

THE NEW LEFT IN THE UNITED STATES

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The New Left: An agglomeration of thousands of young Americans self-righteous but courageous, radical but not specifically socialist, democratic but not anti-communist, far-out but reformist, liberated yet enormously confused. A journalistic literature has sprung up in the past year which describes this strange phenomenon but unfortunately most of the discussion remains on the level of **description**.¹ Certain vital questions remain unanswered: Why the New Left? Why now? Is it merely the reassertion—after the **McCarthy** hiatus—of a tradition of student rebellion? Do the traits of the New Left represent a new trend of radical politics? Or rather, are they the necessary result of its peculiar process of self-birth? Does the New Left reflect any fundamental contradictions of American society, contradictions which can be expected to become aggravated? Does it have any chance of developing a coherent ideology and mushrooming into a full-scale radical movement?

If these are some of the most pressing questions, one thing should be clear: to raise fundamental questions about the New Left is to raise fundamental questions about the nature and direction of contemporary American society. The present analysis is tentative and exploratory. The traits of the New Left are well known. The purpose here is to explain the most salient of these traits in terms of the society in which the New Left arose. Our underlying premise is that specific traits of American society made possible a movement such as the New Left, and that the nature and course of development of the New Left follows, to some degree at least, lines made possible by the nature of American society. Through analyzing one in terms of the other, then, it is hoped to arrive at a better understanding of both.

Twentieth century American capitalism is a system atop a system. Protecting and preserving the capitalist structure of the American economy is a system of controls, mechanisms, and devices, which extends from Madison Avenue to seventeen hundred overseas military bases, from Vietnam to price-fixing, from Guatemala and Iran to automobile junkyards, from welfare payments to the moon: everywhere and in every way one confronts American capitalism's means of **ever-**

more-profitable survival. These mechanisms and devices which absorb opposition while exploiting and squandering resources are *required* for American capitalism's continued survival—and they seem to have indeed succeeded. A high standard of living prevails; the major labour unions are solidly in the system and actively supporting it. In the 1950's and early 1960's American capitalism appeared to have resolved what Marxists had insisted were its fundamental underlying contradictions. So much so that its ideologues called for "the end of ideology" and its opponents with bitterness and despair called it "the Great American Celebration" and the "One Dimensional Society".

A brief description is necessary of these mechanisms which have made the "Great Society" out of the underemployed, underproducing capitalist system of the 1930's, a system which had seemed to fulfil classical Marxism's anticipations.

The Great Depression disappeared with the war-time mobilization of the 1940's.² It is now evident that the New Deal provided a number of the necessary conditions but not the sufficient cause for the post-thirties recovery and rehabilitation of the American economy. In short, it was the permanent war-economy ushered in during the forties which led to the revolutionizing of productive capacity and the subsequent remarkable rise in living standards of the 1950's.³

Within this general movement of recovery the tendency noted by Berle and Means in 1932,⁴ for the economy to come under the dominance and control of a few hundred large corporations, continued to assert itself. As a result, a few hundred supercorporations have come to control the strategic areas, "the commanding heights", of the economy. As one economist has concluded: "The removal of 150 supercorporations would effectively destroy the American economy. . . ."⁵ These supercorporations control a productive capacity that not only makes America the richest nation in the world, but also provides the foundations upon which the allocation of resources, jobs, wealth and income are based. All aspects of this society, from occupation to housing, education to health, scientific research to television entertainment, are dependent on the corporate-controlled area of the economy.

The rise of the supercorporation has taken place within the context of a still war-mobilized economy. A central feature of this warfare economy has been the rapid growth of a "military-industrial complex" absorbing millions of men and billions of dollars of investment.⁶ The defence and defence-connected industries are proving to be an indispensable prop to the post-war economy. This enormous military-industrial complex not only helps stabilize the domestic economy but is also proving to be an essential adjunct to the world-wide practice of American capitalism. Since the 1930's, the United States has emerged as the undisputed leader and protector of the "Free World",

and the demands made by this rôle in turn necessitate the preservation of the war-mobilized economy. America's military machine is vital for the maintenance of the world market economy. A "nuclear umbrella" has been created by the United States under which it participates in the training of numerous foreign armies and police forces and conducts counter-insurgency operations from Thailand to Peru, while at the same time maintaining a network of 275 major base complexes and 1,400 other bases around the world.

Since the 1940's, American corporations have extended their worldwide activities. Today the foreign market for domestic and overseas United States owned firms is roughly equivalent to two-fifths the domestic market.⁸ In terms of the Third World, this extension of American interests has included not only the attempt to gain control over scarce resources such as oil,⁹ but also the attempt to establish captive markets.¹⁰ The growing importance of, and the growing need for, such assured markets on the part of many large corporations strengthens America's overall commitment to maintaining the authority of market relations on a world scale. It must preserve a structure of superordinate and subordinate market relations that are founded upon an historically transient international division of labour. It is not surprising that the United States, with only 6 per cent of the world's population and yet producing and consuming over 35 per cent of the world's manufactured goods, enjoys a virtually unassailable hegemony over world markets.¹¹

This extension of the market in *breadth* (overseas), although of fundamental importance for American capitalism, is but one dimension of its post-thirties expansion. Attention must also be paid to its expansion in *time* (planned obsolescence), and in *depth* (creation of artificial wants, selling through advertising and consumer credit).¹² There is no doubt that the extension of the domestic market in these other directions has proved crucial for the post-war American economy. The corporations have succeeded in establishing administered markets domestically: markets compartmentalized, controlled through mechanisms of managed prices, the brand image and "quality control", and buoyed-up by enormous injections of credit. What competition does take place today, takes place between corporation and consumer via the media of mass communications which are themselves a vital and integral part of the world of the large corporation.

It appears that American capitalism only survives in so far as it can produce and sell enormous quantities of waste-articles satisfying no vital human need. One need only reflect here on the acknowledged tie between the fate of Detroit's automobiles—produced far beyond any rational need, and becoming obsolete in outrageously brief periods

—and the economy as a whole. The waste economy, in order to expand and perpetuate itself, extends and intensifies exploitation backwards to the worker in the corporation and forwards to the consumer, and in the process it increasingly invades every area and moment of the individual's life—through advertising, pressures to buy and consumer credit. There has been created, over and above basic individual needs, a structure of **induced** needs. The individual becomes enmeshed in this structure of **artificial** wants. More and more, the individual, in obediently supporting his economy, surrenders areas of autonomy. The system's demands on him, the stereotyped and standardized forms of amusement, leisure activity and pleasure, block out any possibility for the development of individual interests, needs and desires. In short, the economy has had to extend itself deeply into the individual.

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In order to survive, American capitalism has had to expand relentlessly, developing a productive capacity serving no vital needs, but which requires the manufacture and manipulation of induced needs. But while the individual has no choice but to satisfy his vital life needs the artificial needs must be sold to him. And the individual can hardly accept these waste needs as his own without accepting the entire style of life and society they represent. In buying that way of life, the individual identifies with and becomes enmeshed in this society. Much more of him—his hopes, needs and fears—is bound-up with the economy than ever before. Structurally unable to meet the basic needs of everybody, American capitalism moves deeper and deeper into the lives of its affluent members.

Parallel to this extension of market practice has been the ever growing concentration of control into fewer and fewer **hands**.¹³ A few hundred supercorporations, world-wide in their activities, are increasingly controlled by fewer and fewer people, and in the process are acquiring ever greater efficiency and consequently an ever more tightly structured chain of command, controlling at a moment's notice vast areas of resources, and establishing captive markets at home and abroad and setting prices with little fear of open price competition. The concentration and consolidation of the supercorporation has resulted in a rapid extension of top-down controls which destroy the possibility for exercising individual initiative and responsibility.

The growth of bureaucracy is a function of this centralization in the economic sphere. **Bureaucratization**¹⁴ is an integral element to the post-thirties phenomenon of organized capitalism: a capitalism in which the state has become the agency of mediation for the complex of interlocking bureaucracies. The state is now the focus of the protective apparatus.

Today the American **ruling** class mediates, justifies and shields its corporation-based dominance and privileges through an institutional and bureaucratic structure which is both private and public in extent. The executive and middle-managers in the large corporations, federal and state employees and administrators in politics, education and health, all have a material and ideological commitment to the existing structure of American society. They are the functionaries of organized capitalism, the links in the chain of top-down command, and they owe their position, status and comforts to the existing institutional structure of American society. These social strata have grown in number as the public and private bureaucracies and regulatory agencies of organized capitalism have grown.

The increasing centralization of control, the elaboration of higher and middle strata of functionaries, and the tendency to eliminate at all levels and in all dimensions of social life individual initiative and responsibility, has culminated in a voluntary form of totalitarianism. But this self-imposed totalitarianism, the elimination of significant choice at every level, and the consequent identification with a pre-defined whole way of life, is ultimately predicated upon the anti-communist ideology produced by capitalism's epochal conflict with communism. Unquestioned identification with *the American* way of life is the other aspect of anti-communist prejudice.

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The Cold War has made it possible to reject all other forms of society. Perhaps indeed the expression of and hostility to any alternative as a necessary psychological precondition for the production and consumption of useless goods, for it creates the required identification with *this* way of life. Thus more than just a simple ideological unity is being generated by the Cold War. The Cold War has helped to eliminate any alternative to the status quo, and by so doing it has disguised the fact that capitalism's transiency has been demonstrated. American society, as **Marcuse** argues in *One-Dimensional Man*, is mobilized politically and intellectually to disguise this fact. Communism thus becomes its sustaining menace, its required enemy.

The Cold War's elimination of any alternative to the *status quo*, the enormous expansion of production and the consequent expansion of wages, and, finally, the development of such welfare-state measures as medicare for the aged, social security, limited public housing, welfare payments, workman's compensation, and minimum wage scales, have been the devices that help cement the "Great Society" consensus. It has also been aided in the political sphere by a political, governmental, law-enforcing structure of checks and balances which operate on the principle of integrational politics. The political parties

have proved to be the necessary additional apparatus for closing the arena of divisive politics. Today the narrow sphere of electoral politics is managed. It has become the exclusive preserve of highly organized political parties steered and run by professional politicians and political bureaucrats: functionaries directing a politics in which representatives choose their electors. Electoral politics has become the mechanism through which the American ruling class builds up and maintains an alliance of classes and social strata. In the 1964 elections, the Democratic Party succeeded to a greater extent than ever before in joining businessmen, farmers, professionals, white-collar workers, organized labour, and the Negro community in an electoral alliance, united by a programme which incorporated the various minimum demands of the different groups into a hierarchy of aims which promised a lessening of tensions and problems within American society. The programme of promises to meet this aggregate of minimum demands was labelled the "Great Society".

Organized capitalism is, fundamentally, a society without opposition on the political level, and without alternatives on the individual level. It is a system which increasingly penetrates and shapes every area and phase of social and individual life. It needs, demands, and attains the individual's identification and subordination to a system which is **increasingly** hostile and external to him. It is, in the **profoundest** sense of the word, a system: a centralized, hierarchical **structure** in which all elements and **phases** are interlocking and interdependent, and, in the final analysis, **interpenetrative** and **inseparable**. **The autonomy of the whole** is supreme. In its epochal conflict with communism, all become **subservient** to the movement and structural requirements of the whole. The system demands, whether in its waste production or its anti-communism, identification with, and acceptance of the whole. In order to survive, American capitalism has developed a protective apparatus dependent not on vital needs but on the manufacture and manipulation of induced needs—ultimately it sells the individual a whole way of life. The dismal picture, conveyed starkly in Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*,¹¹ of a closed and controlled universe, a sleek and clean society, is also a picture of the success of American capitalism. The consensus, mobilization against the enemy, the welfare-warfare society, the endless proliferation of useless gadgets—here one is confronting American capitalism's means of overcoming the contradictions made so evident during the Great Depression.



This, then, is the American "solution". Yet in spite of it, in the past few years we have witnessed Vietnam and Watts, Berkeley and Selma. We have witnessed the rise of a student movement and a Negro **move-**

ment, often side by side. Why these explosions? Why this New Left, if American capitalism has been so successful?

In point of fact, the "solution" has merely temporized and repressed the basic difficulties. Indeed, they continue to recur, often in their traditional form: unemployment and **poverty**.¹⁶ Often, in fact, the various forms of the solution contain their own problems—as Vietnam indicates. The point is, of course, that whatever forms they may take, the basic problems of American capitalism have not vanished. The protective apparatus eliminates choice, contracts the space for individual initiative, while at the same time the system in its continuing need and search for profits excludes whole strata from the comforts of affluence. Profitable affluence has produced the ghetto and the depressed **rural** areas, the unemployed and the unemployable, the high school drop-out and the Bowery derelict.

We have suggested that the most basic facts in the "solution" of the system's difficulties are the extension of its demands into all areas of social and individual life, its growth into gigantic institutions, and the concentration of more and more vital decision-making powers in the hands of fewer and fewer men. The elite control bound-up with capitalism becomes more and more pronounced as capitalism makes greater and greater demands on the individual, as the institutions become larger, as they merge and entrench themselves and as they become more manipulative in their search for profits. Choice, whether in the market or politics, is eliminated.

Yet American democratic values—which have proved so vital a weapon in the war against communism—foster expectations which these structures invariably frustrate. These values, rooted as they are in a possessive individualism surviving from an historical period when there was some social space for individual and group movement, still hold sway and dominate in a society which now denies any such space. The notion on which these values are premised W. E. B. Dubois called "the American Assumption": the assumption, that is, that in America there had been created a unique arrangement of societal relations that provided a framework for individual opportunity and self-fulfilment. Today this assumption stands in sharp contradiction to the system's actual practice, yet continues to be intellectually **affirmed**.

This contradiction between ideology and reality has been felt most strongly by those who take the ideology most seriously—students. It was among the students that the New Left originated: individuals choked-off from the system at one of its most vulnerable points—the very institutions in which America's ideas are most strenuously propagated. A refusal has been made to go on meeting the all-embracing demands of organized capitalism. A generation of students has rejected

the specialization of interest, the narrowness of pursuit, the stereotyping of mind, the standardizing of personality demanded of them. It has been a total reaction; a single and decisive act of disinvolvement from the on-going—a point blank refusal to continue accepting the pre-packaged way. This dramatic act of disentanglement has been the first step in the emergence of a New **Left**.¹⁷

The student left that has emerged was not mechanically determined but rather it created itself, and it has done so under conditions imposed by the very society in which it arises. The distinctive features and the character of this new movement represent its response to the very specific situation in which it has created itself.

The first element to note in the specific situation is the absence of an opposition labour movement. The American trade union movement (AFL-CIO) is not only integrated into the system, but is solidly behind it. Its commitment strengthens the peculiar ideological unity of American politics. In terms of the tone this integration imparts to American politics, it would be academic to ask whether the AFL-CIO represents a majority of the workers. The workers it represents are the decisive ones: the privileged workers of the corporate sector, operating the key areas of the economy. The important point here is not the question of labour's future potential, nor what might happen to those liberal elements existing within the AFL-CIO (elements stifled by the firmly entrenched conservative leadership), but rather the character of the trade union movement: its hierarchical and bureaucratic structure and its over-riding aim of maintaining the privileged position of its membership. The AFL-CIO now constitutes a major obstacle to any radical activity and politics in America. This does not, of course, preclude either the possibility or the need for attempting organizing efforts among the workers outside the AFL-CIO, whether they be unskilled, white collar or those of seemingly middle class and semi-professional standing. No act of will, however, is going to overcome this immediate obstacle of the AFL-CIO.

If there is no workers' opposition, neither is there a radical party within which the New Left could have developed. Besides having been isolated and discredited by the Cold War, the traditional Left parties have been polarized around the issues arising from the Russian and Chinese revolutions, having little or nothing to say about the key issue for the New Left—the quality of life in American society. Their insights into poverty and the Vietnam war are appealing, but their fixation on a frozen Marxism, Leninism, or Trotskyism blinds them to the most current developments of advanced capitalism. Moreover, their organizational structure tends to reduplicate that of the existing order, making them unappealing as an **alternative**.¹⁸

If the New Left has grown up in relation to neither party nor

workers' movement, then it has not been able to shape itself in terms of a coherent theory and organizing strategy, and it has not been able to shape itself in terms of an ongoing movement whose experience permitted insight into the underlying socio-economic structure. Neither theory nor first-hand insight into the system's underlying contradictions have been available to it.

But, in fact, the New Left has grown up in relation to a movement—the Civil Rights movement. The complexion and situation of the Civil Rights movement has **been** decisive in shaping the character of the New Left; for many it was the formative experience of their lives. Here is where we must look for a more positive understanding of the characteristics of the New Left.

Until very recently the unifying goal of the Civil Rights movement was integration and the full enfranchisement of American Negroes. The failure to implement full adult **suffrage** and formal equality has stood in stark contradiction to the society's cherished democratic **ideals**.²⁹ The immediate visibility of Southern racism profoundly affected thousands of students. Intimate contact with a people **outside** of the totally **absorbing** system, a people not yet standardized, proved to be a critical experience: it sharpened the contradiction between ideology and reality.

More than the student left, the Negroes are suffering because of the traditional problems of American capitalism: under-employment, low wages, inadequate and over-crowded housing and extremely poor educational facilities and opportunities. They exist on the margin of American society, having made their most important gains only during the two periods of World War. Their position represents America's inability to come to terms with its own slave-owning past. A failure which has resulted in such a deepening of race prejudice that racism is imminent throughout the institutions and practices of American society. American Negroes represent a peculiar colonial problem: historically they were integral to the white colonization of the Americas. but their drive for full emancipation has awaited the political emancipation of Africa. Their peculiar colonial status has not only awakened an interest in Africa, but has also encouraged among some Negroes their self-identification as Afro-Americans. With the use of a "black mercenary army" in Vietnam two phases of past and present American practice are coming **together**.³⁰

But the Negroes are not placed in a strategic position **vis-à-vis** the economy and they do not have an immediate awareness of its basic structure. This absence of a direct tie to the central processes of American capitalism, this marginality, makes it difficult for student organizers, whether black or white, to see how the Negroes' problems

will be solved, or how the society itself **can** be transformed. The Negroes do not readily identify with **working** class exploitation, nor are they in a position themselves to project a structural alternative. Thus the development of a socialist consciousness is impeded. The student left has not been able to conceive of any alternative, because no existing social forces, by their activity or relationship to the system, project any such alternative.

The Negro community's extreme dislocation, and internal lack of cohesion and malaise, produced by more than three hundred years of slavery, capitalist exploitation and race **prejudice**,¹¹ does not extend but simply reinforces the student left's perception of what the system denies--control over one's life. Involvement with a **people** largely outside of the totally absorbing system makes for a moral urgency and an immediacy of demands. Although there is a radical rejection of the system, the absence of any socialist politics within the labour movement and the absence of any vital current of socialist theory within American thought leads to radical energies being transmuted into reformist politics. Radical energies are directed, for the lack of any other direction, at effects of the system rather than the system itself. Naturally bound-up with this tendency is a further one of an alternating despair and utopianism. Both of these tendencies are at present embodied in **SNCC**.¹²

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For the majority of the student left, as typified by SDS, involvement with the Negro movement, has not encouraged this new radical consciousness to overcome and destroy its natural impulse towards reformism. The concern with local and direct control and the quality of life remains at the level of simple spontaneity, rather than a clearly defined alternative to the established society. This fact helps account for a whole range of New Left characteristics, which are related to the kind of system advanced capitalism has become in its efforts to preserve itself.

The American New Left has arisen in response to the peculiar characteristics of contemporary capitalism—its need for a foreign empire, and for wars to defend that empire; its exclusion of Negroes; its enormous and expanding depersonalized institutions; its tendency to bring more and more areas of individual lives under the control of ever more remote bureaucracies; its economic need that individuals not merely produce and consume its goods, but further adopt a whole way of life based on its profit requirements; and, finally, the growing contradiction between a democratic ideology and a capitalism that is demanding and totalitarian in its pressures. Even so, the peculiar traits of the New Left—its emphasis on feelings and people, its vitality, its

bohemianism and anti-intellectualism, its reformist politics—are not merely a mechanical reflex to the overall social conditions.

The pre-history of the New Left is to be found in the beat movement of the 1950's—an unorganized and non-political form of social protest. The beatnik was a disillusioned individual who resigned from middle class society and searched for his identity in a community of **exiles**—voluntary outcasts from middle class comforts and conformity. Traits from this primitive protest survive in the New Left of today.

The intention here, however, is to outline some of the more important of the New Left's characteristics that have developed in the process of its birth within this society. Right at the heart of the student protest is an over-riding sense of moral urgency and need for personal witness: a sense of individual responsibility born out of frustration with the **impersonalness** of the system. Intensely personal modes of behaving and relating have developed in opposition to the general destruction of individual characteristics that has accompanied the growth of organized capitalism: there is a rejection of its coldness. The rejection manifests itself, in part, in distinctive but carefree modes of dress, personalized styles that bear witness to the conventionalization that has accompanied the organization of American capitalism. There is much experimentation with sex, pot and **drugs** in opposition to the standardized and totally constricted behaviour required for employment in any of the major corporations and in opposition to the customary notions of what constitutes "success".

The anti-intellectualism that characterizes large sections of the student left is a two-fold response: first, it is a rejection of an intellectual and educational system which trains for jobs, makes specialists, imparts experience not knowledge, an educational system which undercuts the possibility of individual recognition and criticism; and secondly, it is a rejection of an intellectualism which has retreated into a search for exactitude in the name of science, protecting itself in the process from open and direct criticism—an intellectualism, that is, that has cut the heart out of intellectual activity, no longer concerning itself with human values and human aspirations. In short, what is rejected is an intellectualism which itself is anti-intellectual and **anti-theory**. The New Left has rejected an intellectualism which has itself negated the intellectual's critical function.

Another of the New Left's peculiar characteristics is its demand for an unstructured movement. It stands in opposition to structures because they don't conform to human needs, and it emphasizes people's needs as the central dimension of any new radical politics. The New Left searches for, and hopes to re-establish, the human dimension in American life. It demands that structures should be based upon human needs.

These are the salient characteristics of the student left, and they have both angered the Old Left and frustrated those Marxist intellectuals who wish to make their commitment to socialism something more than a personal preference. But no admonishing will alter the root cause of the problem: namely, the lack of a movement, outside of the ghetto, to which the student left can relate. It is this void that puts the New Left in perpetual danger. The break with the system may be sharp and genuine, but the absence of any visible alternative tendency can lead to despair, to the demand for immediate solutions, and to reformism. The absence of visible alternative tendencies, coupled with the enormous strength of the system and the great weakness of the New Left itself leads to the constant threat of disillusionment with politics.

The analysis of contemporary capitalism has suggested the *raison d'être* for the New Left. In order to perpetuate itself, the system has had to extend itself in every direction: the individual must lose control of his life in ever-increasing ways. Although it is certainly true that every oppressive system has denied the individual's emotional and physiological needs, contemporary capitalism is decisively different: no system proclaiming itself the fulfilment of man's hopes has ever demanded so much from its members. As was pointed out, the basic tendency is to require more and more that the individual meet a structure of induced needs superimposed on his individual needs. Indeed, emotions and instincts are increasingly denied, the space for individuality shrinks as *leisures* becomes increasingly a social task. No realm of life is left for self-determination because no realm of life is free from the need for profit. Every area of life that "pays"—which means virtually every area—is being tapped. The key to this extension of capitalism in space, time, and depth, we have suggested, is its inability to survive by merely producing the necessary goods. New necessities must be created, for production must expand.

If there is no longer any room for individual emotions and instincts at home, after work, with one's family, or in one's section of town—if the whole is a standardized apparatus imposed on the individual; further, if for these classes scarcity is no longer a problem; then traditional notions of what is truly "political" and what is merely "psychological" can no longer be applied. That is, the chief accusation against capitalism is no longer that it cannot produce the goods necessary for a decent standard of living; but that it fails to create the fundamental conditions for human freedom and self-expression. It does not permit, at any level, individual self-determination. It does not permit the members of the society to decide about themselves or the society. It denies individuality by denying men's intellectual, sexual and emotional needs.

Thus the bohemianism of the new Left—in which all of these denied

dimensions are asserted and demanded—is not simply a protest against an accidental byproduct of the system. It rather attacks the necessary requirements for the perpetuation of capitalism: the total absorption of the needs of man by the needs of the system. This is not to say that this concern with life styles, individual feelings, the quality of life, spontaneity, is *per se* political. But it is to insist that these issues are not at all irrelevant to politics and that a mass radical movement in the affluent society will put such questions at its very centre.

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In discussing the origin and nature of the New Left we have mentioned the spontaneous development of a new critical consciousness. This new radical consciousness, in its demand for participatory democracy, suggests the "determinant negation" of this society.

In **other** words, the historical alternative to a given social form is not an arbitrary matter, to be discovered by chance. but rather—if it is to have historical meaning—it must arise directly from the structural malfunctioning of the prevailing society. It must represent the needs that are denied by the present society and which may be realized in the specific social **forms** made possible by and growing out of the present society. In classical capitalism the most telling **structural** problems resulted in low wages, underemployment and unemployment for the mass of the workers. State control and rationalization of industry was seen as necessary for eliminating these structural defects of capitalism. Today the underlying system cannot be meaningfully separated from its vast protective apparatus when structural malfunctioning no longer affects the proletariat so keenly and directly. State control and nationalization hardly express the historical alternative of organized capitalism. Perhaps the decentralization and direct individual involvement on every level which are implied in participatory democracy foreshadow the still-to-be-elaborated alternative to organized capitalism: black power, student power, faculty power, workers power, and above all community power.

A founding member of SDS, Tom **Hayden**, has explained the term participatory democracy in the following way:

"The emphasis in the movement on 'letting the people decide,' on decentralized decision-making, on refusing alliances with top leaders, stems from the need to create a personal and a group identity that can survive both the temptations and the crippling effects of this society. Power in America is abdicated by individuals to top-down organizational units, and it is in the recovery of this power that the movement becomes distinctive from the rest of the country and a new kind of man emerges."²³

Participatory democracy represents an attack on the realities of organized capitalism: its production of profitable affluence, and its

concentration of control into fewer and fewer hands while at the same time eliminating choice and closing out individual initiative and responsibility. The student left has correctly perceived that the issue of control is central to organized capitalism. Perhaps it is the area of the system's greatest vulnerability, for to survive the system must take control from the individual over ever greater areas of his life. Basically capitalism must deny meaningful popular control because control over the means of production by a small class in the interests of that class is its very essence. Its struggle for survival is a struggle to retain power in those few hands. But those who remain without power, those who are to serve the need for profit, must by that very token be managed. In the factory, if the worker is not to control the work process, is not to participate in planning and management, then there needs to be a hierarchical structure of functionaries—planners, experts, and personnel officers to manage people. To the extent that all institutions of organized capitalism become patterned after and intertwined with the corporation this becomes so throughout the society. If teachers (with or without the participation of their students) are not to control their own work, the shaping of the physical facilities as well as the curriculum, then again there needs to be a strata of functionaries, a bureaucracy to perform these functions. To the extent that popular participation and control is eliminated from government and public administration, an extensive bureaucracy is needed. As administrative institutions develop and grow so the top-down chains of command invade every area. If, for example, the administration of the current poverty programme is not to be in the hands of the poor themselves, then a new extension to the bureaucratic structure must be created. Poverty, embracing as it does over forty million people existing in the midst of a prosperous society, requires an extensive bureaucracy of administrators, welfare workers and police. Participatory democracy represents an attack on these realities. Implicit also in the formulation, but as yet unarticulated, is the understanding that bureaucracy and control from above is necessary for a certain mode of production, but not modern industrial production *per se*. Also implicit is the understanding that this over-extended bureaucracy, with its layers of functionaries and attached experts, performs—under the guise of impartiality—the function of legitimizing the dominant values and theoretically justifying the structure of organized capitalism. These bureaucratic structures required to perpetuate capitalism, structures which reduce individual control over individual lives to mere assent to one of two pre-packaged alternatives, are relatively new to American society.

The New Left has spontaneously developed this radical critique of American capitalism. At the centre of the student left's thinking

is the idea that "men must share in the decisions which affect their lives". This idea has led the New Left to focus its energies on **organizing** and mobilizing the poor and the powerless of the depressed rural areas of the South, such as Lowndes County (Alabama), and the decayed urban ghettos of the North, such as "Uptown" Chicago. The organizers of these projects stress the need for individual and local community control; they seek to build a new form of movement. Participatory democracy also provides an instrumental theory, a guide to tactics however limited it may be, for the fight against paternalistic bureaucratic control whether it is the university administration at Berkeley or the city administration in Newark, New Jersey. In the anti-war and anti-draft movements it finds an echo in the argument that stresses the individual's ultimate responsibility for his actions, an argument that utilizes the case put forward by the Allied prosecution at the Nuremberg **Trials**.²⁴

By raising the issue of control, the New Left suggest the basis for a conception of human freedom which demonstrates the need for a new arrangement of social relations. Implicit within this spontaneously developed consciousness is an alternative vision of what society could be: a free and equal association of men controlling the decisions that affect their lives—in short, a socialist society. This new radical consciousness is, to paraphrase **Lenin**, a socialist consciousness in its embryonic form. It is the beginnings of a self-awareness of capitalism in its organized, totalitarian phase.

But so long as it remains at this level of simple spontaneity, the natural tendency of this new radicalism is towards reformist politics. The tendency is for New Left consciousness to remain confined to intuitively perceived insights concerning the structure of organized capitalism, and, as a result, to tend towards a subordinate reformism, a tendency which is already clearly discernible in the New Left: in its failure to break with and clearly confront the dominant **liberal-democratic** ideology, in its attraction to the "new politics" of liberalism and its failure so far to develop the notion of participatory democracy into a conception of a qualitatively new form and structure of society. In addition, as presently defined by its advocates, participatory democracy does not include within it the basis for an adequate socio-economic critique of organized capitalism, so that it speaks of elite rule and subordination only, failing to grasp the significance of class rule and exploitation.

If the New Left is to continue the process of its self-creation it must develop a socialist consciousness capable of directly challenging the existing intellectual and moral supremacy of liberalism; it must break the present ideological unanimity. This needs to be done if it is to develop a movement which aims not only at organizing those

already excluded by the system, and providing a haven for those who reject it, but also those who at present identify, not with the system as such, but with the dominant ideology. The existing gap between ideology and reality needs to be expressed in an alternate theory and a vision, which rejects the attempt simply to rehabilitate existing social conditions. In other words, not only a practical basis but also an intellectual basis for a socialist movement has to be created in the United States. The central concept of any contemporary socialism will be popular control—participatory democracy.

At the present time the development of a socialist movement appears to be dependent upon circumstances, such as the world wide practice of American capitalism, and the rise of the Negro revolt, which lie outside the immediate **purview** of the new radicals. But work aimed at creating the basis of a socialist movement is both necessary and possible, although it will be prolonged and protracted. The basis for such activity exists in American society. The tendency for the system to choke off individuals is built in. The New Left is an organic, not an accidental, movement, the product of a system which continues to create the demand for its overthrow.

NOTES

1. The best of this recent literature is **J. Newfield**, *The New Left: A Prophetic Minority*, New York, 1966, and **P. Jacobs and S. Landau**, *The New Radical: A Report with Documents*, New York, 1966.
2. This was, among many others, **J. K. Galbraith's** conclusion: "The Great Depression of the thirties never **came** to an end. It merely disappeared in the great mobilization of the forties." **J. K. Galbraith**, *American Capitalism*, Boston, 1952, p. 69. (In 1938 there was more unemployment than in 1933).
3. See **P. A. Baran** and **P. M. Sweezy**, *Monopoly Capital*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1966, pp. 142-217, and **J. K. Galbraith**, *op. cit.*
4. **A. A. Berle** and **G. A. Means**, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, New York, 1932.
5. **R. L. Heilbroner**, *The Limits of American Capitalism*, New York, 1966, p. 13. In addition, the late Senator **Estes Kefauver** (Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Anti-Trust and Monopoly) in a book based on the materials compiled by the Senate Sub-committee he headed, concluded:

"The core of the economic problem facing us today is the concentration of power in a few hands. . . . In 1962 the 20 **largest** manufacturing corporations alone had \$73.8 billion in assets, or about one-quarter of the total assets of United States **manufacturing companies**. In turn, the 50 largest companies held 36 per cent; the 100 **largest**, 46 per cent; the 200 largest, 56 per cent; and the 1,000 largest, nearly 75 per cent. This left for all others—approximately 419,000, manufacturing concerns—the **remaining** one-quarter of the total assets." **E. Kefauver**, *In a few Hands*, New York, 1965, pp. 189-190.

Expenditure on defence accounts for 10 per cent of America's G.N.P., and it is estimated that 9 per cent of the labour force are engaged in work directly connected with defence. See P. A. **Baran** and P. M. Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital*, New York, 1966, pp. 176-177; H. **Magdoff**, "The Economic Aspect of Imperialism", *Monthly Review*, November, 1966; Vol. 18, No. 6; and for a general survey T. Coffin, *the Armed Society*, Penguin Books, 1964, and F. J. Cook, *The Warfare State*, London, 1963. It is estimated that over one-fiftieth of the U.S.A.'s defence budget is for counter-insurgency activities: training local security and police forces, projects such as **Camelot** (Chile), as well as more traditional C.I.A. activity. See R. **Hagan**, "Counter-Insurgency and the New Foreign Relations", *The Correspondent*, Autumn, 1964, p. 32.

8. H. **Magdoff**. "The Economic Aspect of Imperialism", *op. cit.*
 9. For an excellent study of the American oil industry's efforts at establishing control over oil reserves see R. **Engler**, *Politics of Oil*, New York, 1964.
 10. **Hamza** Alavi has analyzed this new **form** of imperialist penetration, taking India as **his** example. His analysis shows how relatively small amounts of investment in strategic sectors of the Indian economy, often in co-operation with local capital, can secure **captive** markets for the metropolitan corporations. See H. Alavi, "New Forms of Imperialism", *Socialist Register 1964*, London, 1964, pp. 104-126.
 11. For an excellent discussion of some of the problems and conflicts between countries of the Third World and the U.S.A. and Western Europe that emerged at the 1964 World Conference on trade, see E. R. Braundi, "International Trade and a Strategy for the Working Classes", *International Socialist Journal*, January—February, 1965.
 12. On the question of **planned** obsolescence see V. Packard, *The Waste Makers*, New York, 1961; and P. A. **Baran** and P. M. Sweezy, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-141. **As** regards consumer credit, H. **Magdoff** has estimated for the years 1960-63 that 88 per cent of consumer durables were purchased on credit and that 21 per cent of all consumer expenditure went to meeting such debts: H. **Magdoff**, "Problems of United States Capitalism", *Socialist Register 1965*, London, 1965, pp. 62-79.
- G. Kolko estimates that 2,500 men, through their command of the 200 major companies, effectively control the American economy. G. Kolko, *Wealth and Power in America*, New York, 1964, pp. 55-69. See also C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, New York, 1956, pp. 94-170. Although it does not appear probable that the actual number of large corporations will decrease, through mergers, etc., the tendency still persists for further concentration of corporate control resulting from an extension of their activities into farming and the **service** trades (the traditional outlets for individual enterprise).
- C. Wright Mills (*White Collar*, New York, 1951) **speaks** of the bureaucratization of property that has resulted from the shift in this century from entrepreneurial property to a narrow class property. It is a development, he writes, which "involves a distribution of power among large subordinate staffs . . ." (p. 105). Greed has been routinized and aggression made "an impersonal principle of organization" (p. 109). Mills concludes by saying that the fact that "the power of property has been bureaucratized in the corporation does not diminish that power; indeed bureaucracy increases the use and the protection of property power." (p. 111).

15. H. **Marcuse**, *One Dimensional Man*, Boston, 1964.
16. Present official estimates run close to 4 per cent unemployed and 20 per cent poor. **Baran** and **Sweezy's** estimates are significantly higher: P. A. **Baran** and P. M. **Sweezy**, *op. cit.*, pp. 246-248, and pp. 288-289.
17. When speaking of the New Left we are referring to two separate groups: S.N.C.C. (the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee), and S.D.S. (Students for a Democratic Society). S.N.C.C. was founded in 1960 by a group of Negro college students. It is very small, having an active group of organizers numbering between one and two hundred. But in the South especially it has reached, on a personal level, hundreds of thousands of Negroes. **S.D.S.** was established in 1964. It is primarily a campus-based organization and is made-up of largely white middle class students. Nevertheless, it has set up numerous educational and community organizing projects. Its membership is between 5,000 and 6,000, although perhaps another 20,000 students are associated with it. Both S.N.C.C. and **S.D.S.** have **influenced**, and influence now, many more thousands than formal membership figures suggest.
18. There are a number of groups often associated with the New Left that can perhaps best be termed off-shoots of the Old Left. The W.E.B. Dubois Clubs of America are influenced by much traditional Communist Party thinking; the May 2nd movement was oriented towards the pro-Chinese Progressive Labor Party; and the Young Socialist Alliance, Youth Against War and Fascism, and the **Spartacists** are off-shoots of the Socialist Workers Party.
19. It is often forgotten that in the United States one man one vote has still to be implemented. The **struggle** for the Southern Negro's enfranchisement is still being **fought** in **Mississippi** and Alabama.
20. Stokely Carmichael, leader of S.N.C.C., speaks of a "black mercenary army". Many S.N.C.C. organizers have read, and are influenced by, **Franz Fanon**. Before the slogan "Black Power" was adopted, some wished to put forward the call for "black consciousness".
21. For an excellent discussion of the effects of slavery on the Negro community see E. Genovese, "The Legacy of Slavery", *Studies on the Left*, November—December, 1966, **Vol. 6**, No. 6.
22. S.N.C.C. seeks to bring cohesion and organization to the black **community**, building up a base for later co-operation with other groups. Its call for "Black Power"—local community control for the black and the powerless—is ambiguous. Does it allow for black landlords, shop keepers, etc? This ambiguity is likely to remain so long as no other groups, than the Negroes, are in movement. But there is no certainty that a reformist tendency will be dominant; an expression of solidarity with National Liberation Movements of the Third World is a distinct possibility.
23. Quoted in P. Jacobs and S. Landau, *The New Radicals*, New York, 1966, p. 35. Tom **Hayden** was one of the main architects of the S.D.S. manifesto, the Port Huron Statement.
24. D. Mitchell's defence is based on the Allied case put forth at the Nuremberg trials. Recently the demand has been raised for student participation in draft decisions.