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A Critique of Marxism-Leninism as Theory and Praxis

Carol Pearce

A systematic reconsideration of Marxism in theory and practice reveals the inadequacy, indeed the unacceptability, as far as democratic socialists are concerned of Marxism-Leninism. This article is, in essence, a critique of Marxism-Leninism and a plea for a less doctrinaire approach to both theory and practice. The point, is not simply that Leninism flies in the face of all that makes marxism desirable, nor simply that Leninism is immoral (as if this were not enough). It is that, although Leninism may be one of the logical consequences of Marxism, it contradicts the Marxist premise and the point of Marx's own work. This may lead us to ask whether Marx's texts display the required internal coherence for a scientific theory. It also considers the approaches within the Marxist-Leninist traditions which can be identified as deterministic Marxism and voluntarist Marxism neither of which is theoretically or ethically satisfactory. The general argument is related to Marxism and Marxism-Leninism in Africa.

Introduction

I am speaking of a ruthless criticism of everything existing, ruthless in two senses: the criticism must not be afraid of its own conclusions, nor of conflict with the powers that be.

Marx's theory of history, in its broad outline, is a theory of transcendence. The process of change involves the development of new stages out of earlier ones, each earlier stage containing the seeds of the new society which will emerge from and transcend it.

The final stage of development is the highest in which the greatest degree of human productive forces is released and history as we know it comes to an end. The end of history brings about the simultaneous fruition of the possibilities of social organisation and individual human creative talents: the two are interdependent. The central puzzle for marxist activists, then, is to understand the relationship between this 'end of history' and their own role in actively attempting to bring it about.

Agency and False Consciousness

There is a general problem about action and 'consciousness'. It is traditional to

believe that human actions are causally related to prior beliefs and that it is this conscious or cognitive aspect of agency which distinguishes rational from irrational action. In order, therefore, for people to act in certain ways, they must believe certain things. No satisfactory answer has been found as to how the relationship between the cognitive and the purely physical aspect of agency can be conceptualized. This problem exists for all theorists *of* agency. But Marxist theory adds a more complex twist. Marx says that 'all thought is a product of and reflects the social conditions of one's class position; that is, it has a social and material base' (Marx in Tucher 1978:13).

When (as in 'past history'), these social relationships are distorted our notions about social relations and humanity in general are similarly distorted. For example, it is during the division of labour when social activities are *fixed* and consolidated, that we experience a 'contradiction' between our own individual interest and the interest of the community. This contradiction is real in one sense, because it captures current empirical reality. But it is ultimately false *if* we believe that there is always a conflict between the individual and the group's interest (Marx 1976:49-50).

The social basis of all thought gives rise to the theory of false consciousness. In ordinary, everyday action, we may hold false beliefs about our own interests and may be deluded into acting on these beliefs or illusory desires. But the problem of false consciousness is particularly acute for Marxists. It is an essential part of the theory itself that, in all past history, social thinking in general is necessarily false. In Marxism, consciousness is a product of social relationships and institutional arrangements themselves. Our thoughts and beliefs reflect, pattern or copy those arrangements (Elster 1985:468-76). As my beliefs are a product of my social - and my class - situation, then my (individual) interests reflect of my class interests. Any actions I take to further my interests will advance those class interests.

However, just as the economic mode of production is controlled by the owners of production, for Marxists, so are the 'ideological' products controlled by the ruling classes. The beliefs we hold that justify institutions such as the class, the educational and the legal system and the existence of the armed forces positively support the status quo. The ruling class does not rule merely by force: it rules because those beliefs which further its rule are distributed throughout all social classes. To hold such beliefs is unwittingly to maintain these social relationships. Even the working class has social beliefs (which stimulate or retard actions) that are more likely to reflect the interests of the ruling class than its own. This aspect of Marxist theory is very handy, since it helps to explain all kinds of historical phenomena, including factory, rather than class, consciousness; the existence of a conservative working class; working-class nationalism instead of internationalist; reformist, rather than radical, trade unions and the fact that the working classes have not achieved an anti-capitalist revolution, either nationally or internationally.

Consciousness & Change: the Revolutionary Proletariat

There is a difference between the belief that revolutionary change can be imposed upon the people from above and the belief that change can and must be brought about by the people themselves who, desiring and willing change, take steps to effect it. In the latter case the willing and the acts intended to bring about change are produced by the same persons. There are good general psychological reasons why change should be effected by the very people who stand to benefit from it. Agents are less likely, for example, to be misled about their own interests than others and are also less likely to demand change that serves the interests of others.

In Marxist theory the necessary unity between the agents of revolutionary change and the interests which are fulfilled by such action is even more tightly drawn. Mankind as a whole is the author and agent, the subject of history. The object of historical change is also mankind: but a perfected mankind which recognises and realises its own species-being - its human, social, potential. For Marx, the subject of history is mankind - not something abstracted from human agency, such as the Hegelian 'spirit', or the Christian 'God' and not self-perpetuating social forces. One of the conditions of revolutionary change is that people are intellectually and emotionally prepared for and in harmony with the technological, cultural and economic implications of revolution. This means that the people must be more than the mere objects of revolutionary change: they must themselves be agents of transformation. Marx recognized that to act correctly we have to be able correctly to perceive reality. The 'reform of consciousness' is therefore indicated (Marx in Tucher 1978:15).

The transcendence of 'past history' involves the transcendence of the division of labour and all it implies. In particular, the final revolution brings about the end of a situation where people are merely the objects of others' actions, instruments used by others to achieve their goals. The end of history marks the end of human disunity, of the opposition between people and the fragmentation of persons within themselves. This can come about only when people cease to see themselves, or others, as the passive objects of history, or as the instruments of other peoples' desires.

The importance of the proletariat now becomes clear. As a universal class, it is universally oppressed and therefore has a common, objective interest in change. It is a universal class because it is the last and largest group to be brought into being and socialized into a common relation in the division of labour. There can be no other group, according to Marx, more numerous, more united in oppression and more 'modern' than the proletariat. More importantly, *it is* a universal class because it has the role of overthrowing capitalism and thus bringing about a classless (a universal) society. Its universality lies in the fact that both its actual fate and the inevitable result of its future actions will be to bring about a universally united mankind - to fulfil, that is, to actualize the human species being. This cannot be done on its behalf by a third party, for what is required is a coincidence of the objective social conditions with the

subjectively-felt needs of the proletariat which will engender the revolution, bringing together humanity as the subject and object of history. Institutions cannot be transformed until humans are transformed, and vice versa. The process of change takes in everything, for all are interdependent.

There are problems with this model of agency. It would be useful If we could simply say, 'the people want this, they know they want it and they know how to bring it about'. But it is not always rational to do this; for it is well known that a group, just like any individual agent, may be tricked or bribed into action and that its demands do not necessarily reflect its actual wants. Even worse, people's perceived needs may not reflect their actual, true, interests. The people's subjectively-felt needs may not coincide with their objectively true wants. Such is the problem of populism. Since not everything that people want is good for them, their actions may not always be rational. But Marx's theory demands that the larger course of historical change be rational.

Consciousness & Change: the Revolutionary Party

In the case of change imposed from above - from the government, for example - the converse problem emerges. How can we trust a government to know what is in the people's best interests, to will what is in the people's best interest and to attempt to bring about the conditions for fulfilling those interests? No-one has greater reason to be suspicious of governments, whether they call themselves revolutionary or not, than a Marxist. For there to be a State at all - for there to be instruments of force in the hands of a few, for governments to be able to enact laws which the people must obey, for the de-politicisation of civil society, a division must exist between the rulers and the ruled. This is a political division, based on an unequal distribution of power in which the interests of the ruling class are, at the most minimal, to promote the status quo. It is also, according to Marx, an economic division, for political power needs economic support. State power can be maintained only against the interests of the working class.

For these reasons, the Marxist theorist is faced with two questions: how, if at all, the universal working class can perform its revolutionary role, and how to understand its failure to do so. Before I discuss the orthodox solution, however, it is necessary to consider the beliefs justifying the socialist revolution itself. I am not concerned here with the social class origin of socialist belief, but with the reasons why it is so compelling.

The Desirability of Socialism: Bourgeois Liberties

If socialism means anything, it must mean that the proletariat, in acting on its own immediate interests but in the long-term interests of humanity, rises against bourgeois democracy in order to smash the relations upon which bourgeois society rests but also to transcend by enlarging those aspects of bourgeois society which set it above feudalism, primitive accumulation and slavery.

Socialism must replace and destroy bourgeois society without returning to a situation where the group exercises total control on the productive and creative life of the individual. Marx conceived socialism as a state in which the liberties and values which had developed over the generations (freedom of speech) would not only continue to obtain but have, for the first time, real significance. The fact that in capitalist societies such freedoms are exercised only on behalf of capital does not entail that they can somehow be superseded under socialism. In criticizing these capitalist 'freedoms' Marx says:

> *thus man was not liberated from religion: he received religious liberty. He was not liberated from property: he received the liberty to own property. He was not liberated from the egoism of business; he received the liberty to engage in business (Marx in Tucher 1978:45).*

But religious liberty, the liberty to own property and to engaged in business are, all the same, liberties of a sort and to be preferred to religious intolerance and landlessness. Marx continues:

> *Human emancipation will only be complete when the real, individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when, as an individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a 'species being'; and when he has recognised and organised his own powers as 'social powers' so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as 'political power' (Marx in Tucher 1978:46).*

This is the final stage of liberation: social nature must not blind us to the fact that the point of the analysis is that liberation is desirable. Rosa Luxemburg believed that, although democratic institutions were not perfect, to abolish them would be much worse, as this would paralyse the political life of the masses. Socialism is not and cannot be the perfection of the subordination of the individual to the social whole. It is the Leninist version of Marxism which propagated this belief and perfected the instrument for achieving it.

The Desirability of Socialism: Human Perfectibility

The attraction of Marxism rests on its claim to show the inevitability and desirability of human potential and development. Its inevitability is guaranteed by the theory of history which purports to have uncovered the laws leading societies from one form of development into other, higher forms. Its desirability lies in its demonstration that in each higher form of social organization, human beings increasingly discover or actualize themselves and their true nature. Self-discovery entails the recovery of humanity's truly social nature.

The freedom of the individual to express their own tastes and personality, explore her own interests, and thus develop her human potential is a central goal of Marxist theory. Under socialism, human beings are emancipated from false consciousness and from delusions about their true nature as well as from socially-derived beliefs which conceal this truth. They are in harmony with themselves. This entails they are in harmony with others and with the social institutions, for it is characteristic of humans that they are social producers.

Marx criticizes capitalism, not because it is inegalitarian but because of its divisive and dehumanizing characteristics, from which inequality flow. He remarks contemptuously:

> *'Equality' is nothing but a translation of the German 'ich = ich' into the French, political form. Equality as the 'groundwork' of communism is its 'political' justification, and it is the same when the German justifies it by conceiving man as 'universal self-consciousness' (Marx in Tucher 1978:99).*

To understand Marx's critique of capitalism it is necessary to comprehend that it was the dehumanisation of capitalism which originally appalled him. Under capitalism, the human being is alienated from his/her true nature. The fruits of human labour are alienated from her/him both during the work process and afterwards, for they become the property of the capitalist. They stand above and beyond the labourer as commodities, just as the labour power which is sold in unequal return for a wage becomes an alienated commodity. The labourer is alienated from others and from the productive process. Alienation means that what belongs to a person is taken away - leaving impoverishment. Humans are stripped of humanity. It is this which is wrong with capitalism.

Inevitability - Version I: Deterministic Marxism

Let us examine historical materialism as a deterministic scientific theory without any of the 'voluntarist' elements which scientific socialists, from Kautsky onwards, were to discover in Marxism. I shall deal here only with the broad outline of the theory since it is well enough known not to need detailed exposition. Historical materialism offers a theory of history as the unfolding of iron laws generated in the 'economic' base of a mode of production. Contradictions in this base lead to conflicts in the social relations of production which, themselves, lead to intolerable social stress (pauperization and polarization) ending in revolution. Consciousness, in this model, has a direct and simple causal relationship with material conditions. As material conditions change, human consciousness spontaneously ignites. The revolutionary group establishes a new form of society based on its own interests which absorbs all the developments of the previous form, so that each new mode of society is higher than the last.

This process happens throughout history, gradually drawing together more and more individuals into productive relations at once cooperative in form and conflictful in nature. At the end of history there is a world revolution during which people realise themselves as social beings at the same time as they realise the social institutions which permit and express the power and creative energy of cooperative nature. All other forms of institution which rely upon conflict and the control of one set of humans by another are destroyed as their material base disappears.

In this scenario the final revolution cannot be hastened, for its development can happen only when the seeds for the destruction of capitalism are ripe. It is

only history itself which can show us, retrospectively, when that time has come. Human agents have little conscious role to play in hastening or initiating the revolution because any revolution brought into being before its time will either wither or become incorporated into capitalism. The iron laws of necessity determine the development of material conditions.

In every revolution human needs and interests area also transformed. During 'past history' oppressed groups fight for reforms or adjustments within the existing framework and under the current laws. They seek their own interests and it is only those interests which are met in the new order. In the communist revolution, however, the workers become conscious of their historic role as a universal class and their subjectively-felt needs coincide for the first time with objectively-true necessities: necessities which are true for all people, not just for the proletariat. The development of true consciousness, and the shattering of false consciousness are, however, events determined by the development of social and economic forces rather than the result of spontaneous reasoning or original thought. It is important to emphasise that in this scenario no amount of activity by revolutionary vanguards, by political parties, by charismatic leaders or by the workers themselves can either hasten the revolution or, indeed, deflect it from its path.

What is wrong with Determinism?

In this version we are spared the political manoeuvering of a Lenin or Stalin, or a vanguard Communist Party. We see Marxism as a theory of history which is, on the one hand, unattractively determinist, but as attractively non-coercive, on the other. Deterministic Marxism, however, is theoretically unsound. It lacks crucial elements of full-blown Marxism, the distinction between true and false consciousness. This distinction cannot do any work, for it is irrelevant to a determinist whether people know the truth or not. When the time is ripe, consciousness mechanically coincides with the objectively true and necessary conditions for the fulfilment of history. This is, quite simply, bad sociology. Our experience shows that mind is not linked to material conditions in this fashion: if it were, prediction would be a sociological possibility, and it is not. In moral terms, determinism forbids the allocation of responsibility for actions, since the agent is a chain in a series of causal events which he/she does not generate. It is incredible that Marx's critique of the inhumanity of capitalism could generate a theory of a historical process which simply omits humans as conscious agents of change.

The most obvious practical advantage of this form of Marxism however, is that, as an impoverished theory of the relationship between consciousness and action, it paradoxically allows us to respect and cherish the actual, concrete consciousness of actual, living human beings in both moral and in analytical terms. This respect for concretely existing individuals cannot be though of as a 'bourgeois' addition to Marxism for it is centrally in keeping with the general Marxist critique of capital and methodology.

[we set] out from real, active men, on the basis of their real life process demonstrating the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process . . . This method is not devoid of premises . . . its premises are men, not in any fantastic isolation and rigidity, but in their actual empirically perceptible process of development (Marx 1976).

It also conforms to the Marxist approach to sociology and history in which individuals must be respected in their own right as agents subjected to social and historical forces.

Inevitability - Version II: Voluntarist Marxism

One paradox of determinist Marxism then is that it protects the (flawed but authentic) subjectivity of the proletariat against the interests of any third party - by definition, determinists have no interest in consciousness. Leninist instrumentalism and utilitarianism - while also producing a theory in which proletarian consciousness is the central concern. For Lenin, the very subject and object of history, the very beneficiary of eons of historical development - the proletariat, must be treated as the tool of history and the instrument of the Party. Leninism is predicated upon the belief that action requires consciousness and that if the 'right' agents will not take necessary action, they must be manipulated - for force. In moral terms, then, instrumentalist Marxism is the obverse of determinist Marxism. Leninism utilizes the two-tier theory of true and false consciousness to legitimate the use of all humanity as instruments for the development and protection of state power.

In Leninism, creative agency is the prerogative of the Party. The Party is the revolutionary vanguard acting on behalf of an ignorant proletariat. Only Party and the State are truly revolutionary because only they have a clear grasp of the scientific theory of history (Marxism-Leninism). In Leninism, the proletariat is the instrument of the struggle, rather than the agent or goal of transformation. Whatever forms of social organisation it evolves that do not correspond with received Party doctrine can be ruthlessly overturned and replaced.

It is hard to understand, of Leninism, why Marxism actually needs a working class at all, since it appears that the only thing standing between the world and socialism is the comparatively small size of the Party, which makes it difficult for it to seize and maintain force. For Lenin a spontaneous working-class uprising could not initiate revolution, for the working-class character is indelibly bourgeois. According to Lenin there are only two kinds of thinking: socialist and bourgeois. Workers do not necessarily possess socialist consciousness (for to do so is to be armed with the correct theory). They must then possess bourgeois consciousness; Kolakowski comments:

This is supplemented by a second inference: the working-class movement in the true sense of the term, a political revolutionary movement, is defined not by being a movement of workers but by possessing the right ideology, the Marxist one, which is 'proletarian' by definition. In other words, the class composition of a revolutionary party has no significance in determining its class character (1978, 387-90).

Leninism is best understood as a species of instrumental and utilitarian thought, where the immediate and long-term needs and interests of living people are subordinated to the supposed future interests of humanity. Leninism, seen in this light, is merely another ideology of control: one which has a strongly Durkeimian and functionalist character. There is no substantial difference between the aims of Durkeim as social reformer and Lenin as revolutionary in this respect, except, of course, that for Lenin all and every means to achieve this goal is permissible, while for Durkheim the means of achieving social control is rather more innocuous.

Lenin's solution to alienation is to destroy from above the existing order, including the proletariat, all morality and all bourgeois liberties. His very real admiration for capitalism is restricted to its efficiency, the work discipline of labour, particularly Taylorism, as a method of increasing productivity, its order and organisation.

> *Socialism is inconceivable without large-scale capitalist engineering based on the latest discoveries of modern science. It is inconceivable without planned state organisation which keeps tens of millions of people to the strictest observance of a unified standard in production and distribution (Lenin 1968:19).*

Capitalism is seen in purely utilitarian terms as a solution to under-productivity. It can thus be emulated by socialists desiring economic development. Socialist state capitalism is preferable to ordinary state capitalism only because, according to Lenin, the former represents the dictatorship of the proletariat. But, as we have already seen, this does not mean the real dictatorship of the real proletariat, but the dictatorship of the Party acting in the (supposed) interests of the proletariat.

While instrumentalism does not necessarily lead to these authoritarian conclusions, the possibility always exist that it will, unless restrictions are placed on Marxism-Leninism to prevent the immorality and the glorification of State brutality and violence that Leninism permits. One such restraint might emerge from recognising the initially moral character of Marxism, with a commitment to people as ends in themselves rather than as means to a further end. Another might be to see that Marx's critique of capitalism also appeals (covertly) to a notion of the psychological damage to human nature inflicted by capitalism. The terms 'alienation', 'oppression', 'exploitation', after all, refer to the actual psychic damage suffered by real individuals as a result of inhuman social arrangements. A third might be to assert that Marxism-Leninism, although claiming to be scientific, is not. This could lead us to examine other developments of Marx's own thought, like the Luxemburg variant, which has impeccable credentials but lacks the catastrophic consequences of Marxism-Leninism.

Yet another strategy could take the form of carefully limiting the holist framework within which the Marxist system takes shape. Marx's view is usually interpreted as implying that, as the individual is embedded in (and is thus the product of) social relationships, it is justifiable to protect the social whole (the

State, the Party), in its present and its future genesis, at the expense of the individuals who compose it. Part of the holist premise could be preserved (for Marx himself asserted that there is no dichotomy between individual and society) while outlawing some of the conclusions which flow from it; that we are therefore entitled to kill individuals to further the revolution.

What is wrong with Leninism?

By denying the importance of the subjectivity of the proletariat, Lenin undermines the whole point of Marxist theory. The flowering of human nature which is meant both to produce and to be a product of the revolution is replaced by Lenin with mere economic development of the nation state (which is one of Marx's central targets for attack). Leninism fails to grasp that the unity of subjectivity and objectivity in the revolutionary act is not a poetic afterthought of Marx's. It is central to his whole theory of revolution. Without this unity there could be no guarantee of real change, for without it the people would not have changed sufficiently for real revolution to take place. Without this unity, the State must continue to oppress, and society must continue to be divided. Indeed, without this unity there can be no communism for, essentially, nothing has changed except that power has changed hands.

A second, major, theoretical flaw of Leninism is that it advances an unacceptable and unwarranted theory of knowledge. Only certain people have access to the truth. Those who cannot, or do not wish to, read the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin, are by definition the victims of false consciousness. This doctrine would be considered absurd were it not so pernicious in its consequences. As a doctrine of revelation masquerading as science it deserves to be treated with contempt. It gives no grounds for the proletariat to trust the Party. Those of us who have suffered under the guidance of a ruling party (socialist or otherwise) may have remarked on the similarity between socialist parties and their non-socialist counterparts in Africa. They may remember Weber's insistence that bureaucratic organisation, not 'ideology' is the single major feature of political success; and that it is bureaucratic organisation which is the overriding characteristic of all contemporary societies, socialist and capitalist alike. Those of us who have had this experience may doubt the capacity of any party to prescribe for us our needs, let alone meet them.

What about the purely practical advantages of Leninism? It is often stated that the USSR has experienced astonishing economic development. But economic development on its own cannot be a distinguishing mark of communism. Marxists cannot justify political oppression by appealing to economic development, for it is emancipation which is the aim of Marxism. Yet Leninism justifies present oppression, authoritarianism and terror. Are these 'political goods' an improvement on the flawed bourgeois liberties of which Marx is so rightly critical? Can they be considered a suitable basis for future liberties?

Marxism in Africa

What is sad about Marxist intellectuals in Africa is that they refuse to look dispassionately at actually existing Marxism and thus to recognise its flaws. Such recognition is required if we can begin to save Marxism or to transcend it by developing an indigenous post-Marxist theory. One reason for the lack of internal criticism of Marxism is that it is, above all, a philosophical theory before it is a theory of historical development and long before it is a theory of praxis. In Africa, philosophy is not introduced at school, not taught in all universities: the necessary tools of critique and/or reconstruction are lacking.

Instead of being considered as theory, Marxism-Leninism is used dogmatically and *un*philosophically as a simple and singularly blunt-edged instrument for criticizing former colonial and current neo-colonial powers. In internal politics, it becomes an instrument of control wielded by ruling classes in their own interests, thus giving the lie in a very practical way to Lenin's notion that the party of scientific-socialism is by definition revolutionary. We should note that the Russian Revolution itself by no means followed the pattern predicted by Marx:

> *It [the Russian Revolution] was a communist revolution in the sense that it transferred state power to the Communist Party, but not in the sense of confirming Marxist predictions as to the fate of capitalist society (Kolkowski 1978:481).*

For African Marxists, Marxism-Leninism tends to replace the Bible as dogma. It has become a set of moral and practical rules to be learned and uncritically applied as a recipe for action to all situations. Marxists believe that baking Marxism-Leninism will produce a socialist cake: that any other mixture is a contemptible capitalist *kachasu* (brew). Seduced by the moral content of Marxism and its supposedly practical consequences, intellectuals take up an attitude which represents a simple-minded and anti-intellectual reflex to all socialism. This is unworthy of the African people. The fact that we in Africa are opposed to imperialism and regard self-determination as one of our highest goals is perfectly compatible with careful critique of Marxism itself and a recognition of its fatal flaws.

These flaws should be a matter of debate, out of which genuine theorizing can emerge. The debate needs to be placed in a wider and more philosophical context than a display of our bleeding hearts. Our politicians may choose to use Marxism-Leninism in their rallies as an arsenal for identifying and labelling the enemies of the people and for displaying their self-described revolutionary credentials. Such tactics are unworthy of intellectuals engaged in theoretical work.

Can we not raise the level of debate? One way would be to return to Marx, rather than remaining fixated on the vulgarized filter of Leninist tracts. It would be worth understanding why many Western Marxists and critical theorists have dissented from the Marxist-Leninist tradition. This may require a certain amount of philosophical training, particularly in epistemology, which deals

with questions of truth and knowledge. Theories purporting to be scientific do not derive their truth from the fact that they coincide without desires or moral intuitions and dogmatism is no substitute for thought.

But Marxism is not merely a claim to truth. There is, in addition, a constant ambivalence among Marxists about the status of the moral basis of the critique and its self-proclaimed scientificity. This ambivalence must be addressed. The justification of Marx's critique of capitalism lies, not in the fact that he believed that it made people politically and economically worse off than some other system, but because of its *damaging* effects on actual living individuals. Marx himself is, at least in a large part of his writings, anti-utilitarian. He does not suggest that actual living people should be sacrificed for the good of future generations, even for the good of man. His determinism makes such sacrifices unnecessary. His humanism makes such sacrifices abhorrent. It is therefore contradictory for Marxists to criticise the dehumanizing effects of capitalism but advocate the institution of a far more inhuman type of 'socialism' which is self-avowedly, triumphantly, openly instrumental in its approach to human beings and whose sole aim appears to be the perpetuation of the State.

Conclusion

I have tried to show the flaws of both determinist and voluntarist Marxism in the above pages. Many have been seduced by the elements of truth and the grandeur of Marx's critique of capitalism both in its moral and its analytical aspect. They have attempted to tailor the unacceptable aspects of Marxism so that a coherent theory can be salvaged by an adroit manipulation of these two distinct elements. Perhaps Marxism can be salvaged in some way - though not by determinists or voluntarists. It is perfectly possible that a Marxist type of socialism or communism will one day emerge, as predicted, and that the laws of history which Marx believed he expressed will be vindicated. But, as this century draws to a close - nearly 100 years after the death of Marx - it may be right to say boldly that his great vision is irremediably flawed. As a revolutionary theory, the flaws are only too sadly obvious. As a political programme, there is little currently in it to distinguish it from contemporary capitalism. As science, its status is in doubt.

There are of course intellectuals so blinded by the self-proclaimed 'scientificity' of Marxism-Leninism that they are prepared to mistrust the ability of ordinary folk to engage rationally in the political process, to decide wisely about themselves and their own future, and to work for a better future without throwing away the gains of the past. It is to such people that this essay is addressed. Leninism is a doctrine lacking in philosophical content and in common humanity. It undermines the premises of Marxism in two ways: first, by removing revolutionary agency from the actual proletariat and placing it in the hands of the Party. Second, by negating the original premise of socialism: that it is actual human beings in their daily lives who count in the real world. The use of force against the people negates this principle and renders socialism

empty. More than this, it renders socialism immoral. Socialism cannot be predicated upon such violence. As a body of belief socialism is empty of meaning unless it proclaims its allegiance first and foremost to people, not to scientific socialism and, far less, to that anomaly - 'the socialist state'.

Carol Pearce is at the University of Zimbabwe, Harare.

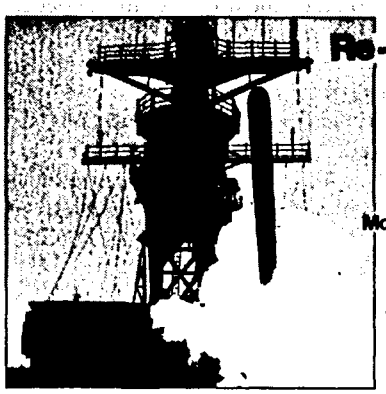
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