

In
Memory
of
Georg Lukacs



surrealist editions
1971

CONTRIBUTION TO THE CRITIQUE OF AN INSIPID LEGEND

Hegel wrote, in 1796, in the diary of his sojourn through the Bernese Alps, that “. . . the Christian imagination has produced nothing but an *insipid legend*.”¹ It is not accidental that the images associated with Christianity — servility, sickness, corruption, weakness, degradation, masochism, cowardice, prostration — are the very images that define the life and work of Georg Lukacs, who recently did us the long-overdue courtesy of dropping dead. Uniting the mystic’s propensity for sudden conversion and the most obsequious realism since Aquinas, Lukacs, for more than fifty years, specialized in adapting himself to, and justifying, the given reality in which he found himself. Thus his philosophical erudition and “classicism” were put in the service of the reality of forced labor camps, the Moscow trials, “socialist” realism, Stalin’s destruction of the Bolshevik Party and the degeneration of the Communist International.

Meanwhile, Lukacs himself became something of an insipid legend. Exalted whispers throughout the world heralded the “profound,” “important,” “great” and “gifted” thinker whose works, however, remained largely unknown, but eagerly awaited, like a Messiah. The mountains of this anticipation labored long and hard and ultimately for nothing, for in the end Lukacs, the most anemic and blind of mice, returned to his point of departure, disappearing forever into the mouldy woodwork of abstraction and evasion. The appearance of his works in translation can in fact be welcomed, for the myth of Lukacs’ importance has been based on the widespread unavailability and ignorance of his writings. To actually read Lukacs is to know his total inadequacy and irrelevance.

No one will have failed to notice, however, that American liberals, political “scientists,” literary critics, book-reviewers, graduate students of theology and philosophy, professional aestheticians, “radical” dilettantes, impostors and careerists of every variety — and even some individuals who proclaim themselves “marxists” — have formed a sizeable and increasingly noisy chorus of worshippers, tearfully and volubly dedicated to the disgraceful pretense that Lukacs was something more than a groveling pimp in the service of Stalinist betrayal. For the surrealists, on the contrary — and I say this not without pride — the death of this two-bit scholastic parasite was the occasion for an authentic and inexpressible delight.²

The facts that Lukacs’ works presently enjoy the favor of a substantial portion of what passes for the American

Left, and that even among the revolutionary youth there appears to be a growing interest in these works, must be regarded as signs of the deplorable backwardness of revolutionary thought in this country.

This epidemic of Lukacsism requires a careful, detailed, many-sided, implacable and sustained attack on the part of those who are truly devoted to the cause of proletarian emancipation. The present intervention of the surrealist movement, an axe of crystal wielded against the cages of dishonor, is intended above all to establish a certain indispensable *preliminary clarity* in this discussion which has suffered so long from countless obscurantisms. Against the cocktail ideologists of so-called "neo-marxism" who officiate at the rites of Lukacs' beatification, and who have gone so far as to insist that Lukacs has made "important contributions" to marxism, the surrealists maintain that these "contributions" are empty abstractions, his "advances" merely retreats, and that no one was less qualified to expand or deepen the perspectives of marxism than this unforgiveable cretin whose entire life was nothing more than an interminable series of exercises in belly-crawling, self-mutilation and permanent confusion.

Only the most hopeless idiot or gangrenous sectarian could confuse our serious, lucid, poetic and above all *revolutionary* hatred for Lukacs and his work with the frivolous, backbiting, ghoulish and essentially *reactionary* attacks against him by, for example, Maoists,³ Althusserians or other traditional pseudo-marxists whose "marxism" consists of platitudes bottled in formaldehyde, irrevocably separated from the life of the working class, and serving only to inhibit workers' self-activity.

To undermine and explode the abject myth of Lukacs as "the finest marxist since Marx," as well as to reduce to their real insignificance the sectarian, dogmatic and false derisions of his works by anti-marxist and pseudo-marxist ideologists, is to assist in clearing the way for a true resurgence of revolutionary thought and action. Let us have done with the cheap and indefensible bourgeois apologists for Lukacs' "genius," "profundity" and "rigor!" Away with these whimpering, pampered "neo-marxist" Lukacsian lap-dogs whose incessant yelping can be considered only a public nuisance! Of course, as Lenin wrote, "What else are lap-dogs for if not to yelp at the proletarian elephant?"⁴ But when this yelping becomes an annoying and wasteful distraction, an actual obstacle to revolutionary development, such miserable curs become intolerable, and must be sent scurrying back to the kennels of their egomaniacal petty-bourgeois hypocrisy.

Nothing would be more absurd than to expect us to confine ourselves to merely pointing out the flies in the

intellectual *soup du jour*. For the proletarian elephant and the surrealist anteater, nourished on materialist dialectics and the principle of creative destruction, this *critical* activity is inseparable from the whole process of the revolutionary transformation of the world. More than anyone we look forward to the day when, as Marx said, the weapons of revolutionary criticism will give way to the revolutionary criticism of weapons — that is, to the seizure of power by the workers and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Meanwhile, the demystification and demolition of the *insipid legend* of Georg Lukacs and his “rigor” constitutes a small but essential step along this road leading to the triumph of workers’ power, genuine human freedom and poetry made by all.

Franklin ROSEMONT

1. Quoted in Walter Kaufman, *Hegel: A Reinterpretation* (Doubleday Anchor, 1966) p. 310.
2. I forget whether it was the Mayor of Newark, or some Senator or Governor, who, some years ago, horrified by the *carnival atmosphere* of the black insurrections, likened this atmosphere to *laughing or dancing at a funeral*. Precisely so. And be assured that at the twin funeral of capitalist and stalinist civilization, the surrealists and the proletariat will laugh and dance like no one has ever laughed or danced before.
3. See for example the ridiculous pamphlet by Lin Mo-han, *Raise Higher the Banner of Mao Tse-tung's Thought on Art and Literature* (Peking, 1961).
4. “The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government,” *Collected Works*, Volume 27, p. 262.



Zapata.

GEORG LUKACS and the Pseudo-Marxist Goulash

It is a fitting indictment and a delightful irony that Georg Lukacs and the new left should find each other just as they tumble homeward to a grave long since ready for their deaths. The marriage of Lukacs and the new left — a union built upon the solid bases of political incompetence, stalinist treachery, and opportunist deceit — finds its ultimate expression in the pseudo-marxist eclecticism that undertakes the justification of stalinist and maoist barbarity in terms of “humanism,” “necessity,” and a totally religious adherence to “inevitability.” This eclecticism finds strong, if unconscious, expression among those elements most removed from the practical-imaginative revolutionary nexus of marxism. It provides for the cloister marxists of *Telos* to publish Lukacs’ nausea-inducing “On the Responsibility of the Intellectuals.” In this scurrilous essay, Lukacs shakes his long and leprous finger in front of the nose of his comrades-in-impotence, the scholastics; warning them, in a voice creaking with supplication, to avoid the poison of “irrationalism” and the moan of despair that accompanies the birth of fascist ideology. Of course, Lukacs undertakes all this on his knees before the patron saint of barbarism, Joe Stalin. The members of *Telos*, Lukacs’ firstborn, fail, of course, to remark upon this. The ghastly incoherence of these philosophers can only breathe new life into the corpse of Lukacs.

The insidious tentacles of this eclecticism stretch world-historically into the activity of would-be revolutionists. Paul Breines, for example, considers it a fitting outgrowth of his study with Herbert Marcuse to edit a book of essays on the impact and meaning of Marcuse’s work. Unfortunately this gem of a task is butchered unmercifully by a series of tennis court essays that extol the virtues of vegetarianism (and why not Yoga?); and the book itself bears the intolerable dedication to Theodor Adorno and . . . Ho Chi Minh! Uncle Ho, who, with the benevolence of all uncles, slaughtered ten thousand revolutionists who refused to accept the Geneva “agreements” as the final word concerning human emancipation.

Across the Atlantic, our leather chair editors of the *New Left Review*, swimming easily in their lack of marxist rigor, find it amusing to publish and offer the works of Marcuse, Korsch, Adorno, and Lukacs, while maintaining positions of practical political idiocy based on the pseudo-science of Louis Althusser, and the exhausting if inexhaustible stupidity of the mumblings from that fetish of repression, Mao Tse-tung.

Something, of course, is behind this infatuation with dialecticians. In capitalist society, infatuation inevitably assumes the role of escape from real, that is *mad*, love. And infatuation is what we have before us. This love affair with dialectics is merely the empty homage of an infatuation that maintains everything exactly as it is, and allows the lover to function at the necessary level of stupidity. This lip-service marxism, perhaps the most effective weapon arrayed against marxism itself, is nothing more than the screaming echo of social-democratic and stalinist capitulation that has cursed humanity for seventy years. Homage is rendered to marxism — it is paid to the living thereby rendering the living “officially dead” — and the hope on everybody’s lips from Brezhnev to Lin Piao to Robin Blackburn to Henry Kissinger to Michael Harrington is that the living will accept quietly the confines of this coffin of kisses, and cut out that damn screaming for release.

In essence, this weekend worship of the dialectic is only one more attempt to expropriate the *form* of the dialectic — its vocabulary — and thereby to suppress the dialectic’s revolutionary and explosive content. The dialectic is then turned back upon itself, and becomes the living noose around its own neck *and* the categorical rejection of its own essence; the essence as expressed by Marx that philosophy can only preserve itself by its negation — by becoming the method for the actual sensuous transformation of social reality and realizing itself, no longer as philosophy, but as the material force of human activity. Thus, the new left can have its philosophical mistress in dialectics, just as Stalin could have his pimp Lukacs to pay homage to the dialectic, while Stalin amused himself with the “humanism,” the “necessity,” the “inevitability,” and oh yes, Georg, the ultimate “rationality” of slave labor camps. The dialectic too falls prey to commodity fetishism and smothers in the worm bed of political cretinism, on the mattress of Lukacs, Stalin, Mao, and the new left.

Infatuation stands in hypnotic fascination before the mysterious, and the career of Lukacs has all the mystery and legend of a drowned man who haunts the lakes with a phantom regularity. Literary critic, commissar, marxist, extreme leftist, and then the lightning capitulation and adherence to stalinism, hold enough mystery to breed a reverence for a type of Kantian unknowable “Thing unto itself.” The question is breathed with a mournful respect, “Will we ever know what Georg Lukacs was really like, what he really felt about marxism and stalinism?” Those who ask the question, of course, already believe in the impossibility of discovering the answer and so feel secure to exercise their stupidity outside the frightening intru-

sions of reality. They seek only one more amusement in the game of scholastic shadows. The question is substituted for the answer and reverence replaces merciless criticism as the motor force for this "new marxism."

Needless to say, the reverence that Lukacs receives is deserving only of the gentle caresses of the nearest wastebasket. However, the basis for so much of this mystery, coming as it does in the period of simultaneous disintegration of the new left and the resurgence of marxism, this continual "coming up for air" by Lukacs, resides in his anchor work *History and Class Consciousness*. This book is too faulty and too easily mistaken for "original," "brilliant," "valuable," to be either summarily discarded or repressed. If that course is taken, the ghost hands of homage may never leave the throat of marxism. The significance of *History and Class Consciousness* is precisely its pathetic weakness, its orthodox posturing, its rigid and undialectical analysis, its betrayal of marxism even within its most elaborate of defenses. It is significant only in that it presages Lukacs' rapid collapse into the lap of stalinism, where his incompetence as a marxist finds its deepest and most anti-marxist expression.

Written between 1919 and 1923, *History and Class Consciousness* has finally re-emerged in full access to those who knew of it only through the whispered references in philosophical journals. The book contains eight essays in which Lukacs attempts to explore the marxist dialectic, defend the dialectic totality from the fragmentary cravings of opportunism, and develop the interrelationship of Marx and Hegel. All of these, we might add, are noble projects, but Lukacs is chronically incapable of bringing any but the most confused results. Included in the new edition is a special introductory essay written by Lukacs in 1967, devoted in large part to answering the questions of his idiot worshippers. The real Georg Lukacs has stood up. Lukacs makes it quite clear that he has abandoned the realm of revolutionary marxism and feels that *History and Class Consciousness* has only documentary value. It is a testament, he claims, to the "revolutionary messianism" (Lukacs' words) he experienced in his youth (he was a toddler of age thirty four). And we are compelled to take this whimpering self-criticism as indicative of this "finest marxist since Marx." For Lukacs was "converted" to marxism, and brought to it all the zeal of a previous despair, and the destructive evangelism that substitutes fervor and shrieks for revolutionary reason. This furious evangelism quickly bows in prayer before the self-created monster gods who are religiously abstracted from the marxism itself. Lukacs' collapse towards stalinism is merely the *complementary opposite*, the reflected identity,

of his crusading leftism of 1918-1924. It is the perverse unity of apparent opposites, this infantile leftism and senile stalinism — the evangelist who transforms himself into the catholic priest, each time claiming knowledge of the real god and sacrificing at the altar of brutality, as testimony to his “belief,” marxism, international revolution, the finest currents of Bolshevism, and the proletariat itself.

Lukacs never entertained, for the slightest moment, any attraction to or solidarity with Trotsky and the Left Opposition; and while Trotsky and the international opposition struggled feverishly to *preserve by transforming* Bolshevism and the whole of revolutionary marxism, Lukacs slipped easily and willingly into the folds of stalinist butchery. There he oscillated forever and nowhere around the axis of infinite submission. Indeed, the career of Lukacs might be entitled “permanent vacillation,” as he spins perpetually on the fringes of the truth, maintaining enough distance from the storms of life to avoid the necessity of a truly dialectical participation and intervention in history. Lukacs recanted (it is of utmost significance that religious descriptions gravitate so easily to this “marxist”) *History and Class Consciousness*, because a refusal — *an act of resistance* — would have resulted in his expulsion from the Comintern. If this were to happen, reasoned this finest marxist, he could not join the “anti-fascist struggle.” What concrete insight! What brilliance! We are well acquainted with the Comintern’s brilliant record in the “anti-fascist” struggle. The string of its victories echoes with the hollow laughs of gravesones in the history of the proletariat — Germany, Spain, France. What a fine marxist this finest marxist is!

These mistakes, these vacillations and pseudo-analyses by Georg Lukacs do not fall from the sky, but result from Lukacs’ conception of the dialectic. And it is precisely this dialectic (or lack of one) that is the object of so much romance among the inheritors of Lukacs’ crumbling castle. Despite the *apparent* attention to the Hegelian dialectic, Lukacs consistently makes the most critical of mistakes — he substitutes a notion of *direct and immediate identity* of opposites for Hegel’s unity of opposites. The collapse of oppositional unity into an immediate identity of appearance deprives the dialectic of its motor force — the tension of movement between *what is* and *what could be*, in short, *becoming*. Despite Lukacs’ protests, the *real* is not immediately identical with the *possible*, but is unified with it to the degree that the *real* contains the *possible*. This containment requires human intervention and the rich drawing forth of hidden capabilities (another process of becoming), that Lukacs never understands. To collapse real

and possible into an immediate identity is to preserve a historical situation as timeless — to *re-create from the left* the various networks of capitalism.

The implications of this mistake for marxism are disastrous. As the case of Lukacs exhibits, it leads to the substitution of an image of the proletariat as it *should be* in place of the proletariat as it *is* and *could be*. This substitution, this religious abstraction, acts as another rosary of spikes around the neck of human liberation. This scholastic hallucination, in fact, deprives the proletariat of its own movement and self-transformation as it is made into the already existing *ideal*, which it isn't! The movement of becoming drops out of this analysis, the notion of potential vanishes, and substituted for the real proletariat and the real tasks of emancipation, we have religious dogma, the worship of the abstract, and the capitulation to the immediate. Moreover, the collapse of this tension in becoming forces revolution to present itself only as a *moment*, a mysterious moment, instead of the leap of the dialectical process that has been building its force within the very chains of capitalism. If Lukacs' analysis were correct or even meaningful, we would be faced with an abstract proletariat devoid of *life* and reality, which, because it had no *becoming* could not recognize its own desires in its day to day activity and therefore never demand *more life, more desire*. The proletariat could not, in fact, make the revolution or truly win its self-emancipation, because it *should have* done both yesterday! Or the day before!

All of Lukacs' spine-twisting postures about subject-object identity are merely the empty rattlings of a hollow gourd. The maintenance of capitalism is the consistent and ceaseless attempt to collapse the proletariat into the realm where the subject is in fact the object and *is only* the object. Lukacs' attempts to reverse this situation without first standing it on its head can only reflect the conditions of slow brutality without changing them.

Hegel, *whom Lukacs never fully understood*, insisted upon this tension, this prime category of becoming as the key to the dialectic. For Hegel, the movement of becoming is consciousness; for Marx, however, the moving force becomes material, in the universal-practical sense as human labor. This moving force, the ceaseless interplay and tension of growth, absorbs the world, draws it to man's needs, and makes it the practical basis for the very becoming which is at the origin of activity. Thus the tension of man and the world is continuously overcome and creatively re-created by labor itself. Lukacs, whom the new left never fully understands, never grasped this pivot of marxism and the dialectic. Rather than praise for his feeble

attempts, Lukacs deserves only to be fought to a finish.

If the proletariat is sacrificed upon Lukacs' altar of the static image and there transformed into a religious icon, Lukacs creates an equally abstract and undialectical conception of the party. The party is the "self-consciousness of the proletariat incarnate" — the beacon on the coast of revolution. The fact, however, remains that the proletarian clipper needs both beacons and rudders to sail into the harbors of delight. It needs self-consciousness, not on the shore, but in its very sails! This abstraction transforms the party, a tool for liberation, into the organ of perpetual oppression. Lukacs claims, in "Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organization":

We said then that the discipline of the Communist Party, the unconditional absorption of the total personality in the praxis of the movement was the only possible way of bringing about an authentic freedom.

Lukacs is too busy crossing himself to notice that this abstraction can have meaning only if the party becomes the practical tool for the total liberation, the total release of the creative energies of the human personality and not just the chanting subservience of its members. Such fervor, the compensation for ignorance, can only be met with a sad smile and a ferocious attack, otherwise the ecclesiastical exaltation is only the forerunner of complete supplication before an inverted Bolshevism, a Bolshevism that is only an abstract form without a revolutionary content. This spiritual humbling, this catholic grovelling, provides a smokescreen of obedience for the brutality of stalinism in that it abdicates the responsibility of a permanent revolution within the structures of organization. The party and the proletariat can only propel each other to consciousness *and* power through the dialectic of *becoming* manifested in workers' councils. Lukacs' absorption of the personality is directly parallel to the absorption of the workers by the "workers' state" — a direct reversal of the dialectics of proletarian dictatorship.

Much has been made by the cheap burlesque comedians of the "new marxism" of Lukacs' silly polemic against Engels in the essay "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat." Engels dismissed Kant's unknowable "thing unto itself" by an appeal to the use of experiment, science and industry as the final refutation of this mysticism. Lukacs takes it upon himself to refute Engels' formulation by his typical (if not *fundamental* to the very name Georg Lukacs) misguided method. Lukacs points out the vocabularic mistake Engels makes in confusing the "thing unto itself" and the "thing for us." However in doing this, and insisting that experiment and science undergo inversion within capitalist society, his formal cor-

rectness totally obscures and misses the implicit thrust of Engels' argument. It is clearly, although not immediately, evident that Engels approached the question from the correct standpoint. The appeals to science, industry, experiment, are in fact the attempts to give *material* roots to Hegel's argument "to know the potentialities of a thing is to know the thing in itself." Engels, unlike Lukacs, is concerned at all points with translating Hegel's knowledge into human praxis.

Even those essays of *History and Class Consciousness* that show the flashes of crystal insight (in particular the essay *Class Consciousness*) lack that practical-imaginative revolutionary kernel that could sustain the ideas against the ebb of revolution, and the tendency of the author to capitulate at the slightest movement of a feather. Lukacs living in the world of abstraction could do nothing but capitulate, capitulate, and capitulate to the world of the concrete. Lukacs deprived marxism of its strongest weapon, the imagination. Marxism without imagination, we might add, is similar to surrealism without revolt — an empty playground for scholastic voyeurs.

This same lack of dialectic pervades Lukacs' "literary work." With shameless ignorance of the revolutionary explosions of poetry, painting, the entire luminous sphere of creation, Lukacs hawked the novel as the timeless achievement of humanity. It is worthwhile to note that Lukacs attacked Trotsky's conception of revolutionary culture on the grounds that *it could never be*. In fact, Trotsky, who understood Hegel, Marx, dialectics, and reality, pointed to a revolutionary culture that *is* only in its *becoming*, that exists only to go beyond itself.

As for Lukacs' stalinism, we are sure that the con-artists and infatuated eclectics of the new left will find more than a few excuses for Lukacs in their garbage dumps of infinite capitulation. The more they defend Lukacs, the more they reveal their own inability to contribute anything meaningful to the rise of proletarian revolution. For every excuse offered, it must be asserted again and again — Revolution demands an iron will, a dictatorship of integrity, a willingness to fight the degenerate tendencies within the very revolution itself. It is precisely this lack of dialectic, this lack of integrity that makes Lukacs, the almost-marxist, what he is and was — The Sponge King.

David SCHANOES



Seal (*Phoca vitulina*). (345)

ANTI-REALISM

St. Georg's Revelation in Aesthetics and the Outcome of Classical Bourgeois Realism

1. Elements of a Dossier Concerning a Truly Scarlet Case

Son of a wealthy Budapest family, before the First World War Georg Lukacs was a prominent member of the idealist school of German philosophy and sociology, and participated in a group whose central aim was to discredit the materialist conception of history, to prove that certain eternal properties of the mind, forms of thinking, were the real forces of history. In a magazine devoted to the first anniversary of the October Revolution, Lukacs wrote in November, 1918:

Is it possible to arrive at good by evil means, to arrive at freedom by oppression? Can a new world order be created if the means for its creation are indistinguishable, except technically, from those of the old order? . . .

Bolshevism bases itself on the metaphysical assumption that good can come out of evil, that it is possible to arrive through lies at the truth. The author of these lines cannot share that belief.

A few days after this statement, Lukacs joined the Hungarian Communist Party. In the abortive Hungarian Revolution of 1919, under the 180 days of Bela Kun, Lukacs accepted the post of Minister of Culture.

From 1924 onward, Lukacs came to support the Stalin faction in the Russian Communist Party. Accepting the "theory of socialism in one country," and the consequent bureaucratic purges, Lukacs found himself horrified by the ultra-leftism of Third Period Stalinism after 1929, a turn paving the way to Hitler's victory in Germany. Resident in Berlin in the years 1931 and 1932, Lukacs was a bitter opponent of Trotsky, who was struggling for the policy of the united front.

To clear my own mind and to achieve a political and theoretical self-understanding, I was engaged at that time on a 'genuine' left-wing programme that would provide a third alternative to the opposing factions in Germany.

I never succeeded in solving it to my own satisfaction and so I did not publish any theoretical or political contributions on the international level during this period.

Lukacs claims he did contribute criticisms within the Hungarian Communist Party. He writes:

My internal, private self-criticism came to the conclusion that if I was so clearly in the right, as I believed, and could still not avoid such a sensational defeat, then there must be grave defects in my practical abilities.

Therefore, I felt able to withdraw from my political ca-

reer with a good conscience, and concentrate on theoretical matters. I have never regretted this decision.

And more clearly:

When I heard from a reliable source that Bela Kun was planning to expel me from the Party as a 'Liquidator,' I gave up the struggle, as I was well aware of Kun's prestige in the International and I published a 'Self-Criticism'."

One of the fundamental work-rules of bureaucracy requiring the lopping-off of those heads which appear above the general mass, Lukacs confined himself to sniping fire at some elements of Zhdanov's bulls concerning culture. Of course, Lukacs did not really withdraw from politics. Adding his intellectual reputation to the chauvinistic propaganda of Stalin in 1942, Lukacs wrote:

The German people, made drunk by demagogy, whipped forward by terror, plaything of its hestial instincts, went staggering to its ruin.

We may unhesitatingly state that the struggle of even the most obscure Left Oppositionist against Stalinism contributed infinitely more to the cause of the proletarian revolution than did the entire output of Lukacs in this period.

Feeling obliged to speak out when the Chinese Communist Party made formally correct criticisms of "peaceful co-existence," Lukacs said nothing about the 1956 Hungarian Revolution in which he joined the reformist Stalinist government of Imre Nagy which was about to be swept away by the Hungarian workers in order better to repulse the Russian tanks. For this misdemeanor, he suffered brief exile in Rumania. Concerning the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and the Polish workers' uprising in 1970-71, Lukacs was silent.

What can be the meaning of Lukacs' "contribution" to Marxism, given these services to the counter-revolution? To the seekers after the mantle of Lukacs: servility was never a revolutionary virtue.

2. The Defense of the Accused and the Statements of Material Witnesses, Including the Works of the Author Himself

Having failed ever to condemn the assassination of Trotsky and the liquidation of the Left Opposition, Lukacs in his latest writings attempted shamelessly to excuse his decades of silence to the point of posing as some battler against Stalin. In the preface to his book *Writer and Critic* (revised 1970), Lukacs states:

It is not hard to see today that the main direction of these essays was in opposition to the dominant literary theory of the time.

Stalin and his followers demanded that literature provide tactical support to their current political policies.

As everyone knows, no open polemics were possible at that time.

From the same preface:

Conscious resistance breaks the magic circle restricting and degrading men.

Leaving aside the inaccuracies, distortions, lies and contradictions contained in these statements, Lukacs, having the character of a jellyfish, remains "restricted and degraded."

Commenting on Lukacs' 1918 article in the journal *Kommunismus*, Lenin wrote (June 12, 1920):

G.L.'s article is very left-wing, and very poor. Its Marxism is purely verbal. its distinctions between 'defensive' and 'offensive' tactics is artificial, it gives no concrete analysis of precise and definite historical situations; it takes no account of what is most essential (the need to take over and to learn to take over. all fields of work and all institutions in which the bourgeoisie exerts its influence over the masses, etc.). (Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 31, p. 165)

In his 1967 preface to *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukacs says:

In the debates in the Russian party I agreed with Stalin about the necessity for socialism in one country and this shows very clearly the start of a new epoch in my thoughts. This is most revealing and has the virtue of frankness. Lenin denounced Lukacs' Marxism as purely verbal and now Lukacs tells us that if there was any great change it came with the new Stalinist epoch! We would be hard put to find a clearer expression of abject worship of the accomplished fact.

In writing his collection of essays that became *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukacs was battling the bourgeois theories of Hegel and Sorel. From Hegel, Lukacs took the concept of totality, which he counterposed to the economic determinism of Kautsky, Adler, Bernstein and other theorists of Social Democracy. Lukacs, by showing that the incompatibility of bourgeois theory and Marxism lay not at the level of data but at the level of logical structure, posed the question correctly. Needless to state, he was and remained congenitally incapable of answering it.

For Lukacs, Marxism goes completely back to Hegel in the worst sense, becoming a closed system for contemplation instead of a method of struggle to change the world. *History and Class Consciousness* is fundamentally idealist and constitutes a rejection of materialism. The dialectical totality of which Lukacs speaks is a purely mental category; he rejects Engels' conclusion: "The unity of the world consists in its materiality."

Lukacs' book, *Lenin*, is unfortunately based on a string of lies — for example, Lukacs claims Lenin was initially

alone in opposing the First World War from a revolutionary defeatist position. Not to mention the fact that he here presents the Party not as a developing unity of theory and practice, but as a fixed star, justified in imposing its guidance on the working class by any means. Unlike *History and Class Consciousness*, which was roundly condemned by the Comintern and which Lukacs himself later renounced, *Lenin* was able to slip by unnoticed.

From the late 1920's onward, Lukacs advances the theory of phenomenal, as opposed to structural, realism in art — evidenced in *The Historical Novel* and *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*. This ultimately meaningless distinction was used in an attempt to show how the products of high bourgeois art and the "socialist realism" of Stalinist Russia could be combined. Lukacs, particularly in these two books, succeeds in restructuring Marxism so as to make it palatable to the petty bourgeoisie he had rejected as sterile in the face of the effectiveness of Marxism.

3. The Judgment

A fearsome Don Quixote masquerading as Saint George, Lukacs has been called, and has accepted as title, "the world's finest critic." It should be added with a note of black humor — *in partibus infidelium*.

The infantile disorder of the younger Lukacs as Minister of Culture (sic!) in the Hungarian Soviet under the 180 days of Bela Kun was cured irremediably as uneasy panegyrist to Stalin. Lukacs' transition from interest in class-consciousness to criticism and defense of specifically bourgeois consciousness is transparently explicable. His good coin in particular circles of the Imperial West is itself sufficient proof of this.

The ultimate indefensibility of realism and the perfidy of Lukacs has been manifestly exposed and enables us to state: the foaming hydras and their mates shall be put to the mirror rather than the wall. And seeing the stark cube of suicide they will wither horribly, knowing that they are no longer capable of even that. And Saint George too will have disintegrated and no longer be their defender, most able, puffing up the stinking corpse of realism which is both their shadow and substance, from which even the least sensitive of their number reel in enervating disgust.

In death as in life, blastically enervated.



Dolphin (*D. delphis*). (1/4s)

Theses on Realism

I.

Accepting the bourgeois precept of sole and limitless quantitative addition as the highest expression of science and culture, Lukacs above all (twice) has refused to accept its inevitable consequence: a monster. This underlying equation of all horror titillations is at the same time the birth sign and tomb inscription of the bourgeois order.

II.

Frantically plying their cataract-crowned cerebral noses for new inspirations, bourgeois artists again produce nothing but reality warmed-over, reified factual moments on whatever strictly vertical plane palmed off as life in spectacle. The marvelous to them is first: a book; second: a book sealed with seven seals.

III.

Though not *generally* given to accretions of hoarding, this peculiar redundant psychic structure is still manifest: the contradiction most pointed in collections, private collections, and private showings.

IV.

The limits and condemnation of bourgeois culture are thus the *museum* and the *market*.

V.

The activities and sterile emanations of the critics are themselves sufficient to expose them as eyeless without form, and generate a conclusion as to the eventual and definite extinction of this category of being. Secondary though necessary extrusions. Tics!

VI.

Throwing off various tangential and carnival "isms," the entire history of bourgeois culture nevertheless essentially resolves itself into the history of *realism*.

VII.

In structure and intent, the novel was and remains the most auspicious form for the dissemination of realism. The novel is to bourgeois culture as money is to bourgeois economy.

VIII.

The "psychological insights" of realism, this flat and mechanical reflective theory of knowledge, a *later* bourgeois refinement, finally runs up against the wall of its cage *from the inside*.

IX.

Shakespeare *did* not write novels. Breton and Péret *could* not write novels.

X.

The death of realism is a fact. It is its *wake* which is in progress.

XI.

Realists have sufficiently described their world; the point, however, is to destroy it. The surrealists are already surpassing this task.

Peter MANTI



Jose Guadalupe Posada

It is dark truths which appear in the work of the true poets; but they are truths, and almost everything else is a lie.
—PAUL ÉLUARD

LETTER to the Editors of *Telos*

The editors of *Telos*, secure in a parade of mourners that includes the *New York Times*, *Pravda*, *Life Magazine*, the *Daily World*, *New Left Review*, and *True Confessions*, have testified only to their own incoherence, their congenital incompetence, and their chronic inability to grasp even the simplest fundamentals of marxism, in the reverence for that syphilitic chameleon of Stalinism, Georg Lukacs.

The inside back cover of the late issue of *Telos* contains an obituary for this quick-change artist and perpetual scavenger, proclaiming Lukacs to have been "the most important thinker for Marxism since Marx." Such babbling nonsense must be disposed of quickly, efficiently, and cheaply. It is of utmost significance that *Telos'* Gregorian chant for this displaced Catholic appears directly across the page from ads for two journals of Stalinist idiocy, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* and *Soviet Studies in Philosophy*. Obviously, despite the intentions of the *Telos* staff, objective chance, through its diabolical juxtapositions, has rescued *truth* from the perfumed gags of philosophic inquiry.

The basic black and white of the obituary is only the tattered blanket that flaps forlornly in a breeze reeking with the odor of capitulation, the stink of submission, and the carp-like movements of *lies*. Lukacs, we are told, found it difficult to reconcile his "brilliant theory" with the world-historical events of the 1920's. This "finest Marxist since Marx" could not, it seems, for various and obscure reasons, *intervene* in the real world. The "brilliant theory" lacked something. Indeed it did. The missing link in Lukacs' theoretical meanderings is marxism itself — the desperate desire of convulsive intensity to change the world. Self-condemned to this neanderthalism, Lukacs substituted vacillation for integrity, the immediate for the future, and the drivel of impotence for the permanent revolution against oppression.

The learned editors of *Telos*, however, believe otherwise. Lukacs, they tell us, was unable to mediate theory and praxis, and therefore embraced Leninism. Leninism? Do we hear right? Lukacs a Leninist? Pardon us while we vomit our rage in the face of this esteemed journal. Pardon us while we reach for our six bladed knives, the incandescent barbs of the dialectical harpoon. Lukacs' incompetence as a marxist is only rivalled by his ineptitude as a "Leninist." Even the most cursory reading of Lukacs' *Lenin* reveals the total failure of this man to comprehend

the essential fluidity of Lenin's work. The book is filled with the easy lies, the enthusiastic half-truths, the frenzied distortions that are the hallmark, in fact synonymous with Lukacs' life.

Telos' trickle of deceit becomes a torrent of abuse and an avalanche of mud as the editors attempt to bury the truth of life in the resurrection of death. In accepting "Leninism," we are informed, Lukacs *naturally* became a Stalinist. We may infer from this, without, we trust, transgressing on those sacred rules of logic so essential to philosophy, that Leninism *is* Stalinism. Here, the Stalinist thesis, that Stalin is the natural and sole heir to Lenin, is re-constructed by the "anti-Stalinists," the "neo-marxists" of *Telos*. This reconstruction cannot fail to please the bureaucrats of Moscow, and will assuredly bring a delighted smile to the face of that pumpkin-headed lout, Mao Tse-tung, who (quite rightly!) claims to be the true heir to Stalin.

For our part, we find it necessary to attack and destroy such worthless gibberish every time it masquerades as *thought*. If Leninism is Stalinism, or even *becomes* Stalinism, why did Stalin find it necessary to destroy the entire Bolshevik Party? Why, in fact, did Lenin break completely with Stalin, demand his expulsion, and propose a Lenin-Trotsky bloc to fight the bureaucratic decay in the tusk of the October Revolution? Why, in fact, did not Trotsky, certainly convinced of his own Leninism, become a Stalinist? Or perhaps the editors of *Telos*, trapped in the momentum of their own imbecility, wish to argue that Trotsky too, was a Stalinist!

Questions of reality for these philosophers as with Lukacs, *are beyond their comprehension*. And whether they like it or not, admit or deny it, they have nothing in common with either Hegel or Marx, but find their true inspiration in the impotent moralism of Kant. They bend their leprous knees in submission to the "thing unto itself," and their politics are the politics of evasion.

These new Kantians, drunk with religion, confident in the numbers of their holy family, cannot refrain from pompous and mystical assertions about the real world. And here, ignorance provides its own satisfaction. "Stalinism," we are politely informed, "was by no means as evidently degenerate a form of Marxism as it has since become." Not to Lukacs certainly! But Lukacs, we suggest was not the only marxist of the era. To Trotsky and the Left Opposition, the international Left Opposition, Stalinism was and is precisely and evidently that degenerate. And if Lukacs adheres to blindness, that does not mean there is nothing left to see, that the sun no longer shines, or that humanity should submit to the crippled mentality

of these professional ostriches. Kantians, however, convinced that certain things cannot be known, become comfortable in their suffering and embrace it feverishly as their salvation. Stalinism is made the only alternative for these ideological priests. Blindness becomes and demands adherence to the world as it is. Nothing exists for these miserable hacks except the inevitable capitulation to the inevitable slavery.

It is imperative to re-claim marxism from the withered hands of such infantile senility. If the Kantians of *Telos* wish to pluck out their eyes and stumble willingly into the web of Stalinist butchery, we offer them every assistance; however, we reserve the right not to follow their hideous example, and we insist that such self-mutilation has absolutely nothing in common with marxism, or *Leninism*. If the sycophants of servility wish to lick the floor before Stalin's bloody boots, they can at least keep their tongues on their business and desist from pronouncements on marxism, "inevitability," and the lack of alternatives to the mud they crave — especially when that alternative, that opposition of furious revolt exists.

Lukacs' conversion to Stalinism, like Stalinism itself, is not a temporary aberration to be easily overcome. Contrary to the ridiculous notions of some philosophers turned obituary-writers (a fitting culmination to an empty existence), nothing is overcome through submission. Lukacs' "attacks" on Stalinism, in reality polite disagreements, come a little too late for our liking. Some fifty years too late. Freedom and the enemies of freedom fight their battles in blood, and not with the sweet smiles and the limp handshakes of a man fit only for the garbage can.

Those who see in the ooze and the slime of a decaying corpse the "cornerstone" of their activity, condemn themselves to the chains of cobwebs and the gallows of rotting flesh.

Georg Lukacs needs no obituary, for he died fifty years ago and the stink says all that needs to be said. If *Telos* enjoys such stench, we say . . .

THE DEAD DESERVE EACH OTHER!

For the Surrealist Group:

(signed)

Paul GARON
Peter MANTI
Franklin ROSEMONT
Penelope ROSEMONT
David SCHANOES
Stephen SCHWARTZ
John SIMMONS
April ZUCKERMAN

September 10, 1971



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The science I am engaged in is a science distinct from poetry. I am not singing this latter. I am trying to discover its source. Through the helm that steers all poetic thought, the billiard-teachers will distinguish the development of sentimental theses.

—LAUTRÉAMONT

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