

## CONTENTS

## ARTICLES

*Malek Khouri*, Theorizing Ideology: Contextualizing  
Marxist Intervention in Film Theory 133

*Patricia P. Brodsky*, The Hidden War: Working-Class  
Resistance during the Third Reich and the Postwar  
Suppression of Its History 171

*Otto H. Olsen and Ephraim Schulman*, John Lewis Gaddis  
and the Perpetuation of the Cold War 187

MARXIST FORUM 219

*Duan Zhongqiao*, Critique of Market Superiority and  
Market Neutrality 221

*BOOKS AND IDEAS*, by *Herbert Aptheker* 241

## BOOK REVIEWS

Howard Parsons, *Marxist Morality*, by William Ash 245

Greg Godels, *Exploitation*, by Alan Wertheimer 246

ABSTRACTS OF ARTICLES (in English and French) 253

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ABSTRACTS OF ARTICLES (in English and French) 253

# Theorizing Ideology: Contextualizing Marxist Intervention in Film Theory

Malek Khouri

Theorizing film has important implications on a major area of analyzing capitalist hegemony, one that relates to understanding the role of ideology in class struggle. The revolutionary transformation to socialism comprises several elements including the development of a working-class consciousness. As Marx emphasized, the struggle against capitalism and for socialism has a specific qualitative characteristic: it informs and is informed by the level of class consciousness of the proletariat, of this class becoming a “class *for* itself.”

Most Marxists agree that in today’s world—and as an ideological player—mass media performs an important role in the shaping of class consciousness. A subject of contention among many Marxists, however, centers around defining ideology in historical-materialist terms, and consequently on defining how ideology functions within the parameters of capitalist production relations.

Discussions about cinema epitomize many facets of the debates around ideology. But for many outside the domain of film studies, Marxist or Marxist-based contributions in film theory remain associated with the articulations made by Eisenstein and Soviet formalism in the early period of the Russian Revolution. Indeed, in this period breakthroughs were made in the application of dialectical-materialist theory to film editing, photography, and thematic presentation. These contributions,

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today, remain among the most important theoretical innovations in the history of cinema. In many ways, these articulations embody a crucial element within the Marxist perspective of aesthetics in the modern era. Developments in film criticism over the last three decades, however, reflected a wider range of discussions within the general framework of Marxist theory and politics. Many of these discussions—beginning in France in the mid-sixties and extending to England and the United States in the mid- and late seventies—made major thrusts within cultural criticism in general and became evolving points of reference within the discourse of film theory.

In this essay I will survey how the appraisal and reappraisal of the works of Althusser and Gramsci continue to form new and complex directions in theorizing cinema. I will examine the development of film theory in the direction of acknowledging the contradictory nature of hegemonic ideology. Culture is therefore conceived as a domain of political struggle that, although dominated by the interests and perceptions of a hegemonic social bloc, is also exposed to vigorous contestation by the dominated classes and other marginalized social groups. In this context, this paper rearticulates the position of the subject/spectator within the sociohistorical dynamics of cultural production and reception. It also emphasizes the notion of base and superstructure as a didactic tool that helps explain how social mediation plays the role of determining ideological effectivity.

### ***“Negative” and “positive” interpretations of ideology***

Many discussions on ideology begin with Marx’s formulation from his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations of production, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of

material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness. (1987, 263)

This formulation puts particular emphasis on the reproduction of existing relations of production. Accordingly, the movement of productive forces (mainly working people themselves, but also the material tools of production), plays a central role in determining and transforming the shape of society. A crude interpretation of this formulation, however, devises a dialectic through which culture and ideology passively reflect the stagnations and/or changes in production relations.

An important element in critical writing on film prior to the 1960s largely focused on a negative appropriation of Marx's notion of ideology. With varying levels of analytical depth and emphasis, such writing accentuated how dominant ideology reflects itself in cinematic practice. Through this assumption, critical writing focused on discussing the thematic and content messages put forward by films, and designated in the process the ideological identity of those messages. The concept of social realist cinema, for example, proposed alternative political and thematic film topics as foundations for providing a cinematic opposition to the dominant ideology.

While this approach was crucial in devising primary applications for an ideological theorizing of cinema, it proved less productive in relating economic and political determinants to the questions about subjectivity, consciousness, and ideological perception. Social realist understanding of ideology as false consciousness, as an all-encompassing superstructural formation that merely reflects the interests and the views of the socially dominant class, led to a reductionist view of the role of cinema in society.

Discussions since the late 1960s reflected a protracted struggle between negative and positive interpretations of ideology. In essence, the debate posed ideology as a necessary distortion that conceals social interests and contradictions against ideology as a neutral concept that refers also to the political consciousness of

different classes and groups including those of the dominated classes and marginalized social formations. In turn, film criticism began to seek and apply disparate theoretical frameworks. It benefited from French structuralism and semiotic analysis as well as poststructuralism and postsemiotics. Film theory also incorporated elements of contemporary Marxism and psychoanalysis. New critical approaches were elaborated in the British journal *Screen* throughout the 1970s, and offshoots of those discussions gradually became the new orthodoxy among many film academics. While stressing the need to look at film from a sociopolitical perspective, new critical orientations incorporated elements from Lacanian psychology and Althusser's theory of ideology.

***From false consciousness to interpellation  
and overdetermination***

Althusser stressed that ideology discloses a specific way of representing reality: that while it makes allusion to the real in a certain way, ideology bestows only an illusion of reality (1990, 26). He contended that ideology gives people a certain knowledge of their world, or rather allows them to "recognize" themselves in that world. At the same time, ideology only introduces people to its misrecognition: "allusion-illusion or recognition-misrecognition—such is ideology from the perspective of its relation to the real" (26).

According to Althusser, the first essential characteristic of ideology is that it is comprehensible only through its form, and that it comprises representations, images, signs, etc. Ideology, however, is not a simple tally of the elements of which it is constituted; rather, "it is their mode of arrangement and combination" that provides them with their meaning (26). In other words, it is the form and structure of those elements that eventually determine their meaning and function.

On the other hand, the structure and mechanisms of ideology are no more readily visible to the people subjected to them than the structure of the relations of production and the mechanisms of economic life produced by it are visible to the agents of production (26). Enticed by Jacques Lacan and psychoanalysis,

Althusser located the function of ideology within the process of constituting the individual as a subject. He demonstrated that ideology is not simply an illusion or false consciousness of the real society, but is instead a material system of social practices (which he calls ideological state apparatuses) producing certain effects upon individuals and providing them with their social identities. Ideology “naturalizes” or “makes obvious” the ways in which people live their lives in society; it is a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence (1977, 152–53).

Althusser also described how “interpellation” functions as the ongoing process by which subjects are constituted in ideology. In order to describe this process, he employed insights into the construction of the subject as provided by Lacan. The infant ego is constituted by the child’s identification with, or misrecognition of, its own autonomy and self-presence. Althusser suggested that such recognition and misrecognition works just as effectively in the social world as at the level of ideology; through ideology, the human subject regains an imaginary construction of its own autonomy. He argued that ideology, through its recognition function, recruits and transforms individuals into subjects.

The recognition function embodies (or is embodied by) the process of interpellation: ideology interpellates or hails individuals, that is, addresses itself directly to them. Althusser gave as an example a police officer hailing an individual by calling, “Hey, you there!” The hailed individual will turn around, recognize himself as the one who was hailed, and in the process become constituted as a subject. All hailed individuals, recognizing or misrecognizing themselves in the address are transformed into subjects conceiving of themselves as free and autonomous members of a society that has in fact constructed them.

Interpellation is achieved mainly through ideological state apparatuses such as church, family, educational system, trade unions, media, etc. It is these apparatuses, rather than the repressive state apparatus of police and courts, that secure the reproduction of social relations, and allow people to assume their sense of identity and the “reality” of their position (1977, 127–86).

Therefore, the main ideology question for Althusser relates to understanding *how* human subjects succumb to the dominant ideologies of their societies. As Terry Eagleton suggests, this question involves assessing how such submission to ideology (one that is critical to maintaining the power of a ruling class) occurs, and “by what mechanisms does this come about” (1983, 171). Eagleton explains:

What Althusser does, in other words, is to rethink the concept of ideology in terms of Lacan’s “imaginary.” For the relation of an individual subject to society as a whole in Althusser’s theory is rather like the relation of the small child to his or her mirror-image in Lacan’s. In both cases, the human subject is supplied with an object which reflects this image back to it in a closed, narcissistic circle. In both cases, too, this image involves a misrecognition, since it idealizes the subject’s real situation. The child is not actually as integrated as its image in the mirror suggests; I am not actually the coherent, autonomous, self-generating subject I know myself to be in the ideological sphere, but the “decentered” function of several social determinants. Duly enthralled by the image of myself that I receive, I subject myself to it; and it is through this “subjection” that I become a subject. (172–73)

The subject here is not forced to submit to ideological determinants. Implicit in Althusser’s theorization is an element of self-subjection practiced by this subject: “I subject myself to it.” It is within this context that Althusser’s approach contributes to moving the concept of ideology away from its essentialist negative interpretation connected with false consciousness.

The structurality of this subjection gives a space for a self-subjection that is not unequivocally determined by elements of the base (or the infrastructure), but is rather overdetermined by all structural elements of both the infrastructure *and* the superstructure. For Althusser, the full structure of the social body determines and is determined by “the various levels and instances of the social formation it animates; it might be called

overdetermined in its principle” (1977a, 101). In this context the capitalist-labor contradiction is always “specified by the forms of the superstructure” and “by the internal and external historical situation,” and therefore is “always overdetermined” (106).

### *Althusser in film theory*

Through their elaboration of the notion of ideology, mainly as a misrecognition, film theoreticians in the late 1960s began to look at film through a new perspective. An important *Cahiers du Cinema* article on John Ford’s film *Young Mr. Lincoln*, for example, suggested that the signifying practice and the system of signs lead to the possibility of an “oppositional” reading of ideology in the film (1976, 493). The article used Althusser’s analysis to map out several structural absences and gaps that revealed an underlying tension between the filmic text and the ideology of the film. It emphasized the need to read the text through the historicity of its inscription and its relationship to different codes (social, cultural, etc.).

As it attempted to decipher film units—that is, its structures and codes—film criticism became increasingly concerned with assessing the totality of the filmic structure. This gave weight to addressing film as a whole, rather than as a summation of its constituting parts. Some linked this strategy to assessing a filmic “surplus,” which includes “gaps, omissions, constraints, or even ‘structuring absences’ (the pressure of what is unsaid, upon that which is said)” (Nichols 1976, 7). Nichols illustrated how *Cahiers du Cinema* conceived and adopted this approach:

[It] indicate[d] how these gaps can result from the operation of the dominant ideology and the specific circumstances surrounding and enmeshed within a particular film. The whole is greater than its parts because the parts form patterns of interference, patterns whose characteristics the formally oriented critic can work to clarify rather than obscure through a desire for harmony. (1976, 7)

*Cahiers* was clearly elaborating a more positive interpretation of the concept of ideology. Critical assessment of the filmic whole

was considered possible because the ideologically informed text allowed for the detection of “interfering absences” that were present through the filmic parts.

Robert and Michael Lapsley argued that the *Cahiers* article emphasized the “Althusserian” perspective that the ideological operation of mainstream cinema discloses the reproduction of the capitalist system, and that its success in this domain is a function more of form than of content (1989, 8). In effect, the editors of *Cahiers du Cinema* were calling for “a revolutionary cinema that would break with the dominant ideology in respect of both form and content, and would establish a quite different relationship with its audience” (8).

Film critics (particularly in Europe) became increasingly interested in examining the ways that certain films were able to place obstacles against ideological hegemony. Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, for example, stressed that while communicating the world to itself, cinema is burdened by the need to reproduce things not as they really are, “but as they appear when refracted through ideology” (1976, 25). This “refraction” that underlies the general ideological discourse, occurs throughout the production/reception process, including its subjects, styles, forms, meanings, and narrative tradition. It is through recognizing that the mere nature of its system turns cinema into an instrument of ideology that one begins to appreciate the priority task facing the alternative filmmaker in “showing up” the cinema’s so-called “depiction of reality.” When filmmakers succeed in this chore, disrupting, or even severing the connection between cinema and its ideological functions becomes possible (25).

Other film theoreticians such as Stephen Heath had a different perspective. Heath viewed the semiotic analysis of film as a specific signifying practice, as an “analysis of a heterogeneity, the range of codes and systems at work in film over and across its five matters of expression (moving photographic image, recorded phonetic sound, recorded noise, recorded musical sound, and writing)” (1985, 512). In this context, Heath refuted the mechanistic notion of reducing film to its ideology, and proposed that it is “the complex relationships among pleasure,

meaning, commodity or industry, signifying practice, and text [that] pose[s] the central challenges [to film theory], not formalism or content analysis” (509).

But in its general thrust, the Althusserian intervention in film theory consistently struggled with ways to explain why the ideological underpinning of a narrative film is important. Film critics of this tradition generally viewed narrative representational strategies as elements that obscure social relations, institutions, and the representational strategies themselves. In a nutshell, the Althusserian tradition in film theory amounted to employing a psychoanalysis of perception to explain the disinformational interaction of ideology-laden film structures with a positioned viewing subject. While conscious of the nuances and the complexities of ideological affectivity, theoreticians related to the *Cahiers* magazine, Comolli and Narboni, and to a lesser extent Nichols and Heath, generally overemphasized how popular film shores up the capitalist patriarchal status quo.

Analyzing ideology in terms of how it is internalized by individual subjects can thus subscribe to the view that cultural forms are monolithic reflections or rationalizations of dominant interests. But if cultural forms literally have no content or basis other than the subjective expression of ruling-class (or dominant) interests, then there is little reason for the study of cultural practice to amount to anything more than deciding what aspect of ruling-class ideology a given cultural form reflects (a formal, descriptive procedure), or for the investigation of how an individual subject's perceptions are induced to correspond to the ideology embodied. While accounting for the interaction between the film and the viewer, discussions in the 1970s pointed to the need to assess how ideology and politics (both in and out of film) involve more than understanding language and Freud.

Film theory during that period, however, often steered into modes of analysis that remained problematic in many respects.

### ***Repositioning the text and the subject in history***

Paradoxically, the very attempt to understand filmic representation and to remove it from the realm of economic and social

determinism led to another form of totalization that worked against understanding the complexity, heterogeneity, and dynamics of cinema. Just as behavior cannot be reduced solely to its economic factors, so too it cannot be reduced to psychoanalytical or linguistic textual elements, themselves a form of cultural common sense. In this respect, important inroads paved earlier by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault added new depths to the discussion on ideology.

Barthes's elaborations on the role of the text, the author, and the subject in relation to art (written in the late fifties and only translated into English in the early seventies) had particular theoretical significance for film criticism (1976). While Barthes did not attempt to explain how ideology is produced through interactions between various institutions and discourses (Barthes referred to "discourse" in the context of myth), he nevertheless indirectly proposed a more positive perception of the notion of ideology.

Barthes argued that the way discourse (or mythology) is circulated through society makes a particular representation of the world seem natural and universal, so that an outsider to it cannot be imagined except as "unnatural," perverse, exotic, abnormal, stupid, and so on. But myth (as an ideological element) "hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion" (129). So instead of dismissing myth by cynically making its intentions obvious, or by demystifyingly unmasking it (122), Barthes focused his attention on exploring its temporal dimension; he contended that in the visual myth

the elements of the form therefore are related as to place and proximity: the mode of presence of the form is spatial. The concept [as a distortion of meaning] on the contrary, appears in global fashion, it is a kind of nebula, the condensation, more or less hazy, of a certain knowledge. Its elements are linked by associative relations: it is supported not by an extension but by a depth (although this metaphor is perhaps still too spatial): its mode of presence is memorial. (122)

In this respect, while acknowledging the spatial dimension of myth, and rather than restricting it to its structural “over-determinants”—as Althusser would have proposed—Barthes situated it within the parameters of an overdetermining historical dimension (i.e., memorial). I will be dealing later with this notion when I address the dichotomy between Althusser and Gramsci’s views on the subject. It suffices to mention here that the difference in contextualizing ideology—that is, between history and structure—bears on how film theory has traditionally overemphasized the significance of the cultural text as an ideological determinant. But let me deal first with how Barthes emphasized the centrality of the role of language over the intention of the author.

In contrast to the dominance and authority associated with the rising “prestige of the individual” in the late Middle Ages, Barthes considered the “modern” author as a mere “scriptor” (1977, 145). He suggested that the absence of the “author” has changed the modern text: instead of having a book and an author “stand[ing] automatically on a single line divided into a before and an after,” the “modern scriptor” does not precede or result from the work, but is born concurrently with it. The only existing moment is that of the “enunciation,” “and every text is eternally written here and now” (145). Writing is therefore a “performative” process: the role of the scriptor is not that of expression but of inscription, which has only language as its origin (146).

As a consequence of the author’s “disappearance,” any attempt to decipher the text becomes an unavailing task because it closes that text by suggesting it as a “final signified” (147). Instead, Barthes called for “disentangling” the text; rather than uncovering what is beneath the text, he proposed to run it “like a thread of a stocking” (147). The emphasis here is put on a different critical element that places the subject/reader/author in the main steering position: consequently, it is the reader, existing within specific “memorial presences” (read: historical) that determines the effectivity of the text.

Michel Foucault, on the other hand, dealt with authorship from the perspective of the relationship between the text and the author, and how the text “points to the figure who is outside and

precedes it" (1977, 14). Like Barthes, Foucault stressed that writing has been "transformed into an interplay of signs, regulated less by the content it signifies than by the very nature of the signifier," and that by referring to itself, writing has "freed itself from the necessity of expression" (15).

Writing, therefore creates primarily an opening where the writing subject (or scriptor) endlessly disappears (15). But more explicitly than Barthes, and, as he acknowledged, owing to the changing circumstances that surround the originating author, Foucault stressed the need to understand how authorship works: what are its dynamics and ultimately how and what historical moments enhance its functionality. He suggested a critical elaboration on the conditions of the text, "both the conditions of its spatial dispersion and its temporal deployment" (16).

Foucault also linked what he termed the "author-function" to other systems (that is, legal and institutional) all of which circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses. The "author-function" does not simply refer to an "actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy" (23). This "author-function" (that is, the modern author) neither operates in all discourses, at all times, and in any given culture, nor is the text a reflexive attribution to its creator, but is rather recognized through a precise procedure.

For Foucault, the question of authorship allows for an "introduction of an historical analysis of discourse" (28). The "author-function" reveal[s] the manner in which discourse is articulated on the basis of social relationships" (28). Consequently, Foucault's emphasis centers on the conditions and forms of an entity like the social subject appearing in, and effecting the order of, discourse, its position, its function, and its rules. Therefore, the "author" or its substitutes need to be "stripped of [their] creative role and analyzed as a complex and variable function of discourse" (28).

The critical elements introduced by Barthes and Foucault have important implications on how film theory applies the notion of ideology. On the one hand, they recognize the active position of the subject (spectator). On the other hand, they

provide bases for moving film analysis further away from the determinism of the notion of “false consciousness” and for recontextualizing ideology within history. The works of Barthes and Foucault, for example, have been influential in undermining the notion of the text as a seamless unity and as a “reflection of reality,” or conversely as a twist of the real (for example, false consciousness). By proposing it as a play of several voices, as the work of a collective “author” rather than a unique and totally autonomous producer, and therefore as a locus of contradictions, Foucault and Barthes questioned the designs and interests that texts have on their audience, as well as the ways in which the audience receives the text. In this context, both philosophers opened new possibilities for repositioning the cultural text within the sociohistorical materiality.

Critics of mass culture are finding new readings possible for texts that have previously been regarded as monolithic and regressive. Foucault’s studies on the origins of power, his inquiry into classical notions of institutional hierarchies and of victimage and his theoretical elaboration on the link between subalternity and social institutions, all offered (albeit indirectly, and without specifically referring to them as such) important inroads to positioning the notion of ideology the context of history.

By the mid-1980s, more film theorists began to deal with the implications of the negative interpretation of ideology. Ryan and Kellner argued that much of the work in film theory conceived of ideology in cinema in a way that tended to “flatten out necessary distinctions between different films at different moments of history and overlook the distinctive and multiple rhetorical and representational strategies and effects of varying social situations” (1988, 1). They emphasized that the relationship between film and social history is a “process of discursive transcoding” (12). To them, “films transcode the discourses of social life into cinematic narratives . . . [and thereby] execute a transfer from one discursive field to another” (12). They argued against the persistent endorsement by film theoreticians of a strictly negative conception of contemporary Hollywood film as a one-dimensional Althusserian “Ideological State Apparatus” or of

Hollywood narrative realism as inherently ideological (in the negative sense).

Marcia Landy, for example, focuses on Gramsci's conception of power and ideology as a less totalistic notion. She stresses that Gramsci's dialectical perspective "complicates ideas of revolutionary struggle by adding subjective factors" and by refusing to conceive ideology as simple false consciousness "that alters when social conditions alter" (1994, 25).

Christine Gledhill's studies of mainstream cinema point out specific theoretical bases for possibilities of cultural resistance. She stresses that by accepting the function of the mass media in making cultural definitions, one can take a more positive position toward "the spaces of negotiation in mainstream production" (1988, 65). She accentuates that "into dominant typifications and aesthetic structures are locked both atavistic and utopian desires; archetypal and futuristic motifs; sensibility and reason; melodrama and realism" (87). Gledhill contests the mechanistic interpretation of ideology as either "conspiratorial imposition" or as "unconscious interpellation." Instead she reiterates the Gramscian concept of hegemony underpinning the model of negotiation. Citing Gramsci she states:

Since ideological power in bourgeois society is as much a matter of persuasion as of force, it is never secured once and for all, but continually to be reestablished in a constant to and fro between contesting groups. "Hegemony" describes the ever shifting, ever negotiating play of ideological, social and political forces through which power is maintained and contested. The culture industries of bourgeois democracy can be conceptualized in a similar way: ideologies are not simply imposed—although this possibility always remains an institutional option through mechanisms such as censorship—but are subject to continuous (re-)negotiation. (68)

Similarly, Fredric Jameson points out that the totalizing account of the "postmodern" encompasses a space for various forms of oppositional culture existing within the boundaries of cultural hegemony and includes:

those of marginal groups, those of radically distinct residual or emergent cultural languages, their existence being already predicated by the necessarily uneven development of late capitalism, whose First World produces a Third World within itself by its own inner dynamic. In this sense postmodernism is “merely” a cultural dominant. To describe it in terms of cultural hegemony is not to suggest some massive and uniform cultural homogeneity of the social field but very precisely to imply its coexistence with other resistant and heterogeneous forces which it has a vocation to subdue and incorporate. (1994, 158–59)

In order to counteract what he conceives as “the political paralysis” of today, Jameson proposes an alternative view of “space” and political action provisionally naming it “the aesthetic of cognitive mapping.” Jameson, however, does not call for the mapping of old notions of space. Instead, this mapping becomes a new form of “radical” political culture, its fundamental object being the “world space of multinational capital” (54).

The notion of cognitive mapping as proposed by Jameson recognizes the need to steer between an awareness of global processes and the inability to grasp totality; it allows people to become aware of their own position in the world and to give them the resources to resist, and to make their own history. It is the logic of capital itself that produces an uneven development of space, in a way that renders it (i.e., the space) open for mapping. By mapping these spaces, Jameson hopes to provide new alternatives that can be utilized by oppositional cultures and new social movements in the struggle against capital. However, Jameson’s account of the “postmodern” cultural condition—and his emphasis on its capacity to shape social subjectivity under capitalism—distances culture from the potential and limitations of its socioeconomic materiality.

### ***“Postmodern” subjectivities***

Whether or not it assumes a “Marxist” identity—as in Jameson’s case—the tendency to overestimate the significance of the changes taking place today in the area of media communications and technology essentially represents an antimaterialist and

a relativist understanding of culture. It is a tendency that confuses the position of the social component within the process of cultural interaction. Theorists who support such approach generally propose that technological changes in the media encourage the development of “qualitatively” different subjectivities and structure new cultural identities.

Mark Poster, for example, argues that new systems of communication foster the emergence of distinctive subjectivities. He suggests that these changes usher the movement from a modernist stage within which individuals were impelled to be “rational, autonomous, centred, and stable” (what he characterizes as the “economic man of capitalism”), to a “postmodernist” period where identities are significantly nurtured by electronic communications. Poster also suggests that earlier forms of media highways prior to the late 1980s stimulated and rationalized “the capitalist or nation-state exploitation of image transmission” (1995, 25). In comparison, new technical innovations expanded the quantity and types of information to the extent that soon it may be able to transmit an imminent qualitative change in the culture (26).

Poster offers several examples of how words and images in today’s world “flit about the speed of light and procreate with indecent rapidity, out of and within “decentered” locations (29). He concludes that these changes alter forever the surroundings within which “the identity of the self is formed” (31). As a result, a new decentered, “unstable, multiple and diffuse” subject (32) is emerging. These qualitative changes are realized through the quantitative shifts in the form and scope of technological interactivity, which (i.e., interactivity) has become “desirable as an end in itself so that its usage can float and be applied in countless contexts having little to do with telecommunications” (33). It is a situation where new technologies, like the Internet, “encourage the proliferation of stories, local narratives without any totalizing gestures, and places senders and addresses in symmetrical relations” (38).

Poster’s assumptions regarding the fixity and stability of the modern subject in comparison to the fluidity and decentrality of

“postmodern” subjectivity are, however, problematic; he does not make clear how changes connected with the new technologies affect the relationship between the new social subject and the public space in a way that is *qualitatively* different from earlier technologies. On the one hand, Poster correctly suggests that new technologies avail radically different forms and quantities of communication tools for the use by today’s social subjects. On the other hand, however, he does not address how the consumption, reception, and utility of these tools are largely influenced by the economic, social, and cultural interactions of the historically situated dominant production relations. Walter Benjamin’s propositions regarding the changing nature of the arts since the late nineteenth century, are applicable to our assessment of the changes affecting new forms of communication technologies.

In his important essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Benjamin demonstrated that by breaking away from isolation, and through new forms of distribution and exhibition, art has been able to increase dramatically the level of social participation in the process of its articulation and reception. Through marketing and reproduction, arts became functional tools in wider ideological and political struggles. As a new form of representation, mechanical reproduction of the arts has freed them from their dependence and reliance on “rituality”: the reproduced work of art became “the work of art designed for reproducibility” (1992, 669). This has allowed for the reversal of its functional foundation from the ritual to the political (670).

But rather than limiting his study of the quantitative changes affecting the production and distribution of art to the technical and formal characteristics of its transformation, Benjamin resituates these changes in the historical moment of their development. By recognizing the moment within which technological changes are taking place, he also acknowledges the potential as well as the limitations that shape the social utility of these changes; this is a consideration that Poster fails to incorporate. Instead, Poster’s approach reduces an entire sociohistorical moment into one of its determinants: the changing form of communication technology.

Consequently, he seems to conceive of the transformations in this technology as sufficient basis for altering the nature, position and role of the subject within society.

Communications writer John Thompson submits that the changing character of visibility (largely due to technological changes in communication technologies) underlies changes in political power relationships. He suggests that transformations affecting the field of public visibility are “part of a broader shift in the nature of the public sphere” itself (1995, 120). He discusses the changing dynamics in the dichotomy between public and private spaces and how they interact with the visible and invisible aspects of power.

Citing the radical transformations affecting public access to communications and media technology, Thompson argues against the validity of Foucault’s analogy of the Panopticon prison as a “generalizable model for the exercise of power in modern societies” (134). He suggests that considering the fundamental historical evolution in communications, the relationship between the governed and the governor has also taken different direction from the one suggested by Foucault:

the development of communication media provides a means by which many people can gather information about a few and, at the same time, a few can appear before many; thanks to the media, it is primarily those who exercise power, rather than those over whom power is exercised, who are subjected to certain kind of visibility. (134)

Any observer of the recent media disclosures surrounding President Bill Clinton’s relation with Monica Lewinsky can see how vulnerable figures of power have become in the face of public probe, largely as a result of the role played by the media. In fact, one can further argue that most nonpublic offenders do not usually undergo the level of attention and scrutiny associated with the media’s coverage of the U.S. president’s own brush with the law.

There is no doubt that major changes in how we observe (and conceive of) political public figures have been influenced by transformations occurring in the dominant media in general.

However, the suggestion that the manner in which the transformation of visibility in relation to the public space is by itself capable of altering the nature of the public space and the nature of power and power relationships is nevertheless unsubstantiated. On the one hand, this argument reduces the notion of public visibility to one of its clearer and more direct formative elements (i.e., public visibility as manifested through media technology). As we have seen earlier with Poster's propositions, such an approach potentially underestimates the crucial role played by other elements that are pertinent to the process of communication, including those of form, access, consumption, and utility, all of which are elements within specific socioeconomic relations. Another point of contention here relates to Thompson's narrow definition of the concept of power.

By overemphasizing the embodiment of power in government, Thompson measures this power by only one of its determinants, i.e., by the level to which governments benefit or suffer from public visibility. Much as Poster's approach mistakes quantitative developments in communication systems for qualitative leaps in the nature and position of the social subject, John Thompson's account for the changing features of visibility misconstrues these changes for qualitative transformation in the nature of power relations.

Recent debates around the controversial MAI treaty and the increasing role of finance capital, for example, challenges assumptions that overstate the disposition of power in the hands of national governments as a whole. If anything, understanding issues related to power and visibility needs to incorporate a critical appreciation of wider and more subtle socioeconomic dynamics of power and their interaction with the media and other systems of communication.

The arena of power in the late twentieth century *is* being influenced by new cultural factors stemming from radically different forms of communications.

As an axis of *hegemonic* relationships, this arena is affected by the changes occurring in the fields of communication "beginning with print and including the more recent electronic media." These changes, as Thompson correctly suggests, have

“reconstituted the boundaries between public and private life” (125) and consolidated the establishment and the elaboration of “mediated publicness”:

The fundamental feature of these new forms is that, with the extension of availability made possible by the media, the publicness of individuals, action or events is no longer linked to the sharing of common locale. An action or event can be made public by being recorded and transmitted to others who are not physically present at the time and place of its occurrence. (126)

But under capitalism the realities associated with the explosion of information and communication are opening new spaces for revolutionizing all aspects of social and cultural and interactivity; this means that in order for cultural and social identities to influence and alter dominant power structures and relations, they are compelled to function within the parameters of specific historical moments, ones that come with a teeming socioeconomic baggage. The significance of media communication and other forms of interactive technology, the use of public space, and our perception of the symbols of power in today’s society, therefore, cannot be adequately considered without assessing their position in connection with dominant production relations.

### *Culture in the context of historical specificity*

More than ever before, cultural interactivity is asserting its role as one mode of exchange and struggle that informs and is informed by contending social interests. Different forms and utilities of mass communication remain integral components of larger cultural materiality itself modified by the process of commodification. Historically, this process emerged in conjunction with the development of the capitalist mode of production, that has culturally contributed to the destruction of the religious and sacramental aura that surrounded earlier cultural manifestations, but has also replaced it with yet another historically specific function and characterization. As commodities, communication facilities are perceived within a historical ideological

framework, one that contributes to the reproduction of a specific set of production relations, that is to say, of power structures.

Jürgen Habermas describes how the “general” accessibility of culture is interconnected with its commodification, i.e., its development and distribution within the market (1989, 36). Consequently, the wider access to, and the changing forms in, the field of cultural interaction do not on their own bring about qualitative changes in the nature of existing public spheres, neither do they single-handedly determine how public spaces interact with power structures.

The utility of technical and formal changes in communications informs and is informed by the dialectics of a specific social, economic, and cultural plane, which means that social determinants have major impact on the role of the public sphere itself, as well as on how it interacts with economic and political structures. Habermas contends that the process that “converted culture into a commodity (and in this fashion constituted it as a culture that could become an object of discussion to begin with) established the public as in principle inclusive” (37). Since cultural products became available as commodities, private people “profaned it inasmuch as they had to determine its meaning on their own (by way of rational communication with one another), verbalize it, and thus state explicitly what precisely in its implicitness for so long could assert its authority” (37).

By tracing the evolution and the class structure of the public sphere in the eighteenth century, Habermas outlines the ideological premises that govern the characterization of this sphere not only as an arena for deliberating issues of significance to the public, but also as a domain that allows and encourages general access to its usage (37). Habermas, however, remains conscious of the ideological limitations inscribed in this dynamic. He describes how “bourgeois” institutionalization of the public as discussants never equated itself with the public, “but at most claimed to act as its mouthpiece, in its name, perhaps even as its educator—the new form of bourgeois representation” (37). He contends:

The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public:

they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. (27)

Public spheres are therefore elements within wider historical realm. Irrespective of how we define the parameters, scope, or constituents of the arena of the public sphere, this sphere is itself determined within historically specific economic and social moments. By accounting for the public sphere in historically defined terms, we can also assess its inherent possibilities *and* limitations (including those related to developing systems of communication technology and other forms of cultural production) and point out the nature of its interactive influence on hegemonic power relationships.

Furthermore, understanding the nature of communication systems as dynamics within a specific historical moment also denotes the understanding of culture as an element of hegemony. As we have seen earlier, the context that enhances the hegemonic functioning of capitalist social structures is largely contingent upon an ideological consensus around privatizing the notion of the public. Accordingly, what is conceived as a free-for-all cultural public domain is essentially governed by a hegemonic consensus (a consensus that remains marked by incessant political contentions and struggles) around the general framework of capitalist ideological interpretations and notions.

### ***Williams and “the sociology of culture”***

To appreciate fully the changes occurring within the cultural sphere as a whole, one needs to account for several elements of sociocultural interactivity. In this context, Raymond Williams’s analytical propositions become relevant to reassessing the limitations associated with mass-communications theory and its limited appreciation of the workings of social and cultural relationships.

Williams conceives cultural production as a process within which “meanings and values” use language as a material form

that relies on “specific technologies of writing and mechanical and electronic communication systems” (1980, 243). He consistently scrutinizes the tendency to present the institutions of modern communications as socially neutral institutions. In his book *Marxism and Literature*, Williams suggests that the negation of the social character of these institutions has resulted in:

the concept of the “mass” replacing and neutralizing specific class structures; the concept of “manipulation” (an operative strategy in capitalist advertising and politics) replacing and neutralizing the complex interactions of control, selection, incorporation, and the phases of social consciousness which correspond to real social situations and relations. (1977, 136–37)

Williams acknowledges the need to isolate temporarily precise elements within the general framework of cultural analysis (based on specific methodological priorities). However, he emphasizes that an essential precept of a sociology of culture lies in the “complex unity of the elements thus listed or separated.” It is this unity, Williams contends, that epitomizes the task of the sociology of culture as a task that is distinct “from the reduced sociology of institutions, formations, and communicative relationships and yet, as a sociology, radically distinct also from the analysis of isolated forms” (140).

In his study of the social, literary, and intellectual history of the dichotomies between the country and the city, Raymond Williams demonstrates how conceptions and assumptions, and ultimately relations, “are not only about ideas and experiences, but of rent and interest, of situation and power: a wider system” (1973, 7). As such his analysis takes the shape of an inquiry into the “history of perspectives, rather than historical errors” (10). Williams looks at the subject of his analysis as it moves in time and “through the history of a family and a people, moving in feelings and ideas, through a network of relationships and decisions” (7–8).

Williams proposes to expand the analysis of “each kind of retrospect” and the “successive stages of criticism that the retrospect supports: religious, humanist, political, cultural” (12). He

maintains that “local,” “particular,” and “personal” exploration of the (English) literary modes of representing the country and the city reveals the social and political process(es), and the cultural consequences that are the result of the (largely) unquestioned and (apparently) uncontested adoption of a particular economic system. He also maintains that cultural sociology should incorporate a historical assessment of “different types of institution and formation in cultural production and distribution,” and “linking of these within whole social material processes” (1977, 138). This includes studying a wide scope of cultural domains such as different institutions like theaters “and their predecessors and successors”; formations (many of which do not necessarily have clear connection with specific institutional frameworks such as literary and intellectual movements); formed relationships (such as audience formation); and finally form (the study of the text or the formal qualities of the cultural medium itself):

Indeed in many arts, while the manifest social content is evident in one way in institutions, formations, and communicative relationships, and in another way in forms which relate to specific selections of issues, specific kinds of interpretation and of course specifically reproduced content, an equally important and sometimes more fundamental social content can be found in the basic social means—historically variable and always active social forms of language and movement and representation—on which, ultimately, the more manifest social elements can be seen to depend. (139)

Williams emphasizes the study of form as an extension (rather than as a replacement) of wider systems of cultural interactivity. The question remains: how can we bring this wide cultural domain to bear practically upon the study of specific cultural forms and products?

***Film studies and the challenge of the sociological reading of the text***

Much of the academic discourse on film continues to eclipse or mystify the political connections and implications of the

cinematic text. In many respects, it engages in a formalist analysis that is arbitrarily distanced from the historical elements of social and political culture; it also blurs the dynamics of ideology in connection with dominant hegemonic power structures. Even as it acknowledges the importance of assessing those structures, it continues to perceive of them as fixed hierarchies and center of power.

Therefore, in spite of the major inroads that have been opened by Barthes and Foucault, the role played by the spectator/subject in film theory remains problematic and is often reduced to passivity. Because it provides bases to analyze cultural products as contested spaces of ideology, Gramsci's notion of hegemony repositions ideological theorization in the realm of the politics of history, social agency, and social transformation. To clarify this connection, I will discuss the relationship between base and superstructure in connection with the role of the social subject.

The incorporation of Lacanian psychoanalysis has affected the notion of ideology by shifting it further away from the concept of false consciousness. Althusser's focus on ideology questioned the endurance of dominant ideological practices, and provided an entry to understanding the relationships of economics, politics, and culture. Like Gramsci, Althusser challenged the reductionist reading of Marx's notion of the relationship between base and superstructure. Even closer to Gramsci was the way in that Althusser perceived popular culture (particularly folklore) as an expression of opposition. Likewise, Althusser's examination of the role of the state and civil society in developing consent bears some similarity to Gramsci's characterization of hegemony. Gramsci, however, offered a more flexible, and perhaps clearer analysis of the nature of the state in a civil society and of how hegemony involves consensus rather than coercion.

Hegemony for Gramsci goes beyond the restrictive parameters of "false consciousness" or direct control and manipulation of the masses. The population's "common-sense" (or "philosophies"), according to Gramsci, is made up of a variety of elements, some of which contest the dominant ideology. Hegemonic ideology provides a more coherent and systematic world view that not only influences, molds, or "hails" people, but

serves as a principle of organization of social institutions. Gramsci's rejection of the negative conception of ideology ultimately led him to recognize it as a "terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc." (1971, 377). It is within the parameters of ideology that Gramsci explains how classes secure adhesion and consent of the wider segments of the population (i.e., through hegemony).

For Gramsci, ideology does not simply reflect or mirror economic class interests, and in this sense it does not represent a "given" determined by the economic structure or organization of society, but is rather an arena of struggle. Ideology therefore organizes action through the way it is embodied in social relations, institutions, and practices, and informs all individual and collective activities (Mouffe 1979).

In some important respects, Foucault's work addresses some of the deliberations put forward by Gramsci; his ideas about the dissemination of power within culture (in contrast to it operating decisively from above) are a good example of that. In some ways, Gramsci's writing on power (particularly his notion of hegemony), represents a middle ground between, on the one hand theorists like Foucault, with his views on power and power determinants, and on the other hand Marx's concern about agency and revolutionary politics. As Alan Hunt points out, however, Foucault does not explain how specific discursive formations become dominant: instead, Foucault's "epistemological wariness" in his historical studies made him dodge dealing with the question of causality (Hunt 1991, 52). Nevertheless, in light of the theoretical directions opened up by Foucault (as well as by Barthes), Gramsci's work generates new possibilities for film theory and its articulation of the notion of ideology.

Gramsci's interest in the nature and impact of the dynamics of popular forms of communication is particularly important; his emphasis on the role of those emerging dynamics as elements in political and cultural change has specific relevance to the development of film theory and the historical, dialectical perspective on culture. On the other hand, Gramsci's alertness to the existing social and economic structures points to the importance of deliberating the multiple factors that affect the correlation between

the cultural and the political. In cultural studies this signifies reintroducing the political into the analysis. It impedes the determinist confines of both economism and/or false consciousness in the reductionist interpretations of Marxism. The question remains: how can we bring this wide cultural domain to bear practically upon the study of specific cultural forms and products? First, let us examine Marx's largely misinterpreted notion of base and superstructure and try to resituate it in the realm of its historical materialist perspective.

***The social subject in the context of base and superstructure***

Comparing Gramsci and Althusser on the issue of base and superstructure demands that we emphasize the difference between the goals of each of them. For Gramsci, the main concern is with the relationship between the objective forces (the economic infrastructure) and the ability of people to act freely and to launch their own intervention into the confines of specific social and historical conditions. Understanding how economic and social factors interact with the superstructure becomes imperative for historical analysis and for assessing the process of cultural production. Equally crucial for Gramsci's position is that causality be comprehended in connection with human history as it materializes in specific modes of production in specific socioeconomic frameworks *and* as aggregated by specific superstructural effects. This, however, does not mean that causality is an issue of mere empirical research. Instead, the interaction in question is an object of empirical testing of history and of historical consequences.

For Althusser the issue at hand is one of epistemology. As he endeavors to define a form of causality that is fundamentally different from the mechanical causality of vulgarized Marxism, Althusser resists the expressive causality of Hegel within which an essence—or spiritual cause—gives organic wholeness to reality and exists hidden underneath the countless disclosures of history. Althusser defines the economic as a function of the structure and the social totality as made of interacting parts, none of which is in itself dominant or determinant. Each of those parts has its own lucid stamina and may, only occasionally, become a determining

element. Consequently, Althusser stipulates a “relative autonomy” to the different superstructural levels in a way that downplays the necessity of the economic factor on which the structure of the whole conclusively depends, but whose influence is “overdetermined” by the superstructure.

Both Gramsci and Althusser see social reality as something more than the sum of its parts. But by this, Althusser means that the heterogeneity of social phenomena (or social reality) is a structure that is distinguished by the relationships among its elements. Hence, since the social combination is ultimately a structural whole, there cannot be an independent entity that can be referred to as the economic base. In other words, the “infrastructural economic” becomes just one other element of the social essence and therefore just one other element (or “cause”) of art, religion, law, politics, etc. (1970, 186–89).

Gramsci, on the other hand, centers not so much on the relationship itself between the structure and the superstructure, as on the place of human agency within it. Although he postulates that people acting consciously are the agents of history, this history cannot be explained simply in terms of collective opinions and actions. In the words of Joseph Femia:

Social interaction may have patterned consequences that none of the participants intended or foresaw. The independent conscious designs of the various individuals in the system may produce a configuration of forces which confront each man compulsively. So productive forces which have intentionality built into them can be determining, in so far as they entail consequences and requirements that elude our control. (1981, 117)

To understand the potential of Gramsci’s approach it is important to account for the material underpinnings of his assessment of the relationship between ideology and its socio-economic dimensions. Underestimating this aspect of Gramsci’s analysis deprives it of the multifaceted power that enhances its analytical dynamics. While recognizing that there was no automatic reaction between changes in the economy and changes in ideology, Gramsci also saw the connection between the two, and

ultimately the determining role of the economy (1971, 184). Indeed his conception of “organic crises” explores the relationship between crises in the economic terrain, where classes acquire their basic identity and interests, and the conjunctural field, where political and ideological forces fight out the underlying conflicts in the relations of production:

A common error in historic-political analysis consists in an inability to find the correct relation between what is organic and what is conjunctural. This leads to presenting causes as immediately operative which in fact only operate indirectly, or to asserting that the immediate causes are the only effective ones. In the first case there is an excess of “economism,” or doctrinaire pedantry; in the second, an excess of “ideologism.” In the first case there is an overestimation of mechanical causes, in the second an exaggeration of the voluntarist and individual element. (1971, 178)

In comparison with Althusser’s emphasis on structural causality and overdetermination, for Gramsci what underlies the base-superstructure relationship is what he alludes to as the “historical bloc.” This “bloc” is the tangible materialization of the interconnection between the economic base and the ethico-political superstructure. By extension, the intellectuals who are organically tied to the hegemonic classes and social groups are in essence the functionaries of the superstructure. This makes the superstructure only as effective as its parts are organized, propagated, and, in other words made hegemonic by the conscious (and material) intervention of social agency.

By stating that “structures and superstructures form an historical bloc” and that “the complex, contradictory and discordant *ensemble* of the superstructures is the reflection of the *ensemble* of social relations of production” (1971, 366), Gramsci enables us to assess how material forces set limits to the operations of ideology. Therefore what differentiates between Gramsci and Althusser in relation to the base-superstructure interaction involves much less the theoretical assumptions regarding the dialectics of interdependence of levels (which are essentially shared by both thinkers), than Gramsci’s underscoring of the

*historically adapted actions of collective social agents at all levels of the social totality.*

Through proposing basic unity between the base and superstructure, Gramsci strips the notion of causality as determinism (whether “mechanical,” “expressive,” or “structural”) of its theoretical validity or centrality. Since social subjectivities are not determined or dominated in what they do or think, therefore they are not “forced,” or destined to live according to the dictates of particular structures or structural elements; yet, at the same time, social subjectivities are not free to operate beyond the limitations (and the opportunities) or conditions set by the concrete historical existence of these structures.

Since social subjectivities operate in their material practice within the structural limitations that they inhabit, they become potentially capable of “negotiating” their conditioning, and of becoming active, creative agents in grappling to break the bounds of a necessity that in the last analysis is only relative. This is what Gramsci calls the moment of catharsis, which indicates “the passage from the purely economic (or egoistic-passional) to the ethico-political moment.” This also means the passage from “objective to subjective” and from “necessity to freedom” (1971, 366–67). In other words:

Structure ceases to be an external force which crushes man, assimilates him to itself and makes him passive; and is transformed into a means of freedom, an instrument to create a new ethico-political form and a source of new initiatives. (367)

This does not mean that the ethicopolitical moment holds priority over the economic. On the contrary, the subject acting in history moves within a historical bloc in which base and superstructure organically interact. Therefore, the economic becomes the means by which superstructural modifications are realized within specific moments in history.

### ***Mediation on the superstructural level***

As we have seen earlier, much of the critical writing on cinema is largely immersed in a “negative” perception of ideology. Under this assumption dominant ideology is preassigned a

homogeneous role within the social, political, and cultural structures that it inhabits. This leads to a preoccupation with the rhetoric of which, or whose, myth or ideology “dominates” the processes of cinematic production and reception. Based on this pretext, the main critical concern becomes centered around: (1) “unmasking” meanings within an ideologically “complete” filmic text, and (2) citing “markers” of difference and marginality within that text. What begs critical answers, however, is *how* historically specific hegemonic relationships work ideologically within the filmic text. Through dealing with this critical challenge, Marxist film criticism can transcend the rhetoric of ideological classifications, and assume a proactive (read: organic) role as a transformatory political agency.

Critical analysis that restricts itself to examining the criteria allotted by the filmic text will always be vulnerable to reductionism. The same way vulgarized versions of Marxist analysis reduce ideology and ideological formations into a “reflection” of sameness of economic and social structures, reducing critical analysis of the ideological workings of film into an examination of the qualities of the formal text makes such analysis vulnerable to conceiving this text as a mirror that has the capacity of reflecting “samely” the ideological reality that it inhabits.

Incorporating an explicit assessment of the historical “context” into critical analysis (including what does not directly or necessarily implicate the formal text but nevertheless refers to its social historicity) introduces an appropriation of the cinematic process as a social signifier.

Mediation asserts the possibility of passing from one level of the superstructure to another (and, as I have discussed earlier, between levels of base and the superstructure) in a way that illustrates how different languages expressed at the various levels represent diversely modified manifestations of the same essence. Through mediation, one can explain a text in terms of its extra-textual relations, not in order to establish a “sameness” of identity between filmic structure and material practices, but rather to show that superstructural phenomena are mere projections of other infrastructural realities (e.g., political, philosophical, institutional) in the sense that they have in common an inner logic and that they possess similar functions and characteristics.

The concept of mediation is reaffirmed through “convertibility” or “translation.” These are seen by Gramsci as general principles that establish the fundamental unity of superstructural and infrastructural spheres. Convertibility makes possible the reciprocal translation of the specific languages of any given system. For example, while it possesses a distinct language of its own, film is translatable into a common language that describes the peculiar characteristics of a world view or the universal structure of a given sociocultural system.

But as social, economic and political discourses cannot on their own determine full understanding and ultimately a change in cultural discourse, filmic discourse in isolation of these and other discourses cannot determine an understanding of the social significance of the “extra-filmic text.” A historical-materialist critical reading needs to attest first to the historical moments of a specific film. This implies a reading that accounts for the empirically “extra-textual” (e.g., the quantitatively political, philosophical, historical), and the formally cinematic (i.e., the form as a qualitative sphere).

For any cultural criticism to incorporate mediation it has to acknowledge that this process involves more than a mere unmasking of meanings from within the text as a substitute for assessing extra-textual attributes. Mediation brings together two seemingly separate elements from two different spheres to address their relationship and interactivity. In order to provide a social and historical understanding of the filmic text, analysis has to bring together both spheres of intelligibility that it is interested in addressing.

### *Consciousness and social agency*

Ideology involves different forms or levels of social consciousness, all of which contribute to sustaining present hegemony as well as to challenging and moving beyond present social and economic relationships. Resistance by the so-called “margin” or “dominated” is a process that occurs within specific class relationships whose ability to sustain stability is contingent on specific historical conditions. But while ideology particularly involves “those modes of feeling, valuing, perceiving and

believing which have some kind of relation to the maintenance and reproduction of social power” (Eagleton 1983, 15), such conditions also allow for different levels of consciousness among the subaltern to emerge, and eventually for social agency to play a decisive role in shaping history. As such, ideology transcends “expressing” (or samely reflecting) entrenched and/or unconscious sets of values and influences.

The ideological role of cinema is part of a particular common sense within a larger hegemonic process that produces a particular vision of life and reality. This amounts to the active presence within the cinematic text of a number of paradoxical elements, all of which are bearers of complex ideological messages that, viewed from a relative distance, appear to merge into a hegemonic dialectic.

The ideological question can be addressed when the cinematic work is seen as a practice directed at reforming consciousness. Concretely, this occurs at specific points in the cinematic narrative when “values”—moral, political, social, and otherwise—are challenged and eventually resolved (or left without a resolution). These are the points when the spectator is presented with a dilemma that has to be settled. How does the formal-textual logic, from which the cinematic ideological effectivity originates, set limits to the ideological perception of history and reality? How do thoughts, emotions, and sensory awareness acquire specific historical significance? I contend that both the formal and the nonformal elements of the cinematic work remain relative in their function (i.e., devoid of meaning) until they become supplied by a “subject”-ive critical interpretation.

As a form of cultural communication that relies largely on expressing common-sense stories and ideas and on popular appeal, film is a medium where the representation of ideological working assumes specific social and historical significance. Different levels of consciousness (i.e., both from inside and outside the formal qualities of the filmic text) function to determine the ideological effectivity of the filmic product. By seeking to understand how film presents different aspects of social and cultural interaction, all of which articulate “free will” and

“independence” into the ideology of specific hegemonic formations, film criticism can map out the dynamics of social agency and resistance and, ultimately, the crucial element for overcoming submission: social consciousness.

To study cinema in its historical context involves studying a cultural dynamic against which the novelty or originality of a specific filmic work can be surveyed. In reality, such a composite is a sociocultural system that cannot be reduced to struggles involving contradiction or negation. It is not a dialectical whole, but rather a universe of dissonance that has acquired an apparent order, reflected in cultural artifacts and philosophies to which we tend to assign the description of cultural experiences. The oppositions, paradoxes, solidarities, conflicts, continuities, and changes within this system constitute one of the main objects of critical exploration that could involve the questioning and examining of everything from every possible angle.

### ***Conclusion***

Critical assessment of cinema is not epistemology, but a dialectical strategic perspective on what is to be known. Criticism, in other words, should not be confused with aspiring to insert culture into some preestablished, teleological scheme and the reduction of a particular filmic work to a series of dialectical contradictions or negations. Neither should we confuse it with an endless metonymic fragmentation of the text or the form in which it is conceived and received in a way that assigns the text as the only focus of social, cultural, and political critical interaction. In order for us to understand the concept of cultural reality as a process (or processes), we need to explore causal relationships as empirical constituents within the ideology.

Today, a socially interested reading of cinema has to account for how ideologies and discourses assume positions of social and cultural domination. It needs to address why a film becomes popular, and why, under other conditions, it makes no sense for the audience and is hence rendered unpopular. Such reading cannot avoid acknowledging the concept of hegemony. As Alan Hunt asserts, “hegemony is important in providing an understanding of the complex processes that secure and reproduce the

predominance of particular strategies, projects and discourses” (1991, 55). Thus, a film criticism that is interested in addressing and contemplating the notions of marginality, social struggles, conflicts, and subaltern resistance and culture has to be based on a strategy that involves locating elements of the hegemonic (and/or counterhegemonic) process. Understanding any intellectual climate presupposes an analysis of the underlying ideas or philosophies characterizing a specific milieu, how they are rooted in material practices, how they circulate within the various parts of the superstructure, and how phenomena that might appear different contain a common ideological nucleus, the substance and functions of which may be reciprocally converted or translated from one to the other. Cinema only comes into being in relation to the limits placed on it by time and place, and by concrete and historically situated language and consciousness.

As part of class struggle, critical analysis is in itself an element within historically specific hegemonic relationships. Therefore a Marxist-oriented critical analysis needs to assess what films most evidently manifest in relation to ideological intelligibilities. In other words it needs to bring together what is already evident within the filmic text in mediation with the ideological formations of which it is part. As such, a working-class-based study of cinematic culture would reaffirm its function as a study of the relationship between cinema and the society in which it resides.

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# **The Hidden War: Working-Class Resistance during the Third Reich and the Postwar Suppression of Its History**

**Patricia P. Brodsky**

Ask any nonspecialist, German or American, about the German resistance to Hitler and fascism, and you will most likely be told about the White Rose and the July 20th plot. And there the response will end. These resisters came primarily from the privileged classes. The small group of university students around the brother and sister Hans and Sophie Scholl sprang mainly from the educated upper middle class—the group to which university attendance was by and large limited until after World War II. Their constituency, also, consisted primarily of fellow students and other members of the university community.

The July 20th group, whose failed attempt to assassinate Hitler on July 20, 1944, gave the Nazis an excuse for a devastating wave of arrests, was more heterogeneous. It included high-ranking military officers, diplomats, representatives of the conservative Prussian landed gentry, clergy, and a few Social Democrats. For the most part, its long-range goals were “restorative and authoritarian,”<sup>1</sup> and its short-range ones were mainly damage control (Kershaw 1985, 779). Carl Goerdeler, one of the July 20th leaders, voiced a concern shared by most of the conspirators that “only Germany could stop Bolshevism. If Germany is weakened by the loss of the war and an unfavorable peace, Bolshevism will find an easier, perhaps all too easy, path to the West” (Gottschaldt 1985, 147). They hoped to form, after

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eliminating Hitler, a new government that could negotiate to maximum advantage with the Allies. Certainly none of the conspirators longed for a return of the ill-starred Weimar Republic, and few if any of them envisioned a democratic Germany after the war.

But there was a much more broadly based German resistance, carried on by ordinary working people with common economic experiences, a tradition of class solidarity, and a shared hatred of fascism. Although it touched the lives of far more people than the conservative resistance, grassroots working-class resistance was either ignored or vilified by many West German historians, journalists, and politicians after the war. In the German Democratic Republic this resistance took center stage, but in the Federal Republic it was not until a new generation of historians began to publish in the 1960s that the conservative gag on the “other” resistance was cast off. The true complexity of the movement then began to emerge (Müller 1986, 16; Peukert 1981, 3).<sup>2</sup> Nor was this “other” resistance part of a postwar German education. Antje Dertinger, author of several books on the working-class resistance, wrote in 1987:

Aside from Stauffenberg and the other men of July 20 there were many other resistance fighters, about whom nobody spoke for decades. In school we learned everything about Sophie Scholl and the White Rose, but hardly anything about the Edelweißpiraten and nothing at all about the other youth resistance groups. Don't you think it's time to speak about these nameless ones? (Dertinger 1987, 20)

In the following pages I will outline some of the forms this resistance took, and examine some of the reasons for its suppression.

Special circumstances prevailing in Germany made resistance particularly difficult there. It is generally easier to organize mass resistance to a foreign occupier than to a regime which, whatever its politics, is made up of one's own countrymen. Thus the resistance to the Nazis in places like Poland, France, or Greece had mass popular support which was not available to the German antifascists. For a long time, the National Socialists kept the

people cowed by a combination of carrot and stick, offering national pride and economic revenge to the lower middle class, while actively persecuting the working class and anyone else who overtly opposed Nazi policies.

The Nazi seizure of power in 1933 brought an immediate onset of political terror against the Left and the labor unions. All independent unions were banned, and German workers were forced into the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront*, the official Nazi union. Radical unionists had no chance of representation on the job, but they remained in contact secretly, through organizations like the illegal Reich Directorate of Unions (Peukert 1981, 11). All opposition parties were also banned, their presses and assets seized, and their leaders imprisoned. Those who escaped had to go underground, and the phase of illegal resistance began.

The Communist Party of Germany (the KPD), which had been targeted by political repression ever since its founding in 1919, was better prepared for the move underground in 1933 than the Socialists (the SPD), which had become an increasingly middle-class party. Both the KPD and the SPD fatally misjudged the strength and efficiency of the new regime. The Socialists thought the Nazis were a marginal phenomenon that would burn itself out, while the Communists believed that a popular revolution would soon overthrow them (Merson 1986, 43–44). In addition, the movement was split by a history of bad blood between the two parties. A major point of disagreement was the question of a United Front of the various antifascist forces. There was opposition and mistrust on both sides, and though the United Front eventually, in early 1935, became official Communist policy, it came too late to be of much help to the embattled activists in the underground.<sup>3</sup>

But despite all their miscalculations, the working-class parties formed the backbone of a heroic struggle in the face of almost insurmountable odds. Both tried to maintain a centralized clandestine party structure. Their principal goals were to maintain a support network of dependable antifascists, give aid to fugitives from the Gestapo, and conduct propaganda and sabotage as far as conditions permitted. The SPD's exile leadership coordinated the resistance from Prague, and later from Paris. The

Communists directed activities from “Red Secretariats” in all the states bordering on Germany. Members of the resistance traveled back and forth, often at great risk, to consult with the leadership in exile. A decimating wave of arrests of antifascist forces, particularly in 1934–1935, caused a reevaluation of the situation, and of the kind of actions that were attempted. Eventually the resisters of both parties were so isolated that their main energies went toward survival.

Much energy was expended on the distribution of printed matter. Presses were set up abroad, and illegal texts were smuggled into Germany. The need to avoid detection led to the use of *Tarnschriften*, camouflaged texts. To protect both the distributors and the readers, antifascist texts were printed with a harmless title on the book jacket (Emmerich 1976, 437). For example, Bertolt Brecht’s essay “Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit” was smuggled in as “A Practical Guide for First Aid” (Emmerich 1976, 438). A selection of socialist songs including the “Internationale” crossed the border as *On the Beautiful Blue Danube: Waltzes by Johann Strauss*, and *Das Nibelungenlied: Popular Edition* hid a parody of the Nazis written in the style of a twelfth-century epic (Emmerich 1976, 438). In addition, instructions and guidelines were sent by party leaders to activists in Germany.

Like all clandestine activists, those publishing and disseminating antifascist materials trod a very fine line between effectiveness and safety. A balance had to be struck between speaking plainly enough to reach the intended readers, and avoiding the notice of the authorities (Schütz 1971, 19). Methods included so-called *Klebezettelgedichte*, political poems written on pieces of gummed paper that could be stuck up anywhere—factory walls, bus stops, an apartment entryway. Leaflets, fliers, posters, and graffiti were also used; most effective were simple, straightforward messages that could be passed on orally (Emmerich 1976, 434–35). Material describing current conditions was smuggled out of Germany in such disparate containers as ski poles and hollowed-out cakes. These texts, which informed antifascists in the democratic countries that the “other Germany” was not dead, helped to mobilize public sympathy and financial support for the fight against Hitler.

There were many who, for philosophical or tactical reasons, left the two major parties to form splinter parties and organizations. This was particularly the case with the SPD, which regularly ejected members whose views were judged too radical. Among the splinter groups were the Socialist Workers Party (SAP); the Independent Socialists (USPD); the Communist Party in Opposition (KPO); New Beginnings (*Neubeginnen*); and the International Socialist Fighters League, (ISK). The KPO was typical in many ways. Security dictated its structure, as it did with many organizations; groups with five members had minimal contact with one another (Dertinger 1987, 47–50). One of their most important activities was acting as couriers across the “green border” with Czechoslovakia, until the mountain passes were closed after the German annexation.

The ISK illustrates the pragmatism of the splinter groups. Unlike the major workers’ parties, its members believed that the Nazis were not going to disappear any time soon, and thus began as early as 1932 to prepare for going underground. They developed an impressive training program that included role-playing interrogations, court hearings, and house searches. They created new biographies, invented harmless cover stories for political activities, prepared hiding places for illegal documents, evolved a system of signals to warn one another of danger, and developed written codes (Dertinger 1983, 39ff). Thus they were well prepared when the time came to drop out of sight and begin their illegal work.

Like the Communists with their Agitprop theater troupes, the ISK showed imagination and a remarkable sense of humor in the most humorless of situations. They set off stinkbombs at Nazi rallies and released a canister of laughing gas at an official Nazi party function. A favorite ploy was a suitcase with foam rubber letters on the bottom, that left inked messages on the sidewalk where it had stood (Dertinger 1983, 50–53). Perhaps the most grandiose was the so-called Autobahn-Action of 19 May 1935. A stretch of new Autobahn was to be opened with great fanfare. The ISK did everything it could to spoil the opening ceremonies; they painted antifascist slogans on highway overpasses and on the roadway itself. They sawed part way through the legs of speaker’s stand, and cut the cables to loudspeakers. The Nazis

got wind of the sabotage and tried to hide the slogans by sprinkling sand on the highway, but the rain kept washing away the sand and revealing the antifascist graffiti (Dertinger 1983, 55–58).

Resistance was also carried out by persons who were not part of the underground networks, mainly working-class youth in the industrial cities. In Leipzig they were called *Meuten* (packs), and had strong SPD and KPD roots. In the Rhineland, the groups had names like Navajos or *Edelweisspiraten*. These 14-to-18-year-olds were already working at adult jobs; there was little in the Hitler Youth that could attract them (Peukert n.d., 309). Without party affiliation, they were antifascist by instinct. When Hitler Youths were sent by the Gestapo to beat them up, the Pirates fought back. Having once been criminalized by the regime, they began to engage in serious resistance, particularly in Cologne. They slashed the tires on Wehrmacht trucks and stole food for their own families and for slave laborers housed in factory barracks. They bought weapons on the black market (Finkelgruen 1987, 43 ff), and even took part in the assassination of a Gestapo chief in 1944 (Peukert n.d., 317). As the war went on and disillusionment increased, their numbers were swelled by Wehrmacht deserters and escaped camp prisoners. The Pirates were finally arrested, and thirteen of them publicly hanged (Finkelgruen 1987).

The rarest type of resistance was the individual act, such as the attempt made on Hitler's life by Georg Elser, a Swabian carpenter, carried out without the benefit of a network. On 9 November 1939, he planted a time bomb in the Bürgerbräu Keller in Munich, and only Hitler's uncanny luck allowed him to leave the restaurant thirteen minutes early, thus narrowly escaping death. Elser defended himself at his interrogation, "By my deed I wanted to prevent even more bloodshed" (Stern 1992, 220).

Perhaps the most difficult resistance of all was in the concentration camps. In August 1943, two hundred Treblinka prisoners armed with picks, spades, and a few liberated rifles killed several hundred guards. In October of the same year, prisoners at Sobibor rebelled, with aid from Polish civilians employed in the camp and using explosives obtained from Polish partisans.

Himmler ordered both camps evacuated and shut down for fear the unrest would spread. In Auschwitz, six hundred members of the *Sonderkommandos*, the prisoners employed in the crematoria, revolted. One crematorium was blown up, and three hundred people escaped (Druks 1983, 55 ff). The revolts were quelled, but even their limited success gave hope to all who heard about them—and hope was one of the central aims of resistance. The most successful and well-documented camp resistance was that in Buchenwald. Unique to Buchenwald were a camp police and a fire brigade made up of “reds,” that is, men who wore the red triangle of the political prisoners (Hackett 1995, 31, 50).<sup>4</sup> They became Kapos (overseers) of crucial work details such as the infirmary and the camp records office and used these positions to develop a framework for resistance. As huge numbers of foreign prisoners began to enter the camp in 1942 and 1943, the resistance was divided into national sections, which were coordinated by the International Camp Committee (Hackett 1995, 264).

The immediate goals of resistance in Buchenwald were to save lives and to make the period of imprisonment as humane as possible. Workers in the camp laundry gave up their free Sundays to wash fellow prisoners’ uniforms. Prisoners targeted by the SS for punishment were hidden in the contagious disease ward, where the SS never ventured, or provided with false papers belonging to dead prisoners so they could officially “disappear” from the records. Extra food was smuggled from the kitchens for weaker prisoners. And at great risk, aid was given to the Jews and the Soviet POWs, both of which groups were isolated and singled out for even more brutal treatment. The resisters intervened wherever possible on behalf of the prisoners, but since all resistance had to be strictly secret, the organization remained small and many of the tens of thousands of prisoners never even knew of its existence, though they benefited from its activities.

Since camp inmates were used as slave laborers in war-related industries, many were able to carry out acts of sabotage. In the Gustloff munitions plant on the boundary of the camp, workers produced only 5500 rifle barrels a month, instead of the 55,000 expected (Hackett 1995, 94). At the Mittelbau-Dora camp, where parts for V-2 rockets were manufactured, prisoners used slowdowns and purposely assembled things wrong. Many

of the rockets exploded on the launch pad or never reached their target (Crome 1988, 111).

The heart of the camp resistance was its military organization. Resisters built secret radio sets to get news from the front, and conducted regular military training with weapons stolen from the SS (Hackett 1995, 85). In April 1945, as the Americans were closing in on Weimar, the resisters went into action, cutting barbed wire, capturing guard towers, liberating the armory and taking 76 SS-men prisoner, before the American troops arrived at the gate (Hackett 1995, 333).<sup>5</sup> The bravery, ingenuity and steadfastness of the Buchenwald resisters should have been the source of enormous pride and cause for hope, especially in the early postwar years, when the Germans had need of something to be proud of. But like working-class resistance in general, this resistance did not become part of the mainstream history of antifascism.

### *The suppression of history*

At the end of the war, historians tried to undo the damage of twelve years of fascist propaganda. Many of the histories of the Nazi period that appeared in the second half of the 1940s were written by former camp inmates and resisters.<sup>6</sup> In their thoughtful works, they sought to juxtapose the concept of the “other Germany” to the sweeping assumption by the Allies of collective guilt. They felt an urgent need to educate both their former enemies and their own people about the German tradition of resistance (Müller 1986, 14). But the majority of Germans, eager to put the past behind them, seized on simplified versions of events, propagated by politicians and the media, which allowed them to feel innocent, or vindicated, or even unfairly treated by history. As the Cold War succeeded the hot one, the political climate in West Germany became increasingly hostile to the very concept of a German resistance. The Western occupation governments gave mixed signals. On the one hand, they insisted that National Socialist organizations and their postwar spinoffs be permanently forbidden, and imposed the policy of so-called “denazification” to weed out former Nazis. Many Germans complained about the Allies’ “harsh” antifascist policies.

Denazification was the greatest single issue for German voters after the war; like the Nuremberg trials, it was regarded by many as mere “victors’ justice,” as ill-concealed revenge. But in fact the process was inefficient, often half-hearted, and ultimately a sham. Thousands of Nazi party members slipped through the coarse mesh of the investigations, and many middle- and high-ranking Nazis remained untouched, and soon were filling important positions throughout society with the blessings of the Allies, particularly the United States.

But at the same time, the Allies were cracking down on leftist groups and anticapitalist sentiments in Germany. In the spring of 1945, former resisters had formed antifascist committees, on the assumption that they would be crucial players in the national renewal. But the committees were soon dissolved in all four zones of occupation (Brandt n.d., 78). A 1946 plebiscite in the state of Hessen, in which 72 percent of the voters supported the nationalization of banks and major industry, was annulled by the U.S. military government. In March 1947, President Truman promised aid to “peoples whose freedom is threatened,” and overtly embraced the policy of containment of the recent U.S. ally, the Soviet Union (Brandt n.d., 80). By March 1948, the United States began pressing the Germans for an end to the denazification program (Brandt n.d., 81).

There was clearly no place for a left-oriented and working-class-based voice in a Germany increasingly shaped by America’s Cold War ambitions. A case in point is the censorship of the newspaper *Der Ruf* (the Call). First published by German POW’s in Massachusetts, this publication was revived in Germany as a forum for discussion of a future democratic Germany. But *Der Ruf* was closed down in April 1947 by the U.S. military government as too radical. Another Cold War attack on the cultural Left was the formation, in June 1950, of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, conceived and funded by the CIA. Its goal was an anticommunist and antineutralist crusade using freedom of expression as a pretext (Coleman 1989, 31–32).

The reactionary forces in Germany were able to read these signals easily, and so, sooner than anyone could have imagined, the erosion of the new democracy began. One of the first laws

passed by the parliament of the Federal Republic was the Amnesty Act of 1949, which amnestied over 800,000 persons, including tens of thousands of ex-Nazis (Frei 1996, 18ff). In 1951 the Bundestag unanimously passed paragraph 131 of the federal constitution, which declared that civil servants and professional soldiers who had lost their positions after 8 May 1945 should be reinstated at rank, or if retired, given state pensions. Among those affected were many ex-Gestapo and SS members, as well as concentration-camp personnel, commanders of *Einsatzgruppen* (murder teams), and manufacturers who had been convicted of using slave labor (Frei 1996, 21). Faculties of schools and universities had to reabsorb numerous unreconstructed supporters of the Nazi regime.

As a result, thousands of fascists were reintegrated into German society, often in positions of power. The legal system was flooded with judges who a few years before had ruled against resisters. The number of former Nazi party members in the new government itself grew rapidly, and in October 1953 Hans Globke, who had helped draft the racist Nuremberg laws in 1935, became secretary of state (Wagenbach 1994, 454). On the heels of this early legislation came other attacks on the Left and on active democracy. In April 1951 a public opinion poll about rearmament was forbidden by the Federal government. That July the Organization of Victims of the Nazi Regime was forbidden as a “threat to the constitution.” In June 1956 the military draft was reinstated, and in August the KPD was again declared illegal (Wagenbach 1994, 454). As politicians legitimized the undercurrent in society that wished only for denial, forgetting, and normalization, the fundamentally criminal nature of the NS regime was relativized and diminished in popular perception.

It is no wonder that, in such a climate, attitudes toward the resistance, and particularly working-class resisters, deteriorated. During the 1950s, the operative principle in West Germany was anticommunism, rooted in the strong anticommunist bias of the Nazi era, and validated and encouraged by the western occupiers, particularly the United States. Right-wing members of parliament publicly accused resisters of treason (Frei 1996, 23). And while the energies of the legislature were focused on

palliating the sufferings of former Nazis, actions in the cause of their victims crawled at a snail's pace. Eight years passed before there was a central office to investigate National Socialist crimes, but by 1949 the Federal Justice Department had already created a section devoted to protection of the rights of German prisoners in Allied prisons in Germany, including the top war criminals in Spandau (Frei 1996, 21–22).

The dominant historical paradigm was the insidious totalitarianism theory, which sought to equate all “totalitarian” regimes (that is, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia), and thus relativize the crimes of the Third Reich. Consequently, in histories of the period, the Communist resistance was often denied legitimacy. In addition, both the economic roots of fascism and the overtly anticapitalist nature of working-class resistance were suppressed. This was not a historical connection which reactionary historians and politicians wanted made (Gottschaldt 1985, 18). By emphasizing the conservative resistance, and by condemning both brown and red “totalitarianisms,” an impression was created that the only German resistance against the Nazis had been that of the military and the conservative establishment. This resistance was simultaneously heroicized, monumentalized, and falsified. The working-class resistance was to be written out of German history, if possible, or used in the propaganda war against the Left.

Typical of the climate was the treatment of the *Edelweißpiraten* immediately after the war. Using Gestapo records and even ex-Gestapo members' testimony as a basis for its decision, city officials in Cologne refused pensions or reparations to the families of the youngsters who were hanged. They considered the Pirates terrorists, not “real resisters,” and declared that they deserved to be punished (Finkelgruen 1987, 127–28). “To call this gang a ‘resistance movement’ must be rejected, for the sake of the honor of the real opponents of National Socialism” (Finkelgruen 1987, 130).

The case of Buchenwald also shows the twists and turns of the official postwar treatment of working-class resistance. In their preliminary report, the first American officers to enter the camp

particularly stress[ed] the role of the communist-dominated inmate leadership. They could not help being impressed that “instead of a heap of corpses, or a disorderly mob of starving, leaderless men, the Americans found a disciplined and efficient organization in Buchenwald.” (Hackett 1995, 5)

As the first major camp to be liberated while still full of prisoners, Buchenwald initially received more publicity than any other.<sup>7</sup> General Dwight Eisenhower came to see the conditions for himself on 13 April, two days after the liberation. He was followed by delegations from the U.S. Senate and the British Parliament, and by journalists, labor leaders, and clergy. Soon thereafter the U.S. Army’s Psychological Warfare Division commissioned a detailed report. The report, compiled in April and May 1945 by a team of inmates who helped conduct interviews, presents in painstaking detail every aspect of daily life in the camp, including extensive discussions of the centrality of the resistance, and its political origins, goals, and strategies.

It was apparently intended for extensive distribution, as a record of both atrocities and resistance. But Eisenhower’s comment about his own visit was to prove prophetic:

I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in a position to give first hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to “propaganda.” (Hackett 1995, 10)

And indeed, the report soon fell victim to the postwar political climate. It may have been used as supporting evidence at Nuremberg, but then it disappeared from view. Scholars who tried to locate the materials in the 1950s ran into a stone wall of classified documents (Hackett 1995, 19). One must ask why a documentary report written by an official committee should be classified. A drastically revised version of the report was published in German in 1946 by Egon Kogon, its principal author, and again in 1949, with “a new concluding chapter that reflected the emergence of the cold war” (Hackett 1995, 19). But probably less than ten percent of the original Buchenwald Report was ever published except in excerpted form (Hackett 1995, 20).

That the report resurfaced at all is pure chance. The Intelligence officer in charge of interviewing the inmates at Buchenwald, Albert G. Rosenberg, had kept a copy, and in 1987 he gave his German original to an academic colleague, David Hackett, whose translation of the report finally appeared in 1995 (Hackett 1995, xvii). Even the rather conservative Hackett admits it is

likely that increasing cold war tensions contributed to the burial of the original version of the report in bureaucratic obscurity. By 1946–1947 the prominent role of Communist camp leaders in administering the camp increasingly attracted the attention of US war crimes investigators, who put some of the Buchenwald kapos on arrest lists. No doubt the Communists' influence at Buchenwald would have led many US investigators to treat the report with some suspicion. In any case, the Buchenwald report never surfaced again, until the present publication. (1995, 19)

By 1946, the Americans were already shifting their attention from the Nazis to the Nazis' victims. In 1949 the German government launched its campaign of rehabilitation. The KPD was once more illegal by 1956. The postwar SPD turned its back on its radical history as something of an embarrassment, while union leaders chose to pursue a policy of cooperationism and discouraged a revival of labor culture (Adamek 1987, 56). Thus it would be many years before the proud story of the working-class resistance was given a suitable voice and its proper place in German history.<sup>8</sup>

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#### NOTES

1. All translations from the German are my own, unless otherwise noted.
2. These included Mommsen, Graml, and van Roon (Müller 1986, 13).
3. The United Front was suggested as early as 1993 by Dmitrov, in one of his speeches at the Reichstag Fire trials. In 1934 Wilhelm Pieck and Walter Ulbricht began to urge its adoption by the German Party's Politburo, but met

with much resistance. The United Front was finally embraced at a meeting of the Central Committee in Moscow in early 1935 (Merson 1986, 155 ff).

4. Most of the information about Buchenwald is taken from Hackett, *The Buchenwald Report* (1995), the official report written on the spot in April and May 1945 by former prisoners, many of them members of the Communist underground organization.

5. There was much debate about when to launch the armed uprising; it was delayed until the front had reached Weimar because of the very realistic assessment that the prisoners were greatly outnumbered in terms of weapons. They had to wait till the SS began fleeing in disarray, and hope that they would not decide to destroy the camp before they went, or evacuate it, sending all the remaining prisoners on a death march. A number of prisoners were in fact evacuated in the last days of the war; of 4500 sent by train to Dachau, fewer than 2000 arrived alive ("Nie werde ich vergessen" 1996).

6. Müller and Mommsen cite Rothfels, Gisevius, Schlabrendorff, and Speidel among these (1986, 15).

7. Natzweiler and Maidanek were empty when found, and only a few prisoners remained in Auschwitz. All the other major camps—Bergen-Belsen, Mauthausen, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück, Theresienstadt—were liberated after Buchenwald (Hackett 1995, 11).

8. This study focuses on the suppression and distortion of history in the immediate postwar era. I do not wish to imply, however, that after the 1960s all was well. Emboldened by a reactionary climate, revisionists in Germany have continued their campaign to destroy all memory of working-class resistance, and even to stigmatize antifascism itself, particularly since the annexation of the German Democratic Republic in 1989. For a detailed overview of streets renamed, memorials razed, museums to the resistance closed or *gleichgeschaltet* (brought into line) to represent their opposite, see Zorn 1994.

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## John Lewis Gaddis and the Perpetuation of the Cold War

Otto H. Olsen and Ephraim Schulman

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the ending of the Cold War have produced in this country an abundance of euphoria and confidence in “capitalist democracy” and the free market, but they have not inspired much in the way of new thinking in establishment circles. John Lewis Gaddis, eminent professor of history at Yale, promised some correction of that deficit in his *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (1997). While it can be granted that Gaddis provides a great deal of detail over a broad scope, as well as some new insight, on the whole he has given us another Cold War document that fully confirms his reputation as “the historical profession’s most resourceful and eloquent defender of American foreign policy” (Eisenberg 1998b, 1462). In this instance, the end of the Cold War has had little more effect on historical thinking than it has had on the nation’s military budget. It is doubly discouraging that a book so burdened by anti-Communist bias has been so lauded in scholarly reviews, and its author selected as a principal adviser to Ted Turner’s recently released CNN series on the Cold War. The latter may help explain the limitations of that series as summarized by Bruce Cumings in the *Nation* (1998).

Gaddis depicts a Cold War in which the United States and the West were by and large virtuous, blameless, and correct. The opposition, particularly when led by Joseph Stalin, was evil, at fault, and wrong; “authoritarianism in general, and Stalin in

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particular” were responsible for the Cold War (Gaddis 1997, 294). The source of conflict is invariably presented as a political struggle between democracy and tyranny. While economic motivations are sorely neglected, the purportedly superior efficiency of capitalism receives substantial credit for the ultimate victory of the West. In presenting his conclusions, Gaddis stresses the importance of newly revealed Russian, East European, and Chinese sources, although he presents little new documentation to justify his claims, and his arguments are often specious. Gaddis’s own research is confined to material available in English and he is thus dependent on translations and secondary works, often relying on very biased anti-Soviet writers. Altogether this account deserves a response addressing the myths, omissions, and half-truths that characterize such establishment versions of the Cold War.

The weakest portions of Gaddis’s volume, fundamental to his general analysis and clearly revealing his bias, cover the years from the Russian Revolution through the immediate postwar period in Europe. We are told in an initial chapter that Woodrow Wilson established, following World War I, the ideological framework of a national policy committed to self-determination, open markets, collective security, and peace. In contrast, Lenin and the newly formed Soviet Union “promised . . . the ultimate form of interference in other states’ internal affairs: overthrowing not just their governments, but their societies” (5). This distorted presentation includes no hint that any significant anti-Soviet thought or action should be considered in interpreting that era. The only mention of the West’s attempt to crush the Russian Revolution is the suggestion that two years of Western intervention were such a “half-hearted” and “confused muddle” that they “may even have helped the Bolsheviks by allowing them to pose as defenders of Russian nationalism” (7). Totally ignored are the wresting away of territory, exclusion from the Versailles Peace Treaty and the League of Nations, the *cordon sanitaire*, and other persisting efforts to isolate and undermine the Soviet Union.

This one-sided beginning facilitates the introduction of Stalin as a despotic monster who is ridiculously paranoid about the

West and out to foment world revolution. In much of what follows, Stalin's Marxism remains a mote in Gaddis's eye. As he moves on to the origins of World War II, Gaddis perceives no difference whatsoever between Hitler and Stalin. He even suggests that only the incompetence of these two "fellow authoritarians . . . eliminated any possibility of an authoritarian coalition directed against the United States and its democratic allies" (11). The obviously defensive Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 is presented as proof of Stalin's incompetence and "long hoped for . . . cooperation with Nazi Germany" (9). No mention is made of the West's history of appeasement and repeated rejection of Soviet efforts to build a United Front against fascism, nor of the overtly anti-Soviet implications of the Munich Pact and other appeasement policies.

The same bias pervades Gaddis's discussion of the war years themselves. He spends no time on the promising significance of a new antifascist alliance mutually committed to humane and democratic values. He finds Stalin's paranoia the only significant source of discord among the Allies, while he ignores many indications to the contrary, including Roosevelt's repeated resistance to the inveterate anti-Soviet leanings of Winston Churchill. Drawing a ridiculous parallel between the plight of the embattled Soviet Union and a United States "desperately trying to hang on in the Pacific" (16), Gaddis mocks Stalin's push for a second front as hypocritical and unrealistic. No mention is made of either Roosevelt's support for an earlier second front or the failure of the West to honor such a commitment in both 1942 and 1943. His most preposterous innuendo suggests that a treacherous Soviet Union should have been fighting alongside the British a year earlier, something that might well have ensured Hitler's success. In his only evaluation of the Soviet defeat of Hitler, Gaddis offers a formulation according American lend-lease equal standing with "the Soviet Union's immense expenditure of manpower" (11). This very wording is illustrative of a reluctance to concede anything in the way of ability or value to Stalin or the Soviet Union. One might wonder why Great Britain, which received approximately twice as much lend-lease aid as the

Soviet Union, could not make a more decisive contribution to Hitler's defeat.

In an especially questionable interpretation that is central to his explanation of the Cold War, Gaddis maintains that Stalin replaced Lenin's belief that socialism would spread by a process of indigenous class revolution with a determination to spread socialism through a "process of territorial acquisition" by the Soviet Union (13–14). This poppycock is based on the postwar posture of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, a situation created by the war and sanctioned by the Yalta agreements and which reflected past mistreatment and legitimate border and security concerns. It is incredible that Gaddis can easily dismiss these concerns of a terribly war-devastated Soviet Union, and twenty some pages later invoke the memory of Pearl Harbor and an imaginary Soviet threat to prove that "the American empire arose *primarily*, therefore, not from internal causes, as had the Soviet empire, but from a perceived external danger powerful enough to overcome American isolationism" (38). Clearly Gaddis attaches minimal significance to the well-established thesis that in response to the needs of its flourishing, capitalist economy the United States had become exceedingly expansionist and antisocialist (Hunter 1998, 8–16). Instead, grossly exaggerated security needs are accepted as a satisfying explanation and justification for the worldwide economic and military expansion of the United States, while the efforts of the recently invaded and devastated Soviet Union to redress past injustices and meet obvious regional security concerns are viewed as evil aggression.

Of course Stalin and the Communists did envision and encourage the spread of socialism, but not in the manner that Gaddis claims. Capitalist nations, including the United States, also sought to spread their system as well as their investments. As both sides in the Cold War attempted to promote their own principles in the world, the Soviet Union had a far less interventionist and aggressive record than did the United States and its allies.

This question is probably not Gaddis's real concern. In these early chapters, he prepares the ground for his approval of

Western policies by directing attention less to appropriate international relationships than to the relative worth of the societies of the United States and the Soviet Union. Here, of course, he can make his most persuasive case. He is speaking to a capitalist society that was and still is incredibly successful, wealthy, and stable, in part because of a war that had decimated the Soviet Union. Our society represents the principles of capitalism and the concepts of democracy and freedom that Gaddis champions, and those considerations are central to his justification of American foreign policy and his reluctance to criticize its role in either the initiation or conduct of the Cold War. But the West's commitment to capitalist ways had been haunted by egalitarian values long before the Russian Revolution, even long before Marx. By the end of World War II, not Soviet aggression, but the continuing specter of a successful Soviet Union together with the rise of a leftist-tinged challenge to Western capitalism and all its colonial empire, so worried the Truman administration and encouraged its extremely hostile response. Once the Cold War was underway it would become largely a matter of choosing sides. Furthermore, the Soviet Union ultimately failed in this rivalry, and to the victor belong the spoils, including those of satisfaction. In the final analysis, however, one must deal with the origins and the facts of the Cold War itself. While the United States may relish its victory, the Cold War brought more than enough in the way of hot war, nuclear madness, insecurity, wasted resources, maldistributed wealth, political travesty, and persisting disorder and armament to justify reconsideration and remorse. Was there not a more promising path available? Gaddis concludes there was not, primarily because of Stalin. To the very end of his life, however, Franklin D. Roosevelt and his closest allies thought differently.

In the eyes of many Americans of that day, a substantial debt was owed to the sacrifices made and the decisive role played by the Soviet Union in saving the world from Hitler and the Axis powers. Gaddis trivializes the Soviet Union's role and sacrifices in that war, erroneously denies it any significant role at all in the war against Japan, and, ignoring Soviet security concerns, sees

only aggressive expansionism in its postwar behavior. In contrast to Gaddis, President Roosevelt believed that the Soviet Union had legitimate border and security concerns in Eastern Europe and no aggressive territorial ambitions, and that after the war it would have more than enough to do simply to recover. Rather than exploit its postwar plight with a hostile anti-Communist program, Roosevelt envisioned a gradual liberalization of the Soviet regime and was preparing to cooperate with it and assist in its rebuilding, not only as a well-deserved response to an ally, but for very practical reasons. Proposed postwar loans to the Soviet Union were intended to provide investments, profitable interest rates, and needed markets for the United States. Cooperation with the Soviets was central to Roosevelt's opposition to colonialism and to his concept of the United Nations and the maintenance of peace and stability in the postwar world. He also realized that the nature and policies of the Soviet Union would reflect the treatment accorded it by the capitalist world. Except for the four years of a wartime alliance, the history of the West's treatment of the Soviet Union since 1917 was largely at odds with Roosevelt's hopes. He anticipated the difficulties he would face, but he was strongly committed to altering that tradition (Greer 1958, 203–04; Kimball 1997, 335; Roosevelt 1946, 109). This would not at all be true of his successor, the bellicose anti-Communist Harry S. Truman.

As Gaddis begins to consider the Cold War itself, he fails to deal substantially with these considerations. Conveniently and quickly gliding by the Truman presidency, he simply proclaims that Roosevelt's death "is not likely to have altered the long term course of Soviet-American relations" (23). This enables him to avoid explaining either Roosevelt's desire to cooperate with a purportedly monstrous Stalin or Truman's abandonment of such a policy. Gaddis's discussion of the origins of the Cold War fails to mention Truman's long-standing hatred of Communism and the Soviet Union, his immediate announcement of a new hard line against the Soviets, his alliance with anti-Soviet elements, his insulting cancellation of lend-lease, his renegeing on reconstruction loans to the Soviet Union, his insulting treatment of

Molotov within weeks of Roosevelt's death, his undermining of the Yalta agreements including the betrayal of commitments not to admit profascist Argentina to the initial meeting of the UN, his openly anti-Soviet collusion with Great Britain and France, or his efforts to crush leftist independence movements through the occupation of South Korea and the restoration of French authority in Indochina. All these steps taken during the initial months of Truman's presidency contradicted Roosevelt's desires and undermined the cooperative relationship he had struggled to establish with Stalin (Olsen and Schulman 1997).

Just as significant was Truman's refusal at this time to take strongly recommended steps to assure the Japanese that defeat would not necessitate the removal of the emperor. Such steps might well have encouraged an earlier Japanese surrender, and Truman's refusal reflected his preference for a policy dependent on the rapid completion and utilization of the atomic bomb. Dismissing many indications to the contrary, Gaddis fully endorses Truman's claim that he dropped two atomic bombs simply to shorten the war and save lives (87). Gaddis is obviously not impressed by the minimal role of the military in reaching that decision, by various denials of the necessity or wisdom of that decision from prominent scientists and military leaders (Alperovitz 1996, 127, 329–31, 334–35, 351, 355), or by the conclusion of the World Court that "except in extreme cases" where a state's "very survival would be at stake," the use of nuclear weapons is a violation of international law (Green 1997, 37–39; Schmidt 1998, 107–110).

We now know that American leaders wanted an opportunity to utilize that bomb without warning against a heavily populated area to demonstrate fully to the world its awesome power. If the war ended too soon, that opportunity would be lost. It appears that Truman's policy may actually have prolonged the war against Japan, as prominent members of his own administration feared, because this policy was aimed primarily at the Soviet Union rather than at Japan. The dropping of the atomic bomb was directly tied to checking the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan, minimizing Soviet influence in Asia, and

intimidating that nation in Europe. Contrary to Gaddis, Truman did not “tell Stalin about the atomic bomb at the Potsdam Conference” (95), where preparations to drop the bomb were secretly finalized by Churchill and Truman. Truman’s failure to deal openly with Stalin at Potsdam on this matter and his exclusion of the Soviet Union from a requested occupation zone in Japan, despite its significant contribution to Japan’s surrender<sup>1</sup>, were incredible insults to an ally whose entrance into that war had been urged only days before when it was not yet certain that the desired bomb would be available. That a purported rethinking of the Cold War, especially one with a professed interest in determining the causes of that conflict, should fail to deal seriously with any of these matters is disturbing.

It seems abundantly clear that from the very first the Truman administration abandoned a policy of serious cooperation with its wartime ally because of its intrinsic hostility to Communism and the Soviet Union. Before the end of 1945, Truman admitted opting for nuclear supremacy and an arms race rather than full cooperation with Stalin (Alperovitz 1996, 434–35). It is simply not credible now to think of the Soviet Union as an expansionist military threat during those years, nor was it perceived as one then by either Truman or his military analysts (Lefler 1984, 361–63). With twenty million dead and unknown numbers maimed and injured, with 1700 towns and 70,000 villages destroyed, anxious only to recover and rebuild, the Soviet Union was in no condition or mood for more war. Soviet territorial claims had strong historical legitimacy, had been fully clarified by the end of World War II, and in the main had been endorsed by the Yalta agreements. Furthermore, the demands of postwar recovery demanded extensive demobilization and, unlike the West, the Soviet Union had no atomic bomb, no long-range bomber force, meager air defenses, and no credible navy except for submarines.

Truman’s actions summarized above, together with his resistance to the security concerns of the Soviet Union and denunciations of its actions in Eastern Europe, indicated that the United States and its allies had returned to a policy of refusing to

recognize the legitimacy of Communism and of isolating and containing the Soviet Union. Truman's attitude was indicated by his comment on 23 April 1945 on the founding of the UN: "if the Russians did not wish to join us they could go to hell" (U.S. 1967, 253). Committed to its own economic principles, worried about the strength of anticolonial and socialist movements throughout the world, and confident of American economic and military power, the Truman administration acted, from the very first, to discredit and contain the Soviet Union and to dominate the postwar world. It could hope to do so because World War II, rather than devastating the United States, as it had so many other areas, had made it the world's most prosperous, productive, and powerful nation. And the United States alone possessed the atomic bomb.

It was soon apparent that appreciation for the contributions of the Soviet Union to the war against fascism was being replaced by a rush to minimize its influence and take advantage of its devastated and weakened condition. Such developments could only be expected to undermine Stalin's trust in the Truman presidency. Already overwhelmed with the problems of internal recovery and security and hardly blind to the open hostility of the West, Stalin responded with a determination to maintain a defensive position in Eastern Europe while rebuilding the Soviet Union. Contrary to Gaddis, Stalin's basic policy beyond agreements achieved at Yalta was clearly not one of expansion or intervention but one of caution, disengagement, and recovery (Adelman 1986, 167; McNamara 1989, 24–27). While he sympathized with leftist movements and anticolonial struggles elsewhere, Stalin refused to become involved in such activities, and, fearing their consequences, even discouraged them. While both Churchill and Roosevelt had acknowledged the legitimacy of Soviet interests and security concerns respecting Iran and the Dardanelles, Stalin's steps to enforce such claims were readily dropped in response to the bellicose reaction of Truman. In 1915 the Allies had conceded the right to full control of Constantinople and the Dardanelles to a Tsarist Russia; in August 1946, only a year after World War II, Truman indicated a readiness to go to war over the far more limited goals of the

Soviet Union in that area. Gaddis's account gives little indications of these considerations.

Looking directly at the Cold War itself, Gaddis views it as a conflict between a Soviet and an American empire, but again his comparisons are not evenhanded. Having bypassed Truman's initial anti-Soviet record, he depicts him as seeking and expecting cooperation in the establishment of a system of bilateral world security: "At no point prior to 1947 did the United States and its Western European allies abandon the hope that the Russians might eventually come around" (36). But come around to what? The program of the United States was not in essence one that offered acceptance and peaceful cooperation between differing socioeconomic systems, but one that denounced the policies of the Soviet Union while pressuring it to capitulate to the power and principles of the West. In September 1945, Secretary of State James F. Byrnes attended the foreign ministers' conference in London "with the firm intention of using the atomic weapon as an 'implied threat' (the words are those used in [Henry L.] Stimson's diary) enabling him to dictate the terms of a lasting peace" (Warburg 1966, 22). This effort succeeded only in furthering the policy of confrontation, with Truman apparently accepting assurances that the United States would enjoy a monopoly in atomic weapons for ten or twenty years and confident that "those Asiatics" could not readily build such a complicated device (Chace 1998, 127, 230).

Subsequently, as Gaddis admits, rather than undertaking serious negotiations on international control of the atomic bomb, the Truman administration presented its own plan to the Soviet Union "on a 'take it or leave it' basis" (90).<sup>2</sup> Because the Soviet Union rejected this spurious offer, Gaddis wants to blame what followed on Stalin for thus leaving "the Truman administration few alternatives but to make whatever it could of its atomic monopoly before the Russians . . . brought it to an end" (91). But what were these few alternatives? The Soviet proposal to destroy all existing atomic weapons and ban any further production, storage, or use was rejected on the specious grounds that the West would be defenseless against the conventional military strength of the Soviet Union. Clearly the Truman administration

wanted and relied on the atomic bomb, and thus it legitimized atomic warfare and initiated the lamentable nuclear arms race that followed. Thereafter it was the United States, not the Soviet Union, that built an overwhelming preponderance of nuclear weapons and means of delivery and repeatedly threatened their use.

Gaddis persists in a reluctance to see anything self-centered or imperialistic in Truman's policies and depicts his administration as one committed to self-determination. It was already crystal clear, however, in Truman's support of European colonialism and acts of intervention that he would accept self-determination only in those instances where capitalist investments were not threatened and anti-Communist conditions prevailed. There was little difficulty, for example, in accepting developments in Greece, where the British, "fearing any resurgence of the Left, allowed the army and the police to institute a 'white terror,' which [by 1946] virtually eliminated even moderate leftists from political life" (Chase 1998, 164). Gaddis excuses this reality by claiming that areas occupied by the West were being prepared "for eventual independence," and that when the United States created satellites it was merely setting out "to reconstitute *independent* centers of power in Europe and Asia" that "would resist Soviet expansionism while preserving as much as possible of the multilateralist agenda American officials had framed during World War II" (39, 157). But there was no Soviet expansion, and is this not a multilateralism that excludes Communist nations? Why is it that Gaddis extends to the United States and its colonialist allies many years in which to establish an acceptable stability in the regions they control, but will not grant the Soviet Union time to do likewise on its recently war-disrupted borders? Gaddis also appears to suggest that Stalin should have accepted a postwar arrangement in which the United States "was to maintain preponderant power" with "a substantial peacetime military establishment and a string of bases around the world from which to resist aggression if it should ever occur." This falls within his description of a supposedly enlightened attitude which "was less that of expecting to impose a system than one of puzzlement as to why its merits were not universally

self-evident” (36). Stalin, of course, is depicted as an unreasonable aggressor, and, according to Gaddis, the Cold War began in 1947 because of Stalin’s persisting belief that capitalists “were there, in the end, to be overthrown, not convinced” (36). But overthrown by whom? Since there was no threat of Soviet military action at that time, are we to assume that the Cold War was justified because the West failed to convince Stalin to abandon the Marxist expectation that an internal socialist revolution would ultimately be provoked within any capitalist state? Gaddis’s suggested 1947 date also finesses the ongoing anti-Soviet activities of Truman ever since he assumed the presidency as well as the extent to which Cold War policies were formulated by his closest advisors even before the end of World War II. In these matters, as in others, Gaddis utilizes a double standard based on the supposedly superior qualities of the United States, belittles Soviet concerns, and displays very questionable conceptions of Marxist ideology and Stalin’s beliefs.

One can still see 1947 as a turning point, although in a way quite different from that proposed by Gaddis. Stalin had not been cowed by the atomic threat, and the determination of the Truman administration to retain a dominant position in Europe was seriously threatened by Europe’s faltering economy and the growing political strength of the Left. Europeans had much to distrust in a capitalist system that in four decades had brought them two exceedingly deadly world wars, a major depression, fascism, a total inability to resist Hitler, and economic chaos after World War II. Europeans also recognized the contributions of the Soviet Union to the defeat of Hitler and the leading role of Communists in the underground resistance. Economic aid and military force already had been utilized by the United States and its allies in response to that indigenous left-wing threat in Europe, and the obvious goal was not to stem Soviet aggression, but to save capitalism by crushing socialist tendencies. But of course the heart of the common distortion of the Cold War has always been that any spread of Communism is ipso facto Soviet aggression, while any interference or aggression by the United States is merely defensive action against the Soviet Union. By early 1947, the feared endemic threat from the Left had greatly

increased, most immediately to the totalitarian right-wing governments of Turkey and Greece, which not surprisingly fit within the Truman administration's concept of democracy. Truman responded with a proposed program of economic aid to save capitalism that was to be sold to Congress and the American public by an intensified program of anti-Communist and anti-Soviet action and propaganda. Democracy was to be spread by supporting right-wing dictatorships in Greece and Turkey and by undermining it at home.

Gaddis pays almost no attention to domestic American opposition to the shift away from Roosevelt's policies respecting the Soviet Union or to the shameful manner in which that opposition was destroyed. Soon after taking office, Truman's hostility toward the Soviet Union was deliberately muted because of widespread domestic objection and his belated recognition that Soviet assistance was still desired in the war against Japan. The latter concern ended with the successful completion of the atom bomb. As for domestic critics of Truman's anti-Soviet policies, from the very first they faced existing hostility toward Communism, which was further encouraged by a postwar attack on organized labor and the enduring anti-Communism of J. Edgar Hoover. On 5 March 1946, Winston Churchill, with a beaming Truman at his side, made a related contribution with his "iron curtain" speech calling on English-speaking peoples to lead "Christian civilization" in an anti-Communist crusade. In response to widespread criticisms of that speech, Truman disavowed any intended approval and falsely told the American people that he had not known its content beforehand. A year later, however, he was prepared to announce his own crusade with a dual program aimed at Communism, the Soviet Union, and his domestic critics. On March 12, in a speech apparently intended "to scare the hell out of the country" as a means of garnering support for a program of American world leadership and economic aid to Europe, Truman called for a world wide struggle against the professed evils of Communism and the Soviet Union and "implied that any criticism of American policy amounted to an act of disloyalty" (Freeland 1972, 89; Hogan 1998, 18). Nine days after this announcement of the Truman Doctrine, he decreed its domestic counterpart, a loyalty-security

program that initiated the official suppression of the Left in the United States and paved the way for the rise of McCarthyism and, among other things, the decimation of important expertise in the State Department. Gaddis responds to this development with his usual red-baiting by noting that “even Americans were not immune from at least a diluted form of Stalinist paranoia,” but “neither mass imprisonment nor mass murder resulted from such practices, and Truman himself courageously resisted many of them” ( 62). Except for its whitewash of Truman and minimization of the witch hunt’s extensive harm, his description does fit the postwar scene within the United States, but it may do so only because the Left was being effectively crushed without any necessity for harsher measures. This description, by the way, also fits the postwar situation within the Soviet Union. If one looks instead, however, at Greece, Korea, Vietnam, and Latin America, one must conclude that intense paranoia, mass imprisonment, and mass killing and murder were indeed a part of the policies of the United States when they were considered necessary.

The Truman Doctrine initiated extensive economic and military aid to all of Western Europe via the Marshall Plan, and a wide-ranging witch hunt and intense program of irresponsible anti-Soviet propaganda at home. The domestic Left was persecuted, the Soviet Union was thoroughly vilified and its policies distorted, and Americans were called on for sacrifice and discipline to carry out their God-given mission to save the world from Soviet tyranny. During 1948, for example, the Truman administration sought support for its programs of militarization and foreign aid by deceiving and inflaming Congress and the public with a deliberate cultivation of the myth that war was being imminently threatened by the Soviet Union (Kofsky 1993). This is not to deny that Communist advances at this time also helped stimulate Truman’s policies, but those advances were in no way matters of Soviet aggression, military threat, or violations of international law. It was not any retaliatory or provocative anticapitalist containment policy that disturbed the Truman administration, but the fact that the Soviet Union’s economy was succeeding so well and that in 1949 it thwarted the American

nuclear threat by detonating its own atomic bomb. Also that same year Mao Zedong came to power in China, Ho Chi Minh was threatening French rule in Indochina, and leftist strength appeared on the increase in the Philippines. In 1950 Korean Communists would easily establish their ability and right to control that nation. It was in response to such trends that the Truman administration intensified its anti-Soviet posture, and its main concern with events in Asia appeared to be that they threatened the prosperity of its other recent enemy but now major ally, Japan. With the creation of NATO in 1949 an entangling alliance was accepted in Europe and NATO members were rearmed. On 1 January 1950 an ardent cold warrior, Paul Nitze, was appointed director of the National Security Council as it prepared its saber-rattling report *NSC-68*. This highly imaginative and rather inflammatory report, which remained top secret until 1975, clearly reflected the new national security rage as it somehow determined 1954 was the likely date of war with the Soviet Union. Not content with simply recommending an immense military buildup in response, *NSC-68* “cited America’s historic mission to spread the blessings of liberty on a global scale” (Hogan 1998, 15). The subsequent adoption of its recommendations essentially placed the nation on its still-persisting war economy, and by 1952 the military budget had increased from \$13 billion to \$50 billion. Not only was that increase intended to prepare for war, but also to place maximum strain on the Soviet union while aiding the American economy, particularly its faltering aircraft industry. As Gabriel Kolko has noted, the State Department had argued that the goal of reversing the existing economic recession “might itself be aided by a build-up of the economic and military strength of the United States and the free world” (1972, 397).

Thus began a national commitment to deficit spending in support of the military, rather than in support of social needs, as a basis for economic stability as well as world domination. By 1952 the United States had 841 atom bombs to the Soviet Union’s less than 50, and late that year detonated the first thermonuclear weapon. That year 80 per cent of all Marshall Plan aid was in weapons and 20 percent in defense support (Ferrel

1974, 166). The intensity of Truman's reckless commitment to containment, militarization, and force could also be seen in the decisions to intervene in the Korean Civil War, establish and rearm a newly formed West Germany, aid the French in Vietnam and the British in Iran, deploy the Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait, increase military forces in Europe, and expand military bases throughout the world.

In discussing the situation in Europe, Gaddis makes much of his point that the American imperial presence there was by and large welcomed by, rather than imposed on, conquered nations. It could therefore be relatively benign without the problems of control that Eastern Europe presented to the Soviet Union. Gaddis takes full advantage of that circumstance, which was heavily dependent on the views of governing elites, to further idealize the West and demonize Stalin. In explaining the differing responses of Germany to the West and the Soviet Union, for example, Gaddis invokes the tyranny of Stalin and the rape of German women by Russian soldiers but avoids a variety of more fundamental considerations. Fascism, after all, had arisen largely as a movement to combat Communism, and throughout Hitler's reign Germany retained a capitalist economy. The German population had supported the Nazi state and fought the war. Known Communists in Germany, unlike capitalists, had been killed or sent to concentration camps, and Germany had invaded and ravaged the Soviet Union. For most of the war, 80 percent of the German army was on the Russian front, the site of 80 percent of all German casualties. It was hardly surprising that the Soviet Union expected suitable punishment for Germany and extensive reparations for itself. Germany, in turn, was clearly Europe's greatest reservoir of hostility to Communism and the Soviet Union. When the United States impeded and then stopped reparations to the Soviet Union, it was aiding the heavily industrialized section of Germany controlled by the West, and it was soon providing extensive aid to this portion of the recent Nazi state while denying postwar loans to those primarily responsible for the defeat of Hitler. The United States also was lenient in its treatment of fascists, pronounced the Soviet Union an enemy within two years of the end of World War II, and initiated the creation and rebuilding of a West German state as part of a

military alliance aimed against the Soviet Union (Eisenberg 1998a, 47–48). Was it any wonder that the Soviet Union felt betrayed or that Germany was eager to embrace its new friend? Much the same was true of the West in general. These were capitalist nations whose leaders feared socialism and had a long history of anti-Soviet behavior. These leaders shared the economic interests as well as the political views of the United States and were eager to accept the salvation now being offered under the Truman Doctrine.

Gaddis implies that only Stalin's ineptness kept the Soviets from sharing the benefits of the Marshall Plan. This was hardly the case. Unlike earlier plans for direct loans to the Soviet Union and the UNRRA program, the Marshall Plan deliberately bypassed recent UN arrangements and constituted a program to aid the United States by rebuilding European capitalism and establishing an international economy based on principles specified by the United States and unacceptable to the Soviet Union. Even capitalist nations objected to the degree of American intervention involved, including threats to withdraw such aid in the event of any moves toward socialization or nationalization. How could the Soviet Union be expected to participate under such conditions? Not only did that plan allow the United States crucial powers of intervention, it envisioned Western Europe as a center of industrial development while Eastern Europe was to be a source of agricultural goods and raw materials. As for the working class, "the economies of Europe were intentionally manipulated to lower living standards, create new unemployment, and sharpen inequality" (Kolko 1972, 30).

The heart of the Marshall Plan was, as Gaddis admits, the policy of containing Communism, which was hardly a promising base for effective cooperation between the socialist and the capitalist world. During Roosevelt's presidency, the Soviet Union had cooperated in international economic arrangements that were drawn up in friendship rather than hostility toward socialism. This was far from the case throughout the Truman administration. After an initial attempt to participate in the preparation of the Marshall Plan, the Soviets became convinced that the conditions being proposed threatened the independence and success of

their own socialist effort and they withdrew. The question of withdrawal may have been moot in any event, since it is doubtful that the Congress of that day would have approved any policy of assistance to the Soviet Union. Denied direct loans to assist in its recovery and increasingly driven back on the limited resources it controlled, which were woefully deficient in industrial strength, the Soviet Union's need to maintain its position in Eastern Europe could only intensify unless it was willing to abandon its socialist path. Stalin would not agree to any such abandonment.

As we have noted, Gaddis's idealization of the American empire in Europe neglects those cases where opposition was crushed by force. This bias is even clearer in his treatment of areas beyond Europe where the tilt of indigenous popularity and power was favorable to Communism and the Soviet Union. In these instances, Gaddis does not continue his earlier line of reasoning and ethical judgment in explaining the origins of the Cold War, but claims that the Cold War did not reach Asia until 1949, and then supposedly "caught everyone by surprise" (54). To the contrary, Indochina and Korea were central to the Cold War as early as 1945, although here it was the Soviet Union that could afford benign restraint. From 1945 to 1950, the United States led in opposing self-determination, violently crushing a leftist nationalism, establishing puppet governments, and again arbitrarily dividing nations. Under the excuse of a Soviet threat, Gaddis avoids criticism of this early utilization of force to deny self-determination to Asian populations in behalf of American economic and political interests. These chickens would come home to roost in the two major international wars that have occurred since the conclusion of World War II, in each of which the United States, but not the Soviet Union, was directly involved. When one considers in addition developments in Central and Latin America, Africa, and the Near East, it becomes apparent that it is not the Soviet Union but the United States that was acting as the most aggressive interventionist power in the Cold War world.

No developments were more central to the nature of the Cold War than those that unfolded in Korea and Vietnam. Gaddis's account of Korea begins with the half-truth that in 1945 Truman diverted "troops to Korea to prevent the Red Army from

completely controlling it" (57). To the extent this was true, it would appear to be an early hostile action of the Cold War. One can imagine the outcry within the United States had the Soviets acted similarly in respect, for instance, to their expectation of participating in the occupation of Japan. In any event, what occurred in Korea illustrated that the intent also included an effort to contain Communism by maintaining the division of Korea, crushing a left-oriented nationalist movement in the South, and establishing a puppet government dominated by a small wealthy elite led by a corrupt dictator supplied by the United States (Cumings 1997). Former collaborators with the Japanese occupation forces played the major role in this process, while opposition political groups were violently crushed and the U.S. presence was widely resented and resisted. The degree of direct and indirect control by the United States in South Korea was extensive; that of the Soviet Union in the North was not, because it accepted an indigenous resistance movement already in control, one which easily would have controlled all of a Korea relieved of American intervention. In any event, conditions approaching civil war persisted within Korea, as the governments of both South and North denounced one another and agitated for the unification of the nation by military means. Both were spoiling for a fight, local rebellions were endemic in the South, and, as Gaddis notes, "both sides had been conducting raids across the parallel for some time prior to the outbreak of hostilities" (71).

Gaddis minimizes the importance of this quasi-civil war in Korea, however, preferring to sanctify the division imposed on Korea in 1945. When North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel in 1950—and the precise source of the first shots is still debated—Gaddis describes this attack as "the first overt military assault across an internationally recognized boundary since the end of World War II" (75). Despite the fact that both South and North Korea were itching for this fight, in Gaddis's view the North Korean attack constituted Soviet aggression: "The question boiled down, then, to whether the Soviet Union or the United States would sanction an attempt to reunify Korea by military means." The North "got a green light from Stalin early in 1950," while all the South "received from Washington were

yellow lights shading over into red” (71). This may be how it looks to Gaddis, but it is not how it looked to the Communist world or to most Koreans. In their view the United States had no right to impose a state of status quo on the world or prevent the reunification of Korea by its own people. They viewed the war as a civil war and did not accept the sanctity of Truman’s (and Gaddis’s) boundary. The attempt to maintain that boundary violated agreements made with the Soviet Union in December 1945 and was little more than a part of the West’s unilateral policy of containment. The fact that the United States did not like the obvious outcome of a civil war did not give it the right to intervene directly, and invoking the name of the UN was not only a convenient cover-up but a violation of the UN charter (Schulman 1993, 47–48). Stalin had recognized the danger of U.S. intervention and had argued strongly against an attack, making it very clear to North Korea’s leadership that the Soviet Union would not under any conditions become directly involved. The essence of his involvement was a discussion not primarily about war within Korea but about the danger of U.S. intervention in such a war. Contrary to Gaddis’s sophistry, Stalin’s involvement in such a discussion is in no way comparable to the outright military invasion by the United States. Stalin recognized North Korea’s right to attempt reunification, and he should at least be given credit for accepting the right of self-determination, supposedly an American principle, and for keeping out of a civil war. Gaddis instead blames Stalin for Truman’s act of intervention, and then maligns him for leaving the burden of potential involvement by the United States in the hands of China. Korea, it must be remembered, was on the border of both China and the Soviet Union, and it took no paranoia on their part to perceive who was really being threatened. Can one imagine how Truman would have reacted to the presence of Soviet troops anywhere in North or South America? Had Stalin been as reckless or expansionist as Truman, World War III would have resulted.

Gaddis suggests that in looking at Korea, “the best place to start is with the fact that in Korea the superpowers had superimposed their rivalry on a civil war that would have existed in any event” (71). But it was the Truman administration alone that

imposed that rivalry on Korea by becoming the only aggressor in this entire episode. Then, in a monstrous blunder, Truman pursued that aggressive urge up toward the Chinese border despite clear and repeated warnings from India and China that this would provoke Chinese intervention. Apparently the Truman administration really did not believe its own persistent cries of imminent armed Communist aggression, and the general conclusion of its intelligence service was that neither China nor the Soviet Union would enter this war. The result was a prolonged, useless, brutal, and unnecessary war “that hardly left a modern building standing in North Korea,” almost prompted Truman’s third use of nuclear weapons, and wasted millions of Asian and thousands of American lives (Cumings 1997, 283–98).

Whether or not he accepts them, Gaddis should at the very least deal with these arguments. Instead, he avoids such considerations and blames the Korean War not on Western ambition, military intervention, or paranoia, but on Stalin for recognizing the rights of Korea as a nation. By this action, Stalin is also blamed for provoking the United States into accepting the earlier recommendations of its own Security Council to triple the defense budget, moving into a permanent war economy, and rearming West Germany. All of this purportedly occurred because “Korea, it appeared, might be only a prelude to substantial Soviet military offensives elsewhere” (84, 124). In reality, no “Soviet military offensives” occurred anywhere, although an obvious American one did.

In essence, President Truman had staked out a claim everywhere outside the lines drawn at the end of World War II beyond which the United States would resist any challenge to its own version of an acceptable social order. The nature and intent of this policy were again revealed in Vietnam. While Gaddis considers intervention in Vietnam a mistake, he casts what aspersions he can. For example, he emphasizes that in 1950 China decided to aid the Viet Minh “just as the United States was deciding to supply the French: both initiatives grew out of the Communists’ victory in China; both *preceded* the outbreak of the Korean War” (161). He ignores the fact that Truman’s military aid to the French actually began in 1945, just as he avoids

distinguishing between aid to a colonial power and aid to an indigenous movement for national independence. When the still-careful Stalin avoided involvement in Vietnam, Gaddis snidely attributes this to Stalin's "distrust of nationalist movements" rather than to restraint or his respect for those nationalist movements (158). Because both China and the Soviet Union urged compromise on the Viet Minh following their defeat of the French, Gaddis comes to the absurd conclusion that "Ho Chi Minh had an uncompleted civil war on his hands because of the settlement the Chinese and the Russians had forced on him in 1954" (176). And finally, we learn that after all it was "the victory of Communism in Cuba" that pushed the United States into "a protracted and costly military effort to *save* [emphasis added] South Vietnam, the single greatest error the United States made in fighting the Cold War" (189). This is pronounced an error not because such intervention was illegal or immoral but because it was unnecessary since Communism had no lasting appeal in the third world anyway and the domino theory was wrong. The implication seems to be that wherever Communism is sufficiently attractive or strong, American intervention is justified. This accords with Gaddis's ready endorsement of any U.S. foreign policy responding to the alleged, but unsubstantiated, dangers of either Communism or the Soviet Union.

The above discussion covers only a portion of Gaddis's account and there is no room here to explore all the questionable aspects of his presentation. Once he moves beyond the origins of the Cold War and Stalin's role in Europe, he does become more thoughtful and credible in his approach. His portrayal of Stalin's role in Asia, especially when Stalin is quoted, is at odds with the incompetent despot pictured earlier in his account, although there is little change in his attitude toward that Soviet leader. Whatever Stalin's faults, since the end of the 1920s he had led the Soviet Union in its rather astonishing economic progress and almost totally unexpected military success in World War II. It seems no exaggeration to state that the Soviet Union under his leadership was primarily responsible for saving civilization from Hitler and the Axis. Stalin lived less than eight years after the war, and during that time he sought to avoid new international

entanglements and again led the Soviet Union to impressive gains in economic recovery and technological development, including nuclear and missile capacity. There is no doubt that these achievements came at a great cost, but throughout Stalin successfully appealed to the Soviet people to accept heavy sacrifices in pursuit not only of a victory over fascism but also of a just and better society. Eight years under the conditions the Soviet Union faced after World War II was hardly sufficient time to recover from the impact of a war that had obliterated so much of its wealth and productive capacity as well as twenty million of its citizenry, including much of the cream of its leadership. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union advanced sufficiently to captivate the world with Sputnik and to inspire Khrushchev's boast of overtaking the United States in productivity within a decade. Instead, under the boisterous and bungling leadership of Khrushchev and his successors, Stalin was denounced, egalitarian principles were abandoned, the economy faltered, and the Soviet Union embarked on a variety of adventurous international policies, especially in Hungary and Afghanistan, that now for the first time could be said to resemble the expansionist actions of the United States. Eventually the goals of socialism itself were abandoned at costs that have become all too obvious.

Ironically, it is for the period after Stalin, when there is a new legitimacy to the concept of aggressive Soviet behavior, that Gaddis becomes more balanced in his presentation. Extreme attitudes and actions on the part of the United States are openly presented, and there is some attempt to fathom the thinking of Soviet leaders. Khrushchev's bluster is portrayed, but so, too, is the logic of his stance on such issues as Berlin, nuclear war, and missiles in Cuba. One wonders if Gaddis is now more even-handed because Stalin is out of the picture and it is easier to be charitable with less able and eventually defeated opponents. It is also easier for Gaddis to deal with this later period because he is beyond explaining the origins of a conflict and is instead depicting the conduct of a conflict in which he champions one side. This, perhaps, also explains his ready disavowal of any claim "to have allowed the chips to fall where they may" (x). Gaddis now shows how leaders on both sides were driven by conditions and

events, how miscalculations were common to all, and how nuclear power affected military posturing, but his tone and his conclusions remain unabashedly one-sided. He quotes but readily tolerates erroneous or extreme anti-Soviet statements by such American leaders as George C. Marshall, George Kennan, and Dean Acheson. No paranoia or commitments to aggression are discovered here. At worst he detects an excessive pessimism respecting the attractiveness of Communism, although he refuses to condemn unwarranted aggression by the United States because “things could have gone the other way,” or “the failure of fears to materialize does not establish their immateriality,” or “nightmares always seem real at the time—even if, in the clear light of dawn, a little ridiculous” (153–54, 187–188). Interventionist actions are also minimized. In the engineered overthrow of Arbenz in Guatemala, “the CIA’s intervention was a massive overreaction to a minor irritant,” which “did little to alter the course of events inside Guatemala” (178). Nor is any discomfort, let alone outrage, prompted by the endorsement of harsh repression in Latin America, British talk of assassinating Nasser, President Eisenhower’s authorization of Castro’s removal, the coup organized in Iran by the United States and Great Britain, or President Kennedy’s order to get rid of Cheddi Jagan in Guyana. An invariably sympathetic judgment of U.S. policy consistently undermines Gaddis’s more serious and informed discussion of various issues in the course of the Cold War. At no time is there any serious analysis of the realities of the capitalist world and its leadership, or any questioning of the policy of containment, or any acknowledgement of the imperial ambitions of the United States.

### *Conclusion*

In his final chapter, as part of his reason for attributing the Cold War primarily to Stalin, Gaddis offers the cunning observation that “for all of their importance, one could have removed Roosevelt, Churchill, Truman, Bevin, Marshall, or Acheson, and a cold war would still have probably followed the world war” (294). But on what possible grounds does this list of cold warriors include Roosevelt? It was his death that opened the way for

their Cold War, and had he still been there that conflict might not have occurred at all. Is this one of Gaddis's chips that is not allowed to fall where it may? Not content simply to ignore Roosevelt's attitude, Gaddis appears to be seeking his endorsement, something suggested on several other occasions in which he grasps at straws in seeking to identify Roosevelt with Cold War policies (e.g., 50–51). Roosevelt, however, remained determined to avoid confrontation and achieve cooperation up to the day of his death in April 1945. A month earlier, worried about opposition to the Yalta agreements, he stressed to Congress and the American people the necessity for active support of the decisions reached at Yalta. Over the following weeks, he rebuffed anti-Soviet proposals from Churchill and members of his own administration including the major Cold War architect Averell Harriman. A day before he died, he again rebuffed Churchill and dictated a speech stating that "today we are faced with the preeminent fact that, if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships—the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together and work together, in the same world, at peace" (Burns 1970, 597). By May, the eminent Sumner Welles complained that in five weeks the policies "so painstakingly carried on" by Roosevelt had been changed: "Our government now appears to the Russians as the spearhead of an apparent bloc of western nations opposed to the Soviet Union" (Siracusa 1971, 88). By September 1945, the intensely anti-Soviet Republican Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg could rejoice at "a complete reversal of the Administration's appeasement and surrender attitudes at Yalta" (Vandenberg 1952, 314). What had happened was Harry S. Truman.

As with any war, the general issues involved in the history of the Cold War are its origins and its conduct. Gaddis's neglect of the early Truman administration and the various complexities involved largely vitiates his explanation of the origins of that confrontation. He also pays little attention to leftist critics or to revisionists who have established a crucial relationship between economics, ideology, and American expansionism. Gaddis is content to explain matters almost solely in terms of Stalin and a conflict between democracy and totalitarianism. Important facts

are often at variance with his claims, and Gaddis's focus on Stalin relies on personal denunciation and erroneous concepts of Marxism to the neglect of the actual conditions, concerns, and policy of the Soviet Union. It is particularly ironic that Gaddis utilizes Stalin's suspicions of Western capitalism to justify Western policies that essentially verified those suspicions. In contrast, the role of a capitalist elite or of a desire to protect a capitalist economic order find little place in Gaddis's explanation of political or economic policy, the preservation of colonialism, the opposition to socialism and Communism, or the origins of the Cold War.

In thereafter considering the history of the Cold War, Gaddis combines and confounds two different issues. The first is the value or appeal of the two competing social systems represented by the Soviet Union and the United States. The second is the conduct of these two competing social orders in international affairs. In respect to the first, Gaddis unequivocally champions the capitalist economic and political system of the United States and also roundly denounces Communism and the Soviet Union, and it is this judgment that dominates his discussion of the Cold War. What his approach boils down to is the assumption that because the United States has created an unusually prosperous and successful society, with a political and social system that it considers uniquely moral and correct, and because Communism was such an evil threat, the United States has the right, if not obligation, to impose its will and its ways on the rest of the world in the interests of both defending and spreading that system. The strength of this bias encourages his use of innuendo, double standards, convenient omissions, distortions of Marxist thought, and one-sided interpretations. This bias also diverts attention from a variety of outrageous actions by the Truman administration and from a serious consideration of what the proper role and relationship of super powers should be. In fact, that question does not appear to concern Gaddis. He seems content simply to accept the collapse of the Soviet Union as a vindication of the policies and the superiority of the economic and political system of the United States.

Such a conclusion ignores a variety of other intriguing considerations. Despite the self-righteous satisfaction of today's capitalist world, can one doubt that the problems of capitalism remain very much with us and that a Marxist-socialist challenge will continue? The question of appropriate relationships between socialist- and capitalist-oriented nations and between competing superpowers also obviously remains with us. It is not necessary to reject one's own political and economic convictions to endorse the concept that societies with very different principles can, in fact, cooperate and compete in a far more reasonable and peaceful manner than that which the Cold War provided. What is required is less rigidity and self-righteousness, a firmer commitment to self-determination, and enough empathy to understand how differing views and conditions reflect differing historical circumstances and stages of development. The extraordinary cost and disturbing legacy of the Cold War have already captured the attention of numerous historians and challenge the wisdom of American policy since World War II. The United States—not the Soviet Union—was directly involved in two major wars during that period. Since World War II, wars have left over twenty-one million dead and “the United States has deployed forces for combat on the average of once every eighteen months” (LeFeber 1998, 35). Unilateral interference in other nations, including military action, now appears to have become a permanent characteristic of American foreign policy. By 1955, the United States had 450 military bases in thirty-six countries around the world, and between 1946 and 1965 the United States intervened in other nations with armed force 168 times while the Soviet Union did so ten times (Lundestad 1990, 53, 65). Walter Russell Mead has concluded that “the U.S. Government seems lost without something to contain,” and at “a time of diminishing national resources and power, the U.S. has not lowered its foreign policy horizons, it has universalized them” (LeFeber 1998, 36). According to Morton Halperin and Jeanne M. Woods, “The national security apparatus that was put in place to wage the Cold War is now a burgeoning bureaucracy in search of a new mission. It is busy identifying new enemies, based on an expanded definition

of national security, that justify its continued existence and funding” (LeFeber 1998, 36).

Today there is much to suggest that the nation has a permanent war economy with the voracious appetite and expansionist surge of American capitalism itself. Little wonder then that the collapse of the Soviet Union did not bring the expected peace dividend, that military budgets remain incredibly high, and a demand for ever-increasing military expenditures continues. While the Cold War contributed to it, this state of affairs is also a reflection of the expansionism of an American capitalism that, horrified by the specter of Communism and anticolonialism, was itself largely responsible for that very Cold War. A search for the acquisition and protection of property and profit has demanded incessant growth and attempted world domination. The United States has become the greatest expansionist power of all time in a process of exploiting and intervening throughout the world. Such policies have brought death to thousands of Americans, wasted and depleted resources, encouraged an obscene concentration of wealth, and contributed to domestic crises in social security, health care, and crime. As the economy thrives, the rich grow richer and the poor grow poorer and low levels of unemployment appear related to increased numbers of citizens in either the military or prisons. In substantial areas of the world, the end of the Soviet Union has brought more rather than less instability, unrest and violence. Franklin D. Roosevelt had envisioned a world where several major regional powers committed to human welfare and justice, including the Soviet Union, would be responsible for the maintenance of order and peace. That expectation has been replaced by an imperial Pax Americana in which the United States may have bitten off more than it can chew and its goals remain unclear.

The defeat of fascism in World War II offered an opportunity for the victorious Allied Powers to work together toward what appeared to be shared goals of economic justice, social democracy, international cooperation, and world peace. The war itself had demonstrated that very different social orders could, despite their mutual suspicions, cooperate in pursuit of important common interests. Contrary to the many big lies of the Cold War,

Stalin was not a Hitler and Communism was not the same as fascism. With its Marxist beliefs, the Soviet Union was attempting to move toward a more prosperous, just, and democratic society based on egalitarian economic principles, rather than on the private acquisition of wealth and insatiable search for profits that drive capitalism. It was also seeking acceptance and a secure place in a hostile, capitalist-dominated world. Stalin, contrary to Gaddis's claim, had endorsed the concept of peaceful coexistence, had established a good working relationship with Roosevelt, and had joined in the condemnation of colonialism, the establishment of the United Nations, arrangements for postwar economic relationships, and the planning for the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Bretons Woods agreement. These actions represented a serious interest in achieving a cooperative postwar relationship, an end to colonialism, and a peaceful world. What initially undermined these three goals was not Soviet aggression or totalitarianism but the immediate resumption, under the leadership of Truman, strongly urged on by Churchill, of the anti-Communist and anti-Soviet stance that had so typified the capitalist world since the Russian Revolution.

The fundamental conflict of capitalism and the profit system versus Marxist socialism was entangled with a worldwide struggle against colonialism. This was not essentially a conflict of democracy versus totalitarianism. Throughout the Cold War, the United States readily accepted and cooperated with dictators and totalitarian regimes so long as they were not inclined toward Marxism or interference with the privileges of world capitalism. In fact, the United States, both indirectly and directly, periodically displaced relatively democratic societies in the process of establishing totalitarian societies. Nor would the United States readily accept or cooperate with any state, however popular or indigenous, that represented socialist principles or that threatened the economic interests of American capitalism. The concern was to a substantial extent simply with movements for colonial independence, but it was also with Marxist socialism per se, not Soviet expansionism, as is readily suggested by the ongoing isolation of Cuba and North Korea in a world indisputably free of any Soviet military threat. There never was any such threat.

What Stalin and the Soviet Union really represented was the most successful and powerful example of the greatly feared specter of Marx, and that fear was primarily concerned not with promoting or protecting democracy for the many but with promoting and protecting the commitment of a few to an economic system based on private ownership, profit, and wealth.

It now seems clear that policies deceitfully imposed by the Truman administration's Cold War did not disappear with the collapse of the Soviet Union. This ostensible victory of the West, purchased at an enormous cost in the suffering, lives, and incomes of the peoples of the United States and the world, has not brought the hoped-for international harmony, peace dividend, or security. While the supposed military threat of the Soviet Union has evaporated, we remain trapped by the habits of power and, as former President Eisenhower warned, the demands of "the military-industrial complex." Our present military budget now exceeds by far the combined military budgets of the entire rest of the world, and we continue to serve as the world's leading purveyor of military equipment. The egalitarian ideals of the Roosevelt era have dropped from favor, and rather than serving to spread prosperity at home or abroad, the astounding technical and productive powers of the modern world largely have been wasted on the confrontation, conflict, and militarization that formed the core of the Cold War. In the eyes of much of the world we still seem determined to fashion, by force if need be, a world subservient to our own beliefs and our own interests. The result has been new enemies, new insecurities, new resorts to force, and new demands for ever-increasing military spending. Not only does this persisting legacy not accord well with many of our cherished values, but it also shows little promise of meeting the needs and hopes of people or of bringing real security to a diverse and troubled world.

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## NOTES

1. "Now that the Soviet Union has entered the war against us, to continue the war under the present internal and external conditions would be only to increase needlessly the ravages of war finally to the point of endangering the very foundation of the Empire's existence." "Hirohito Surrender Rescript to Japanese Troops, August 17, 1945" (Ausubel 1946, 460–61). This message to the Japanese military qualifies as one of the best-kept secrets of World War II. Its existence was brought to our attention by Martin Sherwin in a comment at a symposium in November 1998, and it finally was located in the source cited. Sherwin learned of its existence from Herbert Bix, who plans to publish the entire text in a forthcoming book. This illustration of the impact of the Soviet entry into the war accords with the initial expectations of Roosevelt and Churchill and effectively rebuts justifications for the use of the atomic bomb.

2. "McGeorge Bundy makes the case that 'Roosevelt would have taken to heart the quest for a workable international agreement' and 'made the matter his most pressing business.' Truman did not" (Chace 1998, 128).

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## **MARXIST FORUM**

*Nature, Society, and Thought* initiated with vol. 6, no. 1 a special section called “Marxist Forum” to publish programmatic materials from political parties throughout the world that are inspired by the communist idea. This section makes available to our readers (insofar as space restrictions permit) a representative cross section of approaches by these parties and their members to contemporary problems, domestic and international. Our hope is to stimulate thought and discussion of the issues raised by these documents and we invite comments and responses from readers.

In this issue, we present an article on market socialism written by Professor Duan Zhongqiao, Dean of the School of Marxism of (Remin) People’s University in Beijing.



# Critique of Market Superiority and Market Neutrality

Duan Zhongqiao

Although many different theoretical models of market socialism have been proposed since the middle of the 1980s, they share two theoretical foundations: one is what I call “market superiority,” that is, that the market is superior to planning; the other is what I call “market neutrality,” that is, that the market can serve both capitalism and socialism. Neither of them is correct according to Marx’s historical materialism and socialism.

## *Market superiority*

All market socialists firmly believe that the market, as an economic mechanism, is superior to planning, even though they all have their own reasons for thinking this. David Miller argues that the market can provide more welfare, freedom, and democracy than planning can (1989). John E. Roemer claims, “We know of no mechanism for inducing innovation on an economy wide basis except market competition” (1994, 46). David Schweickart holds that “central planning is deeply flawed as an economic mechanism” (1998, 10). It is easy to see that market superiority is their common starting point for advancing various models of market socialism.

By scrutinizing their texts, we notice that what they call “the market” means the market economy as practiced in capitalist countries now, but what they call “planning” means both the

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centrally planned economy that existed in the former Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries and the planned economy that Marx envisaged would be realized under communism (with socialism as the first phase of communism)—that is to say, two entirely different planning economies are the same thing in their eyes. Accordingly, although their main reasons for saying that the market economy is superior to the planned economy depend on the collapse of the planned economy and the redirection into a market economy in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries, they finally conclude that the market economy is superior to the planned economy quite generally, and, therefore, also to the planned economy that Marx envisaged. From this they further conclude that the market economy should be continued and developed in the transition from capitalism to socialism, and even in the period of socialism. The market socialists' argument is untenable.

First, the planned economy envisaged by Marx is not that which existed in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries. The realization of the former presupposes the full development of a capitalist economy or market economy, while the latter was established when the capitalist economy or market economy had not achieved full development in those countries. The former is based on common ownership of the means of production, with the means of production belonging to the whole society, while the latter was based on two kinds of public ownership, that is, state and collective ownership. The former requires the elimination of commodities and money, while the latter still contained commodities and money to a certain degree. The former is closely related to the abolition of classes and the state, while the latter coexisted with classes and the state. It is obviously unreasonable to equate the planned economy envisaged by Marx with the planned economy that existed in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries. This being so, the failure of the latter cannot demonstrate that the former is doomed to fail once it is put into practice.

Second, to make an abstract comparison between a market economy and a planned economy is in itself a mistake. According to Marx's historical materialism, the market economy

and the planned economy exhibit two different kinds of economic relations. Each of them is appropriate to a given stage in the development of the productive forces and appears in a given phase of the development of history. Concretely speaking, the market economy corresponds to the period of capitalism, and planned economy corresponds to the period of communism. Thus there is no point saying which is better in the abstract, the market economy or the planned economy, because the crux of the matter lies in which is more compatible with the level of development of the existing productive forces. Different countries in the world undoubtedly have different productive forces. Consequently, for some countries, a market economy may be more compatible with the growth of their productive forces, while for other countries, a planned economy may be more compatible. If market socialists want to argue that countries like the United States and Britain should continue developing a market economy during the transition from capitalism to socialism, they must give a definite answer to this question: Is a market economy still compatible with the growth of the productive forces of these countries?

Third, the fact that the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries shifted from a planned economy to a market economy only proves that the planned economy envisaged by Marx cannot be established unless the market economy has developed sufficiently and has turned into a fetter on the development of the productive forces; this fact does not prove that the market economy should be continued in the transition from capitalism to socialism and in socialism. In light of Marx's historical materialism, the development of the economic formation of society is a process of successive replacement from a precapitalist natural economy to a capitalist commodity economy and then to a communist planned economy. It is viewed as a process of natural history, that is to say, "And even when a society has got upon the right track for the discovery of the natural laws of its movement . . . it can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development" (1996, 10). This means that only through the full development of a natural economy can a market

economy be established, and, likewise, that only through the full development of a market economy can a planned economy be established. Consequently, the root cause that compelled the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries to change from a planned economy to a market economy was that they had tried to leap over the phase of full development of a market economy and directly establish a planned economy on the basis of what was, to a large extent, a natural economy. A planned economy established in this way must hinder the further development of the productive forces. It cannot be maintained for a long time and is bound finally to turn back into a market economy. What occurred in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries demonstrates that the planned economy envisaged by Marx cannot be carried out simply by virtue of a subjective desire.

The conditions of the developed capitalist countries, to which the market socialists are paying close attention, should be regarded as a different matter. The market economy in these countries has developed to the point that it has become a fetter on the further development of the productive forces. So the problems with which these countries are confronted, according to Marx, cannot be solved by continuing the market economy, but by replacing it with a planned one. If market socialists want to prove that a market economy should be retained and developed in the transition from capitalism to socialism, they should not take the cases of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries as illustrations, but give a convincing argument that the problems existing in capitalist countries can be solved only by a market economy.

Market socialists advance the thesis of market superiority to argue that only through a market economy can socialism be realized. To arrive at this conclusion, they have confused the planned economy that existed in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries with the planned economy envisaged by Marx, and then have taken the fact that these countries turned back to a market economy as grounds for saying that the market economy practiced in the developed capitalist countries is now superior to the planned economy envisaged by Marx, and that, consequently, the market economy should be retained and

developed when capitalist countries are transformed into socialist countries. This argument is obviously untenable.

### ***Market neutrality***

After arguing for market superiority, all market socialists further advance the thesis of market neutrality. In their opinion, the market is an economic mechanism without any influence on the character of the social system, and can serve socialism as well as capitalism. David Miller emphasizes that “now it is certainly true that capitalism relies on markets, but what is distinctive about it is that the ownership of productive assets is concentrated in the hands of a few, with most people being hired as employees for a wage. It is quite possible to be for markets and against capitalism” (1988, 25). Roemer states in *A Future for Socialism* that “my task in this essay is to propose and defend a new model that combines the strengths of the market system with those of socialism” (1994, 2). David Schweickart points out that “the identification of capitalism with the market is a pernicious error of both conservative defenders of laissez-faire and most left opponents of market reforms” (1998, 11). In a nutshell, they conclude that the market is neutral.

What is the meaning of the market in market-socialist theory? All market socialists have their own answer to that question. All of them, however, agree that the market is not a place for buying and selling, but an economic mechanism or economic system that conditions social production. It determines that the direct object and decisive motive of production of every enterprise is not use values, but exchange values and profit. Consequently, social production cannot be regulated by conscious planning, but by the relations between supply and demand, that is, the law of value, which takes effect spontaneously.

Why is the market neutral? So far, nobody has given a convincing justification of this claim. Let us look at David Schweickart’s exposition. He writes:

Capitalism has three defining institutions. It is a market economy, featuring private ownership of the means of production and wage labor. That is to say, most of the economic transactions of society are governed by the invisible

hand of supply and demand; most of the productive assets of society belong to private individuals either directly or by virtue of individual ownership of shares in private corporations; most people work for salaries or wages paid directly or indirectly by the owners of the enterprises for which they work. A market socialist economy eliminates or greatly restricts private ownership of means of production, substituting for private ownership some form of state or worker ownership. It retains the market as the mechanism for coordinating most of economy, although there are usually restrictions placed on the market in excess of what is typical under capitalism. It may or may not replace wage labor with workplace democracy, wherein workers get, not a contracted wage, but specified shares of enterprise's net proceeds. If it does, the system is a "worker-self-managed" market socialism. (1998, 10)

In brief, the character of capitalism lies in the private ownership of the means of production and wage labor; the character of socialism lies in some form of state or worker ownership, with workers getting specified shares of the enterprise's net proceeds. A market economy can exist both in capitalism and in socialism because it has nothing to do with capitalism or socialism. This can be regarded as a representative argument of market socialists.

It is easy to see that the market socialists' belief in market neutrality is closely related to their understanding of the character of capitalism and of socialism. Their mistakes, according to Marx, stem from their incorrect understanding of them.

In the view of Marx, the most universal feature of capitalism is not private ownership of the means of production and wage labor, but a developed commodity economy, that is, what is called market economy today. Marx often emphasized this feature:

But within bourgeois society, based as it is upon *exchange value*, relationships of exchange and production are generated which are just so many mines to blow it to pieces. (1986–87, 28:96)

The value-form of the product of labour is not only the most abstract, but is also the most universal form taken by the product in bourgeois production and stamps that production a particular species of social production and thereby gives it its special historical character. (1996, 91–92, n. 2)

And developed commodity production itself is capitalist commodity production. (1997, 116)

In *Capital III*, Marx made a very clear statement:

Capitalist production is distinguished from the outset by two characteristic features.

*First*. It produces its products as commodities. The fact that it produces commodities does not differentiate it from other modes of production; but rather the fact that being a commodity is the dominant determining characteristic of its product. . . .

The *second* distinctive feature of the capitalist mode of production is the production of surplus value as the direct aim and determining motive of production. (1998, 866–67)

These quotations show that Marx consistently did regard the developed commodity economy, that is, the market economy, which produces exchange values and surplus values (profit), as the most universal feature of capitalism. Of course, we cannot on this basis draw the conclusion that Marx denied that capitalism also has the features of private ownership of the means of production and wage labor, since he only regarded the developed market economy as the most universal feature of capitalism, and just took this feature as a starting point to derive two more concrete characters of capitalism: (1) private ownership of the means of production and wage labor; (2) anarchy of production and a propensity to economic crisis. In other words, in Marx's thinking, regarding the developed market economy as the most universal feature of capitalism inherently implies the two more concrete features mentioned here.

Why does regarding the developed market economy as the most universal feature of capitalism inherently also imply private

ownership of the means of production and wage labor as features of capitalism? Marx asserted that

definite historical conditions are involved in the existence of products as a commodity. In order to become a commodity, the product must cease to be produced as the immediate means of subsistence of the producer himself. Had we gone further, and inquired under what circumstances all, or even the majority of products take the form of commodities, we should have found that this only happens on the basis of one particular mode of production, the capitalist one. (1996, 273)

Because the capitalist epoch is characterized by the fact

that labour power takes in the eyes of the labourer himself the form of a commodity which is his property; his labour consequently becomes wage labour. On the other hand, it is only from this moment that the produce of labour universally becomes a commodity. (1996, 180 n. 1)

So, once we clarify that capitalist production is the production of exchange values, that its products take the form of commodities, this means that the worker appears only as a seller of commodities, that is, a free wage laborer, and hence labor generally appears as wage labor, and the means of production as the antithesis of wage labor; and the embodiment of other people's assets appears as capital. "In view of what has already been said, it is superfluous to demonstrate anew that the relationship between capital and wage labour determines the entire character of the mode of production" (1998, 866).

Here we need to emphasize that Marx also regarded anarchy of production and a propensity to economic crisis as other more concrete features that accompany private ownership of the means of production and wage labor, when he regarded the developed market economy as the most universal feature of capitalism. In the view of Marx, the developed market economy internally determines that the purpose of production of every enterprise is not the satisfaction of need, but the production of profit, and, therefore, that all production is spontaneously regulated by the

law of value. Under a developed market economy, even though the production of individual enterprises proceeds through organization and planning, “the cohesion of the aggregate production imposes itself as a blind law on the agents of production, and not as a law which, being understood and hence controlled by their common mind, brings the production process under their joint control” (1998:256). Thus, productive anarchy and an inevitable economic crisis constitute another more concrete feature of capitalism. Market socialists do not say a single word about this.

Marx believed that the most universal feature of communism (socialism being its first phase) is a planned economy that is just the opposite of a market economy. In his works he mentioned this feature many times:

Let us now picture to ourselves, by way of change, a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common, in which the labour-power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labour-power of the community. All the characteristics of Robinson’s labour are here repeated, but with this difference, that they are social, instead of individual. Everything produced by him was exclusively the result of his own personal labour, and therefore simply an object of use for himself. The total product of our community is a social product. One portion serves as fresh means of production and remains social. But another portion is consumed by the members as means of subsistence. A distribution of this portion amongst them is consequently necessary. The mode of this distribution will vary with the productive organisation of the community, and the degree of historical development attained by the producers. We will assume, but merely for the sake of a parallel with the production of commodities, that the share of each individual producer in the means of subsistence is determined by his labour-time. Labour-time would, in that case, play a double part. Its apportionment in accordance with a definite social plan maintains the

proper proportion between the different kinds of work to be done and the various wants of the community. On the other hand, it also serves as a measure of the portion of the common labour borne by each individual, and of his share in the part of the total product destined for individual consumption. The social relations of the individual producers, with regard both to their labour and to its products, are in this case perfectly simple and intelligible, and that with regard not only to production but also to distribution. (1996, 89–90)

If we conceive society as being not capitalist but communist, there would be no money capital at all in the first place, nor the disguises cloaking the transactions arising on account of it. The question now comes down to the need of society to calculate beforehand how much labour, means of production, and means of subsistence it can invest, without detriment, in such lines of business as for instance the building of railways, which do not furnish any means of production or subsistence, nor produce any useful effect, for a long time, a year or more, while they extract labour, means of production and means of subsistence from the total annual production. (1997, 314)

In the case of social production, money capital is eliminated. Society distributes labour power and means of production to the different branches of production. The producers may, for all it matters, receive paper vouchers entitling them to withdraw from the social supplies of consumer goods a quantity corresponding to their labour time. These vouchers are not money. They do not circulate. (1997, 356)

Freedom, in this field can only consist in socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of

energy and under conditions most favorable to, and worthy of, their human nature. (1998, 807)

Within the collective society based on common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products; just as little does the labour employed on the products appear here as *the value* of these products, as a material quality processed by them, since now, in contrast to capitalist society, individual labour no longer exists in an indirect fashion but directly as a component part of the total labour. (1989, 85)

These extracts show that Marx regarded a planned economy as the most universal feature of communism. Certainly a planned economy is closely linked with common ownership of the means of production under which labor becomes the prime want of human life. The relation between them is just the same as the relation between a market economy on the one hand and private ownership of the means of production and wage labor on the other.

Since Marx insisted that a developed market economy is a capitalist economy and that a planned economy is a communist economy, he resolutely opposed various theories that tried to merge socialism with a market economy. When he was fighting against Proudhon's socialism, he ridiculed him as follows: "It is an aspiration as pious as it is stupid to wish that exchange value would not develop into capital, or that labor which produces exchange value not develop wage labour" (1986-87, 28:180). He cautioned that "there can be therefore be nothing more incorrect or more absurd than to assume, on the strength of *exchange value* and *money*, control by the associated individuals of their collective production" (28:96).

From Marx's discussion we can see that the thesis of market neutrality is based on an incorrect understanding of the features of capitalism and socialism, and especially of the market economy. Of course, market socialists will not readily admit their mistake. They will argue that the market economy under market socialism is linked with the cooperative factories of laborers themselves, that is, public ownership, with profit shared by the

workers in their factory, and democratic management: it will consequently not lead to capitalism, but promote socialism. Yet is it so? The answer can only be negative from Marx's point of view. Let us proceed to a deeper analysis.

First, the existence of a developed market economy means the existence of private ownership of the means of production. The market economy presupposes the existence of buying and selling, that is, commodity exchange. Marx said, "Only such products can become commodities with regard to each other, as result from different kinds of labour, each kind being carried on independently" (1996, 52). This means that each side of the exchange must therefore recognize the other as an owner of private property (95), otherwise the exchange cannot be carried out and the market cannot exist. Market socialists may stress that, under market socialism, private enterprises owned by individual capitalists will not exist, and that what will exist will be cooperative enterprises owned by the laborers themselves. The means of production of the latter are owned by the laborers of each enterprise—a kind of public ownership, rather than private ownership. But in the public ownership of communism in Marx's discussion, all means of production are owned by society as a whole. Compared with public ownership in Marx's thinking, the public ownership in cooperative enterprise is merely a kind of enlarged private ownership, in a certain sense. It is not individual private ownership, but a collectively private one. This feature is particularly embodied in the fact that the means of production of each cooperative enterprise is only owned by the workers who work in that enterprise. That is to say, the means of production are public assets only for these workers, and not for those workers who work in other enterprises. It is because public ownership of cooperative enterprises is, in fact, a kind of enlarged private ownership, that exchange between these enterprises can be carried out, and, therefore, a market economy can exist. In short, so long as a market economy exists, private ownership of means of production is bound to exist, even though it takes the form of the public ownership of cooperative enterprise under market socialism.

Second, the existence of a developed market economy means the existence of capital and wage labor. Under a market economy, the motive and objective of production of each enterprise, whether it is owned by an individual capitalist or by the collective laborers themselves, is not use value, but exchange value and surplus value, that is, “things are produced only so long as they can be produced with a profit” (Marx 1998, 258) If the means of production are employed only to produce a profit, whether they are owned by an individual capitalist or the cooperative enterprise, they at once take on the character of capital valorizing itself. As Marx wrote in *Capital I*:

If we consider the process of production from the point of view of the simple labour process, the labourer stands in relation to the means of production, not in their quality as capital, but as the mere means and material of his own intelligent productive activity. In tanning, e.g., he deals with the skins as his simple object of labour. It is not the capitalist whose skin he tans. But it is different as soon as we deal with the process of production from the point of view of the process of creation of surplus value. The means of production are at once changed into means for the absorption of the labour of others. It is now no longer the labourer that employs the means of production, but the means of production that employ the labourer. Instead of being consumed by him as material elements of his productive activity, they consume him as the ferment necessary to their own life process, and the life process of capital consists only in its movement as value constantly expanding, constantly multiplying itself. (1996, 314–15)

At the same time, a developed market economy means that all products, or at least the majority, take the form of commodities, which presupposes wage labor, that is, that the workers have no other commodity for sale except their labor power, for “it is only from then onwards that commodity production is generalised and becomes the typical form of production; it is only from then onwards that, from the first, every product is produced for sale

and all wealth produced goes through the sphere of circulation” (Marx 1967, 587).<sup>1</sup>

Market socialists may argue that, under market socialism, the means of production of each cooperative enterprise are owned by the workers themselves and not by an individual capitalist, and that the profit of each enterprise is shared by its all workers, and not owned by an individual capitalist, which shows that capital and wage labor do not exist, even though the market still exists. But this argument is untenable. According to Marx’s discussion, capital is not equal to the capitalist: the capitalist is only capital personified. Under a market-socialist economy, although the means of production of each enterprise are owned by its workers, they still have the character of capital, that is, of self-valorizing value, for the motive and objective of production of each enterprise is still exchange value and profit, that is, surplus value. For just this reason, Marx called the workers in the cooperative factories run by themselves “their own capitalist, i.e., by enabling them to use the means of production for the employment of their labour” (1998, 438). The difference between capital under capitalism and capital under market socialism lies only in that the former is personified in individual capitalists, while the latter is personified in workers’ associations.

As long as capital exists, wage labor must exist at the same time, because capital cannot bring profit without combining with wage labor. As Marx said, “The means of production do not become the material forms of productive capital, or productive capital, until labour power, the personal form of existence of productive capital, is capable of being embodied in them” (1997, 43). Perhaps market socialists will be filled with wonder. Under market socialism the workers have become the owners of their enterprise; how can they be employed by themselves? Yet it is a fact that they are. According to Marx: “Whatever the social form of production, labourers and means of production always remain factors of it. But in a state of separation from each other either of these factors can be such only potentially. For production to go on at all they must united” (1997, 42). Under market socialism, the workers in cooperative enterprises are not only owners of the means of production of their enterprise, but also the producers,

using these means of production to produce products. If they are not producers, but only owners, the cooperative enterprise cannot exist for one day, and then their identity as owners of means of production, and the profit shared by them, will disappear. Once engaged in production linked to wage and profit, their labour represents a kind of wage labor. The existence of wages means that they are still selling their labor power. The existence of profit means that they are still producing surplus value in excess of the value of their labor power, even though this surplus value (that is, profit) will return to them as owners of their enterprise. It can be seen that the workers of the cooperative enterprise have a dual identity. One is as the owners of the means of production of their enterprise. Another is as the wage laborers of their enterprise. As the former, they employ themselves to get profit. As the latter, they sell their labor power to themselves to gain a wage. These relations of self-employment and self-exploitation are what constitute the cooperative enterprise's special form connecting laborers with means of production. Insofar as this connection exists, "the antithesis between capital and labour is overcome within them" (1998, 438).

Clearly, wage laborers under market socialism differ from those under capitalism just in that the former are the owners of the means of production as well as wage laborers, while the latter are only wage laborers; the former sell their labor power to their own enterprise as capitalists, the latter sell their labor power to individual capitalists; the former can gain both wages and surplus value, that is, the profit created by them; the latter can only gain wages, while surplus value is owed to the capitalist. Once a cooperative enterprise declares bankruptcy, which is unavoidable even under market socialism, the former will change into the latter. In a word, as long as a market economy continues, capital will continue, so will wage labor.

Three, the existence of a developed market economy means the existence of anarchy of production and economic crisis. Under a market economy, each enterprise is indifferent to the particular use value of its products and cares only about their exchange value and surplus value; and social production is not regulated by conscious planning, but by an invisible hand, that

is, the law of value. This is bound to lead to anarchy of production and economic crisis. For just this reason, Marx believed that, even though the cooperative factories run by workers themselves are, within the old form, the first examples of the emergence of a new form, in which the opposition between capital and labor is abolished, “they naturally reproduce, and must reproduce, everywhere in their actual organisation all the shortcoming of the prevailing system” (438). The “existing system” is doubtless a market economy, and “all the defects” are doubtless those bred by a market economy, namely, anarchy of production and economic crisis.

Market socialists may argue that anarchy and crisis will not happen, because, under market socialism, the workers in a cooperative enterprise, or the management they democratically elect, can democratically determine everything related to production in their enterprise. But this argument does not touch the relevant point. That is because the understanding of the real needs of society can only be established afterwards, so long as a market exists. An individual capitalist cannot estimate accurately the needs of the market, nor can a group of workers, even though they can democratically discuss and democratically make a decision. That is to say, if social production is governed ultimately by the law of value as a blind natural force, there is no essential distinction between the decision about production arbitrarily made by an individual capitalist and a decision made democratically by all the workers of a cooperative enterprise. The latter also cannot solve the problem of anarchy of production and, consequently, of economic crisis for the total production of society.

Market socialists may emphasize that market socialism can prevent the emergence of anarchy of production and economic crisis through democratic government. The government can formulate various policies and consciously control social investment. But that is a naive delusion. According to Marx’s historical materialism, it is the economy of a society that determines its politics, not the politics of a society that determines its economy. It is utterly impossible to solve the problems originating in the realm of the economy by political means. When Marx criticized Sismondi he said, “Sismondi, by contrast, emphasizes

not only the encountering of the barrier, but its creation by capital itself, which thus gets itself into contradictions, contradictions in which he glimpses the impending BREAKDOWN of capital. He therefore wants to impose barriers on production from outside, by means of custom, laws, etc., which, as merely external and artificial constraints, would necessarily be demolished by capital” (1986–87, 28:338). Thus as long as a market economy continues, anarchy of production will continue, and economic crises are inevitable. Under market socialism, the interventions of democratic government may alleviate these problems to some extent, but cannot eradicate them.

The foregoing analyses show that a market economy is not neutral, and that the existence of the market means the existence of capitalism. The fundamental mistake of market socialists lies in the fact that they do not regard a market economy as a totality of social relations of production that embodies the character of a society.

There is no denying that the motive of market socialists is to envisage a viable program to realize socialism. But through the negation or neglect of Marx’s theory, and an incorrect account of the failure of socialism in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries, they come to believe that the problems of capitalism do not originate in the market economy itself, but in the private ownership of means of production and wage labor, and, therefore, so long as enterprises owned by individual capitalists are replaced by cooperative enterprises of the laborers themselves, and the profit extracted by the individual capitalist is shared by laborers of each enterprise, socialism will be realized. They do not understand that private ownership and wage labor are closely related to the market economy itself, and that the former is just the concrete embodiment of the latter. They want to perpetuate the market economy while simultaneously abolishing private ownership and wage labor. In Marx’s words, “We might just as well try to retain Catholicism without the Pope” (1996, 97, n. 1).

The thesis of market superiority and market neutrality must lead to the conclusion that the market will exist forever. Some market socialists, such as David Miller and John E. Roemer,

advocate that openly. Others, such as David Schweickart and James Lawler (1998), do not agree with it, but believe that, at least in the transition from capitalism to socialism, a market economy should remain and develop. As for its thorough abolition, they think it is nowhere in sight. In Marx's discussion, even though the market cannot be abolished at once in the transition to socialism, the transition itself will necessarily appear as progress, in which a planned economy grows steadily and the market economy declines step by step. The realization of socialism and abolition of the market economy will be simultaneous.

Great changes have certainly taken place in capitalist countries since Marx died, and, therefore, some of his inferences have been considered antiquated. But his opinion that the transition from capitalism to socialism means a transition from a market economy to a planned economy is not obsolete, and is proved by history. So the task facing socialists is to put forward a viable program of gradually reducing the market economy and expanding economic planning according to the changed situations, instead of finding a way to realize socialism while leaving the market economy intact.

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#### NOTES

1. This passage from text added by Engels in the fourth German edition is included in Marx 1967, but omitted from Marx 1996.

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## BOOKS AND IDEAS

by *Herbert Aptheker*

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### **Black and white together**

*The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917–1936* by Mark Solomon (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998, 403 pp., cloth \$45, paper \$20) is the result of a lifetime of study and thought. It is indispensable to an understanding of the modern history of the United States.

In the introduction, we read:

In the nearly two decades covered by this study, one can analyze the evolution of a policy and observe how a movement broke free from isolation and ideological abstractions to achieve a significant place in the battle for racial justice. (xxv)

In achieving this goal, Solomon's work devastates the Cold War mythology coming from Theodore Draper and his myriad of fellow fakers. This book confirms the work of such serious scholars as Manning Marable, Maurice Isserman, Roger Keeran, and Mark Naison. It deepens the recent *New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993), edited by Michael E. Brown and others. Robin D. G. Kelley's work on Communists in Alabama towers over them all—a challenge, as Solomon states, for others to do the same in other areas.

Solomon's book illuminates the history and development of the "consciousness of social injustice, racial and national oppression, and class partisanship" marking the Communist Party's

*Nature, Society, and Thought*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1998)

beginnings. Another volume, moving closer to the present, is promised—may it eventuate! Illuminated are the beginnings of the Communist effort, going back to the African Blood Brotherhood, the historic role of Cyril Briggs, the early connection of the Left with Marcus Garvey, and the role of Rose Pastor Stokes. Emphasis is given, quite properly, to the central role of Robert Minor (out of Texas) in the development of the Party.

Especially important is the idea of the Black experience constituting “a national question,” which drove the Party “into the vortex of Black life.” This was basic to the reality of African American and white unity. The sense of nationality goes back to the beginnings of Black history—something missed by Solomon, who seems not to have known my own “Consciousness of Negro Nationality to 1900,” first published in 1949. Similarly, Solomon’s work on the African Blood Brotherhood would have been strengthened by reference to the third volume of my *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (1973), in which is published an exceedingly rare leaflet giving a fairly full account of the purpose of the African Blood Brotherhood.

In a work of this sweep and originality such lapses are quite understandable. Solomon’s account of the Party’s work in the South is invaluable—heroic pioneering work of lasting impact. Decisive was the development of this idea:

The Communists stressed self-interest rooted in the requirements of social struggle—Blacks were not to be pitied or patronized, they were to be welcomed as indispensable allies in the battle to change the world. (145)

Equally important and dramatic is the account of the Party’s “Fighting Hunger and Eviction” in the Harlem of the Depression (chapter nine).

Solomon does not minimize the Party’s sectarianism, as displayed, for example, in its virulent attacks on W. E. B. Du Bois precisely when he was moving to the left and was open to cooperation with the Party.

Perhaps most consequential in this vital book is its account of the struggles around the cases of Angelo Herndon and the nine Scottsboro defendants. The lessons learned were important in the

movement toward the creation of the National Negro Congress, which, at its opening meeting in February 1936, had over 800 delegates from 551 organizations representing over three million people.

Enlightening, too, is Solomon's account of the Party's significant role in helping develop some comprehension of the magnificence of Black literature and art. The Party's role in the theater was exemplary in helping bring to the fore hitherto neglected and suppressed truths about Black militancy.

In that connection, the work of Carter G. Woodson, his Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, and its *Journal of Negro History* were crucial. My own work on Nat Turner is mentioned by Solomon, but he puts it in the context of Party studies by Minor and others. Much more important was the work of Woodson; its absence is a significant failure in Solomon's book.

Finally, Solomon's work shows that the Party played a key role in creating the "substantial Negro-labor alliance that would become the cornerstone of the struggle for progress against reaction in coming years—and to this day."

Solomon is correct when he emphasizes "the need to make known the historical record of the 1930s and to lay it before new generations." His work closes by quoting the words of the late African American battler, Claude Lightfoot: "the fight was not over—and the craving and the cry for unity were not extinguished" (310).

Solomon's book helps that fight.

### **The attack on affirmative action**

One of the sharpest features of the currently rising right-wing activity is the attack upon affirmative action. Indeed, the national weekly edition of the *Washington Post* (1 February 1999) devotes a page to "The Affirmative Action Battleground Shifts to the Heartland." This describes the growing movement (recently successful in California), spearheaded by the Republican Party, to scuttle affirmative action. One of the features of this reactionary assault is to falsely describe affirmative action as a system of "preferences and quotas."

The reality, of course, is that this nation has always been characterized by racist actions and policies resulting in discrimination against African Americans in income, housing, education, and health, so that in these fundamental aspects of life the Black population suffers significantly compared with the white population. Propaganda against affirmative action tends to affirm that this discrimination has been overcome and that affirmative action is not needed, therefore, and indeed is *discriminatory* against white people.

This is deliberate falsification, and disastrous results are already apparent. In 1998 undergraduate enrollment of African Americans at the University of California in Berkeley fell 66 percent and in Los Angeles 43 percent. In postgraduate education the result has been even more calamitous—thus, at the law school of the University of California in Berkeley in 1998 only *one* Black applicant was admitted!

A splendid book has recently appeared whose theme is to show “long-term consequences of considering race in college and university admissions”: *The Shape of the River* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998, \$24.95). Its authors are William G. Bowen and Derek Bok. Mr. Bowen is former president of Princeton and Mr. Bok is a former president of Harvard and dean of its law school. The book *proves that affirmative action is needed*, and that its past history shows that effective enforcement of affirmative action results in significant reduction of racism’s impact in the colleges and universities of this nation.

The fundamental conclusion of this careful study is that these two preeminent scholars “remain persuaded that present racial disparities in outcomes are dismayingly disproportionate. *At the minimum, this country needs to maintain the progress now being made in educating larger numbers of Black professionals and Black leaders*” (284, emphasis added).

## Book Reviews

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*Marxist Morality*. By William Ash. Delhi: Ajanti Publications 1998. 304 pages, cloth Rs 350. Available in the U.S. from South Asia Books, P.O. Box 502, Columbia, MO 65205, \$15.

This is an account of the Marxist interpretation of ethics. Ash rejects the positivist view that *good* is “merely an emotional sound of approval,” thus “emptying all meaning from the idea of value” (16). He agrees with Marx that “value in general is a form of social labour” (24). The descriptive use of the word *good* expresses the “objective measure” of the work used to satisfy our needs, while the prescriptive use pertains to people’s dependence on things for satisfaction of their wants or needs (25). This stands over against the consumerist or “shopper’s” idea of value, which is concerned with the goods available for use rather than with the productive process.

The essential value or commodity in the market is labor power. The workers sell their labor power to the capitalist and then buy back a portion of their product. What they produce in the time beyond the time necessary for supplying their basic needs is surplus value (31). Thus “the economic law of value,” which is “an exchange ratio of commodities,” appears “as an external necessity inherent in the nature of things.” Thus also exploitation “hides behind commodity operations” (33-34). Marx urges the working class “to get rid of the dominance of the bourgeoisie and their interests thus redeeming law and morality from the influence of their selfish greed” (39).

It is self-interest that drives capitalism. “Capitalist utilitarianism is based on self-interest, the ethics of consumerism” (44). Rights are for the wealthy, not the poor, and “must be reclaimed

*Nature, Society, and Thought*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1998)

as the principles governing the collective behaviour of the far more numerous working people rather than that of the relatively small minority exploiting them” (61).

The descriptive sense of the word *good* “refers to an object’s usefulness,” while a prescriptive sense “honours the human labour incorporated in it” (62). The description of labor as a source of value requires the prescription of the part of the working class to create socialism. When the working class becomes conscious of itself in word and deed as a class-for-itself, it becomes revolutionary. “The strategy of the revolution is the occupation and control of all *workplaces*. . . . The ownership of the means of production by those who use them for the benefit of society is the basis of the socialist democratic institutions which will be the guarantee of freedom from exploitation” (288).

This work is a detailed and comprehensive exposition of the morality of Marxism. It elaborates the theory of value implicit in Marx and developed by Engels, Lenin, Mao Tse Tung, and others. It is a valuable contribution to the literature of Marxism for both theoreticians and activists.

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*Exploitation*. By Alan Wertheimer. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996. 316 pages, cloth \$47.50; 1999 paper \$19.95.

Twentieth-century Anglo-American moral philosophy has largely taken the moral intuitions of the respectable, rock-steady burgher as the data for the study of ethics. From G. E. Moore to John Rawls, the virtues of bourgeois life—respect for person, property, and liberty—are taken to be primary to a theory of ethics; any theory that invites our consideration must range over the prohibitions of murder, assault, theft, intentional destruction,

rape, and other offenses. It must also acknowledge—usually through the vehicle of rights—the sanctity of free, unrestrained actions, limited only insofar as they collide with the actions of others. This set of values permits the orderly human relations and transactions of bourgeois life. This set of values is constitutive of the fundamental charters of modern bourgeois states. This set of shared beliefs undergirds the consensus that modern parliamentary, private-ownership, market societies enjoy.

Writers like John Rawls have earnestly set out to construct a rational defense of these liberal values. No justification of a moral code would ring true to the ear of the academic philosopher unless it defended just these values. A moral philosophy shorn of the sanctity of liberty would be dismissed out of hand. It would, to the university-trained ethicist, hardly count as a moral theory at all.

If the triumph of capitalism has indeed enshrined these rights to life, property, and liberty to the point that they appear self-evident, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have known two significant challenges to the bourgeois creed—from the left and—as a reaction to the strength of the Left—from the right.

Central to the left-wing challenge was a notion popularized by the working-class movement in response to the “dark Satanic mills” of industrialization. The idea of exploitation—specifically, the idea of life organized around human labor and directed toward the enrichment of the few privileged to take advantage of this labor—emerged as a core explanatory and moral concept for this movement. Witnesses to the new industrial system like Engels, Gaskell, Kay, Ure, Dickens, and Carlyle chronicled well the sense of pervasive misery and hopelessness attending the birth of a labor market.

It was for Marx to make exploitation the centerpiece of an alternative social science and moral theory to the bourgeois worldview. Where the bourgeois moral theory grafts the primacy of the individual and the sanctity of unfettered exchange and action onto the traditional prohibitions against the violation of persons and personal property, Marx elevates the wrong of labor exploitation to the stature of these historically evolved wrongs. To use an illustration no doubt repugnant to Marx, moral heaven is only open to those who forego exploitation; appealing to the

values of liberty of action will not erase the sin of exploitation.

Ironically, since the collapse of Eastern European socialisms—the most influential exponents of Marx’s theory—a vigorous interest in the idea of exploitation has arisen among Anglo-American scholars. Just as Francis Fukuyama saw fit to rehabilitate the idea of Hegelian historicism after socialism’s decline, academic philosophers have now discovered a new relevancy to the idea of exploitation. Marxism is dead. Long live Marxism!

The latest and most ambitious academic treatise on the subject is Alan Wertheimer’s *Exploitation*. Wertheimer brings a commendable rigor and attention to detail to his project. Moreover, he is explicit about his own ideological stance, grounding his work “within the framework of a liberal egalitarian political theory.” While Wertheimer professes little interest in the Marxian notion, he holds that the labor exploitation of the proletariat at the core of Marx’s theory is adequately captured by the commonsense idea analyzed in his book.

Indeed, Wertheimer’s claim has some merit; the simple yet elegant definition of exploitation as “taking unfair advantage” seems more basic, more in step with our intuitions, and less question-begging than the inequality-based theories of the analytical Marxists or the imperfect-competition models of liberal economists.

But why “unfair” advantage? Is it not enough for A to take advantage of B to warrant the claim, “A exploits B”? Does not taking advantage of others constitute sufficient wrong to undergird the charge of exploitation without qualifying that act with unfairness? Consider a poker hand where A knows that B will never bet more than \$10 on a hand and willfully raises \$15, causing B to fold. Within the rules of poker, A has acted fairly, yet A has, in some interesting sense, exploited B. Since Rawls’s book *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), liberal theorists have either taken *fairness* to be synonymous with *moral*, in which case it adds nothing to our understanding, or, alternatively, they have understood fairness to be a procedural matter, in which case it fails to capture the wrongness of murder, assault, or exploitation.

Wertheimer accomplishes useful conceptual surgery when he distinguishes what he calls harmful exploitation from mutually

advantageous exploitation, and nonconsensual from consensual exploitation. He is correct in noting that the most interesting and troubling kinds of exploitation occur when the exploited accrue some advantage and, in some sense, accept their exploitation. It was the exploitation of capitalism, where workers participating freely in the labor market drew some “advantage,” that absorbed Marx, just as Wertheimer wrestles with those cases that combine mutual advantage and consent on the part of the exploited. For liberals like Wertheimer, wedded methodologically to individual rational choice, such cases are particularly puzzling because they rub against the assumption of enlightened self-interest. How can a rational, self-interested individual consent to being exploited? Marxists, of course, understand this as class behavior in the absence of class consciousness.

Wertheimer’s embrace of methodological individualism and the explanatory framework of rational choice obscure his vision of labor exploitation. Given a perfectly competitive market with all procedural rules mutually accepted and respected, with all agents enjoying information and rationality, transactions are by definition fair, so it is difficult for Wertheimer to see them as exploitative. Of course, as Wertheimer readily admits, exploitation within competitive markets is “at the center of Marx’s view of capitalism.” “Nonetheless,” he confesses, “I have my doubts as to whether a competitive market is compatible with exploitation of the sort in which I am interested, even if it is compatible with *injustice* in background conditions” (217).

Thus it is background conditions—inequality of assets, privilege, etc.—and not exploitation that Wertheimer takes as constitutive of any injustices in truly competitive markets (otherwise economic injustice must spring from imperfect markets).

Two responses suggest themselves: One might simply anchor capitalist labor exploitation in the shared class experience and moral sentiment of the workers. Just as academic moral philosophy takes the moral sentiments of the petit bourgeois and bourgeois as the data of morality, one might insist that the wrong of labor exploitation is a first principle of working-class morality; any account of morality that leaves it out must be inadequate. Of course, this relativizes the issue. While a moral theory with

exploitation as a cornerstone has intuitive pull equal to that of a moral theory with market-liberty as a centerpiece, choosing between them becomes a matter of class bias.

But consider a logical argument against the picture held by Wertheimer and other Rational Choice adherents of pure markets uncorrupted by exploitation. For any market that enjoys perfect competition, it is logically possible to construct examples of advantages gained from nonmoral (justice-neutral) difference creating the appropriate conditions for acts of exploitation. For example, two agents, A and B, exchanging commodities a and b, have over a long period of time arrived at an exchange rate of 1:1. B, learning of A's favorable disposition towards green b's, offers only green b's in the market and thus enjoys an exchange rate of 1.1:1. A has exploited B although the market is competitive, market etiquette is observed, the agents are rational, and no background moralities are violated.

It is the assumption of liberalism that competition is a great moralizing force that, over time, produces results satisfying to all market agents; otherwise those agents would withdraw from the market. But there is an alternative vision of competition, less based on an abstract notion of "pure competitive markets" and more rooted in the history and reality of markets. Engels wrote in 1844 in "Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy," probably the first exposition of Marxian political economics:

In this discord of identical interests resulting precisely from this identity is consummated the immorality of mankind's condition hitherto; and this consummation is competition. . . . Competition is based on self-interest, and self-interest in turn breeds monopoly. . . . The contradiction of competition is that each cannot but desire the monopoly, whilst the whole as such is bound to lose by monopoly and must therefore remove it. (*Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works* [New York: International Publishers, 1975], 3:432)

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## ABSTRACTS

**Malek Khouri, “Theorizing Ideology: Contextualizing Marxist Intervention in Film Theory”**—Theorizing film has important implications for understanding ideology in relation to class struggle in a major area of historical materialist analysis of capitalist hegemony. Film criticism over the last three decades has reflected the wide range of discussions in Marxist theory and politics generally. This paper surveys how the estimation of Althusser and Gramsci shapes new and more complex directions in theorizing cinema. It conceives of culture as a domain of political struggle which, while dominated by the interests and perceptions of a hegemonic social bloc, is exposed to vigorous contestation from the dominated classes and other marginalized social groups.

**Patricia P. Brodsky, “The Hidden War: Working-Class Resistance during the Third Reich and the Postwar Suppression of Its History”**—A broadly based resistance movement rooted in the working class struggled to keep the antifascist spirit alive in Germany during the Hitler period. After World War II, the history of this movement was largely suppressed in the Western occupied zones. This silence was in the tradition of hostility toward the Left that characterized Nazism and also the Federal Republic during the Cold War. The West German Bundestag restored a number of fascists to positions of power and rehabilitated others during the late 1940s and early 1950s. At the same time, a concerted campaign was mounted to denigrate the role of working-class, particularly Communist, resistance, even to the extent of suppressing a report on Buchenwald because it revealed the importance of the Communist prisoners’ leadership in the liberation.

**Otto H. Olsen and Ephraim Schulman, “John Lewis Gaddis and the Perpetuation of the Cold War”**—The correction in the presentation of history promised in the title of John Lewis Gaddis’s *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* is not

*Nature, Society, and Thought*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1998)

forthcoming. Despite its wealth of detail, the book only confirms Gaddis's reputation, as one writer put it, as "the historical profession's most resourceful and eloquent defender of American foreign policy." The authors dispute Gaddis's central explanation that Stalin replaced Lenin's belief that socialism would spread by a process of indigenous class revolution with a determination to spread socialism through a "process of territorial acquisition" by the Soviet Union. They analyze in detail the major Cold War confrontations between the Soviet Union and the capitalist powers and conclude that as both sides in the Cold War attempted to promote their own principles in the world, the Soviet Union had a far less interventionist and aggressive record than did the United States and its allies.

**Duan Zhongqiao (China), "Critique of Market Superiority and Market Neutrality"**—Although many different theoretical models of market socialism have been proposed since the middle of the 1980s, they share two theoretical foundations: market superiority, i.e., the market is superior to planning, and market neutrality, i.e., the market can serve both capitalism and socialism. The author examines critically the view following from these models currently popular in some U.S. Marxist circles that a market economy is appropriate for an industrialized socialist economy. He argues that Marx's view that the transition from capitalism to socialism means a transition from a market economy to a planned economy is not obsolete, but proved by history. The task facing socialists is to put forward a viable program of gradually reducing the market economy and expanding a planned economy, instead of trying to find a way to realize socialism while leaving the market economy intact.

#### ABREGES

**Malek Khouri, «Théoriser l'idéologie : contextualiser l'intervention marxiste dans la théorie du film»** — Théoriser le film a des implications importantes pour comprendre l'idéologie par rapport à la lutte des classes dans un domaine principal de l'analyse matérialiste historique de l'hégémonie

capitaliste. La critique de film durant les trois dernières décennies montre l'importance du débat dans la théorie et la politique marxiste. Cet article passe en revue comment l'analyse d'Althusser et de Gramsci permet de formuler de nouvelles directions plus complexes dans la théorisation du cinéma. L'auteur conçoit la culture comme un domaine de la lutte politique qui, tout en étant dominée par les intérêts et les perceptions d'un bloc social hégémonique, s'expose à la contestation vigoureuse des classes dominées et d'autres groupes sociaux marginalisés.

**Patricia P. Brodsky, «La Guerre cachée : la résistance de la classe ouvrière pendant le troisième Reich et l'occultation de son histoire après-guerre»** – Un large mouvement de résistance ancré dans la classe ouvrière permettait le maintien de l'esprit antifasciste en Allemagne pendant le régime d'Hitler. Après la deuxième guerre mondiale, l'histoire de ce mouvement était largement occultée dans les zones occupées par les puissances occidentales. Ce silence fait partie de la tradition d'hostilité envers la gauche qui caractérisait le Nazisme ainsi que la République Fédérale pendant la guerre froide. Le Bundestag de l'Allemagne de l'Ouest a restauré nombre de fascistes au pouvoir, et en a réhabilité d'autres à la fin des années 1940 et au début des années 1950. Simultanément, une campagne destinée à dénigrer le rôle de la résistance ouvrière, surtout communiste, a été menée; elle est allée jusqu'à supprimer un rapport sur Buchenwald car il révélait l'importance de l'action menée par des prisonniers communistes à la libération.

**Otto H. Olsen and Ephraim Schulman, «John Lewis Gaddis et la perpétuation de la Guerre Froide»** – Malgré la richesse de détails, les corrections apportées à la présentation de l'époque, auxquelles on pouvait s'attendre en lisant le titre *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Nous savons maintenant: Repenser l'histoire de la Guerre Froide) par John Lewis Gaddis, ne font malheureusement que confirmer sa réputation en tant que «défenseur le plus habile et le plus éloquent de la politique étrangère Américaine» – c'est ce titre qui lui a été attribué. Les auteurs contestent l'explication centrale de Gaddis, selon laquelle Staline a remplacé la conviction de

Lénine – le socialisme s'étendrait à travers un processus de révolution de classe, indigène – par la détermination d'étendre le socialisme par un processus d'acquisition territoriale par l'Union Soviétique. Les auteurs analysent d'une manière détaillée les confrontations entre l'URSS et les puissances capitalistes, et concluent que, alors que chaque coté essayait de promouvoir ses propres principes pendant la Guerre Froide, l'URSS avait une attitude beaucoup moins interventionniste et agressive que les Etats Unis et ses alliés.

***Duan Zhongqiao (la Chine), «Une critique de la supériorité et la neutralité du marché»*** – Beaucoup de modèles théoriques différents du socialisme de marché ont été proposés depuis les années 1980 ; ils ont deux fondations théoriques communes : la supériorité du marché, c'est-à-dire, le marché est supérieur à la planification, et la neutralité, c'est-à-dire, le marché peut servir et le capitalisme et le socialisme. L'auteur examine d'une façon critique le point de vue qui découle de ces modèles actuellement populaires aux Etats-Unis, à savoir qu'une économie du marché est compatible avec une économie socialiste industrialisée. Il démontre que le point de vue de Marx – la transition du capitalisme au socialisme implique une transition d'une économie du marché à une économie planifiée – n'est pas dépassé, mais prouvé par l'histoire. La tâche que attend les socialistes est de faire avancer un programme viable de réduction progressive de l'économie de marché tout en augmentant l'économie planifiée, plutôt que d'essayer de tenter la réalisation du socialisme tout en gardant l'économie de marché.