

Preface

The following correspondence between Alex Steiner and Steve Long is being reproduced here in order to correct the record. David North, in his [Marxism, History and Socialist Consciousness](#), quotes passages from Steiner's correspondence in three separate places. Here is the first instance of North's use of this correspondence:

In the course of your defense of Geoghegan, you refer favorably to the work of Wilhelm Reich. In this case, I cannot object to the connection that you make between the former and the latter. You are correct when you state that Geoghegan's assertion that the Nazis "were far more effective in their appeals to mass psychology than the German left" essentially repeated the arguments made by Wilhelm Reich in the 1930s. In agreement with Reich, you write that "political consciousness was a battleground that the left was ignoring with disastrous consequences," and that "Socialism could only triumph by winning over the allegiance of millions of workers and for that to happen the left had to find a way of engaging the hopes, fears and dreams of those millions."

*The question that arises is how the development of "political" and "socialist" consciousness was understood by Wilhelm Reich. You have surprisingly little to say on this subject in your document, noting only in passing that Reich demonstrated "in practice" how a "renewed socialist idealism" could be developed "with the fascinating work he did in the early Thirties with German working class youth in the sex-pol movement." Aside from implying that this work holds great lessons for contemporary socialists, you fail to present either a summary of Reich's views or explain their enduring relevance. However, in a document entitled "Utopia and Revolution," which you, Comrade Steiner, wrote in 2004 and sent to Comrade Steve Long of the ICFI, you provided an indication of what you believe to be the crucial insight of Wilhelm Reich. Arguing in support of positions advanced by Herbert Marcuse in his *Eros and Civilization*, you explained that Marcuse "essentially makes the same point that Wilhelm Reich did in his *Mass Psychology of Fascism*, that if the Marxist movement does not find a way to channel repressed libidinal drives in a progressive direction, then fascism will utilize those same drives to bring us into an age of barbarism." You immediately added: "I could say a great deal more on this subject but I think I have made my point."*

Indeed, you did. What you understand and mean by the struggle for "political" and "socialist" consciousness has absolutely nothing to do with Marxism. Much of what you write is based on the work of Wilhelm Reich, whose conceptions are fundamentally alien to historical materialism and the revolutionary Marxist tradition. (121-122)

It is clear from the context that North's remarks are first addressed to Brenner as it was he who referenced the work of Geoghegan and not Steiner. But then North proceeds to address the remarks on Wilhelm Reich in Steiner's correspondence and concludes with the claim that, "much of what you write is based on the work of Wilhelm Reich". It is

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something of a mystery as to who the “you” is supposed to be in North’s construction. As a matter of fact, the totality of Steiner’s output on Reich was the single line quoted by North. Nor does Brenner have a great deal to say about Reich for the simple reason that whereas Brenner values some of Reich’s insights, it is simply not true that the bulk of his work, or even a significant part of it, “is based on the work of Wilhelm Reich.” It is clear that the sole purpose of the quote of this single line from Steiner’s correspondence is to raise the spectre of Reich as part of North’s crude attempt to paint Brenner as an advocate of Bacchanalian sex and psychological navel gazing.

North makes yet another reference to the same remark about Reich in his document, this time to demonstrate Steiner and Brenner’s “indifference” to politics and program. Here is the second reference:

What perspective flows from this analysis? What policies and concrete political initiatives must be implemented? The conclusion that you have drawn, as you informed Comrade Steve Long, is that the Marxist movement must “find a way to channel repressed libidinal drives in a progressive direction...”

No one is stopping either of you from devoting your time and energy to this mission. But the International Committee has no interest whatever in participating in this dubious and disoriented project. (136-137)

We will comment on the substance of North’s remarks on Reich in Chapter 10 of our reply to North, [Marxism Without its Head or its Heart](#). However it should be noted that whereas North quotes Steiner’s remark on Reich on two separate occasions, the remark itself plays a distinctly subordinate role in Steiner’s correspondence, serving primarily to illustrate the importance of Marcuse and not Reich. Yet North has little to say about Marcuse and completely fails to address Steiner’s discussion of Marcuse’s oeuvre.

Finally, North references the Steiner - Long correspondence a third time in his footnote 8. Here is the text:

*One especially unpleasant expression of your indifference to political analysis is the manner in which you are willing to excuse even the grossest blunders of your utopian heroes. When comrade Steve Long pointed out to you, Comrade Steiner, that Jacoby (the author of your beloved *The End of Utopia*) is writing as a proponent of a liberal revival, you merely shrugged your shoulders and replied: “Does that mean that we as Marxists are therefore entitled to ignore everything he writes beyond page 8 where he announces his intentions of reviving a form of radical liberalism?” Or in response to comrade Long’s reference to the unsavory political history of Herbert Marcuse and Theodor Adorno, you replied: “Yes, both Adorno and Marcuse were political opportunists who went along with the Moscow trials in the name of a ‘united front’ against fascism in the 1930s. Does that mean they had nothing relevant to say to us afterward?” Has it not occurred to you that the political swinishness of these individuals (and let us not forget to include Ernst Bloch, who greeted with rapture the murder of Old Bolsheviks), had something to do with their utopianism? Why should confidence be placed in the utopian conceptions of individuals who were incapable of making a correct appraisal of objective*

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reality, or even distinguishing truth from the noxious lies of the Stalinist regime? Would it be impolite to ask what method they employed when they considered political issues? Or perhaps their genius was of such a rarified and special character that it worked only in the future tense! (35-36)

*We have commented on this note at length in Chapter 9 of our reply to North, [Remarks on Bernstein, 'Neo-Utopianism' and Political Amalgams](#). (See the section titled **A Catechism of Approved Authors and the Use of the Political Amalgam**, pages 244-252.)*

By reproducing the Steiner – Long correspondence in its entirety we are letting the readers judge for themselves whether North's mocking sarcasm exhibits the talents of a comedic artist or that of a cynic desperate to divert attention away from his own theoretical and political degeneration.

The letter from Steve Long (published here in the appendix) was dated Jan. 22, 2003.

*Steiner's reply to Long, *Utopia and Revolution*, was dated May 28, 2003.*

Except for the correction of spelling and grammatical errors, both letters are reproduced unchanged. Explanatory footnotes have been added to Steiner's letter.

Alex Steiner

December 1, 2007

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Defining Utopia

In any discussion in which words have attached themselves to a history of polemics such as “utopia”, it is important to define our terms before we begin. There is a deliberate ambiguity introduced into this term by Thomas More from the beginning, where it is a play on the Latin for “good place” or “no place”.¹ In the history of Marxist polemics about utopia, the word becomes increasingly associated with impossible and unscientific dreaming whereas the sense of “good place” is forgotten. Hal Draper makes the following observation about its use in the history of Marxist polemics:

With this arsenal of meanings anyone can prove that anyone else is "utopian" in some sense and this game has been played out in countless books.²

This confusion over definition reflects a history in which the fortunes of utopian ideas have swung from one extreme to the other. This is particularly true within the Marxist movement. There is a big difference between Marx and Engels critique of the utopians and the attitude that matured in the Second International. I do not intend to go into an exposition of this history, but suffice it to say that the counterposition between Utopian and scientific socialism was a vulgarization of Marx’s view. (An excellent source for such a history can be found in the book, *Utopianism and Marxism* by Vincent Geoghegan.) It even involves a mistranslation of the title of Engels pamphlet on the subject. This is usually translated in English as “Socialism, Utopian and Scientific”, whereas the original title, *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft*, should read “The Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science” making clear the continuity between the two. Hal Draper points out in his *Adventures of the Communist Manifesto*, that Marx carefully distinguishes his assessment of the great utopians, Owen, Saint Simon and Fourier, from those of his followers. His criticism is aimed at the sterile sects of the followers of the great utopians, whereas he lavishes compliments on the critical character of the work of the utopians. Draper says, “few who write about Marx and the utopians realize the fact that he made a sharp differentiation.”[between the utopian theorists and the sects their followers spawned]. Draper also makes the point that in later years Marx and Engels regard for the utopians did not diminish but on the contrary increased. To cite just one example, in his *Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science*, Engels says that Fourier “uses the dialectic method in the same masterly way as his contemporary, Hegel.” And in the *Origin of the Family* he noted that he originally intended “to place the brilliant critique of civilization scattered through the works of Fourier by the side of Morgan’s and my own.”

¹ The reference is in error. The word is derived from Greek rather than Latin. It is a deliberately ambiguous word in Thomas More’s classic ‘Utopia’, pointing to either *outopia*, meaning “no place” or *eutopia*, meaning “good place”.

² *Adventures of the Communist Manifesto*, p. 300

The counterposition therefore between utopia – conceived of as fanciful and unrealizable dreams of a future society - to science, is a product of the Second International and its vulgarization of Marx and Engels. You are carrying on this unfortunate tradition when you say that “Nick has emphasized the basic axiom that Marxists do not propose a utopian alternative to capitalism”. Presumably you still agree that Marxists do propose some kind of “alternative” to capitalism. But if this alternative is not encompassed by that slippery word, “utopian”, then what kind of alternative is it? Doubtless you would reply that the alternative proposed is a “scientific” one or some such formulation. But such an argument only hangs together if you have defined “utopian” prior to the discussion as an unrealizable flight of fancy completely at odds with a scientific outlook. That is the only way your next sentence makes any sense, where you write, “Instead the general economic tendencies, which can only be fully realized under a socialist form of society, are already inherent in capitalism itself.” Now it is certainly a truism among Marxists that the development of capitalism provides the material possibility for the outbreak of socialism. This Marx and Engels argued against the utopian sects of their day who did not recognize – and indeed in many cases could not recognize – that it is present society that establishes the material basis for the future society. But Marx and Engels having done that, 150 years ago, does it then follow that all imaginings of a future society are thereby “unscientific”? Or to put it in the language in which you pose it, why does it follow that once one recognizes that the objective basis for socialism is being laid by the development of capitalism and the global world market as you indicate, that you cannot therefore “propose a socialist alternative to capitalism”? The only change my formulation makes from yours is that I substitute for the word “utopian” as a description of a future society, the word “socialist.” This change is necessary for two reasons: A future society that is described as socialist is determined more precisely than the broad term “utopian” as the latter encompasses all manner of visions of a future society, including some that are distinctly not socialist. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that virtually all the utopian visions of a future society from the 19th century had a definite socialist content and in most cases “socialism” and “utopia” were understood to be synonymous. A more fundamental reason for this substitution is that the word “utopian” has acquired the meaning of “unrealizable” in the usage handed down from the Second International. If we uncritically accept that usage of the term “utopian”, then of course there is no reason to have any discussion at all as it is clearly absurd to propose a future society which by definition is “unrealizable”.

Therefore, if we are to continue a discussion on the relationship of Marxism and utopia, I propose that we appropriate the useful distinction made by Ernst Bloch between “abstract utopia” and “concrete utopia.” By employing this distinction, Bloch retains the ambivalent nature of the concept of utopia contained in More’s play on the original, a duality that challenges the conventional view that sees an absolute dichotomy between “anticipatory dreaming” and “science”. There is a difference between “dreaming” and science, but the two are more properly seen as partners rather than as opponents. Bloch characterizes the distinction in the following terms:

Thus the only seemingly paradoxical concept of a concrete utopia would be appropriate here, that is of an anticipatory kind which by no means coincides with abstract utopian dreaminess, nor is directed by the immaturity of merely abstract

utopian socialism. The very power and truth of Marxism consist in the fact that it has driven the cloud in our dreams further forward, but has not extinguished the pillar of fire in those dreams, rather strengthened it with concreteness.³

In Bloch's terms therefore, when speaking of utopian ideas, we may mean either an "abstract utopia" which posits a goal for the future without any objective basis for its realization out of tendencies inherent in the present, or a "concrete utopia", whereby the realization of an envisioned future society is inseparable from conscious practical activity rooted in tendencies arising out of contradictions in contemporary class society. Marxism demonstrates the obsolescence of "abstract utopias" while it realizes the validity of "concrete utopias". At the same time there is no Chinese wall between abstract and concrete utopias. Further reflection shows that the "science" cannot arise without the "dreaming." We can, following Ernst Bloch among others, look at the fanciful dreams of yesterday as anticipations of the realizable goals of a future society fundamentally different than our own. This is just another way of saying that reason must be united with passion. Marx said something very similar when he insisted that revolution needs both the head (reason) and the heart (passion).

The emancipation of the German is the emancipation of man. The head of this emancipation is philosophy, its heart the proletariat. Philosophy cannot realize itself without the transcendence [*Aufhebung*] of the proletariat, and the proletariat cannot transcend itself without the realization [*Verwirklichung*] of philosophy.⁴

I think this is the nature of Marx's *Aufhebung*⁵ of utopian socialism.

A Brief Sketch of the Development of Utopianism out of the Spirit of Revolution:

You do not have to remind me "of the contributions by Marx and Engels", but perhaps you should take some time to do a study of the real history of the great utopians, Marx and Engels engagement with and critique of their views, and the transformation of Marx and Engels critique into a taboo against talk of a future society at the hands of the Second International.

The Utopians, Owen, Saint Simon, and Fourier, were not just aimless dreamers but were the direct descendants of the movements and ideas that germinated at the time of the two great bourgeois revolutions in history, the English and French Revolutions. Have you considered that there is a direct influence from these utopian thinkers to the movement proclaimed by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*?

³ *Principle of Hope*, Volume I, p. 146.

⁴ *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Introduction

⁵ This German word was used by Hegel and Marx to describe the dialectic when one form passes to another form in which the old is simultaneously cancelled, preserved and raised to a higher level.

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Marx and Engels probably took the slogan of "From each according to his ability to each according to his need." from Cabet. There is material here for a history of ideas that perhaps has never been done, whether by a Marxist or anyone else, although E. P. Thompson's book on William Blake touches on aspects of it.

All the great utopians of the 19th century seem to have a common inspiration in Rousseau's critique of the dehumanization that is the price of admission to modern (i.e. bourgeois) civilization. There is on the one hand a more or less direct line of descent from Rousseau to Saint Simon, as well as from Rousseau to Fourier and from Fourier to Marx. Another intellectual line of descent can be traced from Rousseau to Owen and from Owen to Cabet and from Cabet as well as Owen more directly to Engels.

A brief sketch of such a history: Saint Simon knew Rousseau and held a number of conversations with him. Although Fourier was an opponent of the French Revolution, it can be argued that his ideas were inconceivable without the impetus of the Revolution and the philosophy of Rousseau. Furthermore, Fourierism as a movement first becomes a significant force after a split among the Saint Simonians in which one of the parties turns away from Simonian doctrines and is won to Fourier. It is known that when Marx was collaborating with Arnold Ruge, they considered themselves Fourierists for a while.

Even better documented is the link from Owen to Cabet and Engels. It is known that Cabet was influenced by Owen during his exile in England. We also know that Engels held both Owen and Cabet in high esteem, and contributed to the Owenite press. Furthermore Rousseau's philosophy had an immense influence on enlightened thought in England, at least until the reaction set in against the French Revolution, when there was a backlash amid the "educated classes" in England against French culture and continental traditions as a whole. It is known that Rousseau's *Emile* had a profound effect on enlightened notions of the role of education in forming character. Owen's work is infused by the spirit of Rousseau on this point - who thought that to create a new society you have to create a new man by a process of education that will immunize the subject to the corruptions of modern civilization. It is in reply to Rousseau, as well as Owens as well as Feuerbach that Marx provides his devastating critique of materialism as it has been previously understood. He poses the question (In the Theses on Feuerbach) "Who will educate the educator?"

Finally, there is the issue of the role of the English and French revolution in the evolution of Utopian thought. There is a direct link between the Nonconformists of the 18th century and the radical traditions of the English Revolution - people such as Winstanley and the Diggers, or the Ranters, and later millenarian Christian sects such as the Quakers who in turn give rise to the Shakers who come to the U.S. and start their utopian communities. But Owen and the Chartists are likewise another spawn of the Non-Conformists. The radical traditions that came into their own during period of Cromwell's Commonwealth, and later suppressed, first by Cromwell and thereafter by the Restoration, were never eviscerated completely but sent into an underground existence. These later resurfaced and were given a tremendous boost by the example of the American Revolution and then the French Revolution. (See E.P. Thompson's book on

William Blake for an account of this genealogy.) The radical traditions of the Diggers and Levelers lived on in and took on a number of religious guises throughout the century or so when they could not directly express themselves politically. After the outbreak of the French Revolution the radical traditions of the English working class and rural laborers found a new outlet for this long-repressed tradition. It is out of this highly politicized atmosphere that Owenism and Chartism arise.

An even more compelling case can be made for the influence of the French Revolution on French Utopian thought. After the reaction of 1814 - not to mention that of the Directory and the Empire - the egalitarian traditions of the Jacobins and the even more radical Babeuvists⁶ were all but forgotten. Until 1830 that is. Around that time two important events occur. First comes the overthrow of the Bourbon monarchy. This opens up the political possibilities both in France and Germany - where there had been an extreme reaction following the Carlsbad decrees which forced Hegel for instance to keep quiet about his sympathy for progressive causes. There begins a return to the democratic ideals of the French Revolution. The literature of the Jacobins is once more read, for the first time in 2 generations. The other important thing that happens is the publication of Buonarrotti's history of the Conspiracy of Equals. Buonarrotti - a descendant of Michelangelo's brother - was a leader of the Babeuf conspiracy who was in exile for decades. He returns to France and publishes his memoirs which had an incredible effect. Prior to Buonarrotti's book, Babeuf's ideas were virtually eradicated from history. Following the publication of his book, the Icarians began to recruit in large numbers. It also influenced thinking across the Rhine. Edward Gans, Hegel's most important student, and Marx's teacher in Berlin, was one person who was doubtless influenced by Buonarrotti and later the Icarians. And these intellectual movements coincide with and nourish the emerging working class movements in France and Germany. Thus from 1830 till 1848 you get a period of tremendous intellectual and political turmoil without which neither the rise of Chartism in England, Utopian communities in the U.S., the left Hegelians in Germany and the radical working class movement in France would have been possible. All this comes to a head with the 1848 revolution and the *Communist Manifesto* which can be understood as the *Aufhebung* of the previous Utopian movements and much else.

It is also true that the setbacks faced by Owenism eventually turned it into a sterile cult. Yet it was still vigorous enough in 1842 to command the admiration of Friedrich Engels.

⁶ Followers of François-Noël Babeuf better known as Gracchus Babeuf, taking his name after the Roman orator and defender of the common people. His publication was called *Le Tribun du Peuple*, and advocated a radical egalitarianism long after the Revolution had turned against its radical wing. His group merged with the remnants of the most radical of the Jacobins and became a center of opposition to the reversal of such gains for the common people as bread subsidies. During the period of the Directory he was accused of being the leader of a 'Conspiracy of Equals' and planning an insurrection to establish a communist society (although the word itself was not used at that time.) Although The Conspiracy of Equals was drowned in blood and Babeuf and several associates were executed, it inspired future generations. Engels saw the Babeuvists as corresponding to the most radical elements of the English revolution a century earlier. In his *Condition of the Working Class in England*, he wrote that, "...the Presbyterians, Independents and Levellers correspond to the Gironde, the Montagnards and the Hébertists and Babeuvists." <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/condition-england/ch01.htm>

The followers of Fourier still had some influence among the working class during the revolution of 1848, but this proved to be their high water mark. From then on they became an increasingly irrelevant sect.

This sketch is just a suggestion for a history that is yet to be written. Elements of this history have been explored by E.P. Thompson in his book on William Blake⁷ and by Christopher Hill in his magnificent opus, *The World Turned Upside Down*. But it has yet to be brought together systematically. I may be wrong in some details here and there but I hope to suggest to you the complex web of cross-fertilization between the philosophes of the Enlightenment, the Romantic critique of the Enlightenment, radical political movements, millenarian religious sects as well as artistic and cultural trends. The great utopians of the 19th century emerge out of this fertile cauldron.

Marxism is ultimately the heir to this history of revolutionary struggle in which what has been called utopian thought played an absolutely critical role. From this history alone it should become apparent that utopianism cannot be discarded as a thing of the past which no longer has any relevance for us. If Marxism is the realization and development of utopianism then it is clear that what is living in utopianism is of the highest relevance to the Marxist movement. This is why I must take exception to your remarks when you write in such a patronizing tone about how “Marx and Engels had the greatest respect for the first great utopian socialists”, aping Dante’s praise for Moses and Plato, two figures from the ancient world for whom he had the “greatest respect” but because they had missed the historical moment of Christian salvation, would not be allowed to pass through the gates of heaven.

The Anti-Utopianism of Kautsky and the Second International

You then write that “the Marxist movement has always been confronted with the charge of utopianism,” as if no worse epithet is conceivable. Now it is indeed true that Marxists have been called “idle dreamers” and “impractical romantics” and this is often equated with being a “utopian”. Perhaps you should ask yourself what social forces are represented by the authors of these indictments. Is it not clear that behind the accusation of unrealistic and “utopian” there lurks the most conservative tendencies in society, social forces that cannot imagine a world other than one in which the law of value rules and social relations are truly such as described by Hobbes, a war of all against all? Of course when workers come forward with questions, we should patiently explain that Marxists are fighting for a new society, but one that is realizable because its preconditions are being created all around us through the development of the productive forces. But the critics of Marxism who proclaim that its goals are impossible to realize, i.e. they are “utopian” in your usage, are coming from a different direction altogether. They are saying what opponents of revolution always say – that there is no alternative to what exists! (This ideology even has an up-to-date acronym as I recently learned – TINA for There Is No Alternative.) What should be our reply to these charges? Should we in

⁷ The title of Thompson’s book is *Witness Against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law*.

effect accept the outlook of the anti-utopians, saying that, “Yes we agree that visions of utopia are foolish and possibly dangerous delusions. We are not utopians, but practical minded people like yourselves, except that we have some different ideas about where society is heading.” Or ought we to proclaim instead our solidarity with the great revolutionary movements of the past, the Diggers of the English Revolution, the Babeuvists of the French Revolution, the Communards of Paris and the Bolsheviks of the Russian Revolution?

You suggest rhetorically that when “we emphasise the utopian nature of our programme” we are thereby “making concessions to our political opponents”. I would suggest that when you accept the redefinition of utopia as an unrealizable empty dream, the definition that is imposed by our political opponents, it is you who are adapting to them. Even worse, you follow them when they invert the meaning of “utopia” into that of a “dystopia”. You cite Aldous Huxley’s dystopian novel *Brave New World* as an example of the accusation made by our opponents of “the supposed utopianism of the Marxist movement”. The transformation of the longing for utopia into the dystopian nightmare of dictatorship and concentration camps is part of the terrible heritage that we have inherited from Stalinism. One of the great cultural tasks of revolutionaries today is to recapture the optimism and revolutionary spirit that characterized the working class in 1917. It is inconceivable that this can be done if we begin by accepting the corruption of ideas that are reflected in the redefinition of utopia as dystopia. We must reject this noxious identification and proclaim to all the world that yes, we are utopians, in the sense that we imagine a new society of freely associated producers. Far from being an idle dream, the society that we imagine is actually realizable and is being made necessary by the development of the productive forces on a global scale. For all that there is nothing inevitable about this new society - it will take a conscious struggle and a theoretically armed leadership to bring it into being.

Furthermore, you misrepresent the difference between Lenin and Kautsky when you say that their conflict was ‘not fought over the issue of “for or against utopia”, or perhaps, which of the two dreamt more often or more vividly.’ What you fail to understand is that for Kautsky, as for the majority of the Second International, the polemics against “utopia” were but a veiled form of polemics against the socialist revolution itself. It took Eduard Bernstein to openly express this thought when he proclaimed that “the movement is everything, the final goal nothing”. Yet the depth of the anti-utopianism of the SPD leadership can be gauged in the fact that they referred to the coming socialist revolution as the great *Kladderadatsch*, “the great crashing mess”, hardly a term to inspire confidence in the future. Or as Alfred Doblin wrote, when the revolution finally came in November 1918,

In those revolutionary times the peculiar German form of social democracy felt much the same as the virgin with her baby; it didn’t know how it happened.⁸

Lenin recognized, as early as 1902, that this reformist, and ultimately anti-revolutionary strand, pervaded much of the leadership of the social democracy. Thus when Lenin cites

⁸ *A People Betrayed*, p. 55

Pisarev's comments and concludes by saying "Of this kind of dreaming there is unfortunately too little in our movement", he is in effect throwing down the gauntlet against those conservative forces in the Russian Social Democracy who are spiritual partners of the German SPD leaders and their dread of the great *Kladderadatsch*.⁹ Kautsky's embrace of ultra-imperialism¹⁰ would not come for more than a decade later. By that time Kautsky too had gone over completely to the perspective of the revisionist Bernstein. His anti-utopianism had evolved into an open opposition to the social revolution. It is thus incorrect on your part to separate the conflict over "utopia" from the differences over "conflicting assessments of the development of world capitalism". These are two sides of the same coin. It is furthermore a trivialization of Lenin's struggle in 1902 to characterize the conflict with Kautsky as to "which of the two dreamt more often or more vividly". Kautsky's problem was that he could not dream at all and this proved to be his Achilles heel. That is to say, despite his erudition and subjective commitment to socialism, he was organically incapable of adopting the standpoint of a revolutionary.

Jacoby's Critique of Contemporary anti-Utopianism

I cited Russell Jacoby's *The End of Utopia* as an example of a compelling critique of contemporary anti-utopian strands of thought. Your glibly dismiss Jacoby, pointing out that "his priority is the revival of a form of radical left politics which will in turn serve to revive liberal thought." Now it is indeed the case that Jacoby's motivation is the revival of a vigorous liberalism. Does that mean that we as Marxists are therefore obliged to ignore everything he writes beyond page 8 where he announces his intentions of reviving a form of radical liberalism? That appears to be your operative principle as you do not deal with any of the content of Jacoby's book. Yet there is a curious inconsistency here. In a recent article on the influence of Leo Strauss on certain right-wingers around the Bush Administration,¹¹ you make use of the analysis of the political theorist Shadia

⁹ Pisarev was a follower of the great Russian utopian novelist and revolutionary, Chernychevsky. Lenin favorably cites Pisarev's remarks about the need for imagination and dreaming against the deadly embrace of the 'practical' men within the Marxist movement of his day. The discussion is in *What is to be Done?*

¹⁰ Kautsky developed his theory of "ultra-imperialism" in his later years. He claimed that capitalism had entered a new phase whereby a few powerful states would be able to jointly cooperate and form cartels to peacefully divide up the world between them. Lenin justifiably criticized this theory, saying that Kautsky claimed that "the rule of finance capital lessens the unevenness and contradictions inherent in the world economy whereas in reality it increases them."

¹¹ *The ideological forebears of Washington's "neo-conservatives"*. 26 March, 2003.

<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2003/mar2003/stra-m26.shtml> This article includes the following endorsement of the usefulness of the work of the liberal theorist Shadia Drury:

In her book *Leo Strauss and the American Right*, Shadia B. Drury writes from the standpoint of a sceptical liberal attempting to breathe life into what was correctly termed, in a recent WSWs article, the "stinking corpse" of American liberalism. Despite the shortcomings of her book she includes some interesting passages on the ideas of Leo Strauss.

Drury whom you indicated has written some useful material despite her liberal political outlook.

I fully concur that Shadia Drury has written some useful political and cultural analysis. I have cited her myself (in my essay on Irony.) Yet for some reason when it comes to Jacoby, you discount engaging with his analysis because he is trying to revive liberalism.

Jacoby presents a compelling analysis of the roots of contemporary anti-utopianism. In an article reviewing Edward Bellamy's utopian novel *Looking Backward* on the occasion of its republication in the millennium year of 2000, Jacoby wrote,

Anti-utopianism continues to suffuse our culture. Conventional as well as scholarly opinion posits that utopia spells concentration camps and that utopians secretly dream of being prison guards. Robert Conquest, a leading chronicler of the Soviet terror, is lauded by Gertrude Himmelfarb for telling the truth about "totalitarianism and utopianism" in his latest book, *Reflections on a Ravaged Century*. And the final chapter of *The Soviet Tragedy*, by Martin Malia, another leading Soviet historian, is tellingly entitled, "The Perverse Logic of Utopia." Indeed, we now think of a utopian idealism as little more than a prelude to totalitarian murder. At best, an expression of utopian convictions will call forth a sneer from historians and social scientists. In the nineteenth century the anticipation of a future society of peace and equality was common; now it is almost extinct. Today few imagine that society can be fundamentally improved, and those who do are seen as at best deluded, at worst threatening.¹²

Jacoby correctly identifies the openly right wing roots of the contemporary attacks on utopianism. Yet he is perceptive enough to note that while right-wingers such as Conquest and Himmelfarb carry on their screeds, a more significant source of anti-utopianism today comes from former leftists and liberals of various stripes.

Inasmuch as anti-utopian scholars have come mainly from the left (anti-utopianism being perhaps self-evident on the right), they have been settling accounts with their own past and its utopian hope; hence their vehemence and lack of perspective. Books like "The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy" by J. L. Talmon or "The Road to Serfdom" by Friedrich Hayek target the utopian ideas that their authors had, in their youths, found appealing, and which they subsequently rejected. Karl Popper exemplifies the species... Isaiah Berlin expended much effort denouncing the presumptions of utopianism. As young people, Popper, Berlin and Arendt had dabbled in leftism...

The conscientious reader of Popper would have to conclude that the threat to a free society today comes from Plato and Hegel, as if these thinkers were ever much read or understood by people in power. French scholars have cranked out books on Hegel and Marx but have been notably reticent about French fascism or the Vichy period of collaboration with the Nazis. This scholarly approach has won the day. Educated opinion targets utopianism as the primal threat to civilization.

¹² Harper's Magazine, December 2000, *A Brave Old World: Looking Forward to a Nineteenth-century Utopia*.

One can update Jacoby's observations in relation to the turn anti-utopianism has taken since 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Utopian thought is today conflated not just with Plato and Hegel but is demonized in the same terms as Osama bin Laden and Sadaam Hussein. and regularly ascribed to Stalin and Hitler. At the root of this attack on utopianism is the notion, pioneered by Karl Popper, that "big ideas", i.e. systematic thought aimed at uncovering universal principles are not only misguided but downright dangerous. Instead we must be satisfied with limited, particular truths. This is a formula for getting by with the world as it is. Jacoby does an excellent job in exposing these schools of thought and showing their kinship to current trends in postmodernist-inspired cultural analysis. Thus he points to the influence of Clifford Geertz who has said,

There is no general story to be told, no synoptic picture to be had. It is necessary then, to be satisfied with swirls, confluxions, and inconstant connections; clouds dispersing.¹³

Jacoby's work shows that the roots of multiculturalism and other modes of false pluralism that are so fashionable among radical intellectuals, are rooted in an abandonment by these forces of any notion of a fundamentally different future for which we should strive.

In the following example Jacoby unmasks the pretensions of one academic champion of multi-culturalism:

An exponent of Native American studies denounces the educational imperialism of Eurocentric education. Native traditions "challenge, at root," the "dominant-subordinate construction" and the "social hegemony" of Euro-American superiority. Up to now Eurocentrism "marginalizes Ethnic Studies or American Indian Studies or Gender Studies," states M. Annette Jaimes Guerrero, a California professor. What must be done? Head for the hills? Blow up the mainstream institutions? Not exactly. "American Indian Studies will need to be able to stand on its own as a fully accredited discipline with departmental status and even with a broader institutional standing."

This is typically argued without losing a beat. Ethnic studies is marginalized; it threatens the core of Western domination. Conclusion? We want the Western overlords to give us more support and money. Once upon a time revolutionaries tried, or pretended to try, to make a revolution; they harbored a vision of a different world or society. Now dubbed radical multiculturalists, they apply for bigger offices.¹⁴

To be sure, Jacoby's work is not above criticism. But I would have thought that his extended reflections on the intimate connections between the abandonment of utopian ideals and the vacuousness of current radical intellectual currents – and their political impotence – would be a fruitful point of departure for a Marxist critique. In connection with this point, I think you missed a golden opportunity to demonstrate the intimate relationship between the anti-utopian animus and postmodern relativism in an exchange

¹³ *The End of Utopia*, p. 131.

¹⁴ *The End of Utopia*, p. 64.

you had with a sympathizer of postmodernism. Your correspondent, “MG”, makes the following interesting statement:

Postmodernism is not anti-modernism, since plurality was already propagated by modernism (cf. Max Weber: the “polytheism of values” as a characteristic of modernity), but it is concretely opposed to the striving for unity in philosophy and social utopias, which in this sense are “meta-discourses”.¹⁵

There you have it! The rejection of “social utopias” – which in this case is coupled with a rejection of “meta-discourses”, i.e. a coherent and universal theory of history, leaves us with a plea for “diversity” and little else. Although you did make some valid points against MG, you completely overlooked the kernel of his thought – the one statement that brings together the different strands of postmodernism and shows its intimate connection with a rejection of social revolution. Could this be connected with your having studiously avoided any engagement with Jacoby’s work? I think your patent rejection of Jacoby is an object lesson in how Marxists should **NOT** engage with the work of a non-Marxist.

Adorno, Marcuse and the New Left

As further justification of why we should ignore Jacoby, you then cite his intellectual indebtedness to the works of Adorno and Marcuse. You indict him for quoting Adorno, but you say nothing about the content of the quote itself, viz

The idea of utopia has disappeared completely from the conception of socialism. Thereby the apparatus, the how, the means of socialist society have taken over any possible content.

Given that Jacoby comes out of the tradition of the Frankfurt school it is not surprising that he should quote Adorno and Marcuse. Not knowing the context of Adorno’s remark it is hard to evaluate, but I find nothing wrong with the first sentence, which could read equally as an indictment of social democracy as well of Stalinism. The second part of the statement, with its implied adherence to the bastardized notion that the former Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (“socialist society”) were examples of “really existing socialism” is certainly problematic. Yet you seize on Jacoby’s utilization of this quote as if you have discovered the smoking gun behind a major crime. Likewise your reference to Jacoby’s positive reference to Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization*. Is a positive reference to *Eros and Civilization* proof of some ideological crime? You then provide a sketchy history of the Frankfurt School seeking to prove that its adherents were political opportunists who were guilty of disorienting the student movements of the 1960’s. Your history is however an eclectic combination of some historical truths combined with a series of oversimplifications. It is a jumble that confuses more that it illuminates. Yes, both Adorno and Marcuse were political opportunists who went along with the Moscow trials in the name of a “united front” against fascism in the 1930s. Does this mean that they had nothing relevant to say to us afterward. Furthermore, Adorno and

¹⁵ *An exchange with a reader on postmodernism*, 4 December, 2000.
<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2000/dec2000/post-d04.shtml>

Marcuse are not twins. There are profound differences between them that your account completely overlooks. In particular, I find it rather bizarre that you cite Adorno as any kind of proponent of utopianism. Adorno's best-known work, *The Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, co-authored with Max Horkheimer during their wartime exile in the U.S., is a distinctly anti-utopian tract imbued with a deep sense of pessimism about the possibility for realizing the utopian project. Indeed, *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* has not without some justification - although Adorno himself would doubtless have bristled at the connection - often been cited as the precursor to the bashing of the Enlightenment that is fashionable among postmodernists.

Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* is on the other hand a work infused with the utopian spirit. It is an attempt to complement Marxism with a radical critique of civilization derived from Freud that at the same time rejects the conservative conclusions drawn by its author. It was precisely the optimistic conclusions about the possibility for a radical transformation of society that made the book so popular. It became something of a founding document for the New Left movement in the 1960's. I don't propose an analysis of this book now, but it is clearly not a work that should be dismissed out of hand.

You seem to agree when you say,

All of the issues raised by Adorno and Marcuse – the sexual question, the role of the media, indeed the evocation of utopia, are important issues to be taken up and explored in our cultural work.

Fine, but where is the exploration of these issues? You have not attempted it, and I do not know where it has been done. Perhaps you should ponder the reasons behind this lack of critical analysis of these important works. These are not exactly the latest intellectual trends that we have simply not gotten around to examining. We are talking after all about books that were written almost half a century ago.

A further point to be made is that in talking about the work of Marcuse, it is particularly important to distinguish which period of his work you are referencing. There is a difference between Marcuse in *Reason and Revolution* with Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization* with Marcuse in *One Dimensional Man*. By the time he wrote *One Dimensional Man*, Marcuse had completely gone over to the perspective that the culture industry had precluded all normal attempts at oppositional political practice and that the objective basis for revolutionary transformation were all but irrelevant given the new mechanisms of cooptation developed in advanced consumer society. This assessment was used to justify a turn away from the working class – now hopelessly co-opted – and with it toward a politics of cultural subversion carried out by students and marginalized minorities. This political turn by Marcuse provided ideological fodder for the New Left and has been justifiably criticized as sowing the seeds for the eventual disillusionment with Left wing politics on the part of an entire generation.

The Marcuse of *Eros and Civilization* is not however the same as the Marcuse of *One-Dimensional Man*. To be sure, there are certain seeds or anticipations of Marcuse's position in *One Dimensional Man* in this earlier work (written in the mid 1950's in McCarthyite America). Marcuse himself points to these anticipations in a Preface he wrote for a new edition of the book in the 1960s. But by the time he wrote the Preface Marcuse had completely gone over to the politics he espoused in *One Dimensional Man*. There is however also a positive side to *Eros and Civilization*. There is in that work an exploration of a long neglected subject – the relationship of modes of sexual repression in its social form to the ability of the ruling class to maintain its hegemony. There is nothing in the main argument of *Eros and Civilization* that requires that we abandon the notion of the working class as the agent of revolutionary transformation. Nor are we required to abandon the political struggle in favor of a vaguely defined cultural practice. Marcuse does insist however that a political struggle that does not address fundamental cultural and psychological issues is ultimately sterile. He essentially makes the same point that Wilhelm Reich did in his *Mass Psychology of Fascism*, that if the Marxist movement does not find a way to channel repressed libidinal drives in a progressive direction, then fascism will utilize those same drives to bring us into an age of barbarism. I could say a great deal more on this subject but I think I have made my point. In discussing a complex thinker such as Marcuse, it is not very helpful to truncate his thought in the manner that you have.

Contemporary Radicalism and Utopianism

I was, I must admit, somewhat astonished to read your assessment of the contemporary state of radical politics. You write,

We are now in the midst of a renewed radicalization of young people and workers. Is our job to turn a blind eye to the rightwing turn by post-war intellectuals who ditched any adherence to historical materialism and confidence in the working class, in favour of a new “utopia”? Or should we rather emphasis the way in which globalised capital confirms and strengthens all of the basic tenets of Marxism, creating more and more difficulties for the ruling class and society as a whole, making a socialist reordering of the planet a more and more practical and urgent necessity for the working class.

My own reading of the contemporary radical scene is that it is entirely bereft of any notion of “utopia”. And if Russell Jacoby's analysis has any validity, then you can say the exact opposite – the position of contemporary radical politics is militantly anti-utopian. Rather than seeing themselves as fighting to bring about a fundamentally new society, today's radicals accept the parameters of bourgeois society and only insist that it become fairer. Instead of the overturn of private property, they proclaim their allegiance to “diversity”, instead of universal values, they talk about local issues. In this sense, the radical movements of today are very different than the radical movements of the 1960's. The radicalism of the 1960's was imbued with a utopian spirit. It was the last great

movement that one could characterize in that way. It had what I have previously referred to as the “heart” of the revolution. Its problem was that it was missing the “head”. The radical movements of the 1960s exhibited plenty of élan, but they were clueless theoretically and thus easily manipulated by the Stalinists and revisionists. These were movements completely cut off from Marxist philosophy and the history of the struggle of Trotskyism against Stalinism. The radical movements that we see today, for instance the anti-globalization movement, has neither a heart nor a head. These are timid movements typically united around a single issue and have little staying power. (I don’t know how you managed to find a utopian sect in Berlin that takes its inspiration from Adorno. I can assure you that there are no utopian sects in New York. Nor is it apparent what an “Adorno Left” might be. Adorno, as I have mentioned, was hardly a utopian. And during the radicalization of the 1960’s Adorno played a role very different than Marcuse. Adorno was more often than not the target of the New Left radicals rather than its inspiration. He was mocked as a representative of the old school of conservative German intelligentsia and radical feminists made a point of baring their breasts in his class.) That doesn’t mean that I write them off. A transformation of these movements is possible and the potential is there. It arises out of the objective crisis of capitalism.

In criticizing the politics that animated the students in the 1960s, you conflate the rejection of the working class with the utopian cast of its vision. You don’t so much argue the case as assume it. This is, as I have tried to explain, an untenable position. There was much to criticize about the politics of radicalized students in the 1960’s, but surely the fact that they were animated by a vision of a future society is not one of them. What is needed today is a radicalization that renews that utopian instinct, but is at the same time oriented toward the working class as the agent of change and imbued with Marxist theory. This will require a struggle on many fronts – on the political front certainly, but also in the realm of social psychology, in the arts, in philosophy, in history, and basically all areas of contemporary culture. But how will that ever come about if Marxists who are called upon to provide leadership to the coming radicalization, are afraid of imagining the future society whose midwives they are?

Appendix: Letter from Steve Long to Alex Steiner

Dear Alex,

sorry for the long delay in replying to your last mail, I was in GB for a time visiting relatives. Thank you for the book tips. I got hold of “Nietzsche and Soviet Culture” by Bernice Rosenthal, a collection of very speculative essays (claiming Lenin was influenced by Nietzsche, as well as Stalin), which is typical of a very tendentious trend in Soviet historical research. I will look out for the other books you mentioned.

I wanted in particular to take up the points you raised in your last mail about the concept of utopia which you say must become the “touchstone for any truly revolutionary view of politics and culture”. In this connection you go on to refer to points made in articles by Nick Beams and criticise a number of the statements he makes. I must say I do not agree with the issues you raise.

I have looked again at the articles by NB. He makes a reference to a utopian perspective in part 3 of a series of lectures/articles on the significance of the Marxist analysis of globalisation (7 June 2000). Towards the end of the third part Nick writes: “If capitalism had been able, over the course of the last 100 years, to ensure the harmonious development of the productive forces and ensure the social, economic and cultural advancement of the broad masses of the world's people, then we would have to say that the prospect of international socialism remained a utopian perspective, unable to be realised.”

In “An Exchange on Socialist Planning” (4 March 2000) Nicks replies to a readers comment: “Let me say that it is not a question of me or anyone else setting out some kind of blueprint for a socialist society which would then be put into practice...” In the same article Nick emphasises the necessity of the broadest democratic participation in socialist economic planning. This democratic planning of the economy will, in and of itself, throw up entirely original methods and principles for the resolution of economic and social questions.

In his contributions on economics Nick has emphasised the basic axiom that Marxists do not propose a utopian alternative to capitalism. Instead the general economic tendencies, which can only be fully realised under a socialist form of society, are already inherent in capitalism itself. Indeed the globalisation of the forms of production is in essence a profoundly progressive development which is stymied and frustrated at every turn by economic relations based on private property and the drive to profit compounded by political relations based on nation states which have long since outlived any progressive function.

In addition NB has dwelt at length on the political significance of the Russian Revolution and made clear that Stalin's programme of “socialism in one country” has nothing in

common with the international conceptions of Bolshevism which inspired the Soviet take-over of power in 1917.

The Marxist movement has always sought to distinguish its conceptions from those of the utopian socialists. I do not have to remind you of the contributions by Marx and Engels who warned of the danger arising from the standpoint of the classical utopian socialists - Owen, Fourier and Saint Simon - i.e. a “kind of eclectic, average socialism” a “mish-mash” which denies the role of the working class as the only material force for the realisation of a new progressive society. At the same time Marx and Engels had the greatest respect for the first great utopian socialists. The problem lay not so much in their subjective failure to come to grips with social processes, but rather that society itself had not progressed to a point where these social mechanisms could be clearly identified.

Throughout its history the Marxist movement has always been confronted with the charge of utopianism. Prior to the Russian revolution many opponents of Marxism claimed that Marx’s ideas were interesting but utopian and could not be transformed into practice. The taking of power by the working class under a Marxist leadership in Russia silenced such critics for a while until the rise of Stalinism enabled them to re-warm their arguments and demonstrate the supposed utopianism of the Marxist movement’s struggle for social progress. I recently reread Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, written in 1932, which features the characters Lenin and Trotsky, and is devoted to precisely this theme

The issue is still relevant. After the excesses of the recent *Black Book* school of historical falsification, which sought to lay all of the problems of mankind at the feet of the Marxist movement, some bourgeois critics are undertaking a somewhat more measured, but hardly new approach. In the latest edition of *The Economist* magazine an essay takes up the legacy of Marx. The author is confounded by the fact that in 1999 the British BBC ran a poll to find the “Greatest Man of the Millennium”. The result, he records, for the peoples choice as the greatest thinker of the last thousand years was Karl Marx, followed by Einstein and Newton. Yes, Marx was right on a few issues, the author is then forced to concede, but after all what he was putting forward was merely a utopia - a form of religion with its own disciples.

In your memo you write of Kautsky and Lenin and refer to the “anti-utopianism” of Kautsky and social democracy as opposed to Lenin’s evocation of “dreams” in *What is to be Done*. I find the quote by Lenin to be highly instructive and cautionary on the necessity of imagination and fantasy on the part of revolutionaries. After all we have all pledged our lives to the realisation of certain ideals and principles, but the conflict between Lenin and Kautsky was not fought out over the issue of “for or against utopia”, or perhaps, which of the two dreamt more often or more vividly. The differences between Lenin and Kautsky concerned their conflicting assessments of the development of world capitalism and in particular Kautsky’s (and Bernstein’s) interpretation of the possibilities of reforming capitalism (super-imperialism)

In the midst of the most profound crisis of capitalism since the ravages of the 30’s and 40’s of the last century, why should we now drop our guard and make concessions to our

political opponents this point? Instead of an analysis of the revolutionary crisis of capitalism, the implications of globalisation, the historical consequences of the betrayal of Stalinism you propose we emphasise the utopian nature of our programme? New advocates of utopianism have little excuse. At least since the second half of the nineteenth century no proponents of utopianism could not fall back on the defence that social conditions had not developed sufficiently for socialism.

The End of Utopia by Russell Jacoby

In your advocacy of the centrality of the concept of utopianism you refer to *The End of Utopia* by Russell Jacoby. As I pointed out in my last mail Jacoby has the virtue of at least being honest about his standpoint. He makes absolutely clear that his priority is the revival of a form of radical left politics which will in turn serve to revive liberal thought.

He makes precisely this point on a number of occasions in the first chapter of his book, for example: “The defeat of radicalism bleeds liberalism of its vitality.” (page 8) or again: “The problem is, this liberalism has turned vapid because a left that kept it honest has disappeared or turned liberal or both. A left constituted the liberal backbone; as the left vaporised, the backbone went soft.” (page 17)

I repeat Jacoby’s advocacy of utopia as the central issue for a renewed left radical politics is aimed at the revival of American liberalism. In his book he goes on to criticise the way in which radical lefts and intellectuals at the universities have become part of the political mainstream. He then writes later in his book: “The fate of a utopian vision is bound up with the fate of intellectuals, for if utopia ever found a home, it was among the independent thinkers and coffee house patrons. To the degree these no longer exist the utopian vision flags”.... (page 103).

So there we have it - instead of the institutionalised intelligentsia, Jacoby proposes a return to “coffee house” socialism – or as Marx and Engels put it “an eclectic, average socialism”, a mish-mash. This is neither an exactly new nor inspiring perspective.

Adorno and Marcuse

Jacoby goes on to refer to the intellectual forbears for his advocacy of utopianism. On page 25 he approvingly quotes Theodor Adorno: “The idea of utopia has disappeared completely from the conception of socialism. Thereby the apparatus, the how, the means of socialist society have taken over any possible content.” And later in his book Jacoby uncritically quotes Herbert Marcuse and refers positively to the latter’s *Eros and Civilisation*.

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Now the clarification of the role played by Adorno and Marcuse is bound up with an analysis of the role played in post-war thought and political development by members of the so-called Frankfurt School. This is not possible within the frame of a memo but it is no coincidence, in my opinion, that Jacoby enthusiastically takes up the standpoints of these two thinkers.

Although both intellectuals were initially sympathetic to the Russian Revolution and Marxist theory both reacted to the combined rise of Stalinism and Fascism by rejecting the working class as a force for social change, as well as increasingly severing themselves from the basic historical materialist tenet of Marxism, i.e. that the driving force for social and political change is the contradiction between the development of the forces of production and the specific forms of social organisation.

In the thirties leading members of the Frankfurt School rejected Trotsky's analysis of the nature of the Soviet Union under Stalin. Long before Burnham and Shachtman, the economics expert of the Frankfurt School, Friedrich Pollack, designated the development in the Soviet Union to be of a state capitalist nature. In the mid-thirties, and bound up with their conception of anti-fascism, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and others remained silent on the purges of Trotskyists and intellectuals in the Soviet Union.

After the war leading members of the Frankfurt group, with Adorno and Marcuse to the fore, declared that it was not economics and the material development of society which were of primary importance, but other factors instead – control of the media, the suppression of libido, and the denial of utopia. It was such social and psychological phenomena which, according to Adorno and Marcuse, were of overriding significance in permanently disabling the working class as a force for change.

All of the issues raised by Adorno and Marcuse - the sexual question, the role of the media, indeed the evocation of utopia, are important issues to be taken up and explored in our work - particularly in our cultural work. I am well aware of the battle cry of the Surrealists who declared that "a map of the world which does not feature utopia is not worth the paper it is printed on". Nevertheless in our debates and discussion with artists who, with their own sensual mechanisms and tools, approach the world in a different way to ourselves, we must insist on the significance of a historical materialist world outlook as the key to understanding and transforming reality – also in the form of artistic creation.

The shift away from Marxist politics and the denial of the potential of the working class as an agent for change by such figures as Adorno and Marcuse was a significant factor in disorientating broad layers of young people and workers caught up in the political radicalisation which took place in the US and America in the sixties. In particular, Herbert Marcuse was able to address large meetings at the Free University in Berlin and sow enormous confusion with his support for petit bourgeois radical politics and advocacy of radical students as the only real force for change.

(It is worth noting that much of what is described as the contemporary "Adorno left" in Germany – i.e., the magazines *Jungle World* and *konkret* - now support an American

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invasion of Iraq. Their support for the US is bound up with their uncritical position towards Israel and rejection of the working class in Germany and America).

We are now in the midst of a renewed radicalisation of young people and workers. Is our job to turn a blind eye to the rightwing turn by post-war intellectuals who ditched any adherence to historical materialism and confidence in the working class, in favour of a new “utopia”? Or should we rather emphasis the way in which globalised capital confirms and strengthens all of the basic tenets of Marxism, creating more and more difficulties for the ruling class and society as a whole, making a socialist reordering of the planet a more and more practical and urgent necessity for the working class.

At the same time, it seems to me, we must continue to deepen our work to demonstrate the significance of the events of the nineteen-thirties where under the combined pressure of Stalinism and Fascism a whole generation of intellectuals ditched their initial adherence to Marxism, reconciled themselves over time to the apparent impregnable strength of imperialism, and played a significant and largely negative role in post-war politics and ideological debate.

Alex, my answer is rather more drawn out than I originally planned but I would be interested in your opinion.

Best wishes, Steve