of the Victorian Age. The beds were full of

bugs and disasters so you've got to comment on the health, the state of health or cleanliness or lack of it. And the social, the beds were full of bugs. Every now and then I can pull off a thing like that.

FW: Was it a struggle for you to write or did you feel that you were sort of fluent?

BD: I'm fluent. It was fun. I did lots of prose writing. And I improved over time I think. I compose by the paragraph, not by the sentence. That means I've got the whole thing set up pretty much as it's going to be before I write it down. The general structure grows as I write. I suppose some sense of it must be there already or I wouldn't be able to go in the proper direction. But I'm always wonderfully well satisfied with it and I think oh, my god, I'm so pleased with myself. It's really rather terrible. I think it's the best thing not only that I've ever written but has ever been written. I tend to think that when I have finished a piece. Then of course a few days go by and the cold light of reality descends and I see that it's not the greatest thing ever written but it's pretty damn good. And so I make changes in it if it needs it and they won't need very many. Then I would bring the chapter down and read it to Alice. And she's heard every chapter of every book I've written. And there were not many criticisms but she would tend now and then to ask a question which obliged me to recast the whole thing. So she could come at the central thing. And I think I am one of the best living writers. I'll confess to that much. Self-satisfaction.

FW: Well, if you had it to do over again you'd do it the same way?

BD: Oh, yes. I was very fortunate in all of that. As I may have said, we were in the presence of Ella Winter, who was sitting in a chair right over there by that doorway. I was describing a lecture series I was giving on social superstitions. You can't change human nature and so on. She said "Barrows, there's a book in that." It happened—my beginning as a published author was right

there. She did that. She had a lot of people going. Of course she could not only point that out but she could bring me to the publisher. She took me and we sat in his office. I had a list of fifteen subjects. And so I started off with the human nature one and then I sent it up to him and went on to the second one. This began in '43. By '45 the book reached its crisis. I was doing the one on you can't mix art and politics and I was having trouble. As it happens when you're having trouble, you resort to things that aren't very good. I sent what I had written to Ella and she said, "Barrows, you're being facetious." That is false funny. And it was just that. It was the way I wrote when I felt I was failing and wanted to be funny about it. And I guess about that time Angus Cameron told her he didn't think I'd be able to do this project. So I tore up Chapter 5, the art and politics one, and started over. It was in the summer of '45. And it went well. I was able to get a good start. We had entered Germany by that time when one of the people they captured was the movie star Leni Riefenstahl, the one that Hitler preferred. And she was interviewed and the soldier who interviewed her said: "Baby, I've been going to the movies a long time and I've never heard of you." And she said "I am an artiste"—he put all this, he put it down spelled so you got the pronunciation. "I cannot take part in politics." This was my theme. I got it attached to a Nazi right off. And that got me started. And so I went right on through with it. It's a good chapter, maybe the best one in the book. And from then on I had found the pace and the tone. I was in command. So in the spring around Eastertime of 1946 Alice and I went up to Cambridge. Ella and her husband Don Stewart had taken an apartment in Cambridge and Ella's son by Lincoln Steffens was in Harvard. And so I took up the manuscript. I had nine chapters out of the ten and I gave them to Angus. I gave them to him one day. Two days later he came back, and said: "That's the best manuscript I have

ever been given.” So I knew I had it. He was much more likely to tell you the book you hadn’t written was the one you should have. Then they wanted to publish it right away. I had to write a tenth one. A tenth myth and that was, you can’t be free and safe, and I needed to do the introduction, I guess the introductory chapter. They wanted me to go at this fast. I had the business of rewriting it and going back over it. I found that absolutely exhilarating. I took a pair of scissors and I cut in to the old manuscript, threw away parts of it. And then I pasted that on to yellow paper and filled in if I wanted to fill in. Correcting a manuscript I found to be just wonderful. I knew I was improving it. It was a matter of enthusiasm to get rid of this and put it in here and so on. And it was that revised manuscript that I gave Angus. It had been beautifully typed by a stenographer at Temple University, a very nice lady. And so we took a train from Boston to New York on our way home. And all the way from Boston to New York I worked out what became the concluding sentence of *Man against Myth*: “Now therefore, since the struggle deepens, since evil abides and good does not yet prosper, let us gather what strength we have, that our small victories may end in triumph and the world awaited be a world attained.” And that got into the Unitarian hymn book in a section called Closing Words. And I’ve got a hymn in the same hymn book, too, one called Valley Forge. In those days I was newly fired and I used to get a lot of consolation by going out to Valley Forge and communing with George Washington and the Continental Army where they had their most difficult winter. And Angus came down to visit and I drove him out there and one or two other people. One time I was coming home by myself from having been out there and I composed this two verse poem and I wrote this the first week of May.

Winter is a cold thing
But faith and hope are warm,

And charity's a bold thing
That can outlast a storm.

For love has its defenses
Where winter cannot blow,
And he is safe who senses
The spring beneath the snow.

That's a good last line, I think. I recited that to an audience in Los Angeles and a man came up afterward who was a composer and was teaching composition at UCLA and we became close friends after. I haven't seen him for years. He asked to set it so I gave him the text and he set it first as a solo for a soprano in a quite modernistic style. Then he set it as a hymn. As a hymn it appears in this same hymnal. He was one of the editors of the hymnal so he put this work of his in, and it's quite charming. Winter is a cold thing, but faith and hope are warm. He is safe who senses the spring beneath the snow. That's almost as good as "if winter comes can spring be far behind?"

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On Holz's Defense of Leninism

Norman Markowitz

In the aftermath of the political counterrevolutions in the USSR and its allied CMEA countries, Communist party activists and diverse partisans of socialism throughout the world have been compelled to ask what these developments mean for both Marxist-Leninist theory, past and present, and the future of socialism. Although my background and interests are those of a historian rather than a philosopher or economist, I found *The Downfall and Future of Socialism* by Hans Heinz Holz (1992) enormously valuable in his nondogmatic reassertion of a historical-materialist framework for understanding both socialist and capitalist society. Most of all, I was impressed by his portrayal, with a good deal of candor, of how early socialist societies strayed from Marxist-Leninist principles by seeking to compete with the countries of the U.S.-NATO bloc on terms and conditions set by the capitalist world system.

Holz thus explicitly rejects the line developed so disastrously by Gorbachev and his associates with the contention that “a universal humanism cutting across class lines is a bourgeois illusion, possible only in the mind. Humanism becomes real only in class struggle” (29). Holz, however, contends that for Marxism-Leninism to develop as an effective scientific outlook, it must

continually go forward, using real life to test theory and “involve above all the visualization of historical experiences, the successes and failures of our own history” (29). It cannot, one might add, rest on its laurels, or use the achievements of the past to deny the need for critical analysis of socialist societies in the present, as so many Marxist-Leninists did in the postwar era, to the point of denying or restricting criticism of the Gorbachev leadership and policies. Holz then goes on to list ten essential theses of Marxism-Leninism, through which he presents the familiar analytical framework of dialectical and historical materialism. This is very useful since, as a system of thought, Marxism-Leninism must be flexible in its ability to analyze socioeconomic developments, without, as bourgeois theorists do, making theory into a sort of stock-market commodity, to be sold at higher and higher prices without regard to its real earning power.

For those who seek to use Marxism-Leninism as an analytical tool, Holz affirms that all class-based societies remain divided by the “private appropriation of social wealth” regardless of the advances in technology, science, and standards of living for the majority—even though these developments must be analyzed, rather than dismissed in dogmatic leftist ways, if Marxist-Leninist theory is to retain its explanatory power.

Communist parties, in Holz’s analytical framework, remain necessary to learn from as well as guide the struggle of the working classes for the abolition of class-divided society and the eventual creation of a Communist social reality in which “the working class in its struggle for self-determination against exploitation, oppression, and injustice brings about the goal of establishing a society in which free and equal citizens can develop their talents in full; only such a society, a Communist society, can guarantee human rights” (36).

Holz goes on to restate the view that the development of a socialist mode of production must inevitably be a long, contradictory process replete with many reversals (a point that existing socialist societies, advertising the future through optimistic commercials for the present, as do capitalist societies, perhaps understandably came to underestimate, if not ignore).

Capitalist production relations developed over centuries before the political revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth century permitted the class of merchants and manufacturers to carry forward industrialization, world market development, and the proclamation of capitalist property rights as the only expression of freedom, democracy, and universal human rights. In contrast, the working class brought with it to its political revolutions no property and no experience of gradually gaining political and economic power (as against ad hoc concessions) inside the womb of capitalist society.

The institutions and worldview on which socialist societies were built were filled with capitalist and precapitalist forms: the development of modern imperialism, the imperialism that is finance capital by another name, saw socialist revolutions occur in capitalism's hinterlands, at its weak, overextended links.

The political revolutions for socialism, particularly those that followed the defeat of the fascist Axis powers in World War II and the rapid demise of the old colonialism in the postwar period, "gave rise to the hope that the transition to socialism could take place, if not without a struggle, nevertheless in a continuous progression." In this context, Holz, rooting his discussion in traditional Marxist criticism about the difficulties in constructing socialism, contends that the victories developed into fetters on further progress as "communist self-confidence covered up the fact that the peaceful coexistence of antagonistic social systems had to be maintained under conditions in which capitalism continued to dominate" (47).

Here Holz argues, as have many others (including myself), that the substantial gap in standards of living between the nations of "the capitalist metropolises" and the socialist countries enabled the United States-NATO bloc to make both the arms race and the consumerism race the territories on which the cold war was fought. In the process, "socialism gave up ideological territory and failed to lead aggressively the ideological class struggle in the direction of an alternative consciousness" (48).

Also, the concept of capitalism's general crisis, valid in regard to the rise of such features as monopolies, militarization, colonialism and neocolonialism, and environmental devastation,

that has characterized the essential development of finance capital/imperialism since the late nineteenth century, was *falsely construed* as evidence that capitalism was growing weaker and weaker in contrast to an advancing socialist system.

As someone who believed this long before becoming a committed Marxist-Leninist and in effect having taught it to students through the Reagan era, I now appreciate that, like so many other partisans of socialism living in the United States and NATO-bloc countries, I was operating under illusions such as those which influenced many socialists in Europe particularly in the period before World War I. For the majority of socialists of the Second International, the growth of large capitalist trusts, the expanding power of the state, and the rise of mass socialist parties encouraged the view that the increasing concentration in business would produce concentration in labor, and that capitalist society would eventually fall into the hands of majoritarian socialist parties and workers' movements. Capitalism, therefore, would in essence collapse of its own internal contradictions without any need to update Marx or develop new revolutionary strategies.

These Second International "revisionist" socialists, prisoners of their own illusions and a failure to develop Marxist theory, and dominated by opportunist leaders who were products of the movement's successes at building organizations and failure at developing a workable revolutionary strategy, were thus not prepared to deal with imperialist war and the subsequent assault on bourgeois-democratic systems that followed World War I. Even those who resisted and defeated at Second International Congresses the far-right revisionists, the followers of Edward Bernstein who, like Gorbachev and others seventy years later, sought to read class struggle and proletarian revolution out of the socialist movement, did not either update theory or develop strategy to defeat the spread of revisionist practice in the unions and allied mass organizations of the socialist parties.

Holz argues accurately that in the socialist countries after World War II, the much greater economic power of the major capitalist countries was "grossly underestimated," along with capitalism's ability to profit from and even thrive on crisis, and

stabilize and expand production (within the limits of its system).

Here I would add that the unprecedented role of the United States in using its vast sources of world investment capital to fund European reconstruction, develop the International Monetary Fund–World Bank–G-7 system, and use the nuclear arms race as well as direct and indirect military intervention to force socialist countries to spend, given their lower economic base and lack of a neocolonial hinterland, far greater capital and human resources to defend themselves was key to the failure of the socialist countries to develop a self-critical view of social relations at home or a realistic appraisal of capitalism's multifaceted offensive against them.

In fighting a richer and stronger enemy from a defensive position, a fortress mentality is a perhaps inevitable response to economic and military encirclement. Boldness, flexibility, and creativity in the struggle for the minds of the masses, the very characteristics most necessary for success under such circumstances, are the ones most feared, since the enemy (the U.S.-NATO-EEC enemy by the end of the 1950s) has both its military bases around you and its showcase societies on your borders, offering both welfare-state benefits superficially similar to socialist societies and a cornucopia of quality consumer goods largely unavailable in socialist societies.

In such a context, Holz contends, the "hegemony" of the working class and of the Communist parties having state power in regard to the purposes of social development and the commitment to the construction of new social relations based on planned abundance and social equality was lost in campaigns to out-produce capitalists, to make the number of people having television sets or graduating from schools the proof that socialism was developing and superior to capitalism.

Under such conditions, Holz maintains, "the people reacted with apathy toward socialism and developed illusions about what capitalism would bring them, while the governments reacted with bureaucracy and restriction of individual freedom. . . . Since the overall view of scientific socialism could no longer be brought into harmony with people's expectations, it retreated to abstract generalities about everyday life; theory was calcified in

schematics, philosophy no longer integrated with the specific objective practice, the latter thereby surrendering to positivist, regressive, piecemeal thinking and methods that were implicitly taken over from the worldview of Western philosophy of science” (87).

One might add that along with these failures came a view of socialism among those with left orientations, particularly the young in the industrialized countries, as something stodgy, hostile to all forms of innovation, a less affluent version of the organization-man society under capitalism. Such views, not creatively challenged even in France and Italy, countries with strong Communist parties, played an important role in channeling the mass upsurges of the 1960s in the industrialized countries into romantic idealist, anarchist, and narrow reformist dead ends.

Holz sees the 1950s as central to these developments and I strongly agree. Without denying the far-reaching repressions of the Stalin period, Holz stresses the huge achievements of the Soviet Union in economic development, the defeat of fascism in World War II, and postwar reconstruction and leadership of world revolutionary forces—all carried through under the most extreme negative conditions, and all possible only through large-scale popular support for socialism and the Soviet system.

Proclamations in the post-Stalin period about “catching up” with the West in consumer goods in effect stimulated desires for consumer goods that were not and could not be fulfilled, creating a situation where “the competition between social systems was no longer over the goals of life, but over levels of consumption” (106). Thus, Holz argues with great analytical force, “the turn-about from criticism and destruction of a system based on commodity fetishism to submission to such a system was connected to the real backwardness in satisfying material needs as compared with Western society” (106).

This failure of theory, from the Twentieth Congress (1956) of the CPSU on, produced both a lack of flexibility and a lack of militancy, a pontifical smugness of a kind that readers of Soviet academic texts are all too aware. As a result, practical political analyses deteriorated.

Holz does not see these developments as inevitable: to do so

would be to repeal not only the history of socialism in the twentieth century as a blasted dream, but of the manifold struggles for social progress that have been influenced by the development of socialism. He really offers no concrete suggestions, however, as to what could have been done differently.

Here I might suggest the importance of the Sino-Soviet conflict in dividing the two world powers of socialism and permitting the capitalist countries to use their conflict as a weapon in the cold war. Chinese development with Soviet assistance might have greatly lessened the cold war pressures on the Soviets and provided, through the economic integration of the world's largest country into a socialist community, the creation of an international socialist economic system that might have reduced the relative impoverishment in regard to consumer goods that was and is socialism's Achilles heel.

Greater cultural contact with the peoples of East Asia, China, Korea, and Vietnam might also have reduced the Eurocentric outlook that shaped the thinking of Soviet leaders, regardless of ritualistic proclamations of support for internationalism, an outlook eventually also used by Gorbachev as a political program to call for integration the East into a "common European homeland." Such a community might also have been able to pursue a more flexible, unified, and militant socialist foreign policy, rather than competing with each other for influence in the "third world." Out of that competition, the Chinese party and leadership actually became a profoundly disruptive, demagogic, left-opportunist force on the world scene in the 1960s and 1970s, objectively aiding imperialism before the Deng policies opened the country to capitalist penetration. The Soviet party and leadership found themselves drawn into conflicts in the Near East and Africa in response to the U.S. policy of encirclement, a policy in which China was a *de facto* ally from the late 1960s on. Indeed, such an alliance might have been strong enough to resist the penetration of West European and U.S. capital in both the Peoples Republic of China and the Warsaw Treaty nations in the 1970s and 1980s.

Such an alliance might also have taken advantage, creatively and at a much earlier time, of the contradictions between U.S.

and European capital that began to be seen in the NATO bloc in the 1960s. While one may argue that this was not possible, given the contradictions between socialist movements rooted in national-liberation struggles (the Chinese example) and a concrete socialist internationalism, only a careful study of the Soviet and Chinese leaderships in the 1950s and 1960s can enable Marxist-Leninists to comprehend and learn from this great failure.

Holz also fails to analyze in necessary detail the disasters of the Gorbachev leadership, although he gives Gorbachev a well-deserved slap with the comment that “the low level to which the Party’s political competence to develop correct policies descended is shown in the superficial babble of the programmatic book *Perestroika* by Mikhail Gorbachev, which purported to announce the beginning of a new epoch of Communism” (112).

Gorbachev’s identification with “universal human values,” and a “common European homeland,” as against traditional Soviet commitments to class analysis and struggle and a class-based internationalism made his leadership into a transmission belt for generations of revisionist ideas about the achievements of social welfare under capitalism changing the content of class relations, the classless nature of democracy, the interest of capitalist countries and corporations in working together with the socialist countries, etc.

By creating and nurturing factions committed to policies of domestic social democratic “restructuring” and international class collaboration, and seeking to isolate and defeat Marxist-Leninists in their own parties and their own countries, the pseudo-reformist Gorbachev leadership transformed the ideological and political failures that Holz portrays into full-fledged counterrevolution.

In the Communist Party, USA, the defeat in 1991 of factional forces, diverse in their viewpoints and criticisms but led by a section of the functionary leadership committed to Gorbachev’s general line *even after his acceptance of the Yeltsin countercoup and support for the banning of the CPSU*, not only saved the party as a Marxist-Leninist party able in the future to grow and develop, but saved it from becoming another reformist append-

age in the world of Democratic Party interest-group politics, another trophy on the mantelpiece of opportunism and revisionism in a society where extreme forms of individualism, and multilayered patronage machine politics, have made self-defeating right and left “opportunism” pervasive.

Had such forces in the CPSU been able to defeat the “new thinking” of Gorbachev either before or after 1985 and provide a Marxist-Leninist theoretical framework and policies for the “restructuring” and “openness” that his leadership espoused, betrayed, and discredited, the political counterrevolution of 1989–1991 might not have triumphed.

Danny Rubin, whom I knew and respected for a long time in the CPUSA, was among those who represented Gorbachev’s notions in the 1991 struggle, that I, along with a solid CPUSA majority opposed. Rubin continues to represent these views in his critique of Holz (1992) after the complete discrediting of Gorbachev’s positions, even by Gorbachev himself, who now regularly uses “Communist” and “Bolshevik” as epithets in his attempt to provide a “loyal opposition” to his old protege, Yeltsin, whose national career he launched in 1985.

Much of Rubin’s criticism of Holz merely rehashes the traditional anti-Communist arguments of liberals and social democrats that *NST* contributors and readers have faced through the years, and I answer them somewhat wearily.

Neither Holz, nor I, nor anyone of my acquaintance with a Marxist outlook “finds the market mechanism to be necessarily identical with capitalism” (326). Market mechanisms are necessary to the functionings of any economy. Market economy and market mechanisms are two different things. A “social market economy,” the concept that Gorbachev trumpeted, was derived from post–World War II West German economic development, and the various calls for pluralistic property relations from social-democratic and liberal economic theory. The reality, at best, linked to such notions, is the advanced welfare-state capitalism of countries like Sweden, Austria, the Federal Republic of Germany—achievements connected to strong labor movements, and the peculiar conditions of postwar reconstruction—including the competition with Communists—created by the cold war. As

Gorbachev and his supporters moved in these social-democratic directions, the countries that became his models saw their welfare-state achievements erode sharply in response to international capitalist crisis and an international ideological right offensive carried forward in all major capitalist countries.

The concept of a stagnation crisis, as the Gorbachev leadership developed it, derived much more from Keynesian theory, and from technocratic notions of technology and expertise outstripping forms of administration, than from Marxist philosophy. At best, these notions represented a vulgarization of dialectical processes, similar to the concept of “cultural lag” put forth in the United States by Thorstein Veblen, except Veblen’s position was both well to the left and intellectually far above that of Gorbachev and his advisers. Rather than being “new thinking,” these notions belonged to the world of pre-Soviet debates both within Marxism and within liberal circles. Their function under “perestroika” was to provide a pseudo-Marxist rationale for an experimentalism, without clear and concrete form and socialist purpose, that degenerated into a looting of the planned public economy by a nascent class of capitalists drawn from the bureaucracy and the black-marketeers.

Furthermore, Rubin’s point that “there has been a strong tendency in the world communist movement to assert that there is only one Marxism” (332), and his connection of this with leader cults and a lack of “pluralism,” ignore the whole history of the Marxist movement, and of radical and revolutionary movements throughout history; that is, the struggle over theoretical principles and tactics and strategies, and the association, for good or for ill, of various political trends with individuals, including, in the generations following the revolution of 1776, Jeffersonians, and Hamiltonians.

Revolutionary Marxism developed in the nineteenth-century struggle against Lassalleans, Bakuninists, Blanquists, et al. Marxist-Leninists made Marxism a world movement after the Russian Revolution by developing a materialist analysis and strategy for the colonial regions of the world, a critique of racist and national oppression, and bringing into working-class politics an analysis of male chauvinism and male supremacy, most of

which the Gorbachev revisionists abandoned entirely, and that Rubin, a champion of a “pluralism” without content, uses to make what I consider untrue and unfair criticisms of Gus Hall and the CPUSA leadership cadre of which he was part for decades.

Accusing Holz and “old-style Communist parties such as the CPUSA” of “reductionism” and defining reductionism as “the tendency to say no other struggles exist or are of any importance but the struggle of the working class against the capitalist class” (339) is, in my view, frankly silly. That view has nothing to do with Holz’s sophisticated development of dialectical thinking or the whole history of the CPUSA (or for that matter Communist parties anywhere) that have made the critique of imperialism and the struggles against colonialism and racism central themes.

Rubin’s attempt to say over and over again that emphasizing class relations and the class struggle as the foundation for understanding social relations excludes mass people’s movements, racially and nationally oppressed people, and women is simply wrong about Holz and about the Communist movement. Communists have been in the forefront of developing and supporting those movements, concretely, and attempting to unite them in broader people’s coalitions, often failing (particularly in the United States) to gain the credit due them for developing both consciousness and organizational forms in the civil rights and peace movements. What Communists have not done in mass movements is to surrender to either opportunists or nationalists, who play one group against another either to defend their narrow turf or seek to be bought out by ruling circles. Maintaining a principled class and internationalist outlook and practice is very difficult under the best of conditions, but it is the right thing to struggle for, given where the “pluralist” alternatives lead, that is, to the abandonment of socialist power where it exists and its dissolving into liberal and social-democratic reformism (both of which well to the right today of where they were even a generation ago) where capitalism holds political power.

Finally, Rubin’s strange view of Gorbachev and the nuclear arms race, that is, that “dogmatic” Soviet leadership refused to see that nuclear weaponry had reached a stage in which human-

ity would be destroyed, thus failing to launch the “peace offensive” that Gorbachev did, flies in the face of substantive disarmament proposals from the Soviets that go back to the beginning of the nuclear age, and their persistent emphasis in the international peace movement on the genocidal nature of nuclear war and weaponry. What was new about Gorbachev was his willingness, given the huge strategic imbalance that resulted from cold war encirclement of the USSR by the United States, to make huge practical concessions to U.S. cold warriors that no previous Soviet leader contemplated. In the 1980s, when the Reagan administration launched the greatest arms buildup in all of history, created government agencies like the Endowment for Democracy to carry on the kind of ideological subversion in the socialist countries that the CIA had formally engaged in covertly, and launched an offensive on all fronts reviving the worst aspects of the high cold war period of the 1950s, Gorbachev’s pious wishes about “universal human interests,” a desire to integrate with West European capitalism in a “common European homeland,” and a practical policy of appeasing an aggressive imperialism led to the disasters of recent history. Specifically, this approach to “reform” led the Gorbachev leadership and its apologists to create the conditions that turned chronic problems into economic and political collapse, culminating in the counter-revolutions of 1989, the Gorbachev-assisted rise of Yeltsin, and the Gorbachev-supported banning of the CPSU and the dismantling of the USSR at the end of 1991.

That Rubin has learned little from these developments at a time when Gorbachev was lending lukewarm support to Yeltsin’s use of tanks and commandos to slaughter the Congress of Peoples Deputies that his perestroika program created, and cannot see beyond his own old existence as a CPUSA functionary closeted for so long with other functionaries in the development of policy that he now uses to make a universal critique of the world Communist movement, is to me both startling and sad. Rubin’s dismissive attitude toward the CPUSA leadership, of which he was a part for so long, may help to re-enforce the anti-Communism of old social democrats and old new leftists, acting

the way the criticisms and staged “confessions” of ex-Communists did after World War II for the cold war establishment and the general population, but it cannot produce anything beyond another group of ex-Communists, most of whom (hopefully) will move back to the CPUSA, rather than repeating the errors of the past by becoming either political dropouts, frustrated liberals, or drifting further to the right. That I also find very sad.

I am in general agreement, as I think Marxist-Leninists and CPUSA members would be, with Erwin Marquit's defense of Holz's work and Marxist-Leninist theory from Rubin. I would say that it is through the CPUSA that Marquit and those readers who agree with Holz's and his position can most effectively develop themselves as people and advance the movement for socialism, rather than wasting so much time in what are really very old polemics that add little to theory and practice.

Nobody I know in the CPUSA has seriously claimed to have all of the answers, since learning and understanding are processes rooted in an evaluation of changing material conditions and social relationships. But without a framework and some theoretical confidence, nobody on the left advances anywhere in political life. The framework of “evolutionary socialism,” as Bernstein called it nearly a century ago, of “market socialism,” as “classless democracy,” as support for social movements as the primary focus, offers no solution for socialist reconstruction and “renewal”; rather, as Holz shows, it is a large part of the problem of both building effective movements for socialism and developing a socialist system. It is not a “renewal” of Marxism-Leninism, but the reassertion of ideas and trends that Lenin's renewal of revolutionary Marxism successfully combated in both theory and practice.

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French Communist Party Congress, 1994

The Twenty-Eighth Congress of the French Communist Party (FCP) was held 25–29 January 1994 in Saint-Ouen, a working-class suburb of Paris. The fifteen hundred delegates, each representing about five hundred members, adopted three documents, the "Manifesto," the "Program," and the "Statutes." The documents were prepared well before the congress and sent out to individual federations (the French departmental organizations) for discussion in the party clubs. On the opening day of the convention, the delegates received a new set of the three documents, revised on the basis of discussions in the federations and with the additions and deletions clearly marked. The principal character of the changes was the inclusion of a somewhat deeper class content in formulations of the various issues.

The Manifesto outlines the party's approach to national and international problems and relates organizational changes to the implementation of the party's programmatic goals. The Program is a more detailed exposition of the party's positions on a wide range of national and international issues, while the Statutes is the basic document on organizational structure, rights and duties of members and officers, etc., and reflects the changes in organizational principles outlined in the Manifesto.

The Manifesto traces briefly the history of the party, formed in 1920 on the background of the support given by the Socialist Party to the French government in World War I and the new course that was being followed by the majority of socialist activists in the wake of the October Revolution in Russia. "In 1975, it analyzed what Stalinism had been and condemned in an irrevocable manner such conceptions and practices that had influenced it. At its 22nd Congress, in 1976, the French Communist Party

broke away with the Soviet model and put itself in the perspective of a change of policy and of society to be carried out in and by the freedom of a self-managed socialist society, to be built entirely on the basis of French realities, in which the verdict of universal suffrage would be complied with under any circumstance.”

In a section entitled “What Has the World Become?” the Manifesto declares that “capitalism is incapable of positively meeting the major issues of our time. There is a growing visible gap between the driving force of this system—the breathless search for financial profitability—and what the life of people is made up of or contributes to the development of human kind: labour education, culture, health, sport, research, environment, the practice of democracy and liberties, the blooming of each person’s capacities. Whereas for the first time in history, resources exist to feed the whole population on the planet, this essential and vital right is inaccessible in this system to hundreds of millions of people. Capitalism no longer carries the future.”

In its discussion of imperialism, which it recognizes as being integral to capitalism, manifesting itself at the economic, ideological, and military level, the Manifesto notes that “the main decision centers are more and more concentrated in the hands of the most powerful, both at the European and world levels: the G7, within which is the ‘triad’ of the United States, Japan, the European Community with a dominating influence of Germany; the international financial institutions: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade; Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation; ECD, European Commission and Council; European Central Bank, “round table” of the major European groups, NATO. The powerful of the world have never produced themselves with such hypercentralized decision centers.”

The Manifesto states that since the collapse of the USSR, the United Nations has come under stronger and stronger pressure to transform itself into an instrument of the United States in order to legitimize U.S. actions. The UN General Assembly, the only body representative of all the nations on the basis of equality, is being shunted aside on the most crucial questions; the Security Council, with major powers under U.S. leadership, is assuming the command position.

Turning to the situation in France, the Manifesto characterizes it as “the deepest crisis our society has ever faced since it became a capitalist society.” Among crisis phenomena mentioned are mass, long-lasting unemployment, which is used to “impose a brutal aggravation of exploitation” and cuts in social welfare budgets, particularly victimizing women and youth; growing plagues of malnutrition, illiteracy, and diseases like tuberculosis; dehumanization of the workplace; rural desertification, with whole regions in decline; broken-down industry; urban overconcentration; decline in public services; and ecological imbalances. “The moral and social consequences of this crisis facilitate the rise of intolerance, violence, racism, obscurantism, corruption, and drug consumption. While labor incomes decrease, corporate profits are on the rise, with only forty percent of the profits being reinvested in the French economy, the remaining sixty percent going into financial speculation and capital exports.

“In order to solve the crisis this system has caused,” states the Manifesto, “nothing is more urgent than the development of democracy.”

The French Communist Party did not always perceive that essential reality. Thus whereas probably no other party did so much for liberties in France, and had to pay such a high price for it, for a long period, it named “bourgeois-like” those liberties [that] the bourgeoisie more and more feel as being an obstacle. . . . And the FCP long shared with the other communist parties a way of thinking which stated that society could only free itself from capitalism through the dictatorship of the proletariat and state-controlled economy. The building of Soviet society, after the 1917 Revolution, was completed according to this model.

It first enabled an important economic, social, and cultural development, up to making the USSR become the second power in the world. But it also made it possible for Stalinism and its monstrous paraphernalia to appear. It was also unable to meet the needs of a modern country’s people. This model definitely failed.

The Manifesto draws three lessons from this analysis. First, “it is not enough to abolish capitalism to go beyond it. Wanting to build up a society superior to it cannot mean doing away with the existing society in order to build another full scale one. Socialism . . . has to be a process of transition.” Second, “using constraint, power, abuse, intolerance, manipulation of conscience perverts any project aiming at moving away from this system. Society cannot be freed from it outside scrupulous respect of individual liberties, of pluralism, of universal suffrage and of the impetus to new liberties, of self-management.” Third, “when the development of events escapes people’s control, it eventually turns against the people. Whatever the asserted intention, no change can be completed in favour of the people if it is not the achievement of the people itself.”

The first task of the Communist Party is to work for opening the way to democracy in enterprises, public life, in institutions and the media so that the people can freely choose their own destinies. “For us, the meaning of the word ‘communism’ is nothing but the actual implementation of those aspirations: self-management and new relations between citizens and politics, the state and society; friendship and cooperation between people and nations; enhancing truly humane relations; full development of the capacities of each individual, a condition for the free development of all; all this implies the suppression of the domination of the capitalist class on society and beyond, of all forms of social domination and alienation.”

In a section entitled “A New International Order,” the Manifesto calls for cooperation without domination. “It is necessary to promote the demand for the demilitarization of international relations, to ban the bloc rationale, to put forward concepts of negotiations, of collective security, of a political settlement of conflicts.”

In a section focusing on economic questions, the Manifesto criticizes reliance on “criteria of capitalist productivity and profitability.” The privatization of national companies and public services or as well as the infusion of private capital into these public sectors under the guise of forming mixed capital and the imposition of criteria of profitability on the management of these activities will only aggravate the economic recession and the

crisis of society. "It is necessary to have the courage to imagine a completely different rationale. Of course, this does not mean reproducing what failed in other countries, to collectivize and enforce a state-funded economy; we long ago spoke in favour of a socialist transformation including private initiative and a private economic sector."

To use economic resources in a completely different way, the FCP proposes that the control and needs of wage-earners be a major element of management, that public and private capital be held to criteria of social efficiency so as to increase jobs and create wealth for the development of human beings in a new kind of "mixed" funding where the public interest would predominate. The people have a growing desire to be informed and consulted, and to intervene in decision-making. Satisfaction of this desire implies new rights for wage-earners and a real decentralization that brings citizens closer to decision-making processes at all levels.

The Manifesto places the rights of workers in the foreground of its discussions, above all, "the right to work, to a stable job, in which each and everyone's skills, responsibility, and citizenship are acknowledged." "In the same way as the industrial revolution in its time made the bases of feudalism obsolete, today the scientific revolution makes it necessary to get rid of the chains capitalism imposes on labor. . . . It means moving from a scattered, exhausting, repetitive work which imposes narrow horizons, to a job based on skill and democracy which makes it possible to get a complete view of the completed object and of its social function. . . . All these transformations require a change in the conception of earnings. Wages today are conceived as a cost for the company. All efforts are made to make them as low as possible. On the contrary, it would be necessary that each worker have a good wage, not only because this meets a need for justice, but also because this is the most useful social investment. . . . The progress of society requires that labour be freed from any form of exploitation or alienation."

In its statement on international solidarity, the Manifesto avoids use of a class-oriented language, referring not to solidarity in the anti-imperialist struggles, but to assistance to "all populations faced with the most tragic situations." On the

other hand, the Manifesto declares that “all those who, throughout the world, fight for their freedom, their dignity, their right to development can be assured of the active support of French communists. The Manifesto refers specifically to the party’s support for the Palestinian and South African people and to its opposition to the Gulf War and speaks of joint common actions with the broadest possible range of progressive forces throughout the world, including communists.

The Manifesto addresses changes in the composition of the working class, stressing, however, that the working class is not decreasing, that nine out of ten occupationally active people are wage-earners, one-third of whom are blue-collar workers, one-third office workers, and one-third technicians, executives, engineers, researchers, teachers, and other intellectuals. In the broader category of working people are non-wage-earner-intellectuals, farmers, craftspeople, shopkeepers, and professionals who are also subjected to the hardships of right-wing policies of capital.

The Manifesto treats the trade-union movement as the most important organized force in opposition to the right-wing policies. The Manifesto stresses the need to gather together in France a parliamentary majority to bring about the changes it proposes. This means that a majority must be formed from people of various beliefs, so that a progressive majority force can only come into being if it is pluralistic and democratic.

The party acknowledges that the common program it promoted with the Socialist Party in the sixties “eventually created the illusion that the electoral victory of the left would automatically guarantee a deep change, and that it relied excessively on the leadership level for implementing this program without the participation of and control by the people. Nevertheless, the party never compromised itself by forming alliances with the right-wing forces as the socialist and green parties had done.”

The Manifesto sees the *raison d’être* of the FCP as “to put the organized force of a political party at the disposal of those who want to defend themselves, to those who are seeking new answers in which the human being and not money is the end,” and who want to give a national dimension to their aspirations.

The Manifesto asserts that the electoral decline which began

in the period of the common program and continued during the deterioration of the image of the Eastern European countries has now been stopped thanks to the thorough renovation over the last twenty years. The Congress renewed the party's focus on the workplace as the primary point of activity. "The Communist party is open with no preconditions to all those who wish to act for social relations worthy of the human being." The party's funding is open, derived from members' dues and fund-raising; elected representatives turn over their compensation to the party.

In its discussion of the principle of democratic centralism, the Manifesto recognizes its importance at the time the party was founded. It says that the way the principle was applied varied over different periods, but basically led to mistaking unity of thought and action around a political orientation for uniformity, so that sincere communists who disagreed with this orientation were regarded as adversaries. The Twenty-Eighth Congress adopted the position that the party's strength lies in its diversity. The "party's unity in its diversity is built thanks to the confrontation of all views, to the plurality of opinions so that everyone can enrich one's analyses and that of the party itself. . . . Decisions are taken democratically by a majority, leaving everyone [with] his/her opinion, everyone listening to one another, even after a vote," which keeps open the possibility of reconsidering the position.

The results of the congress can be better understood by considering several areas in which the orientation of the French Communist Party departs from what are usually considered Marxist-Leninist approaches. The Manifesto apparently considers these areas of difference significant enough to characterize the party as a "communist party of a new type."

As indicated in the Manifesto, the French party had earlier dropped the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Some Marxist-Leninist parties, such as the CPUSA, no longer use the phrase in their programs or literature, primarily because the term "dictatorship" is perceived by the public as identical with despotic political rule. Nevertheless, following Marx and Lenin, these parties recognize that the essence of every state is the dictatorship of a class and that a distinction must be made between the form of the state—be it a despotic monarchy or a

parliamentary democracy—and the content of the state as an institution with the sole function of preserving the dominance of the interests of a ruling class.

A second difference is reflected by the French communists' reference to *overcoming* capitalism as distinct from *replacing* it by revolutionary struggle. They see this “overcoming” as a long process of increasing the empowerment of the working class in the economic/managerial decision-making processes, so that the interests of the workers and of society as a whole, rather than capitalist profits, become the dominant factors motivating economic activity. Marxist-Leninist parties would tend to regard struggles for increased worker participation in management decisions as a means for raising working-class consciousness, but consider that the substantial sharing of power is impossible without a revolutionary transformation of the character of the state. Further theoretical discussion of this question would have been of great interest, but in preparation for the congress such debate was necessarily limited to the pre-convention discussion format.

A third difference is the replacement of democratic centralism as an organizational principle by the concept of unity through diversity. Marxist-Leninist parties did not in general ever formally prohibit the expression of diverse views on any subject prior to taking a decision (even when such views differed from those of the leadership). Practice was often at variance with this stated position, however, as the Manifesto pointed out was the case in the FCP. The new feature here is that the members do not have to acknowledge the validity of a decision after it is adopted, so that diverse views are tolerated after decisions are being implemented. The Statutes, nevertheless, state that “respect for the decisions of the majority, which are the basis of the Party policy, ensures its *unity* and its effectiveness in action.” It is not clear to me that this position departs in any essential way from Lenin's concept of democratic centralism, so that rather than the new Statutes constituting an abandonment of democratic centralism, it is actually a restoration of its original content.

The congress documents do not identify the party explicitly as a vanguard party. Nothing in their contents suggests, however, that other political forces will lead the way to socialism. In essence, the party has not abandoned its vanguard role, but is

anxious to distance itself from the arrogance with which this role was asserted in the past.

What stands out in the three documents adopted by the congress is their attempt to express the issues underlying the day-to-day struggles of French communists in a language not associated with stereotypical jargon of the communist movement so as to demonstrate their separation from negative phenomena associated with the some of the dogmatism of the past. The communist movement, however, has always made a deep connection between the theoretical basis of its socioeconomic and political understanding and the practical strategic and tactical consequences of this understanding. It was not primarily the language, but the faulty implementation of the theory, that caused the trouble. A sharp break in the traditions of theoretical language has the potential danger of muddling theoretical understanding. Some formulations in the documents may well illustrate this danger, such as the conception of a “communist party of a new type.”

In my view, a glaring deficiency in the Manifesto is its weakness on the need to continue the development of Marxist theory in both education and research. The only direct reference to Marxism in the Manifesto is a statement saying that in the nineteenth century the founders of Marxism associated communism with the proletariat. The Statutes, however, are quite explicit about the importance of Marxism. “In its effort to analyze the contemporary realities, the FCP is attentive to the revolutions in knowledge as the creative experience of emancipatory struggles. It considers that the discoveries, theorizations, and anticipations of Marx are essential to the analysis of class antagonisms, the contradictions of capitalism, and their possible resolution. The work of Marx inaugurated, in effect, in the history of people and ideas a revolution in the comprehension of the motion of societies that permits the treatment of revolutionary transformation in a most profound way.”

The excerpts from the Manifesto are taken from the English translation published by the FCP.

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Book Reviews

Racial Formations/Critical Transformations: Articulations of Power in Ethnic and Racial Studies in the United States. By E. San Juan, Jr. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1992, 163 pages, cloth \$35.00.

This book offers a major critique of United States international and domestic hegemony over the discourses of peoples of color and those peoples' struggles to create their own culture. Perspectives of justice, equality, emancipation, and popular democracy serve to question U.S. external (Puerto Rico, the Philippines) and internal colonization (African Americans, American Indian nations, Chicanos, and Asian Americans) and to define and encourage indigenous art. The book significantly extends the author's other distinguished dozen books and over 100 articles, including *Writing and National Liberation*, *From People to Nation: Essays in Cultural Politics*, *Subversions of Desire*, *Reading the West/Writing the East*. San Juan is one of the world's distinguished experts in comparative ethnic studies and the world's authority on ethnic conflict in the Philippines.

In *Reading the West/Writing the East* San Juan examined U.S. hegemony over native creative writers as typified by Philippine writers. The "disciplinary regime" of low-intensity war, consumerism, micropolitics, and controlled multiculturalism is subjected to the resisting interrogators of Philippine writers—Joaquin, Villa, Bulosan, and others—through whom San Juan seeks an emancipated future of popular self-determination and grassroots cultural revolution "to radically transform the institutions of elite/cacique democracy" (x). "The cunning of Caliban's dissent/dissidence

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against the Ariels of capital—art’s goal of metamorphosing the real—is as protean and resourceful as the ruses of imperial pacification” (xi).

He turns to the centrality of race and racism in U.S. discourse and social practice in *Racial Formations/Critical Transformations*, specifically the interactive regime of constraints and opportunities for people of color and its inscription in writing. Race and not ethnicity is the subject because only race “articulates with class and gender to generate the effects of power in all its multiple protean forms. Ethnicity theory elides power relations, conjuring an illusory state of parity among bargaining agents” to “legitimize a pluralist but hierarchical status quo” (5). Race and racism are social constructs in the historical process of the struggle for self-determination and domination, integral to U.S. history and inseparable from the totality of the U.S. political economy—the market, exchange- value, possessive individualism, and colonialism.

But again Caliban’s cunning can open “new paths of resistance” within the “racial subject-in-process” against the disciplinary regime of accumulation, inequality, and militarism by interrogating the hegemonic discourse of the “politics of identity, inward salvation, narcissistic catharsis” and by mobilizing agents of social transformation such as Jesse Jackson’s Rainbow Coalition (17–18). Simply, he would enable “peoples of color in the United States to be able to speak, act, and make changes on their own terms” (20).

The second chapter of *Racial Formations/Critical Transformations*, “The Cult of Ethnicity and the Fetish of Pluralism” (31–41), defines differences between the conceptions of “race” and “ethnicity” crucial to his whole argument. The exponents of “ethnicity” theory—e.g., the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (1980) and *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* edited by Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan (1975)—put a smiling face on U.S. history. Ethnicity is defined by the white immigrant experience, the melting pot metaphor, and the pluralistic ideal, and applied to all groups in a vision of an ultimately harmonious society. Recently the melting pot has been

refurbished by cultural pluralism in which a hegemonic and essential but neutral European culture absorbs all differences. The fact of the homogenization of a variety of cultural differences among European migrants is applied to Blacks, Asians, and Chicanos out of the charitable desire to “negate racial differences” (32).

San Juan counters this familiar, reassuring argument by maintaining the perspectives of the non-European groups. He joins up with scholars like Harold Cruse, Robert Blauner, M. G. Smith, Michael Omi, Howard Winant, Leith Mullings, and a host of other oppositional sociologists and historians unwilling to distort the past into an upbeat celebration of liberal tolerance and cultural diversity. Contrary to the optimistic ethnic thesis of the United States as a nation of free individuals achieved through a European ideology of individualism, mobility, self-reliance, free enterprise, and consumerism, San Juan concentrates upon the persistent racism of U.S. history—genocide, slavery, economic exploitation, educational deprivation. Ethnicity suppresses the history of white racism, suppresses the differences between the dominant and the subaltern groups and within and between the minority populations, and suppresses the differences in constraints. Especially, ethnic theory undercuts resistance to white racism by its sham homogenization. For example, by diminishing the evidence of the persistence of racial hierarchy, affirmative action has been turned into “reverse discrimination.”

The consequences of racism have had a profound impact upon U.S. literature and criticism. Jules Chametzky, for example “pontificates about the totality called American literature” (36), its core cultural values, its synthesis of pluralistic and unity impulses. Implicitly invoking Northrop Frye’s myth criticism and New Critical formalism, Chametzky essentializes and homogenizes U.S. literature. Or Jerome Rothenberg obscures the unique richness of American Indian oral culture by “a massive barrage of allusions” to Anglo-Saxon writers, completely omitting reference to “genocide and continuing dispossession of their homelands” (37). Literary theory is thus politically complicit with those who would cover up difference and discrimination in order to preserve, consciously or unconsciously, “internal colonialism.”

Against this exploitation and oppression and literary complicity, San Juan argues for a diversified curriculum and canon that directly exposes racial, class, and gender inequality in the name of genuine democracy (40).

The remaining chapters elaborate this argument. Chapter 3, "Problems in the Marxist Project of Theorizing Race" (42–59), rejects the old Marxism which subsumed race into class and economics for a new Marxism of race/class dialectic in which "racially categorized groups like blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans, and Asians are both exploited as workers and oppressed as colonized people" (45). San Juan advocates the conception of the United States as "a racially ordered capitalist system—where the hegemony of the bourgeoisie has been constructed through the articulation of race" (57) as the "Archimedean point of the class struggle against the domination of capital, against imperialism" (59).

Chapter 4, "Hegemony and Resistance: A Critique of Modern and Postmodern Cultural Theory in Ethnic Studies" (60–96), discusses, among other writers, Antonio Gramsci, Werner Sollors, Alan Wald, Fredric Jameson, Michael Fischer, William Boelhower, and Arturo Islas. Gramsci offers an effective conceptualization of the complex relations among ideology, hegemony, culture, class, gender, race, the self, and other forces. For example, Boelhower in *Through a Glass Darkly: Ethnic Semiosis in American Literature* (1987) challenges "universalist and homogenizing politics which condemns the Other as a false, inferior image of a superior Self" (77); Islas's *The Rain God* (1984) portrays the relationships between the European tradition of Hispanic aristocracy and the Indian vision of reciprocity.

Chapter 5, "Beyond Identity Politics" (97–130), is composed of two parts: "The Predicament of the Asian American Writer in Late Capitalism" and "Toward the Production of a Filipino Racial Discourse in the Metropolis." In his first section San Juan presents critiques of Ronald Takaki's *Strangers from a Different Shore* and of the symposium on "Issues of Identity" held at Cornell University in the context of the historical deprivations of the American Dream; in the second he analyzes the response of Filipinos to a hundred years of U.S. cultural domination (117–22) as

the foundation for “reinventing the Filipino” in the United States for creative artists (122ff.), calling into question postmodernist modes and advocating defamiliarizing techniques (Brecht, Augusto Boal, the San Francisco Mime Troup) that expose the mechanisms of illusion.

The “Afterword: Cultural Diversity, Racial Politics, and Ethnic Studies in the Twenty-First Century” (131–43) recapitulates all of these themes and arguments brilliantly, by focusing upon the future revitalization of Ethnic Studies through a return to its “inaugural vision as part of wide-ranging popular movements for justice and equality” (133). Forcefully San Juan refutes the “melting pot” metaphor for minority citizens, and this critique leads him to question who is allowed to enunciate the national identity. Ethnic Studies’s original high aim, which emerged in the sixties, sought “to uncover the occluded and submerged, to liberate the repressed in the process of shaping peoples’ histories. . . . to redraw the boundaries, to affirm the autonomy of the ‘internal colonies’ (barrio, reservation, inner cities), and thus recover the space for the exercise of popular democracy” (132). But the academy, by erasing race and racism as causal factors in the making of the United States, transformed these democratic purposes into the “cult of ethnicity” based on the paradigm of European immigrant success and of democracy in the limited sense of equal opportunities for white citizens through enslavement, extermination, and territorial expansion, all of which helped determine the canon of literature for the classroom and the methods of teaching that literature. And this academic indoctrination is reinforced by the corporate mass media to legitimize “the prevailing system of racially based economic inequality underpinning the powerlessness of peoples of color” (135). Consequently, here as throughout San Juan calls for an activist Ethnic Studies, such as the one established at San Francisco State University in 1968, and an oppositional literature, such as David Hwang’s *M. Butterfly*, to empower oppressed peoples.

I have been able only to hint at the compendious scholarship undergirding San Juan’s exposure of the pervasive racism of U.S. domestic and global politics and literature (References pp.

144–53). *Racial Formations/Critical Transformations*, because it so powerfully unites political and literary history, is essential reading for anyone who wishes to understand the relationship between the race/class nexus and literature in the United States.

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Freethought on the American Frontier. Edited by Fred Whitehead and Verle Muhrer. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus, 1992, 314 pages, cloth \$24.95.

Reading this book brought back some pleasant memories. Visiting relatives on a beautiful Sunday does not usually engender a great deal of enthusiasm in young children. (It did not for me at least.) There was, however, one exception where, stashed away in an obscure corner of one relative's library, there was a collection of Haldeman-Julius pamphlets. I would surreptitiously make away with a few, find a place where I would be inconspicuous, and read with consummate delight and excitement. How wonderful for the first time in one's life to see new light shine through what had heretofore been a homogeneous world—to learn that there were intelligent, articulate people writing and saying things that were never heard in school or Sunday School! Haldeman-Julius is included in *Freethought on the American Frontier*, but there is much more. Included in this collection are Robert Owen, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Robert G. Ingersoll, Etta Sample, Mark Twain, Clarence Darrow, Theodore Dreiser, Robert Service, Edgar Lee Masters, Sinclair Lewis, Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, Langston Hughes, and others.

This book consists of a compact but informative introduction followed by an anthology of "freethought" writings extending in time from a speech given probably in the late 1700s by Red Jacket, a chief and famed orator of the Seneca tribe in upstate

New York, to selected poems by Tom McGrath. The selections chosen for the anthology are remarkable for their variety and range, from archival materials that are not well known and not readily accessible, to excerpts from the writings of famous literary and political figures; often the selections by notables provide a “freethought” dimension that is not widely recognized by the public.

Notwithstanding the diversity of the selections, recurrent themes do emerge. One is the close relationship between freethought in matters concerning religion and socially progressive views and movements, as exemplified by Robert Owen in “Declaration of Mental Independence”:

Upon an experience, then, of nearly forty years, which, owing to a very peculiar combination of circumstances, has been more varied, extended, and singular than perhaps has ever fallen to the lot of any one man, and, during which period, my mind was continually occupied in tracing the cause of each human misery that came before me to its true origin;—I now DECLARE, to you and to the world, *that Man, up to this hour, has been, in all parts of the earth, a slave to a TRINITY of the most monstrous evils that could be, combined to inflict mental and physical evil upon his whole race.*

I refer to PRIVATE, OR INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY—ABSURD AND IRRATIONAL SYSTEMS OF RELIGION—and MARRIAGE, FOUNDED ON INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY COMBINED WITH SOME ONE OF THESE IRRATIONAL SYSTEMS OF RELIGION.
(50)

Indeed, it is clear from these excerpts that many of the free-thinkers did perceive that religious conformity was a tactic for maintaining the status quo and fostering acquiescence to exploitation.

Another emerging theme is that, contrary to the officially propagated view, censorship and repression of dissident thought have been endemic in the United States throughout its history. This repression has often functioned at the local level through

economic measures such as failing to hire, firing, or boycotting dissidents. More frequently than is generally realized the ruling class has resorted to censorship in order to suppress ideas inimical to its perceived interests. An interesting example is recorded by Lois Waisbrooker:

DETAINED

Number 426 of the *Light-Bearer* went to press on time Friday, April 15th; was printed, folded, wrapped, delivered to the postal clerks; weighed and postage paid as usual. Saturday the 16th, the editor was informed by the Asst. P.M. that the paper was detained in the P.O., by order of the U.S. district attorney, Ady, and U.S. postal inspector Brush. Mr. Brush was seen, also Dept. Dist. Attorney Soper. From them it was learned that the articles condemned by these officials are "A Divided House," on [the] second page, and on [the] fourth page, the advertisements of Cupid Yokes, "A Discussion of the Social Question, and the Law of Population."

Believing that these men have no moral or legal right to stand between our subscribers and the paper they have paid for and tell them what they may read and what they shall not, we make our appeal to the justice-loving people of the United States, and ask them to rebuke these obscene-minded meddlers in other people's business, and restore to us our natural right of FREE PUBLICATION including the use of the common mails, and to our readers their natural right to CHOOSE THEIR OWN READING. Topeka, April 18, '92. (119)

In short, *Freethought on the American Frontier* is a fascinating read that presents an aspect of U.S. history that is not adequately appreciated. It also is a salutary reminder of that frequently symbiotic relationship between organized religion and ruling-class domination, a relationship observed clearly by the historian Polybius in the second century B.C.:

I will venture the assertion that what the rest of mankind deride is the foundation of Roman greatness, namely

superstition. (In Greek this is *deisidaimonia*, which is probably better translated as “religious fear.”) This element has been introduced by the Romans into all aspects of their private and public life, with every artifice to awe the imagination, in a degree which could not be improved upon. Many may be at a loss to understand this. My view is that it has been done to impress the masses. If it were possible to have a state in which all citizens were philosophers, perhaps we might dispense with this sort of thing. But the masses in every state are unstable, full of lawless desires, of irrational anger, and violent passion. The best that can be done is to hold them in check by fears of the unseen and other shams of the same sort. Not for nothing, but with deliberate design, did the men of old introduce to the masses notions about the gods and views on the after-life. The folly and heedlessness are ours, who seek to dispel such illusions. (*Histories*, VI, 56. Quoted from Benjamin Farrington. *Science and Politics in the Ancient World*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968.)

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War and an Irish Town. By Eamonn McCann, 3rd revised ed. London: Pluto Press; Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1993, 312 pages, paper \$15.95.

It is easy to say that every Irish-American sincerely interested in the present situation in Ireland should read this book. It is an exciting personal account of an activist involved in the struggles initiated in the sixties. All the key figures are vividly portrayed in a kaleidoscope of conflicting views and ideologies. All sides of this enduring struggle are effectively and honestly presented: the

nationalists, the unionists, the Church, the reformists, the radicals. McCann's account and even his Irish idiom are authentic.

As these years pass into history they should not be forgotten, because although history can be a trap producing bitterness, cynicism, or escapism, it can also yield valuable lessons for the present and ideals imbued with hope for a better future. Also recommended is Tim Pat Coogar's *The IRA: A History* (Niwot, Colo.: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1993) for its richly detailed stories of "the brutal and the brutalized." There is a "terrible beauty" in Irish history.

All readers—not just the Irish—could profit by the author's precise and thorough analysis of social, economic, and political forces involved. In the preface to this updated version he notes the parallel struggle in other countries. The international implications could not be broached on the barricades in the Bogside, but they are essential.

The author's proposed solution to flagrant sectarianism—developing class consciousness—needs to be more carefully analyzed. It cannot be denied that sectarianism is utilized by upper-class interests. Awareness of the abuses of clerical power must lead beyond bitterness to a more fruitful analysis. McCann puts the pulpit factor in proper perspective.

Economics are, of course, a key factor. Power is held by those who profit from the system, and profit procures the facade of morality, decency, and respectability. That facade creates monumental hypocrisy. When the British admitted to inflicting savage tortures on the interned, "hooded" men, Lord Parker said that it did not constitute cruelty since the perpetrators did not "take pleasure" in their work (p. 153). Pomp and circumstance must not provide a perpetual cover-up.

McCann's conclusions are valuable in that they deal with the long-term goal instead of the short-term objectives of uniting Ireland and getting rid of the British troops. For the Irish it is essential to reject violence, for they have suffered at the hands of outsiders and inflicted hideous violence on themselves. At the same time, one remembers the heroism of the freedom fighters. The Irish must correct the distortions of history that bleach out the

social idealism. The reality that so many forces and such power are marshalled against those seeking justice must not deter or distract them in any way. *Go raish mile maith agati* [thank you], Eamonn.

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ABSTRACTS OF ARTICLES

David B. Reynolds, “Rediscovering Marxism's Heritage: Rosa Luxemburg and the Revolutionary Party”—Luxemburg's defense of liberal rights, faith in the ability of the masses, and opposition to bureaucratic centralism mark her politics for many as an alternative to the so-called Leninist model of a vanguard revolutionary party. These features, however, do not stem from an embrace of liberalism, but from her defense of Marxism. Luxemburg's Marxist praxis has long been overshadowed by Third World revolutionary models. It envisions revolution as a process of self-emancipation in which the working class, through the experience of struggle, acquires the ability to collectively and democratically reorganize society. This vision has relevance for us today, not only in terms of class politics, but as a general model of struggle against all forms of oppression.

Donald Smith, “Valuing Tradition, Valuing History: Reading Thomas McGrath's *Letter to an Imaginary Friend*”—The revolutionary poet McGrath works with a dialectic between tradition and history that would reserve “history” as the name for the most deconstructive experience, experience that would threaten any constructed tradition. McGrath pursues this dialectic in his long poem, and this is hard work, for his purpose is to make a tradition, nevertheless. To be suspicious of all narratives, McGrath's poem suggests, is to witness effectively to history; it is also to witness to oneself and one's responsibilities; it is also to listen effectively to the pain of others.

Fred Whitehead, “An Interview with Barrows Dunham”—Barrows Dunham, whose books include *Man against Myth*, *Heroes and Heretics: A Political History of Western Thought*, and *The Artist in Society*, also merits attention as an academic who defied HUAC and lost a tenured position at Temple University as a result. Fred Whitehead describes Dunham in the introduction to his 1990 interview as “the dean of American Marxist philosophers.” Subjects included in this wide-ranging interview are socialism, capitalism, the condition of U.S. philosophy today, and Dunham's own writing and teaching.

(Marxist Forum) *Norman Markowitz*, “On Holz's Defense of Leninism”—The author replies to Rubin's critique (*NST* vol. 5, no. 4) of Hans Heinz Holz's defense of Marxism-Leninism.

ABREGES D'ARTICLES

David B. Reynolds, « **La redécouverte de l'héritage du marxisme: Rosa Luxemburg et le parti révolutionnaire** » —A bien des gens, la défense par Luxemburg des droits libéraux, sa foi à la capacité de la foule, et son opposition au centralisme bureaucratique désigne sa politique un choix alternatif au modèle dit léniniste d'un parti révolutionnaire avant-garde. Ces traits attrayants, pourtant, n'avaient pas leur origine dans l'acte de renfermer le libéralisme de la part de Luxemburg, mais dans sa défense plutôt intransigeante du marxisme. En effet, Luxemburg peut nous aider à faire de nouveau la connaissance d'une pratique révolutionnaire occidentale ayant des rapports directs avec Marx, mais éclipsée des modèles révolutionnaires au tiers monde. Une telle pratique envisageait la révolution comme processus de l'émancipation de soi pendant lequel la classe ouvrière, à travers l'expérience de la lutte, acquérait la capacité de réorganiser la société d'une façon collective et démocratique. Cette vision nous est applicable aujourd'hui, pas seulement en termes de la politique de classe, mais aussi comme modèle général de la lutte contre toute forme d'oppression.

Donald Smith, « **Estimer la tradition, estimer l'histoire: Lire *Lettre à un ami imaginaire* de Thomas McGrath** » —La poète révolutionnaire Thomas McGrath manie une dialectique entre la tradition et l'histoire qui réserverait le terme *histoire* à l'expérience la plus déconstructrice, l'expérience qui menace toute tradition construite. Cependant, dans son long poème *Lettre à un ami imaginaire* [*Letter to an Imaginary Friend*], McGrath poursuit cette dialectique dans le but de construire une tradition. Se méfier des narrations de toutes sortes, McGrath suggère, c'est porter témoignage à l'histoire dans une manière efficace; c'est aussi porter témoignage à soi-même et à ses responsabilités; enfin, il s'agit d'écouter pleinement la douleur des autres.

Fred Whitehead, « **Une Interview avec Barrows Durham** » —Barrows

Dunham, dont les livres comportent *L'Homme contre le mythe*, *Les Héros et les hérétiques: une histoire politique de la pensée occidentale*, et *L'Artiste dans la société*, mérite aussi notre attention comme professeur qui défia HUAC et donc perdit une position de sécurité à l'Université Temple. Fred Whitehead décrit Dunham dans l'introduction de son interview en 1990 comme « le doyen des philosophes marxistes américains.» Cette interview de grande envergure englobe le socialisme, le capitalisme, la condition de la philosophie aux Etats-Unis de nos jours et les écrits et l'enseignement de Dunham lui-même.

(Le Forum marxiste) Norman Markowitz, « Sur la défense de léninisme de Holz» L'auteur répond à la critique que fit Rubin (*NST* vol. 5, no. 4) de la défense du marxisme-léninisme par Hans Heinz Holz.