Neo-Marxism: End of a Career Or Start of a New One?

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THE TERM "NEO-MARXISM" HAS COME TO REFER to a sub-school within Marxism which attempts to account for much of the anomalies that classical Marxism has proven unable to explain. Its birth may be placed at 1945 with the publication of the now-classic *The Stages of Economic Growth* by Paul Baran, generally recognized as the father of neo-Marxism.[1] Since then, neo-Marxism has evolved and matured as it attracted a vigorous set of adherents to its ranks. There have been intellectual dissensions within Marxism particularly in pre-Second World War Europe in opposition to Stalinism.[2] But none has achieved the level of consistency, systematization, and integration that neo-Marxism has attained. In Kuhnian terms, neo-Marxism can truly be regarded as an insurgent paradigm.[3]

1. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1957).

2. For a masterly discussion of the various dissenting movements within Marxism during this period, see Leszek Kolakowski's impressive three-volume work, **Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth and Dissolution** (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1978).

3. Thomas S. Kuhn, **The Structure of Scientific Revolutions** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). This perspective is shared by Paul M. Sweezy, founder and editor of the socialist journal **Monthly Review**, in his "A Crisis in Marxian Theory," in **Monthly Review**, 31, 2 (June 1979): 20-24.

Neo-Marxism and Its Classical Precursor

To better comprehend neo-Marxism's insurgent nature, a few initial differences with Karl Marx and classical Marxism need to be highlighted.

Firstly, on the nature of capitalism, Marx definitely thought it to be expansionary and acquisitive; it even had the potential of developing colonies by introducing technology that would not otherwise be available, e.g., the railway system in India constructed under the auspices of British colonialism. Orthodox Marxists, and no less than Marx himself, anticipated this to hasten the emergence of a revolutionary working class much like its counterpart in Europe. While Marx saw this development as occurring internally and independently within a country or a territory, neo-Marxists underscore the nature of colonial capitalism as essentially a relationship between partners of uneven endowments: one stronger, and the other weaker. On this score, neo-Marxists concur with dependency theorists[4] that the development of the stronger party occurs at the expense of the weaker one.

Secondly, on the nationality question, Marx thought that nationalism is a survival from the past and that eventually it will give way to socialism. Ethnic groupings would shed their ethnic identities and accept an ethnic-free category of citizenship under a system which demands what one can afford and gives what one needs. Neo-Marxists are more realistic about the matter and concede that nationalist feelings could not be eradicated and that, at times, nationalism would prevail over socialism. The fact that the Eurocommunists of the last two decades have promoted national issues over and above international socialism attests to the durability and perenniality of nationalism, much to the chagrin of orthodox Marxists.

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4. For a discussion of the origins and development of dependency theory, see Kenneth E. Bauzon and Charles Frederick Abel, "Dependency Theory: History, Theory, and Reappraisal" in: Mary Ann Tetreault and Charles Frederick Abel, eds., **Dependency Theory and the Return of High Politics** (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 43-69. A more recent assessment of prospects and new directions in dependency theory, see Kenneth E. Bauzon, "The Current State of Dependency Research," **Philippine Development Forum**, 7 (forthcoming, Third Quarter, 1991).

And, thirdly, corollary to the preceding question, the matter involving the peasantry has received scant attention from Marx. Mention in a passing fashion – particularly in *The Communist Manifesto* – was made only to describe its reactionary character.[5] Lenin, who tried to give a practical handle to Marxism, perpetuated this disparaging attitude towards the peasantry by denying it any vanguard role in the revolution; only the workers would be in this lead position. Marx's prescription for a revolution was clear: it would occur only in the context of industrialization which gives birth to a working class. By implication, agrarian societies first have to industrialize, create a working class, then experience a revolutionary transformation. Neo-Marxists have been unequivocal in their belief that the peasantry could be a revolutionary force, that it could assume a vanguard role, and that a peasant society could bypass the stage of capitalism into socialism.[6] The emergence of a working class is not an absolute requirement. Ample examples outside Europe are cited, including China, Vietnam, Cuba, Tanzania, Chile during Salvador Allende's presidency, and Nicaragua during the regime of the Sandinistas.

Neo-Marxism: Basic Postulates

The Nature of Inquiry, the Inquiry of Nature, and the Method of Inquiry.

Having outlined some of the initial differences with classical Marxism, it is now appropriate at this juncture to elaborate on some of neo-Marxism's basic presuppositions. First of all, neo-Marxists clarify that, unlike their liberal counterparts, they do not pretend to be value-free and that their work has a definite political message and objective. They contend that mainstream social scientists, in their study of development in the Third World, have unwittingly served the foreign policy interests of the developed countries.

Secondly, in terms of method, neo-Marxists tend to be deductivists, in which their research is guided by a set of rules that define and give meaning to reality.[7] Objectivity in this sense is understood to mean affirming the elementary rules of empirical research in order to fulfill better their commitment to the proletariat. It is argued, for instance, that the knowledge derived from an empirical inquiry could, in fact, "support a dialectical explanation as long as the research tool itself does not deny the possibility of a dynamic analysis."[8]

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5. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, **The Communist Manifesto**, ed. by Samuel H. Beer (Northbrook, Ill.: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1955).

6. For a collection of varying perspectives among neo-Marxists on the issue of transition, see Paul M. Sweezy and Charles Bettelheim, **Notes on the Transition to Socialism** (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972).

7. Having said this, nothing is implied that all neo-Marxists are deductivists; there is greater diversity in their ranks than is apparent. For a fuller discussion of this diversity, see Pauline Marie Vaillancourt, **When Marxists Do Research** (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1986).

8. See Pauline M. Rosenau (nee Pauline Marie Vaillancourt), "Philosophy, Methodology, and Research; Marxist Assumptions About Inquiry," **Comparative Political Analysis**, 20, 4 (January 1988):436.

Thirdly, neo-Marxists assume that the world is one integrated whole. It follows from this that the development of one part cannot be looked at in isolation from the underdevelopment of another, and that domination does not occur in a vacuum but, rather, it is a part of a process in which both the victim and the victimizer interact based on their relative access – or lack thereof – to certain valued resources, e.g., surplus, that are essential to the maintenance of an international division of labor.

Fourthly, neo-Marxists affirm the significance of material – as opposed to purely economic – factors in explaining development. The assumption here is that to reduce all human events to the economic motive would be too simplistic and naive. Thus, some neo-Marxists emphasize the essential unity and integration of the political, economic, and strategic goals of the United States in its efforts to maintain hegemony around the world.[9] Others point to a combination of social and economic factors leading to underdevelopment in the Third World.[10] And yet others suggest the importance of the political and ideological superstructures which maintain and validate a system of domination in any given society.[11]

And finally, on the revolutionary approach to socialism, neo-Marxists are much more open-ended than their classical counterparts in that they do not regard it as an absolute and inevitable course. They admit to the possibility of achieving socialism through peaceful and evolutionary means, including participation in the parliamentary process. Thus, they regard Allende's success in Chile in the early 1970s as an indication of the possibility of achieving state power through electoral means in the Third World. That there may be tremendous forces arrayed against them once in control of the state is beside the point. What is significant is that winning state power in a competitive system is possible, and that this continues to be demonstrated even in Western Europe as in the case of the socialist parties of France, Italy, Portugal, and Greece where pluralism is a characteristic of the political system.

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9. For example, see H. Magdoff, **The Age of Imperialism** (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969).

10. Representative of this group is Arghiri Emmanuel, **Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade** (London: New Left Books, 1972).

11. See, for examples, Tom Bottomore, **Sociology as Social Criticism** (London: Allen & Unwin, 1975); and Barrington Moore, **Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy** (London: Penguin, 1966).

Development as a Marxian Idea

Turning the discussion now to the subject of development per se, neo-Marxists argue that Marxism has a natural affinity to the subject in that development is of a distinctly Marxian origin and that, as Aidan Foster Carter claims, "Marxism is the prototype of development theory...."[12] Liberal social scientists, accordingly, have appropriated the term and gave it a meaning which suggests graduated stages over a period of time. This thinking, however, is reflective of the biological influences which found their way in the socio-political analyses of Emile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer at around the turn of the century and in the contemporary works of Neil Smelser and Talcott Parsons.[13] But in truth, development has always meant the kind of emancipation envisioned in socialism: the "liberation of the individual human being and of his diverse potentialities; his 'productivity' is to be liberated from the distorting constraints of class society and of 'objective' economic laws."[14]

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The neo-Marxist explanation of underdevelopment in the Third World, as the presuppositions discussed earlier indicate, relates it to the expansionary character of capitalism. As capitalism expanded beyond European boundaries in search of profits, i.e., as merchants, bankers, and manufacturers engaged in their usual activities, this led to the extraction of resources in various parts of the world, reshaping their economies in the process to render them subordinate to the demands of capital. An effect of this was the emergence of a kind of semi-permanent international economic division of labor in which the capitalist countries of Europe and North America virtually monopolized the industries as well as the capital needed to sustain them; much of Asia, Africa, and Latin America was

12. See his "Marxist Approaches to Development and Underdevelopment," **Journal of Contemporary Asia**, 3, 1, (1973): 9.

13. For a critical assessment of the influence of this functionalist group of writers and the conflict theorists that grew from it, see Kenneth E. Bauzon, **Liberalism and the Quest for Islamic Identity in the Philippines** (Durham, N.C.: Acorn Press in Association with Duke University, Islamic and Arabian Development Studies, 1991), Part Three, "The Liberal Paradigm," especially chapters 6-8. A Philippine edition of this book has been published by the Ateneo de Manila University Press also in 1991.

14. Iring Fetscher, "The Changing Goals of Socialism in the Twentieth Century," **Social Research**, 47, 1, (Spring 1980): 37.

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regarded as a vast market for their products and as a source of immense raw materials and cheap labor. A further consequence of this was the institutionalization of exploitation and domination through various mechanisms of neo-colonial control, e.g., aid, trade, and investments, so that these regions of the world would remain subordinate in their agricultural and pre-industrial state.

In an apparent move to reconcile the conflicting claims of protagonists over whether the source of underdevelopment and exploitation is external (e.g., "world system") or internal (e.g., "mode of production"), some neo-Marxists are re-interpreting Marxist and Leninist writings in such a way that both sources are accounted for. Earlier analyses which embraced one over the other are deemed "one-sided" or "narrow." A leading neo-Marxist theoretician, Ernesto Laclau, for instance, criticizes Latin American Marxists for their inability to analyze Latin American conditions "*simultaneously* at the level of *modes of production* and at that of *economic systems*." Laclau further observes that their mistakes derive from "a unilateral use of one or the other of the two levels."[15] Some contemporary writers turn to the writings of earlier writers who may have fallen out of grace with the powers-that-be for their insights at the time they were writing. One writer, for instance, recalls Leon Trotsky, who wrote: "Marxism takes its point of departure from world economy, not as a sum of its parts but as a mighty and independent reality which has been created by the international division of labor and the world market, and which in our epoch imperiously dominates the national market."[16]

15. See Ernesto Laclau, **Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory**(London: New Left Books, 1979), p. 42.

16. As quoted in his **The Permanent Revolution** (London: New Park Publications, 1971), p. 22.

The theme that recurs in this and in much of the current literature is the requirement for flexibility in the interpretation of and approach to the historical and social processes. The purpose, admittedly, is to enable the observer to "study the totality of all sides of the phenomenon and their reciprocal relations (or contradictions)."[17] Only when this is done could the false dichotomy of the "internal" and the "external" be avoided and, instead, lead one to inquire into the "all-sidedness of the material process and its unity."[18]

Capital and the Formation of the State

This leads our discussion to the nature of the relationship between the "logic of capital," as one writer describes as the process of capital accumulation and expansion, on one hand, and the formation of the state, on the other.[19] Contrary to the orthodox Marxist view that the historical process is reducible to economic motives, the emergent trend in neo-Marxist thought is the recognition of the primacy of the "political" as the dominant force in modern capitalism.

This point was not lost to Nicos Poulantzas who, early on, asserted that the intervention of the state – as a political act – has the consequence of displacing "market forces as the dominant element in the reproduction of the capital relation."[20] This theme was refined and developed by later neo-Marxists among whom was Colin Henfrey who asserts that in much of the Third World where the dominant economic forces are "external" (e.g., the metropolitan countries of Western Europe, North America, and Japan), "the ruling class rules disproportionately through the political mechanisms of its relations with other classes, rather than through economic ones, which it controls either incompletely or scarcely at all." Henfrey further asserts that social relations of production in much of the Third World have not evolved into mature capitalism; rather, these are being "reproduced largely by ideological and political rather than economic forms of coercion."[21]

If one is searching for a neo-Marxist explanation of the phenomenon of enclave economies or what dependency theorists refer to as "development of underdevelopment," one need not look far. Poulantza's and Henfrey's accounting of the primacy of the political typifies current neo-Marxist thinking on the subject. A logical implication of this view is the assumption of the "relative autonomy" of the dependent state in the Third World not only to distance itself from control by the competing domestic forces but also to better serve the interests of the capitalists in the

17. Ronaldo Munck, **Politics and Dependency in the Third World; The Case of Latin America** (London: Zed Books, 1985), p. 347.

18. **Ibid.**

19. See B. Jessop, **The Capitalist State** (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982), p. 134.

20. See his **Political Power and Social Classes** (London: Verso, 1978).

21. See his "Dependent Modes of Production, and the Class Analysis of Latin America," in Ronald Chilcote, ed., **Dependency and Marxism** (Boulder, Co. : Westview Press, 1981), pp. 29-30.

metropolitan countries. This autonomy has two elements, namely: control over the domestic wealth by the state, and control over the political and coercive apparatus of the state by the state. These elements have the consequence of denying effective access to the state to other sectors of society — the dominant ones included — which may potentially threaten the position of the incumbent guardians of the state: the ruling class. A further consequence is the inability of other sectors to influence the conditions of dependency, the distribution of the means of production, and the shape of social relations which makes production possible.

In this context, we may understand the rise of the bureaucratic-authoritarian state in many parts of the Third World. This state formation has been largely responsible in reinforcing the integration of the domestic economy into the orbit of capitalism, in enhancing the role of foreign capital, and in dictating the nature and direction of domestic production, particularly in the context of industrialization. These were made possible as the state — backed by the instruments of coercion — assumed the roles of the market in the setting of prices, profits, and wages.[22]

As a case in point, the "newly industrializing countries" (NICs) of the Third World, especially the so-called Asian Tigers, although commonly cited by proponents of free enterprise as showpieces of capitalist success in the Third World, are regarded by neo-Marxists and other critics of capitalism as fine examples of enclave capitalism in which a small segment of the economy develops while the rest lags behind. Furthermore, this segment maintains links with, but could never compete against, its counterparts in the metropolitan countries. Despite their aggressive economic growth, they could not engage in the production, manufacture, and distribution of certain products, e.g., those deemed militarily sensitive, that could threaten or undermine the metropolitan countries' technological, industrial, and strategic advantage over the rest of the world. Theirs have remained essentially assembly-plant economies as they have played hosts to Western companies fleeing unionized workers demanding high wages and benefits in their home countries.

The NICs have offered abundant cheap labor, readily accessible natural resources, and conducive political climate free of worker activities that might disrupt production. In return, they have received favorable responses from Western governments, companies, and international lending institutions including a promise for less restrictive entry for their products into Western markets.

Although the NICs have attained a level of economic sufficiency that many Third World countries envy, the distribution of domestic economic wealth is essentially lopsided in favor of the native capitalists who have collaborated with their counterparts from the metropolitan countries. The state, though autonomous from other sectors, remains insecure as the

22. See James Petras, "State Capitalism and the Third World," **Development and Change**, 8 (1977): 1-17.

repressed forces in society attempt to break out. Long-term political stability is sacrificed in exchange for short-term profits. Furthermore, the state remains vulnerable to outside pressures as the metropolitan countries and lending institutions, to whom it is politically indebted, seeks to deepen – through various mechanisms of neo-colonialism – their penetration and control of the local economy. This heightens its dependency and renders meaningless its claims to independence and sovereignty.

The Question of Strategy: Revolution or Evolution?

The Revolutionary Alternative

Confronted with this reality, neo-Marxists have attempted to offer a solution but, as might be expected, they do not speak with one voice. The early group of neo-Marxists – which includes Andre Gunder Frank arguing for Latin America,[23] Frantz Fanon taking up the case for Africa,[24] and Paul Baran – close the door to any peaceful and evolutionary transformation.

Contending that development is about changing the world and that it is essentially a revolutionary idea, this group is convinced that any significant change in history is rarely accomplished through peaceful means. Revolutionary movements are, accordingly, seen as the pre-eminent instruments through which development

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23. Representative of his works is **Dependent Accumulation and Underdevelopment** (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969).

24. See his classic **The Wretched of the Earth** (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

could occur and that the barriers to development are not socio-cultural patterns per se in the poor countries but, rather, the self-serving interests of the metropolitan countries and their native collaborators. Writes Aidan Foster-Carter, "The doctor is the disease: the would-be Samaritan is the thief," referring to the inability of Western assistance to promote development as well as the failure of liberal-inspired development theories to prescribe specific mechanisms of change between the presumed stages of development.[25]

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The Evolutionary Path

Neo-Marxists writing around the time dramatic changes in the socialist bloc countries began unfolding were not so definite about the inevitability or necessity of revolution. For instance, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's penetrating critique of Marxist theory and practice, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy; Towards a Radical Democratic Politics,*[26] offers the proposition that "there are no iron laws of history, no historical necessity for a proletarian revolution, no 'special mission' for the working classes, and so forth,"[27] in an apparent effort to dismiss the popular notion that the Marxist approach to development is strictly deterministic.

Nicos Mouzeli explains: "Neither the deterministic/mechanistic nor the scientific/authoritarian elements...can be considered as representing the core of Marx's thought...."[28] On the contrary, Mouzelis continues, "Marx's scheme of stages – which emphasizes the importance of class struggles as a fundamental mechanism of transition from one stage to the next – provides the conceptual means for avoiding a strictly unilinear, determinist view of development of the kind that is set out in the writings of [Auguste] Comte, for instance."[29] Thus, Marx's overall work need not entail a determinist orientation nor does

25. See his "Neo-Marxist Approaches to Development and Underdevelopment," **Journal of Contemporary Asia**, 3, 1 (1973): 23.

26. (London: Verso, 1985).

27. As paraphrased in Nicos Mouzelis, "Marxism or Post-Marxism?," **New Left Review**, no. 167 (January-February 1988): 115.

28. **Ibid.**, p. 122

29. **Ibid.**

it lead necessarily to an authoritarian political system.

The Pluralist Model

This is perhaps best illustrated by socialist movements that operate in a pluralist setting – both in Western and non-Western areas – and which operate by essentially the same rules that non-socialist parties operate by in their bid to win control of the government. The Sandinista movement in Nicaragua, as a case in point, allowed pluralism to prevail albeit with great reluctance in view of the tremendous pressure arrayed against it by the U.S. It was unseated from power in what international observers generally described as a fair, open, and honest election. Through the same rules by which it was defeated, it seeks to win power again when time becomes propitious.

This new attitude is reflected to a certain degree in the "Socialist Vision," a principal founding document of *BISIG* (*Bukluran sa Ikauunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa* [loosely translated as Alliance for the Advancement of Socialist Thought and Practice]), a socialist movement in another part of the Third World – the Philippines. This document states that:

> Socialism in the Philippines will encourage the presence of multiple parties, each one with its own perspective on the correct path towards socialism.... Unlike the much misunderstood and sometimes abused concept of the vanguard party, socialism in the Philippines will encourage the interplay of forces and perspectives on socialism, each aspiring for the vanguard role. The vanguard role, therefore, is not one that is bestowed on any party or political force. It is a role that is dependent upon the support of the majority for a party's policies and programs.[30]

This document, however, is not reconciled with the kind of pluralism which admits non-socialist groups and parties in an openly competitive political system; it presupposes that these groups and parties shall have converted to socialism in which each of them aspire for the vanguard role before they could be allowed into the pluralist system being envisioned. Thus, confrontations, which may at times be violent between socialist groups and parties and those that do not share a socialist vision, are almost certain to occur.

Socialist movements in Western countries have a unique if not much longer experience in operating under a pluralist system. Their members routinely get elected to government positions, while some socialist parties have, at one time or another, captured the reins of government, e.g., in Great Britain, France, Greece, and Italy. These movements have obviously found a way to reconcile their existence with Marxist thought and practice in such a way that they would not be regarded as pariahs among the socialist movements; at the same time, they attempt to maintain their distinct identities and pursue their own nationalistic agenda.

30. **BISIG, The Socialist Vision and Other Documents** (Quezon City, Phil.: Second BISIG Congress, 1987), p.13.

Parliamentary struggle may have become a cliche but it lies at the core of their approach to political power. Liberal democratic principles are re-interpreted to make them amenable to socialist practice. The principle of proportional representation, for instance, is being coopted at least in the British context as a socialist concept. This position is being argued by Arthur Scargill of the British Socialist Society who submits that "proportional representation is a fundamental socialist concept" and that "no socialist seriously committed to democratic, accountable representation can advocate any electoral system."[31] This is obviously a rejection of the Leninist concept of democratic centralism which was practiced with dire consequences by Stalin and his successors in the Soviet Union up until Mikhail Gorbachev made glasnost the cornerstone of his administration. More significantly, it is a clear departure from the orthodox Marxist principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat at a time when workers could no longer hope to seize power through revolutionary means.

Conclusion

Needless to say, Marxist thought is in a terrible state of flux. Marxists of all shades appear to be scampering for cover as socialist systems around the world, particularly in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, go through a traumatic transformation that has led to the demise of some of them – all because of the episodic failure of the socialist experiment. Other Marxists have tried to salvage Marxism from itself, such as those of the Frankfurt School,[32] or those who comb the works of Louis Althusser,[33] Jean Paul Sartre,[34] and Antonio Gramsci[35] for any hints that recalcitrant aspects of reality may be reconciled with Marxism. Commentators have began talking about "post-Marxism;" for some, in order to leave Marxism

31. See his "Proportional Representation: A Socialist Concept," **New Left Review**, no. 158 (July-August 1986): 76.

32. Much of the views of the adherents of this school may be found in the journals **Telos** and **New German Critique.**

33. See his **For Marx** (London: New Left Books, 1965); and Norman Geras, "Althusser's Marxism: An Account and Assessment," in **Literature of Revolution** (London: Verso, 1986).

34. Sartre's philosophical system is best understood in its totality as represented by his work **Being and Nothingness; An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology,** trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956).

35. See his **Selections from the Prison Notebooks,** trans. and ed. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1972).

behind, while for others, in an attempt to give it a new lease of life and meaning.[36] Representing the former are Andre Gorz[37] and Rudolph Bahro,[38] while the latter is represented by Perry Anderson.[39]

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In any event, there is no longer any doubt that the credibility of Marxism and the movements that claim to represent it has been seriously impaired. As a theoretical framework or as a call to arms in the forward march of history, Marxism's self-assurance has been shaken and could no longer claim a privileged position much less a monopoly to an explanation of reality.[40] This crisis besetting Marxism is admitted somberly by Stanley Aronwitz, a thoughtful and long-time exponent of neo-Marxism, with the following words: "We live in a time when all the old assumptions about politics and history appear enfeebled. Throughout Western industrial societies, both of the capitalist and state socialist types, the theory and practice of workers, intellectuals, women and ecologists have, in different ways, questioned the adequacy of Marxism as a theory of the past and present and as a guide to the future."[41]

This assessment is reinforced by Ronald Aronson who, in observing that Marxists today are without any "pole of authority or attraction," explains with a mixture of realism and pathos that:

> [N]o Marxist party enjoys deep attachment beyond its membership, no revolutionary state appeals widely beyond its citizens, no individual leader commands worldwide respect, no mass movement ignites enthusiasm. For many of its critics Marxism is not quite a god that failed, source of profound disillusion and betrayal, but rather an old fashioned and simplistic outlook which, over time, has grown outmoded much like the Ptolemaic system, requiring too many epicycles to

36. For examples, see: Murray Bookchin, "Beyond Neo-Marxism," **Telos**, no. 36 (Summer 1978): 5-28; Norman Geras, "Post-Marxism?," **New Left Review**, no. 163 (May-June 1987): 40-82; Mouzelis, **op. cit.**; and Fetscher, **op. cit.**

37. **Farewell to the Working Class** (London: Verso, 1982).

38. **From Red to Green**(London: Verso, 1984).

39. **In the Tracks of Historical Materialism** (London: Verso, 1983).

40. In support of this sentiment are: Harold Mah, "Marxism's Truth: Recent Interpretations of Marxist Theory," **Journal of Modern History**, 61 (March 1989): 110-27; and Jerzy Topolski, "Methodological Problems of Applications of the Marxist Theory to Historical Research,"**Social Research**, 47, 3 (Autumn 1980): 458-78.

41. See his **The Crisis of Historical Materialism: Class, Politics and Culture in Marxist Theory** (St. Paul, Mn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1990 ed.).

> 'save the phenomena.' Simpler then to become frankly pluralist, or to look for other keys and watchwords — 'power' or 'domination', for example.[42]

Commenting on the emergent pluralism of neo-Marxist thought as well as the pluralist setting to which neo-Marxists have been compelled to operate, including the resultant confusion in the neo-Marxist agenda, Murray Bookchin, writing over a decade ago, wrote with candid insight the following assessment:

> What is most disturbing about the self-absorption of so many of these 'neo-Marxian' tendencies is the promiscuity with which they meld utterly antithetical radical goals and traditions. Libertarian concepts and authoritarian ones, individualists and collectivist, economistic and cultural, scientistic and ethical — all have been funded together into an ecumenical 'radicalism' that lacks the consistency required by a serious revolutionary practice. Classical Marxian tendencies, functioning under the imperatives of organized political movements, were compelled to press the logic of their premises to the point of a combative social engagement with bourgeois reality. Neo-Marxism enjoys the luxury of theoretical reveries in which basically incompatible visions of freedom intermingle and become diffuse and obscure.[43]

The above passages would have readily been dismissed as being no more than sour-graping were it not for the fact that they were penned by thoughtful Marxists, nay, neo-Marxists, who themselves were brought up in the critical tradition. Out of the desire perhaps to restore credibility and vitality to a movement that once was steeped in utopian idealism, these and other critics suggest a lowering of sights as well as the assumption of a leading but not necessarily a dominating role for a movement seeking both relevance and acceptance. They further suggest to those Marxists who, perhaps out of habit, loyalty, or delusion of infallibility, refuse to recognize either the failures of their movement or the inadequacies of their ideology, to adapt consequently to constantly changing conditions. They must realize, additionally, that if reality does not conform with ideology, it is perhaps the latter that must adjust with the former.

The belief that "objective reality" must be created in order to make reality conform to ideology has had unforeseen and severe human consequences. Too often, this belief has been used as a justification for even the most gruesome abuse of human rights in the name of humanity, and it has spawned a totalitarian system that has enslaved rather than emancipated its citizens. It has also been used for the expediency or convenience of whoever happens to command the loyalty and obedience of the vulgar masses. One only need to recall the dark period of Stalinism which, although an extreme example, makes everyone wonder whether it is truly the way forward to history. It is apparent that the time has long past to recast this belief or discard it altogether. Then and only then may socialist movements, particularly those with a revolutionary bent, reflect with consistency and integrity the humanism which they proclaim to be their reason for being.

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42. See his "Historical Materialism, Answer to Marxism's Crisis," **New Left Review**, no. 152 (July-August 1985): 75.

43. Bookchin, **op. cit.**, pp. 5-6.