

ALIENATION AND THE NECESSITY OF SOCIAL CONTROL

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IN the deeply moving final pages of one of his last works Isaac Deutscher wrote :

"the technological basis of modern society, its structure and its conflicts are international or even universal in character; they tend towards international or universal solutions. And there are the unprecedented dangers threatening our biological existence. These, above all, **press** for the unification of mankind, which cannot be achieved without an Integrating principle of social organization. . . . The present ideological deadlock and the social status quo can hardly serve as the basis either for the solution of the problems of our epoch or even for mankind's survival. Of course, it would be the ultimate disaster if the nuclear super-Powers were to treat the social status quo as their plaything and if either of them tried to alter it by force of arms. In this sense the peaceful co-existence of East and West is a paramount historic necessity. But the social status quo cannot be perpetuated. Karl **Marx** speaking about stalemates in past class struggles notes that they usually ended 'in the common ruin of the contending classes'. A stalemate indefinitely prolonged and guaranteed by a perpetual balance of nuclear deterrents, is sure to lead the contending classes and nations to their common and ultimate ruin. Humanity needs unity for its sheer survival; where can it find it if not in **socialism?**"¹

Isaac Deutscher concluded his work by passionately stressing: "*de nostra res agitur*": it all is our own concern. Thus it seems to me right to address ourselves on this occasion to some of the vital problems which stood at the centre of his interest towards the end of his life.

All the more so because the "status quo" in question is a historically unique status quo: one which inevitably involves the *whole* of mankind. As we all know from history, no status quo has ever lasted indefinitely; not even the most partial and localized ones. The permanence of a *global* status quo, with the immense and necessarily expanding dynamic forces involved in it, is a contradiction in terms: an absurdity which should be visible even to the most myopic of game-theorists. In a world made up of a multiplicity of conflicting and mutually interacting social systems—in contrast to the *fantasy*-world of escalating and de-escalating chess-boards—the precarious global status quo is *bound* to be broken for certain. The question is not "whether or not", but "by what **means**". Will it be broken by

devastating military means or will there be adequate social outlets for the manifestation of the rising social pressures which are in evidence today even in the most remote corners of our global social environment? The answer will depend on our success or failure in creating the necessary strategies, movements and instruments capable of securing an effective transition towards a socialist society in which "humanity can find the unity it needs for its sheer survival".

What we are experiencing today is not only a growing polarization—inherent in the global structural crisis of present-day capitalism—but, to multiply the dangers of explosion, also the break-down of a whole series of safety-valves which played a vital part in the perpetuation of commodity society.

The change that undermined the power of consensus-politics, of the narrow institutionalization and integration of social protest, of the easy exportation of internal violence through its transference to the plane of mystifying international collisions, etc., has been quite dramatic. For not so long ago the unhindered growth and multiplication of the power of capital, of the irresistible extension of its rule over all aspects of human life, used to be confidently preached and widely believed. The unproblematic and undisturbed functioning of capitalist power structures was taken for granted and was declared to be a permanent feature of human life itself, and those who dared to doubt the wisdom of such declarations of faith were promptly dismissed by the self-perpetuating guardians of the bourgeois hegemony of culture as "hopeless ideologists", if not much worse.

But where are now the days when one of President Kennedy's principal theorists and advisers could speak—about Marx and the social movements associated with his name in terms like these:

"He [Marx] applied his kit-bag to what he could perceive of *one* historical case: the case of the British take-off and drive to maturity; . . . like the parochial intellectual of Western Europe he was, the prospects in Asia and Africa were mainly beyond his ken, dealt with almost wholly in the context of British policy rather than in terms of their own problems of modernization. . . . Marx created . . . *a monstrous guide to public policy*. [Communism] is a kind of disease which can befall a transitional society if it fails to organize effectively those elements within it which are prepared to get on with the job of modernization. [In opposition to the Marxist approach the task is to create] in association with the non-Communist politicians and peoples of the preconditions and early take-off areas [i.e. the colonies and ex-colonies] a *partnership* which will *see them through* into sustained growth on a political and social basis which keeps open the possibilities of progressive democratic **development.**"²

These lines were written hardly a decade ago, but they read today like prehistoric reasoning, although—or perhaps because—the author

is the professor of Economic History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In this short decade we were provided with tragically ample opportunity to see in practice, in Vietnam and in Cambodia, as well as in other countries, the real meaning of the programme of "partnerships" aimed "to see the politicians of the early take-off areas through" to the disastrous results of such partnerships,³ under the intellectual guidance of "Brains Trusts" which included quite a few Walt Rostows: men who had the cynical insolence to call *Marx's* work "a *monstrous guide to public policy*". Inflated by the "arrogance of military power", they "proved", by means of tautologies interspersed with retrospective "deductions", that the American stage of economic growth is immune to all *crisis*;⁴ and they argued, with the help of counter-factual conditionals, that the break in the chain of imperialism was merely an unfortunate mishap which, strictly speaking, should not have happened at all:

*"if the First World War had not occurred—or had occurred a decade later—Russia would almost certainly have made a successful transition to modernization and rendered itself invulnerable to Communism."*⁵

We might be tempted to rejoice at the sight of such a level of intellectual power in our adversaries, were it not terrifying to contemplate the naked power they wield in virtue of their willing submission to the alienated institutions which demand "theories" of this kind so as to follow, undisturbed even by the possibility of an occasional doubt, their blind collision-course. The hollow constructions which meet this demand of rationalization are built on the pillars of totally false—and often self-contradictory—premises like, for instance:

1. "socialism is a mysterious—yet easily avoidable—disease which will befall you, unless you follow the scientific prescription of American modernization";

2. "facts to the contrary are merely the result of mysterious—yet easily avoidable—mishaps; such facts (e.g. the Russian Revolution of 1917) are devoid of an actual causal foundation and of a wider social-historical significance";

3. "present-day manifestations of social unrest are merely the combined result of Soviet aspirations and of the absence of American partnership in the societies concerned; therefore, the task is to check-mate the former by generously supplying the latter".

"Theories" resting on such foundations can, of course, amount to no more than the crudest ideological justification of aggressive American expansionism and interventionism. This is why these cynical ideologies of rationalization have to be misrepresented as "objective social and political science" and the position of those who "see

through" the unctuous advocacy of "seeing the politicians of the early take-off areas through"—by means of the "Great American Partnership" of massive military interventions—must be denounced as "nineteenth century ideologists".

The moment of truth arrives, however, when the "mishaps" of social explosion occur, even more mysteriously than in the "early take-off areas", in the very land of "supreme modernization" and higher than "high mass-consumption": namely in America itself. Thus, not only is the model of undisturbed growth and modernization shattered but, ironically, even the slogan of "sustained growth on a political and social basis which keeps open the possibilities of progressive, democratic development" ideologically backfires at a time when outcries against the violation of basic liberties and against the systematic disenfranchizing of the masses is on the increase. That we are not talking about some remote, hypothetical future but about our own days, goes without saying. What needs stressing, however, is that the dramatic collapse of these pseudo-scientific rationalizations of naked power marks the end of an era: not that of "the end of ideology" but of the end of the almost complete monopoly of culture and politics by anti-Marxist ideology successfully self-advertised up until quite recently as the final supersession of all ideology.

A decade ago the Walt Rostows of this world were still confidently preaching the *universal* adoption of the American pattern of "high mass-consumption" within the space of one single century. They could not be bothered with making the elementary, but of course necessary, calculations which would have shown them that in the event of the universalization of that pattern—not to mention the economic and social-political absurdity of such an idea—the ecological resources of our planet would have been exhausted well before the end of that century several times over. After all, in those days *top*-politicians and their Brains Trusts did not ride on the bandwagon of ecology but in the sterilized space-capsules of astronomical and military fancy. Nothing seemed in those days too big, too far, and too difficult to those who believed—or wanted us to believe—in the religion of technological omnipotence and of a Space Odyssey round the comer.

Many things have changed in this short decade. The arrogance of military power suffered some severe defeats not only in Vietnam but also in Cuba and in other parts of the "American hemisphere". International power-relations have undergone some significant changes, with the immense development of China and Japan in the first place, exposing to ridicule the nicely streamlined calculations of *escalation*-experts who now have to invent not only an entirely new type of

multiple-player chess game but also the kind of creatures willing to play it, for want of real-life takers. "The affluent society" turned out to be the society of suffocating *effluence*, and the allegedly omnipotent technology failed to cope even with the invasion of rats in the depressing slums of Negro ghettos. Nor did the religion of Space Odyssey fare any better, notwithstanding the astronomical sums invested in it: recently even the learned Dr. Werner von Braun himself had to link-up the latest version of his irresistible "yearning for the stars" with the prosaic bandwagon of pollution (so far, it seems, without much success).

"The God that failed" in the image of technological omnipotence is now revarnished and shown around again under the umbrella of universal "ecological concern". Ten years ago ecology could be safely ignored or dismissed as totally irrelevant. Today it must be grotesquely misrepresented and one-sidedly exaggerated, so that people—sufficiently impressed by the cataclysmic tone of ecological sermons—could be successfully diverted from their burning social and political problems. Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans (especially Latin Americans) should not multiply at pleasure—not even at God's pleasure, if they are Roman Catholics—for lack of restraint might result in "intolerable ecological strains". That is, in plain words, it might endanger the prevailing social relation of forces, the rule of capital. Similarly, people should forget all about the astronomical expenditure on armaments and accept sizeable cuts in their standard of living, in order to meet the costs of "environmental rehabilitation": that is, in plain words, the costs of keeping the established system of expanding waste-production well-oiled. Not to mention the additional bonus of making people at large pay, under the pretext of "human survival", for the survival of a social-economic system which now has to cope with deficiencies arising from growing international competition and from an increasing shift in favour of the parasitic sectors within its own structure of production.

That capitalism deals this way—namely its own way—with ecology, should not surprise us in the least: it would be nothing short of a miracle if it did not. Yet the exploitation of this issue for the benefit of "the modern industrial state"^H—to use a nice phrase of Professor Galbraith's—does not mean that we can afford to ignore it. For the problem itself is real enough, whatever use is made of it today.

Indeed, it has been real for quite some time, though, of course, for reasons inherent in the necessity of capitalist growth, few have taken any notice of it. Mam however—and this should sound incredible only to those who have repeatedly buried him as an "irretrievably irrelevant ideologist of nineteenth century stamp"^M—had tackled the

issue, within the dimensions of its true social-economic significance, more than one hundred and twenty-five years ago.

Criticizing the abstract and idealist rhetoric with which Feuerbach assessed the relationship between man and nature, Marx wrote :

"Feuerbach . . . always takes refuge in external nature, and moreover in nature which has not yet been subdued by men. But every new invention, every new advance made by industry, detaches another piece from this domain, so that the ground which produces examples illustrating such Feuerbachian propositions is steadily shrinking. The 'essence' of the fish is its 'existence', water—to go no further than this one proposition. The 'essence' of the freshwater fish is the water of a river. But the latter ceases to be the 'essence' of the fish and is no longer a suitable medium of existence as soon as the river is made to serve industry, as soon as it is polluted by dyes and other waste products and navigated by steamboats, or as soon as its water is diverted into canals where simple drainage can deprive the fish of its medium of **existence**."⁶

This is how Marx approached the matter in the early eighteen forties. Needless to say, he categorically rejected the suggestion that such developments are inevitably inherent in the "*human predicament*"⁷ and that, consequently, the problem is how to *accommodate* ourselves⁷ to them in everyday life. He fully realized, already then, that a radical restructuring of the prevailing *mode* of human interchange and control is the necessary prerequisite to an effective control over the forces of nature which are brought into motion in a blind and ultimately self-destructive fashion precisely by the prevailing, alienated and *reified* mode of human interchange and control. Small wonder, then, that to present-day apologists of the established system of control his prophetic diagnosis is nothing but "parochial anachronism".

To say that "the costs of cleaning up our environment must be met in the end by the community" is both an obvious platitude and a characteristic evasion, although the politicians who sermonize about it seem to believe to have discovered the philosophers' stone. Of *course* it is always the community of producers who meet the cost of everything. But the fact that it always *must* meet the costs does not mean in the least that it always *can* do so. Indeed, given the prevailing mode of alienated social control, we can be sure that it *will* not *be able* to meet them.

Furthermore, to suggest that the already prohibitive costs should be met by "consciously putting aside a certain proportion of the resources derived from extra growth"—at a time of nil growth coupled with rising unemployment and rising inflation—is worse than **Feuerbach's** empty rhetoric. Not to mention the additional problems necessarily inherent in increased capitalist growth.

And to add that "but this time growth will be controlled growth" is completely beside the point. For the issue is not *whether* or *not* we produce under *some* control, but under what *kind* of control; since our present state of affairs has been produced under the "*iron-fisted control*" of capital which is envisaged, by our politicians, as remaining the fundamental regulating force of our life also in the future.

And, finally, to say that "science and technology *can* solve all our problems in the long run" is much worse than to believe in witchcraft, for it tendentiously ignores the devastating social embeddedness of present-day science and technology. In this respect, too, the issue is not *whether* or *not* we use science and technology for solving our problems—for obviously we must—but whether or not we *succeed* in radically *changing* their *direction* which is at present narrowly determined and circumscribed by the self-perpetuating needs of the maximization of profit.

These are the main reasons why we cannot help being rather sceptical about the present-day institutionalization of these concerns. Much cry and little wool: the super-institutions of ecological oversight turn out to be rather more modest in their achievement—than in their rhetoric of self-justification: namely Ministries for the Protection of Middle-Class Amenities.

In the meantime, on this plane as well as on several others, the problems accumulate and the contradictions become increasingly more explosive. The objective tendency inherent in the nature of capital—its growth into a global system coupled with its concentration and increasingly greater technological and science-intensive articulation—undermines and turns into an anachronism the social-structural subordination of labour to capital.⁸ Indeed, we can witness already, that the traditional forms of hierarchical-structural embeddedness of the functional division of labour tend to disintegrate under the impact of the ever-increasing concentration of capital and socialization of labour. Here I can merely point to a few indicators of this striking change:

1. The escalating vulnerability of contemporary industrial organization as compared to the nineteenth century factory. (The so-called "wild-cat strikes" are inconceivable without the underlying economic and technological processes which both induce and enable a "handful" of workers to bring to a halt even a whole branch of industry, with immense potential repercussions.)

2. The economic link-up of the various branches of industry into a highly stretched system of closely interdependent parts, with an ever-increasing imperative for safeguarding the *continuity of produc-*

tion in the system as a whole. (The more the system is stretched as regards its cycle of reproduction, the greater is the imperative of continuity, and every disturbance leads to more stretch as well as to an ever-darkening shadow of even a temporary break-down in continuity.) There are increasingly fewer "peripheral branches", since the repercussions of industrial complications are quickly transferred, in the form of a chain-reaction, from any part of the system to all its parts. Consequently, there can be no more "trouble-free industries". The age of paternalistic enterprise has been irretrievably superseded by the rule of "oligopolies" and "super-conglomerates".

3. The growing amount of socially superfluous time" (or "disposable time"), customarily called "leisure", makes it increasingly absurd, as well as practically impossible, to keep a large section of the population living in apathetic ignorance, divorced from their own intellectual powers. Under the impact of a number of weighty social-economic factors the old mystique of intellectual elitism has already disappeared for good. Also, side by side with a growing intellectual unemployment—both potential and actual—as well as a worsening of the cleavage between what one is supposed to be educated for and what one actually gets in employment-opportunities, it becomes more and more difficult to maintain the traditionally unquestioning subordination of the vast majority of intellectuals to the authority of capital.

4. The worker as a consumer occupies a position of increasing importance in maintaining the undisturbed run of capitalist production. Yet, he is as completely excluded from control over both production and distribution as ever—as if nothing had happened in the sphere of economics during the last century or two. This is a contradiction which introduces further complications into the established productive system based on a socially stratified division of labour.

5. The effective establishment of capitalism as an economically interlocking world system greatly contributes to the erosion and disintegration of the traditional, historically formed and locally varying, partial structures of social and political stratification and control, without being able to produce a unified system of control on a worldwide scale. (So long as the power of capital prevails, "world-government" is bound to remain a futurologist pipe-dream.) The "crisis of hegemony, or crisis of the State in all spheres" (Gramsci) has become a truly international phenomenon.

In the last analysis all these points are about the question of *social control*. In the course of human development, the function of social control had been alienated from the social body and transferred into capital which, thus, acquired the power of grouping people in a hier-

archical structural-functional pattern, in accordance with the criterion of a greater or lesser share in the control over production and distribution. Ironically, though, the objective trend inherent in the development of capital in all spheres—from the mechanical fragmentation of the labour process to the creation of automated systems, from local accumulation of capital to its concentration in the form of an ever-expanding and self-saturating world system, from a partial and local to a comprehensive international division of labour, from limited consumption to an artificially stimulated and manipulated mass-consumption, in the service of an ever-accelerating cycle of reproduction of commodity-society, and from "free-time" confined to a privileged few to the mass production of social dynamite, in the form of "leisure", on a universal scale—carries with it a result diametrically opposed to the interest of capital. For in this process of expansion and concentration, the power of control invested in capital is being *de facto* re-transferred to the social body as a whole, even if in a necessarily irrational way, thanks to the inherent irrationality of capital itself. That the objectively slipping control is described from the standpoint of capital as "holding the nation to ransom", does not alter in the least the fact itself. For nineteenth century capitalism could not be "held to ransom" even by an army of so-called "trouble-makers", let alone by a mere "handful" of them.

Here we are confronted with the emergence of a fundamental contradiction: that between an effective loss of control and the established form of control, capital, which, by its very nature, can be nothing *but* control, since it is constituted through an alienated objectification of the function of control as a reified body apart from and opposed to the social body itself. No wonder, therefore, that in the last few years the idea of *workers' control* has been gaining in importance in many parts of the world.

The social status quo of not so long ago is rapidly and dramatically disintegrating in front of our very eyes—if only we are willing to open them. The distance between "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and the beleaguered headquarters of black militancy is *astronomical*. And so are the distances from the depressing working class apathy of the post-war period to today's, even officially admitted, growing militancy on a world-wide scale; from graciously granted presidential "participation" to the Paris street fights; from a badly divided and narrowly wage-orientated Italian trade union movement to the unity necessary for the organization of a political general strike; or, for that matter, from the monolithic, unchallenged rule of Stalinism to the elemental eruption of massive popular dissent in Poland, in Hungary, in Czechoslovakia, and recently in Poland again. And yet, it did not take **any-**

thing like light-years—not even light-minutes—to travel such astronomical distances.

Not so long ago the "scientific" ideology of gradualist "social engineering"—as opposed to the "religious holism" of revolutionary change and socialism—enjoyed an almost completely monopolistic position not only in educational and cultural institutions but also in the ante-chambers of political power. But, good heavens, what are we witnessing today? The dramatic announcement of the need for a "major *revolution*" by none other than President Nixon himself, in his recent State of the Union message; followed by the Shah of Persia's warning that he is going to spearhead the "*rebellion of the have-nots against the haves*".

And Mr. Wilson too, who mysteriously lost the word "*socialism*" from his vocabulary the very minute he walked through the front door of 10 Downing Street—and it just could not be found, though his entire team of experts and advisers as well as cabinet colleagues were looking for it for almost six years through the powerful spectacles of "pragmatic modernization", supplied completely free of prescription charges—he mysteriously found the word again after leaving the Prime Ministerial residence. Indeed, in one of his public speeches he even found a crack about the "Pentagon hunting for communists under the sea-bed", though at the same time by a slight fit of amnesia forgetting that he was himself fishing for communists under the Seamen's bed not that long ago.

President Nixon: a new *revolutionary*; the Shah of Persia: *leader of the world rebellion of the have-nots*; and Mr. Wilson: an indomitable *crusader against the Pentagon's anti-communist crusades*. I wonder what might come next. (I did not have to wonder for long: only a few days after this lecture was delivered, Mr. Heath—yet another "pragmatic modernizer", of Rolls Royce fame—hastened to add, in the truest spirit of consensus-politics, his name to our illustrious list: as a vigorous *champion of nationalization*.)

However, even metamorphoses of this kind are indicative of powerful pressures whose nature simply cannot be grasped through the mystifying personalization of the issues as expressed in hollow concepts like "bridging the credibility gap", "acquiring a new image", etc. The hypothesis that politicians break their promises because they are "devious" and because they "lack integrity", only begs the question, at best. And the suggestion that they change their slogans and catchphrases, because "*they need to change their image*" is the emptiest of the whole range of tautologies produced by the post-war boom of behaviourist and functionalist "Political Science". Concepts of this kind are nothing more than pretentiously inflated rationalizations of the practice of self-advertising through which the advertising

media sell their services to credulous politicians. As Mr. Wilson himself can testify: the simple and strictly quantifiable truth is that the psephologist "credibility gap" between this kind of "scientific" electoral forecast and painfully final result *exactly* equals the distance between the front door and the back door of 10 Downing Street, in both space and time.

If the tone of traditional politics is changing today, it is because the objective contradictions of our present-day situation cannot be repressed any longer either by means of naked power and brute force or through the soft strangulation supplied by consensus politics. Yet, what we are confronted with is but an unprecedented crisis of social control on a world scale, and not its solution. It would be highly irresponsible to lull ourselves into a state of euphoria, contemplating a "socialist world-revolution round the corner".

The power of capital, in its various forms of manifestation, though far from being exhausted, does no longer reach far enough. Capital—since it operates on the basis of the myopic rationality of narrow self-interest, of *bellum omnium contra omnes*: the war of each against all—is a mode of control which is a priori incapable of providing the comprehensive rationality of an adequate social control. And it is precisely the need for the latter which demonstrates its dramatic urgency with the passing of every single day.

The awareness of the limits of capital has been absent from all forms of rationalization of its reified needs, not only from the more recent versions of capitalist ideology. Paradoxically, however, capital is now forced to take notice of some of these limits, although, of course in a necessarily alienated form. For now at least the *absolute* limits of human existence—both at the military and at the ecological plane—*must* be sized up, no matter how distorting and mystifying are the measuring devices of a capitalist social-economic accountancy. Facing the dangers of a nuclear annihilation on one side and of an irreversible destruction of the human environment on the other, it becomes imperative to devise practical alternatives and remedies whose failure is rendered inevitable by the very limits of capital which have now collided with the limits of human existence itself.

It goes without saying, the limits of capital carry with them an approach which tries to exploit even these vital human concerns in the service of profit-making. The lunatic—but, of course, capitalistically "rational"—theories (and associated practices) of "escalating" war-industry as the ultimate safeguard against war have dominated "strategic thinking" now for quite some time. And recently we could observe the mushrooming of parasitic enterprises—from the smallest to the largest in size—which all try to cash in on our growing aware-

ness of the ecological dangers. (Not to mention the ideological-political operations associated with the same issues.¹⁰)

All the same, such manipulations do not solve the issues at stake, only contribute to their further aggravation. Capitalism and the rationality of comprehensive social planning are radically incompatible. Today, however, we witness the emergence of a fundamental contradiction, with the gravest possible implications for the future of capitalism: for the first time in human history the unhampered dominance and expansion of the inherently irrational capitalist structures and mechanisms of social control are being seriously interfered with by pressures arising from the elementary imperatives of mere survival. And since the issues themselves are as unavoidable as the contradiction between the need for an adequate social control and the narrow limits of capitalist accountancy is sharp, the necessary failure of programmes of short-sighted manipulation—in a situation which demands far-reaching and consciously coordinated efforts on a massive scale—acts as a *catalyst* for the development of socialist alternatives.

And this is far from being the sum total of the rising complications. The mass production of disposable time mentioned earlier is now coupled not only with expanding knowledge, but also with growing consciousness of the contradictions inherent in the practically demonstrated failures, as well as with the development of new modes and means of communication capable of an effective diffusion of the massive evidence of the eruption of these *contradictions*.¹¹

At the same time, some of the most fundamental institutions of society are affected by a crisis never even imagined before.

The power of religion had almost completely evaporated a long time ago, but this fact had been masked by the persistence of its rituals and, above all, by the effective functioning of substitute-religions, from the abstract cult of "thrift" in the more remote past to the religion of "consumer-sovereignty", "technological omnipotence", and the like, in more recent decades.

The structural crisis of education has been in evidence now for a not negligible number of years. And it is getting deeper every day, although its intensification does not necessarily take the form of spectacular confrontations.

And the most important of them all: the virtual *disintegration* of present-day family—this cell of class society—presents a challenge to which there cannot conceivably be formal-institutional answers, whether in the form of "amending the law of trespass" or in some more ruthlessly repressive form. The crisis of this institution assumes many forms of manifestation, from the hippy cults to widespread drug-taking; from the "Women's Liberation Movement" to the

establishment of utopian enclaves of communal living; and from the much advertised "generation-conflict" to the most disciplined and militant manifestations of that conflict in organized action. Those who have laughed at them in the past had better think again. For whatever might be their relative weight in the total picture today, they are potentially of the greatest significance without one single exception.

Equally significant is the way in which the stubborn persistence of wishful thinking misidentifies the various forms of crisis. Not only are the manifestations of conflict ignored up to the last minute; they are also misrepresented the minute after the last. When they cannot be swept any longer under the carpet, they are tackled merely as *effects* divorced from their *causes*. (We should remember the absurd hypotheses of "mysterious diseases" and of "events devoid of any foundation" mentioned above.)

Characteristically, we find in a recent book on economics, at the foot of a page which calls for "reducing industrial investment in favour of a large-scale replanning of our cities, and of restoring and enhancing the beauty of many of our villages, towns and resorts", the following story :

"The recent electric-power breakdown in New York, obviously to be deplored on grounds of efficiency, broke the spell of monotony for millions of New Yorkers. People enjoyed the shock of being thrown back on their innate resources and into sudden dependence upon one another. For a few hours people were freed from routine and brought together by the dark. Next-door strangers spoke, and gladdened to help each other. There was room for kindness. The fault was repaired. The genie of power was returned to each home. And as the darkness brought them stumbling into each other's arms, so *the hard light scattered them again*. Yet someone was quoted as saying, 'This should happen at least once a month!'"¹²

The only thing one does not quite understand : why not "at least once a *week*"? Surely the immense savings on all that unused **electricity** would more than cover the costs of a "large-scale replanning of our cities, and of restoring and enhancing the beauty of many of our villages, towns and resorts". Not to mention the supreme benefits inherent in practising the new-found virtue of unlit-skyscraper-corridor-brotherhood regularly on a weekly basis. For apparently it is not the mode of their social relationships that "scatters people" apart, but the technological efficiency and monotony of "hard light". Thus, the obvious remedy is to give them less of "hard light" and all unwanted problems disappear for good. That the production of "hard light" is a social necessity, and cannot be replaced even for the duration of periodic rituals by soft candle-light, this is a consideration

evidently unworthy of the attention of our champions in romantic daydreaming.

To put it in another way: this approach of wishful thinking is characterized by a curt dismissal of all those expectations which the system cannot meet. The representatives of this approach insist with unflinching tautology, that such expectations are not the manifestation of social-economic contradictions but merely the *effects* of "*rising expectations*". Thus, not only is the challenge of facing up to the *causal foundations* of frustrated expectations systematically evaded but at the same time this evasion itself is very conveniently "justified", i.e. rationalized.

The fact is, however, that we are concerned here with an internal contradiction of a system of production and control: one which cannot help raising expectations even to the point of a complete breakdown in satisfying them. And it is precisely at such points of breakdown that Quixotic remedies and substitutes are advocated with so much "humanitarian" passion. Up until, or prior to, these points of crisis and breakdown, no one in his right mind is supposed to question the superior wisdom of "cost-effectiveness", "business-sense", "technological efficiency", "economic motives", and the like. But no sooner does the system fail to deliver the goods it so loudly advertised the moment before—confidently indicating, prior to the eruption of structural disturbances, its own ability to cater for expanding expectations as the self-evident proof of its superiority over all possible alternative modes of production and social control—its apologists immediately switch from preaching the religion of "cost-effectiveness" and "economic motives" to sermonizing about the need for "self-denial" and "idealism", untroubled not only by their sudden change of course but also by the rhetorical unreality of their wishful "solutions".

Thus, beyond the horizon of "artificial obsolescence" we are suddenly confronted with "theories" advocating the planning of artificial powercuts, the production of artificial scarcity—both material and as an antidote to too much "disposable time"—to spreading knowledge and to increasing social consciousness; of space-solidarity and artificially manipulated suspense, etc. Indeed, at a time of dangerously rising unemployment there are still with us antediluvian "theorists" who wish to counteract the complications arising from a total lack of aim in saturated commodity-existence by seriously advocating the production of artificial unemployment and hardship, topping it all up with nostalgic speeches about lost religions and about the need for a brand-new artificial religion. The only thing they fail to reveal is how they are going to devise also an artificial being who will systematically fail to notice the grotesque artificiality of all these artificialities.

Once upon a time it suited the development of capitalism to let the genie of a ruthless conversion of everything into marketable commodities out of the bottle, even though this deed necessarily carried with it the undermining and the ultimate disintegration of religious, political and educational institutions which were vital to the control mechanism of class society. Today, however, the status quo would be much better served by a restoration of all the undermined and disintegrating institutions of control. According to our romantic critics everything would be well if only the genie could be persuaded to retire back into the bottle. The trouble is, though, that he has no intention whatsoever of doing so. Thus, nothing much remains to our romantics except lamenting upon the wickedness of the genie and upon the folly of human beings who let him loose.

When the system fails to cope with the manifestations of dissent, while at the same time it is incapable of dealing with their causal foundations, in such periods of history not only fantasy-figures and remedies appear on the stage but also the "realists" of a repressive rejection of all criticism. In 1957 a gifted young German writer, Conrad Rheinhold had to flee the D.D.R. where he used to run a political cabaret in the aftermath of the Twentieth Congress. He was asked, after he had had some experience of life in West Germany, in an interview published in *Der Spiegel*,¹⁸ to describe the main difference between his old and new situation. This was his answer: "*Im Osten soll das Kabarett die Gesellschaft ändern, darf aber nichts sagen; im Western kann es alles sagen, darf aber nichts ändern.*" ("In the East political cabaret is supposed to change society, but it is not allowed to talk about anything; in the West it is allowed to talk about whatever it pleases, so long as it cannot change anything at all.")

The example illustrates quite well the dilemma of social control. For the other side of the coin of "repressive tolerance" is "repressed tolerance". The two together mark the limits of social systems which are incapable of meeting the need for social change in a determinate historical period.

When Marx died in 1883, his death was reported in *The Times* with some delay. And no wonder: for it had to be reported to the London *Times* from Paris that Marx had died in London. And this, again, illustrates very well our dilemma. For it is easy to be liberal when even a Marx can be totally ignored, since his voice cannot be heard where he lives, thanks to the political and ideological vacuum that surrounds him. But what happens when the political vacuum is displaced by the rising pressure of the ever-increasing social contradictions? Will not, in that case, the frustrations generated by the necessary failure of attending only to the surface manifestations of

social-economic troubles, instead of tackling their causes,—will not that failure take refuge behind a show of strength, even if this means the violation of the selfsame liberal values in whose name the violation is now committed? The recent case of another young refugee from the D.D.R.—this time not a political cabaret writer but someone deeply concerned about the degradation of politics to the level of cheap cabaret: Rudi Dutschke—suggests a rather disturbing answer to our question.

The issue is not that of "personal aberration" or "political pig-headedness", as some commentators saw it. Unfortunately it is much worse than that: namely an ominous attempt to bring the political organs of control in line with the needs of the present-day articulation of capitalist economy, even if such an adjustment requires a "liberal" transition from "repressive tolerance" to "repressive intolerance". Those who continue to nurse their illusions in these matters should read their allegedly "impartial" daily somewhat more attentively, in order to grasp the carefully woven meaning of passages like this:

"The harder the liberal university is pressed, the less comprehensive it can afford to be, the more rigorously will it have to draw the line, and the more likely will be the exclusion of intolerant points of view. The paradox of the tolerant society is that it cannot be defended solely by tolerant means just as the pacific society cannot be defended solely by peaceful means."*

As we can see, the empty myths of "the tolerant society" and "the pacific society" are used to describe the society of a "bellum omnium contra omnes", disregarding the painfully obvious ways in which the "pacific society" of U.S. capitalism demonstrates its true character by saturation bombing, wholesale slaughter and massacres in Vietnam, and by shooting down even its own youth in front of the "liberal university"—in Kent State and elsewhere—when it dares to mount a protest against the unspeakable inhumanities of this "tolerant" and "pacific society".

Moreover, in such passages of editorial wisdom we can also notice, if we are willing to do so, not only the unintended acknowledgment of the fact that this "liberal" and "tolerant" society will "tolerate" only to the point it can *afford* to do so—i.e. only to the point beyond which protest starts to become effective and turns into a genuine social challenge to the perpetuation of the society of repressive tolerance—but also the sophisticated hypocrisy through which the advocacy of *crude* ("rigorous") and *institutionalized intolerance* ("exclusion") succeeds in representing itself as a liberal defence of society against "intolerant points of view".

Similarly, the advocacy of institutionalized intolerance is extended to prescribing "solutions" to Trade Union disputes. Another *Times*

leader—significantly entitled: *A Battle Line at 10 per cent*¹⁵—after conceding that "*Nobody knows for sure what the mechanism which causes a runaway inflation is*", and after murmuring something about the fate of "some sort of authoritarian regime" which befalls the countries with substantial inflation, goes on to advocate *blatantly authoritarian* measures:

"What can be done to reverse the present inflationary trend? The first and immediate answer is that the country should recognize the justice of *standing firm*. Anyone in present circumstances who asks for more than 10 per cent is joining in a process of self-destruction. Anyone who strikes because he will not accept 15 per cent deserves to be *resisted* with all the influence of society and all the power of government.¹⁶ . . . The first thing to do and the simplest is to start *beating strikes*. [!!!] The local authorities should be given *total support* [including troops?] in refusing to make any further offer, *even if the strike lasts for months*."

We can see, then, how the *apparent* concern about the (*fictitious*) danger of "some sort of authoritarian regime"—which is simply declared to be mechanically attached to major inflations—gives way to revealing the *real* concern about protecting the interests of capital, no matter how grave the political implications of "standing *firm*" against "strikes lasting for months" might be. To formulate, thus, our highest priorities in terms of "*beating the strikes*" is and remains *authoritarian*, even if the policy based on such measures is championed in editorial columns capable of assuming liberal positions on more peripheral issues.

From the advocacy of institutionalized intolerance, in the form of "beating the strikes with all the power of government", to the legitimation of such practices, through *anti-union laws*, is, of course, only the next logical step. And the record of consensus-politics is particularly telling in this respect.¹⁷ For Mrs. Castle's denunciation of the *Tory* bill is not just half-hearted and belated. It also suffers from the memory of its twin brother—the ill-fated Labour bill—for which she could certainly not disclaim maternity. And when Mrs. Castle writes about *The Bad Bosses' Charter*,¹⁸ she merely highlights the stubborn illusions of "pragmatic" politicians who, notwithstanding their past experience, still imagine that they will be voted back into office in order to write in the statute books a "*Charter for the Good Bosses*".

From a socialist point of view, bosses are neither "bad" nor "good". Just *bosses*. And that's bad enough: in fact it couldn't be worse. This is why it is vital to go beyond the paralysing limits of consensus-politics which refuses to recognize this elementary truth, and makes the people at large pay for the disastrous consequences of its mounting failures.

The manifest failure of established institutions **and** their guardians to cope with our problems does not put, of course, these problems out of existence; only intensifies their complexity as well as the explosive dangers of a deadlock. And this takes us back to our point of departure: the imperative of an adequate social control which "humanity needs for its sheer survival".

Its establishment will, no doubt, take time and will require the most active involvement of the whole community of producers, activating the repressed creative energies of the various social groups over matters immeasurably exceeding in importance issues like deciding the colour of local lamp-posts to which their "power" of decision-making is confined today.

The establishment of this social control will, equally, require the conscious cultivation—not in isolated individuals but in the whole community of producers, to whatever walk of life they may belong—of an uncompromising critical awareness coupled with an intense commitment to the values of a socialist humanity which guided the work of Isaac Deutscher to a rich fulfilment.

Thus, our memorial is not a ritual remembrance of the past but a persistent challenge to face up to the demands inherent in our own share of a shared task.

It is in this spirit that I wish to dedicate my lecture to the memory of Isaac Deutscher.

NOTES

1. Isaac Deutscher, *The Unfinished Revolution*, Oxford University Press, 1967, pp. 110-114.
2. W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Cambridge University Press, 1960, pp. 157-164.
3. People often forget that President Kennedy was **directly** responsible for the escalating U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, inaugurating a whole series of disastrous policies conceived on the basis of "theories" like the one quoted above.
4. Here is a graphic example of tautological apologetics based on a retrospective reconstruction of the past in the key of an idealized present of U.S. capitalism:
 "the relative inter-war stagnation in Western Europe was due not to long-run diminishing returns but to the *failure of* Western Europe to create a setting in which its national societies moved promptly into the age of high mass-consumption, yielding new leading sectors. And this *failure*, in turn, was due mainly to a *failure* to create initial full employment in the **post-1920** setting of the terms of trade. Similarly the protracted depression of the United States in the **1930's** was due not to long-run diminishing returns, but to a *failure* to create an initial renewed setting of full employment, through public policy, which *would have permitted* the new leading sectors of suburban housing, the diffusion of

automobiles, durable consumers' goods and services to roll forward beyond 1929." (Rostow, *op. cit.*, p. 155.)

Thus, "failures" (crises and recessions) are explained by the "failure" to realize the conditions which "would have permitted" the avoidance of those unfortunate "failures", by producing the present-day pattern of capitalist "high mass-consumption" which is, of course, the non plus ultra of everything. How those unfortunate, failure-explanatory-failures came into being, we are not explicitly told. Since, however, the point of the whole exercise is the propagation of Rostow's "objective" and "non-parochial" *Non-Communist Manifesto* as the ultimate salvation of U.S. dominated world capitalism, by implication we can take it that the "failures" in question must have been due to the absence of this retro-spective-tautological economico-political wisdom. By what "failures" he would explain today's rising unemployment and the associated symptoms of serious structural disturbances in the U.S. as well as in other parts of the capitalist world of "high mass-consumption", "suburban housing", etc., must remain, unfortunately, a mystery to us, since there are no "new leading sectors" in sight whose creation "would have permitted" the avoidance of present-day troubles.

5. Rostow, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

6. Marx, *The German Ideology*, pp. 55-56.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

8. I have discussed several related problems in my contribution to *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness*, Essays by Tom Bottomore, David Daiches, Lucien Goldmann, Arnold Hauser, E. J. Hobsbawm, István Mészáros, Ralph Miliband, Rudolf Schlesinger, Anthony Thorby, Edited by I. Mészáros, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971.

9. See Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Bkonomie*, Berlin, 1953, pp. 593-594.

10. This is how the "Voice of America" introduces its programme of interviews with intellectuals on "Man and his Survival":

"the order of importance of great tasks has changed. Today no longer the clash of *national interests*, or the struggle for *political power* occupy the first place; nor indeed the elimination of *social injustice*. The outstanding issue by now is whether or not mankind will succeed in securing the conditions of its survival in a world it has transformed No wonder that the President of the United States has dedicated two thirds of his latest 'State of the Union' message to the question of how to rehabilitate the environment from pollution. What happens, though, if man, instead of thinking about his own survival, *wastes his energies in fighting for the relative truth of various ideologies and social-political systems*? What are the **first** steps mankind ought to take in order to *reform itself and the world*?"

Further comment is quite unnecessary, thanks to the transparency of these lines.

A capability so far very effectively paralysed by the guardians of the ruling order. For a penetrating analysis of the dynamic potentialities of the "mass media", see Hans Magnus Enzensberger: "Constituents of a Theory of the Media", *New Left Review*, No. 64 (Nov.-Dec. 1970), pp. 13-36.

11. E. J. Mishan, *The Costs of Economic Growth*, Penguin Books, 1969, p. 225.

12. 6 November, 1957.

14. Editorial, *The Times*, 17 October, 1970.
15. 20 October, 1970.
16. Marx's comments on the Prussian censorship instructions throw an interesting light on this "liberal" mode of arguing:
 "Nothing will be tolerated which opposes Christian religion in general or a particular doctrine in a frivolous and hostile manner.' How cleverly put: *frivolous, hostile*. The adjective 'frivolous' appeals to the *citizen's sense of propriety* and is the exoteric term in the *public view*; but the adjective 'hostile' is whispered into the *censor's ear* and becomes the *legal interpretation* of frivolity."
 In our quotation the respective terms are, of course, "the influence of society" and "all the power of government".
17. As the Editors of the *Trade Union Register* rightly emphasize:
 "The similarities between the two documents [i.e. the Tory *Fair Deal at Work* and Labour's *In Place of Strife*] are considerable, and certainly more substantial than their differences. This consensus reflects the whole tendency in orthodox political circles to assume that workers (not necessarily trade unions) have too much freedom and power in the exercise of strike action and other forms of industrial collective pressure, and that it is legitimate for the state to legislate with a view to restraining and limiting those freedoms and powers. In view of the enormous recent increases in the authority and influence of the state itself, and of large irresponsible private industrial and commercial companies, against which the independent forces of organized labour alone stand as a guarantee of ultimate civic and political liberties, the consensus view prevailing in the political parties of the centre and right requires the most vigorous and thorough opposition from the labour movement."
Trade Union Register 1970, Merlin Press, London 1970, p. 276
18. Barbara Castle, "The Bad Bosses' Charter", *New Statesman*, 16 October 1970.