



POWER, REVOLUTION AND THE DIALECTIC

By F. McEachran

THE particular form of heresy into which Communism and Socialism fall is seen in their failure to recognise the significance of natural law and its connection with human freedom. They assume, quite falsely, that the social element in man is prior to the egoistic and draw the most far-reaching conclusions. In the U.S.S.R., to take the most typical example, the same economic struggle for survival goes on as in Western countries, with the difference that men there compete to become commissars, or public officials, rather than to get possession of industries and estates. In other words they scramble to get key positions in the Communist hierarchy which will enable them to control, order and otherwise interfere in other people's lives and they embody the power position in a new and terrifying way.

But the most terrifying aspect of the evolution of society in Russia is precisely the fact that just as in the society of the ants individual enterprise becomes very nearly "unbiological", so in Russia the direct relation of the producer to production, even when obviously co-operative, has come to be regarded as unethical. Yet precisely Russia, which has gone far to abolish both property in capital and property in land (the unfortunate term "means of production" includes both) should be in the best position in the world for establishing human freedom, since half the task (the harder half) is already accomplished.

Why then do the Russians not collect the one value which is social (i.e. rent) and leave individual values, wages and capital, to their producers, since the power is there to do it? Why do they persist in controlling all productive enterprises and then mulcting the producer with taxes which should be unnecessary? The reason is only too simple. *To collect rent means throwing open the market. Throwing open the market means renouncing power and renouncing power is precisely what a revolutionary hierarchy will not do.* Revolutionaries prefer, in the name of "welfare of mankind", to set up controllers of this, departments of that, etc., and so provide in a pseudo-scientific manner a new avenue for the increase of power.

The free individual, as biology and the history of the race presents him to us, is in fact disappearing, and what is more, even the theoretical ideal of such an individual is being lost. Moral ideas, which always reflect the existing situation, throw a halo of unselfishness on the very officials who, as bureaucrats, are satisfying their desire for

power. It is unethical today in Russia, for example, for a man to work for himself, although we have already shown that private enterprise, in any sense that has a meaning, is also a public act. Marxist morality says that man must work for the State, or, as some prefer to call it, "for all," not "for himself," and being translated, this simply means that men must compete not to produce as nature meant them to compete, but to become officials who, while controlling and directing, also batten on and hinder production. More even than this. By controlling production the officials exercise power and so restore in a new form the very evil which revolutions are meant to destroy.

But, says the Marxist philosopher at this point, you have surely heard of the "dialectic" of history, which teaches us that no progress is ever achieved without the violent overthrow of an oppressing class? In the absence of a revolutionary party which will seize and hold fast to power, how do you suggest that tyranny of class or dictator is ever to be broken? The transition from the feudal regime to the bourgeois regime, which we admit was freer, was accompanied after all, by means of an armed revolt both in England and in France, and without an armed revolt it would never have been effected. If what you say be true, that a revolutionary party by the act of seizing power, must always hold on to it, then there is little, if any, hope for the future of the race at all.

The fallacy of this argument lies in the terminology of groups and classes, the "abstract" nature of terms such as capitalist, bourgeois and workers. The Marxist speaks historically of course, and makes allowance for the relativity of class formation at various times, but this does not prevent his nomenclature by its very broadness from obscuring the real issue. It was a Marxist who admitted in a footnote to the *Communist Manifesto* that the class struggle had not always existed, and has begun only with the introduction of land monopoly. Now an admission of this kind is very significant, in view of what I have to say here.

Secondly, there is running through history a body of scientific truth which represents a definite and perhaps absolute attainment even though, for a time, barbarism may threaten to wash it right away. It is true that during the Dark Ages, for example, learning declined and a wave of ignorance spread over the Western World. Yet a good deal of permanent truth did survive and probably does during any cataclysm, whether it be a *Volkerwanderung* in the ancient sense, or a revolutionary period in modern style.

An obvious example is the fact that no victorious class or country in any civil or international war that has taken place in the last four centuries has ever dreamt of imposing chattel slavery on the conquered class or nation. The knowledge that human life production and happiness cannot be realised either for master or slave on that foundation, is so definitely acquired, that no dictator would attempt to re-establish it.

Applying this argument to the "dialectic" mentioned above, what I wish to emphasise is that every revolution carried out succeeds or fails only to the extent and exactly to the extent in which its victory embodies fundamental truth inherent in nature. Apart from this consideration there is indeed no such thing as a "successful" revolution and cannot ever be. In so far as the revolution in the England of the seventeenth century "freed" man and his economic relationships — and to some extent it certainly did—it was a successful and glorious revolution. In so far, on the other hand, as it substituted modern taxation for the cruder but more natural "feudal dues" (which were a genuine land-value rental) it was unsuccessful and inglorious, and contributed its share to the economic evils of today. A revolution which would actually break the biggest monopoly of all, and which went no further than that, would be a revolution which found itself with nothing more—as a revolution—to do. For power, from the very moment that monopoly is broken, returns to each individual organism with the speed of an arrow to its mark and once returned, it remains there.

Once unnatural is removed nature reasserts itself, that is all. Nor could power reassert itself in any State form because with the breaking of the fundamental monopoly the necessary conditions would be gone. When chattel slavery is abolished nature immediately reasserts itself in the individual slave and he does not sell himself to be a slave. Nor do other men think of buying or selling him, not because they are more moral than their forefathers, but because the "African conditions" for slavery no longer exist. On the other hand, the reason why the Soviet still have to suppress humanity nearly fifty years after a "successful" revolution, despite all the goodwill in the world, is mainly its lack of knowledge with regard to the relations in which men should stand. It has destroyed with great efficiency one form of unnatural—the feudal-bourgeois Czarist monopoly—but not so much in the name of freedom as in the name of control by the Communist Party, and this, moreover, despite its promise that the State shall eventually "wither away". This control, notwithstanding its greater element of scientific organisation and higher consciousness of aim, is also a piece of unnatural. Only if the Communist Party were to resign its power deliberately to restore natural law by collecting the rent of land (through the market) and abolishing arbitrary taxation, would a situation arise not requiring continual suppression. This it has not done, and will not do, partly because the Communist Party, misled by Karl Marx, does not believe there are natural laws of economics.

There is this difference between the government in Russia, and the governments in bourgeois countries. In the

West the state is the servant at one remove of the bourgeois economy. If by some lucky chance the Communist executive in Russia were to decide to collect the rent of land and to abolish taxation it would find that after a few years and to its great surprise no further oppression of individuals was required.

Analogies, admittedly, have their limitations, but they are often useful as a means of driving home a subtle point. If, for example, you place a heavy boulder on a plot of green turf the grass will gradually wither away because it can no longer obtain sunlight. But roll away the boulder and the grass with its greenness will reassert itself. Nothing more than this is required. We do not need to tell the grass how to grow. It will do so without our help and much better without it; leave it alone. In this analogy the boulder is the monopoly, the green grass is normal nature and you are the state or revolutionary party. When you have broken monopoly you have done your work and you may retire. A lot will remain to be done, but it will be done by people co-operating freely, not by the state.

This argument, I hope, goes a long way to dispose of the familiar Marxist contention that continued suppression by armed force is inevitable after a revolution. The main point, of course, is that a dispossessed class will endeavour with every means in its power to regain its lost ascendancy and therefore some organised force is essential. The argument misses out several important points which I will now emphasise. In the first place the dispossessed class in the revolution I am talking of both loses and gains, and in the vast proportion of cases, gains much more than it loses; it gains far more by being freed from taxation and an impoverished market than it loses in monopoly value. And this is true of all but a very few cases, so few, indeed, that they would have no effect on general public opinion. Secondly, the relief felt in returning to a natural economy, comparable to the relief of the green grass when the boulder is removed, or of a man healed from a long sickness, would be so universal and so intense that nothing could withstand it. Thirdly, since the revolution in question would make no attempt to tax or rate or otherwise plunder private values, but only ask for the socialisation of public values in rent and a natural market in which to produce and trade, there would not be the slightest cause for public violence. Fourthly (and lastly) the few people who would lose by the change would easily be able to gain more than they lost under the more flexible conditions of life and if for some reason they were unable to do so, they could with the greatest ease be treated as hard cases by ordinary public charity.

This Marxist argument, as these considerations should prove, really fails to distinguish between power from nature and power from man. For against the power in nature which enables men to produce and accumulate capital, men do not revolt nor conspire. They will take risks and they will go bankrupt philosophically as long as they know the game is fair. They do so even today when



the risk is great and bankruptcy frequent. No social revolution could arise on these grounds, if only because such risks are personal and not general to mankind. We have shown that it is monopoly which demands armed force for its maintenance, not freedom, and all we ask for is that ignorance should be turned into knowledge. Under freedom, it is true, the evil passions of men will remain, but, like power, evil will be diffused. The bully cannot bully if his victims can leave him, nor the employer be harsh if the market tempts his workers away. Tyrants are not different from other men. It is the monopoly background which gives them their power. Break that and tyranny goes.

It is evident that I am imagining a special type of revolution in which the revolutionary band of comrades fully understand the laws of economics and the relation between production and power. As the evolution which this mentality pre-supposes is a more pacifist type than that of the traditional revolutionary it may be concluded rightly that I am pre-supposing something new. I am arguing that monopoly is the cause of revolution and war, not human nature, and that in the end enough people will see the point to make the change come about easily. It will be a long time, of course, before enough people *do* see it. After all, it took many centuries before people saw anything wrong in slavery. But they saw it at last and once seen the intuition was not lost easily.

To sum up the above arguments there are really only two propositions and no more, which I can formulate as follows: 1. *Economic dislocation is the background of revolution and war.* 2. *Knowledge alone can cure it.* And herein lies my answer both to the "Marxist" and to the "Capitalist". The element of monopoly in economic life (which is the one great anti-social element) is the true and final cause of all public upheavals, whether we call them wars or revolutions. Victory is different from defeat only in degree since the dislocation is always internal and victors and vanquished alike suffer. Similarly, a victorious revolution is a contradiction in terms for the same reason. The *power question* and the *production question* must be solved *simultaneously* and this can happen only when a sufficient number of people understand the connection



between them. Knowledge of this kind is not, of course, so much specialised information as nous or "wisdom" in the old sense, which is rooted deep in the evolution of the race and the structure of nature. The bases of all sciences are simple enough: it is only distortion and dislocation which makes them seem complicated. The wisdom I speak of has developed with the race since the beginning and, despite wars and rumours of wars, will continue to spread. The mainspring of economic life (on which all spiritual life ultimately depends) is simplicity itself. It consists of free individuals, freely co-operating with each other on the background of

natural necessity, i.e., the need to live which is the general necessity running through nature. There is no other law of necessity but this. All others are sporadic and particular.

It should now be clear that the distinction between individual and social earnings shows itself immediately production begins and not, as Rousseau and others imagined, by virtue of some mythical social contract. It is revealed as soon as we start to produce, and it follows a general law which lays down clearly how the product shall be divided: 1. *The individual receives wages. (Later on, interest on capital if he saves part of his wages);* 2. *Society (i.e. all other men) shares the rental value of land.*

Similarly, and perhaps more clearly, we can see that free trade, which involves a profit for both sides, is amoral in the sense that it is inherent in nature, for without profit exchange would simply have no meaning. In actual fact the payment of Rent to the community for the use of land by the individual is also a kind of exchange which would go on willingly and easily and to the advantage of both parties. Here the two parties are the public and the individual, not the individual and the individual, but the point at issue is identical, the desire to make a willing and mutual exchange. In just the same way, men are pleased for other individuals to have land, because while producing on their sites they return their Rent to them and others.

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