

The Concept of the Left

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In 1966, Gomulka expelled Kolakowski from the Polish Communist Party for having defended the 1956 rising which returned Gomulka to power. He has since been dismissed from the philosophy department at the University of Warsaw.

The story is by this time too familiar for comment. We need only observe that what the United States does to Iran, Guatemala, and Vietnam, the U.S.S.R approximates in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, and that what the bloc countries do to their leading intellectuals, the United States approximates with dozens of its young professors. The signature of our period lies in part in the honor which surrounds a certain kind of defeat.

Throughout the collection from which this essay is taken, Toward a Marxist Humanism, Kolakowski's constant meditation—cool, poised, never declining to bitterness—is upon precisely this impasse. In his gentleness which is never sentimental, his detachment which is never disengaged, his solitude which is never aloof, we may recognize the real Camus.

EVERY WORK OF MAN is a compromise between the material and the tool. Tools are never quite equal to their tasks, and none is beyond improvement. Aside from differences in human skill, the tool's imperfection and the material's resistance together set the limits that determine the end product. But the tool must fit the material, no matter how remotely, if it isn't to produce a monstrosity. You cannot properly clean teeth with an oil drill or perform brain operations with a pencil. Whenever such attempts have been made the results have always been less than satisfactory.

THE LEFT AS NEGATION

Social revolutions are a compromise between utopia and historical reality. The tool of the revolution is utopia, and the material is the social reality on which one wants to impose a new form. And the tool must to some degree fit the substance if the results are not to become ludicrous.

There is, however, an essential difference between work on physical objects and work on history; for the latter, which is the substance, also creates the tools used to give this substance shape. Utopias which try to give history a new form are themselves a product of history, while history itself remains anonymous. That is why even when the tools turn out to be grossly unsuited to the material, no one is to blame, and it would be senseless to hold anyone responsible.

On the other hand, history is a human product. Although no individual is responsible for the results of the historical process, still each is responsible for his personal involvement in it. Therefore each is also responsible for his role in fashioning the intellectual tools used upon reality in order to change it—for accepting or rejecting a given utopia and the means employed to realize it.

To construct a utopia is always an act of negation toward an existing reality, a desire to transform it. But *negation is not the opposite of construction—it is only the opposite of affirming existing conditions*. That is why it makes little sense to reproach someone for committing a destructive rather than a constructive act, because every act of construction is necessarily a negation of the existing order. At most, you may reproach him for not supporting the reality that exists and for wanting to change it; or, on the other hand, for accepting it without qualification, without seeking change; or, finally, for seeking harmful changes. But a negative position is only the opposite of a conservative attitude toward the world, negation in itself being merely a desire for change. The difference between destructive and constructive work lies in a verbal mystification stemming from the adjectives used to describe the changes, which are considered either good or bad. Every change is, in fact, an act both negative and positive at one and the same time, and the opposite only of an affirmation of things as they are. To blow up a house is just as constructive as to build one—and at the same time just as negative. Of course, this does not mean that it is all the same whether one destroys or builds a house. The

difference between the two acts is that the first, in most instances, works to the detriment of the people involved, and the second is almost always to their benefit. The opposite of blowing up a house is not to build a new house but to retain the existing one.

This observation will serve to lead to conclusions whose aim is to define more closely the meaning we give to the concept of the social Left.

The Left—and this is its unchangeable and indispensable quality, though by no means its only one—is a movement of negation toward the existing world. For this very reason it is, as we have seen, a constructive force. It is, simply, a quest for change.

That is why *the Left rejects the objection that its program is only a negative and not a constructive one.*

The Left can cope with reproaches directed at the potential harm or utility that may arise from its negations. It can also contend with the conservative attitude that wants to perpetuate things as they are. It will not defend itself, however, against the accusation of being purely negative, because every constructive program is negative, and vice versa. A Left without a constructive program cannot, by that token, have a negative one, since these two terms are synonymous. If there is no program, there is at the same time no negation, that is, no opposite of the Left—in other words, conservatism.

UTOPIA AND THE LEFT

But the act of negation does not in itself define the Left, for there are movements with retrogressive goals. Hitlerism was the negation of the Weimar Republic, but this does not make it leftist. In countries not controlled by the Right, an extreme counterrevolutionary movement is always a negation of the existing order. Thus the Left is defined by its negation, *but not only by this*; it is also defined by the direction of this negation, in fact, by the nature of its utopia.

I use the word "utopia" deliberately and not in the derogatory sense that expresses the absurd notion that all social changes are pipe dreams. By utopia I mean a state of social consciousness, a mental counterpart to the social movement striving for radical change in the world—a counterpart itself inadequate to these changes and merely reflecting them in an idealized and obscure form. It endows the real movement with the sense of realizing an ideal born in the realm of pure spirit and not in

current historical experience. Utopia is, therefore, a mysterious consciousness of an actual historical tendency. As long as this tendency lives only a clandestine existence, without finding expression in mass social movements, it gives birth to utopias in the narrower sense, that is, to individually constructed models of the world, as it *should* be. But in time utopia becomes actual social consciousness; it invades the consciousness of a mass movement and becomes one of its essential driving forces. Utopia, then, crosses over from the domain of theoretical and moral thought into the field of practical thinking, and itself begins to govern human action.

Still, this does not make it realizable. Utopia always remains a phenomenon of the world of thought; even when backed by the power of a social movement and, more importantly, even when it enters its consciousness, it is inadequate, going far beyond the movement's potentials. It is, in a way, "pathological" (in a loose sense of the word, for utopian consciousness is in fact a natural social phenomenon). It is a warped attempt to impose upon a historically realistic movement goals that are beyond history.

However—and this is fundamental to an understanding of the internal contradictions of left-wing movements—the Left cannot do without a utopia. The Left gives forth utopias just as the pancreas discharges insulin—by virtue of an innate law. Utopia is the striving for changes which "realistically" cannot be brought about by immediate action, which lie beyond the foreseeable future and defy planning. Still, utopia is a tool of action upon reality and of planning social activity.

A utopia, if it proves so remote from reality that the wish to enforce it would be grotesque, would lead to a monstrous deformation, to socially harmful changes threatening the freedom of man. The Left, if it succeeds, would then turn into its opposite—the Right. But then, too, the utopia would cease to be a utopia and become a slogan justifying every current practice.

On the other hand, the Left cannot renounce utopia; it cannot give up goals that are, for the time being, unattainable, but that impart meaning to social changes. I am speaking of the social Left as a whole, for though the concept of the Left is relative—one is a leftist only in comparison with something, and not in absolute terms—still the extreme element of every Left is a revolutionary movement. The revolutionary movement is a catch-all for all the ultimate demands made upon existing society. It is a total negation of the existing system and, therefore, also a total program. A total program is, in fact, a

utopia. A utopia is a necessary component of the revolutionary Left, and the latter is a necessary product of the social Left as a whole.

Yet why is a utopia a condition of all revolutionary movements? Because much historical experience, more or less buried in the social consciousness, tells us that goals unattainable now will never be reached unless they are articulated when they are still unattainable. It may well be that the impossible at a given moment can become possible only by being stated at a time when it is impossible. To cite an example, a series of reforms will never attain the goals of revolution, a consistent reform party will never imperceptibly be transformed into the fulfillment of a revolution. *The existence of a utopia as a utopia is the necessary prerequisite for its eventually ceasing to be a utopia.*

A revolutionary movement cannot be born simultaneously with the act of revolution, for without a revolutionary movement to precede it the revolution could never come about. As long as the revolutionary act has not been accomplished, or is not indisputably and clearly evident, it is a utopia. For today's Spanish proletariat a social revolution is a utopia; but the Spanish proletariat will never achieve a revolution if it does not proclaim it when it is impossible. This is why tradition plays such an important role in the revolutionary movement: the movement would never know any victories if it had not in previous phases suffered inevitable defeats—if it had not initiated revolutionary activity when the historical situation precluded success.

The desire for revolution cannot be born only when the situation is ripe, because among the conditions for this ripeness are the revolutionary demands made of an unripe reality. The continuous influence of social consciousness is one of the necessary conditions for the maturation of history to the point of radical change; utopia is a prerequisite of social upheavals, just as unrealistic efforts are the precondition of realistic ones. That is the reason why revolutionary consciousness cannot be satisfied with mere participation in changes already taking place; it cannot merely follow events, but must precede them at a time when they are neither planned nor anticipated.

Therefore—and this is an elementary practical conclusion—the Left doesn't mind being reproached for striving for a utopia. It may have to defend itself against the accusation that the content of its utopia is damaging to society, but it need not defend itself against the charge of being utopian.

The Right, as a conservative force, needs no utopia; its essence is the affirmation of existing conditions—a fact and not a utopia—or else the desire to revert to a state which was once an accomplished fact. The Right strives to idealize actual conditions, not to change them. What it needs is fraud, not utopia.

The Left cannot give up utopia because it is a real force even when it is merely a utopia. The sixteenth-century revolt of the German peasants, the Babouvist movement, and the Paris Commune were all utopian. As it turned out, without such utopian activities no nonutopian, progressive social changes would have taken place. Obviously, it does not follow that the task of the Left is to undertake extreme actions in every historical situation. All we are saying is that to condemn utopia for the mere fact that it is a utopia is rightist, conservative, and hampers the prospects of ever creating a utopia. In any event, we are not at the moment formulating social tasks. We are considering the concept of the Left completely in the abstract, trying to ascertain and not to postulate. Since the Left is as "normal" a social phenomenon as the Right, and progressive social movements are as normal as reactionary ones, it is equally normal for the Left, which is a minority, to be persecuted by the Right.

THE LEFT AND SOCIAL CLASSES

The concept of the Left remains unclear to this day. Although only about a hundred and fifty years old, it has acquired universal historical dimensions and is applied to ancient history by virtue of a diffusion of meaning common to all languages. Broadly used, the term has a practical function, but its meaning becomes very obscure, more sensed than understood. One thing is certain: it is easier to say which movements, programs, and attitudes are Left in relation to others than to determine where the Left ends and the Right begins in the political power relationship within society's total structure. We speak of a Left within Hitler's party, but that does not, of course, mean that the German Right was restricted to the party Right and that everything else, including the left wing of that party, was the Left in an absolute sense. Society cannot be divided into a Right and a Left. A leftist attitude toward one movement can be linked with a rightist attitude toward another. It is only in their relative meanings that these words make sense.

But what do we mean when we say a movement or an attitude is Left in relation to another? More specifically, which

aspect of the concept of the Left is valid in all social situations? For example, what do we mean when we speak of the Left in the Radical Party of France, or of the social-democratic, Catholic, or communist Left? Is there some common element in the word used in such varied contexts? Or are we simply stating that every political situation reveals some human activity we either approve or find to be the less repugnant, and which we therefore call "the Left"? (I say "we call" because the Left draws the dividing line between the Left and the Right, while the Right fights this division systematically—and in vain, for the Left's self-definition is strong enough to define the Right and, in any event, to establish the existence of the demarcation line.)

No doubt because it has taken on a positive aura, the term "Left" is often appropriated by reactionary groups. For example, there is the "European Left," a political annex of the European Coal and Steel Community. So the mere use of the word does not define the Left. We must look for other signposts to help us fix our position in this murky area. Slogans like "freedom" and "equality" belong, of course, to the tradition of the Left; but they lost their meaning once they became universal catchwords to which everyone attaches his own arbitrary interpretation. As time passes, the Left must define itself ever more precisely. For the more it influences social consciousness, the more its slogans take on a positive aura, the more they are appropriated by the Right and lose their defined meaning. Nobody today opposes such concepts as "freedom" and "equality"; that is why they can become implements of fraud, suspect unless they are explained. What is worse, the word "socialism" has also acquired many meanings.

Naturally, it is quite easy to define the Left in general terms, as we can define "progress." But general definitions are necessarily misleading and difficult to apply in concrete discussions. For example, we can say that "Leftness" is the degree of participation in the process of social development that strives to eliminate all conditions in which the possibility of satisfying human needs is obstructed by social relations. From such a definition we derive a certain number of equally general slogans that are too universally acceptable to be useful in fixing political demarcations. The concepts of the Left, of progress, and of freedom are full of internal contradictions; political disputes do not arise from the mere acceptance or rejection of the concepts.

Therefore, rather than construct an easy though ineffective general concept of the Left applicable to all eras, let us accept existing social reality as a fact and look for the basic conflicts that define current history. These are, first of all, class conflicts and, secondarily, political ones. However, the political battle is not completely identical with the pattern of class relations; it is not a carbon copy of them transposed to relations between political parties. This is so because class divisions are not the only kind, and classes themselves are becoming more, rather than less, complicated because they are split from within by nationality or ideology. Finally, there are political divisions, insofar as they assume diverse forms of autonomy. Under these conditions political life cannot reflect class conflicts purely and directly but, on the contrary, ever more indirectly and confusedly. As a matter of fact, it was never otherwise—if it had been, all historical conflicts would have been resolved centuries ago. That is why the statement that it must be in the interest of the working class to belong to the Left does not always hold true. On the one hand, it is characteristic of the Left to try not to realize men's wishes against their will, nor to force them to accept benefits they do not desire. On the other hand, the working class of a given country may be greatly influenced by nationalism, yet the Left will not support nationalistic demands; elsewhere, the working class may have deep roots in a religious tradition, yet the Left is a secular movement. Even real immediate interests of the working class can be in opposition to the demands of the Left. For example, for a long time the English workers benefited from colonial exploitation—and yet the Left is an enemy of colonialism.

That is why the Left cannot be defined by saying it will always, in every case, support every demand of the working class, or that it is always on the side of the majority. The Left must define itself on the level of ideas, conceding that in many instances it will find itself in the minority. Even though in today's world there is no leftist attitude independent of the struggle for the rights of the working class, though no leftist position can be realized outside the class structure, and though only the struggle of the oppressed can make the Left a material force, nevertheless the Left must be defined in intellectual, and not class, terms. This presupposes that concrete intellectual life is not and cannot be an exact replica of class interests.

On this basis, we can set forth certain characteristics of the position of the Left in various social orders:

In capitalist countries the fight of the Left is to abolish all social privilege. In noncapitalist countries, it is to remove privileges that have grown out of noncapitalist conditions.

In capitalist countries the Left fights all forms of colonial oppression. In noncapitalist ones, it demands the abolition of inequalities, discrimination, and the exploitation of certain countries by others.

In capitalist countries the Left struggles against limitations on freedom of speech and expression. It does so also in noncapitalist lands. In one and the other the Left fights all the contradictions of freedom that arise in *both kinds* of social conditions: how far can one push the demand for tolerance without turning against the idea of tolerance itself? How can one guarantee that tolerance will not lead to the victory of forces that will strangle the principle of tolerance? This is the great problem of all leftist movements. It is also true, obviously, that the Left can make mistakes and act ineffectively, and thus engender a situation that is inimical to itself. However, it is not faulty tactics that are the distinguishing feature of the Left, for, as we have said, its criteria are established on an ideological plane.

In capitalist countries the Left strives to secularize social life. This is also true in noncapitalist countries.

In capitalist countries the destruction of all racism is an essential part of the Left's position. This is so in noncapitalist lands as well.

Everywhere the Left fights against the encroachment of any type of obscurantism in social life; it fights for the victory of rational thought, which is by no means a luxury reserved for the intellectuals, but an integral component of social progress in this century. Without it any form of progress becomes a parody of its own premises.

Finally, under both systems, the Left does not exclude the use of force when necessary, though the use of force is not an invention of the Left, but rather an unavoidable form of social existence. The Left accepts the antinomy of force, but only as an antinomy and not as a gift of fate. Everywhere the Left is ready to compromise with historical facts, but it rejects ideological compromises; that is, it does not abdicate the right to proclaim the basic tenets of its existence regardless of its political tactics.

The Left is free of sacred feelings; it has no sense of sanctity toward any existing historical situation. It takes a position of permanent revisionism toward reality, just as the Right as-

sumes an attitude of opportunism in respect to the world as it is. The Right is the embodiment of the inertia of historical reality—that is why it is as eternal as the Left.

In both systems the Left strives to base its prospects on the experience and evolutionary tendencies of history; whereas the Right is the expression of capitulation to the situation of the moment. For this reason the Left can have a political ideology, while the Right has nothing but tactics.

Within the context of both systems, the Left knows that every human freedom satisfies a specific need, but that there is also a need for freedom as such.

The Left does not fear history. It believes in the flexibility of social relations and of human nature—in the possibility of changing them. Within both camps it rejects all humility vis-à-vis existing situations, authorities, doctrines, the majority, prejudices, or material pressures.

In both, the Left—not excluding the use of force, not ashamed of it, and not calling it "upbringing" or "benevolence" or "care for children," etc.—nevertheless rejects any means of political warfare that lead to moral consequences which contradict its premises.

All this time I have been describing the Left as a certain ideological and moral attitude. For the Left is not a single, defined political movement, or party, or group of parties. The Left is a characteristic which to a greater or lesser degree can serve particular movements or parties, as well as given individuals or human activities, attitudes, and ideologies. One can be leftist from one point of view and not from another. There rarely occur political movements that are totally leftist in every aspect throughout the entire course of their existence. A man of the Left can participate in the political struggle and be a politician in a leftist party, but refuse to approve actions and opinions that are clearly inimical to a leftist attitude. Which does not mean, obviously, that the leftist position does not lead to internal conflicts and contradictions.

For these reasons the Left, as such and as a whole, cannot be an organized political movement. The Left is always to the left in certain respects with relation to some political movements. Every party has its left wing, a current which is farther to the left than the rest of the party in regard to some trait that can be cited as an example. Still, this does not mean that all the leftist elements of all parties taken together form a single movement, or that they are more closely allied to each other than they are to the party that gave birth to them. This would be so if they

fulfilled all the requirements of being Left in every aspect; but in that case they would not have been segments of so many diverse parties with such varied programs to begin with. The left wing of the Christian Democratic parties has, as a rule, infinitely more in common with them than with the socialist Left, yet it is the Christian Democratic Left on this very basis. Its "Leftness" may be shown by a stand on one or another actual political problem that, in the particular instance, brings it nearer the left of other parties—for example, a condemnation of colonialism or racism. On the other hand, the demands of the Left are met to varying degrees by different parties, which for this reason are called more or less leftist.

THE LEFT AND COMMUNISM IN POLAND

Can one speak of a pure party of the Left, and if so, when? Is the Communist Party one? Since we cannot at this time define all the Communist parties, let us apply this question to the Polish Party.

For a long time the division into a Party Left and Right did not exist, although some members were more or less to the left. It did not exist because the Party was deprived of any real political life, because its ideology did not grow out of its own historical experience but was to a large degree imposed upon it regardless of experience. The division into a Left and a Right was drawn only when the political life of the Party came into being.

The split took place according to positions on the problems that always divide a movement into a Left and a Right. The Party Left was made up of those who fought to abolish all forms of privilege in social life, to recognize the principle of equality in dealings among nations, and to oppose local and foreign nationalism, reserving the right to call it by its real name of nationalism. The Left stands for the abolition, without chicanery, of all kinds of anti-Semitism in Poland, for freedom of speech and discussion, for *victory over dogma* and over dull, doctrinaire, or else magical thinking in political life, for legality in public relations, for the maximum increase in the role of the working class within the system of government, for the liquidation of the lawlessness of the police. It fights against calling crimes "communism" and gangsters "communists"—and against a thousand other things.

I am listing these items summarily, without going into specifics, only to show that the direction of the changes in-

tended to lead to the triumph of socialist democracy was inspired in the Party by its Left, whose demands on all vital points are included in what we call a leftist position. The Party Right consists of the forces of Stalinist inertia, defending a system based on principles that renounce Polish sovereignty in favor of a foreign nationalism. It supports the dictatorship of doctrinaire schemas in intellectual life, the dictatorship of the police in public life, and military dictatorship in economic life. It suppresses freedom of speech and uses the terminology of government by the people to conceal government by a political apparatus that disregards both the opinion of the public and its needs. The forces of Stalinism within the Party were and are a concentration of all the basic characteristics that define the Right, conservatism, and reaction.

However, the Left in the Polish Communist Party finds itself in a peculiar position, in which political tendencies do not cover a single unbroken gamut "from left to right," but abound in complications. The forces of the Left stand between two rightist tendencies: the reaction within the Party, and traditional reaction. This is a new historical development, awareness of which has arisen only in the past few years. It is as yet a very restricted phenomenon, but its implications are international. We will refrain from describing the historical causes of this situation, which in a certain phase of its development created a crisis in the communist movement, and simply state that the New Left appeared within the movement when it became apparent that a New Right existed. We will not at this time take up the question of just how the Old Left degenerated and survived in the form of a Right—a process of which the history of Stalinism furnishes an instructive example—but it does not seem that this process was caused by the mere fact of the Left's coming to power. That is, it does not seem that the Left can exist only in a position of opposition, or that the possession of power is incompatible with the nature of the Left and leads inevitably to its downfall.

For although the negation of reality is part of the nature of the Left, it does not follow necessarily that reality must always be contrary to the demands of the Left. History, it is true, provides countless experiences that seem to speak for such a view and tempt us to see the Left as condemned to be an "eternal opposition." Yet over the years history has witnessed many setbacks to demands (for example, equality before the law) that subsequently, after centuries of suffering and defeat, became reality. Love of martyrdom and heroics is as alien to the

Left as opportunism in a current situation or renunciation of utopian goals. The Left protests against the existing world, but it does not long for a void. It is an explosive charge that disrupts the stability of social life, but it is not a movement toward nothingness.

THE WEAKNESSES OF THE LEFT

The main weakness of the Left was not that it grew out of negation, but that its negation attained only the level of *moral protest* and not of practical thought. A leftist attitude that stops at the stage of moral experience has little practical effect. "Bleeding-heartism" is not a political position.

Another trait, one that was unavoidable in our circumstances, was that the Left could not be an organized movement but only an unclear, fragmented, negative consciousness opposed to the Right, which was bound by no scruples of loyalty regarding the formation of splinter factions within the Party. Thus the Left did not become a political movement in the true sense, but merely the sum total of spontaneous moral positions.

One weakness of the Left arose from the regressive circumstances of the international situation, the details of which I won't go into but which distinctly favored rightist activities.

Other weaknesses of the Left were those elements of the immediate situation from which the efforts of the Right could draw strength. The Right has no scruples about using every kind of demagoguery, every political and ideological slogan that will enable it to dominate the situation of the moment. When necessary, it makes use of anti-Semitism to gain a certain number of allies from the bigots within or outside the party. The Right is primarily after power. In the fight for power (which, for example, it does not possess in Poland today) it is prepared to advance any leftist slogans that can count on popular appeal. Let us speak openly: contempt for ideology is the strength of the Right because it allows for greater flexibility in practice and for the arbitrary use of any verbal façade that will facilitate the seizure of power. The Right is backed not only by the inertia of old customs and institutions, but also by the power of the lie; true, only a little way, but far enough to enable it to master the situation. At a given moment these ideological slogans are exposed as tactical imposture; but the trick is to make sure this moment comes only after the situation is in hand and the police are at one's disposal. That is why it is important for the Left to have available at all times criteria of

recognition in the form of attitudes toward those actual political matters which, for one reason or another, force the Right to reveal itself for what it is. Today such criteria exist chiefly in the domain of international affairs.

The Left was also weakened by the fact that the general social protest against the compromised methods of the government was too often linked with reactionary demands unacceptable to the Left. But at that stage of its development, the Left was not strong enough to assume leadership of this protest.

As a result of these circumstances, the Left (on an international scale) could not help but be defeated. Nevertheless, if it is to exist, the Left must above all be aware of the danger of its *ideological* position.

The danger lies in its double exposure to two forms of rightist pressure. The Left must be particularly alert to its need to define its special position as *constantly and simultaneously* opposed to both those forces. It must clearly and continuously proclaim its negative stand against both rightist currents, of which one is the expression of Stalinist inertia and the other of the inertia of capitalism in its most backward and obscurantist cast. The Left is in grave danger if it directs its criticism toward only one pressure, for it thus blurs its political demarcations. Its position must be expressed in simultaneous negation. The Left must oppose Polish nationalism as adamantly as it does foreign nationalisms that threaten Poland. It must take the same clear rational attitude toward both the sclerotic religiosity of the Stalinist version of Marxism and the obscurantism of the clergy. It must simultaneously reject socialist phraseology as a façade for police states and democratic phraseology as a disguise for bourgeois rule. Only thus can the Left retain its separate, distinct position, which is that of a minority. Nevertheless, the Left does not desire to become a majority at any price.

In the current situation, the Left's greatest claim is ideological. To be more precise, it is to differentiate exactly between ideology and *current political tactics*. The Left does not refuse to compromise with reality as long as compromises are so labeled. It will always counteract any attempt to bend ideology to the demands of the moment, to temporarily necessary concessions, to tactics. While the Left realizes that on occasion it is powerless in the face of crime, it refuses to call crime a "blessing."

This is definitely not a trivial or secondary matter. A political party that does not rely on an authentic ideological base can

exist for a long time in a state of vegetation, but it will collapse like a house of cards if confronted by difficulties. A case in point is the Hungarian Party. A communist movement that subordinates its ideology to immediate tactics is destined for degeneration and defeat. It can exist only with the support of the power and the repressive capacity of the State. The intellectual and moral values of communism are not luxurious ornaments of its activity, but the conditions of its existence. That is why it is difficult to create leftist socialism in a reactionary country. A communist movement whose sole form of existence is sheer tactics and which permits the loss of its original intellectual and moral premises ceases to be a leftist movement. Hence the word "socialism" has come to have more than one meaning, and is no longer synonymous with the word "Left." And this is why a regeneration of the concept of the Left is necessary—also so that we can delimit the meaning of socialist slogans. We therefore propose the term "leftist socialism."

Without surrendering any of the premises of its existence, the Left is obviously ready to make alliances with any groups, no matter how small, and with all "leftist foci" wherever they may be. But it must refuse to support rightist situations and activities; or if compelled to do so under duress, it must call this "duress" and refrain from seeking ideological justification for its actions.

The Left knows that these demands merely seem modest; and realizes they may lead to new defeats—but such defeats are more fruitful than capitulation. For this reason the Left is not afraid of being a minority, which is what it is on an international scale. It knows that history itself calls forth in every situation a leftist side which is as necessary a component of social life as its aspect of conservatism and inertia.

The contradictions of social life cannot be liquidated; this means that the history of man will exist as long as man itself. And the Left is the fermenting factor in even the most hardened mass of the historical present. Even though it is at times weak and invisible, it is nonetheless the dynamite of hope that blasts the dead load of ossified systems, institutions, customs, intellectual habits, and closed doctrines. The Left unites those dispersed and often hidden atoms whose movement is, in the last analysis, what we call progress.

PART TWO:

The Revolutionary Frontier