Daniel Bell

The End of Ideology Revisited (Part I*)

In memory of Raymond Aron

THERE ARE SOME BOOKS THAT ARE BETTER KNOWN FOR their titles than their contents. Mine is one of them. Various critics, usually from the Left, pointed to the upsurge of radicalism in the 1960s as disproof of the book's thesis. Others saw the work as an 'ideological' defence of 'technocratic' thinking, or of the 'status quo'. A few, even more ludicrously, believed that the book attacked the role of ideals in politics. It was none of these.[1]

The frame of the book was set by its sub-title, *On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*. Yet the last section looked ahead. After observing young left-wing intellectuals express repeated yearnings for ideology, I said that new inspirations, new ideologies, and new identifications would come from the Third World. I wrote:

> ... the extraordinary fact is that while the old nineteenth-century ideologies and intellectual debates have become exhausted, the rising states of Asia and Africa are fashioning new ideologies with a different appeal for their own people. These are the ideologies of industrialization, modernization, Pan-Arabism, color and nationalism. In the distinctive difference between the two kinds of ideologies lie the great political and social problems of the second half of the twentieth century. The ideologies of the nineteenth century were universalistic, humanistic, and fashioned by intellectuals. The mass ideologies of Asia and Africa are parochial, instrumental and created by political leaders. The driving forces of the old ideologies were social equality and, in the largest sense, freedom. The impulsions of the new ideologies are economic development and national power.

1 The charade continues. Professor Quentin Skinner, in his introduction to a 1985 volume on 'Grand Theory', writes of the 'notorious title of Daniel Bell's', the claim that '"the end of ideology" had been reached', which Skinner equates with the belief that political philosophy is finished and that one should 'get on ... with the purportedly value-neutral task of constructing ... "empirical" theories of social behaviour ...' Quentin Skinner (ed.), *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 3–4.

And, as is evident in the book, I said that, given the culture of the West, there would always be the hunger for a cause, for those impulses lie deep in the utopian and chiliastic roots of Christian thought.

THE WAR OF IDEAS

The End of Ideology, as a work, did not stand alone. As a cautionary tale it was part of the war of ideas that was taking place among the intellectuals, especially in Europe, about the future of the Soviet Union and Stalinism. On the one side were Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in France; those who had returned 'East', such as Bertolt Brecht and Ernst Bloch in Germany; and Georg Lukács, the *éminence grise* who had re-emerged from the shadows. On the other, men such as Albert Camus, Raymond Aron, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, George Orwell, and Czeslaw Milosz. One might have thought that the Moscow Trials, with their gruesome execution of almost the entire cadre of old Bolshevik leaders, such as Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, as well as hundreds of others; the revelations about the *Yezhovschina* — the sweeping elimination of hundreds of thousands of old party activists during the tenure of N.I. Yezhov as head of the secret police — and the imprisonment of millions in the labour camps (which Solzhenitsyn later dramatized as the Gulag Archipelago); and the Nazi-Soviet pact (when the swastika was hoisted on Moscow airport in honour of Ribbentrop's arrival and the Red Army band broke into the *Horst Wessel Lied*) — that all this would have ended the infatuation of intellectuals with the Soviet Union. But the great resistance and sacrifice by the Soviet peoples during the war, and the hopes for a new relaxation by the regime, fed the longings of many for the resumption of the *marche générale* of 'History' to the promised land of socialist society. Merleau-Ponty, the French phenomenologist philosopher, and an editor (with Sartre) of *Les Temps Modernes*, wrote a book, *Humanisme et Terreur*, justifying the repressions as the logic of the dialectical spiral of progress. Bloch published his ponderous *Der Prinzip Hoffnung*, a philosophy of history embodying the unfolding of a utopian principle of men's aspirations (which he had written in New York, during the war, before returning to East Germany). Sartre, the philosopher of existential decision, stated that the histori-

cal choice as heir to the future was either the Soviet Union or the United States; and the Soviet Union as the incarnation of the working class, the universal class, was preferable to the United States, the embodiment of the vulgar bourgeois world. The claims of 'the future' had resumed their march under the banner of ideology. And, as is always the case with intellectuals, culture became the battleground in the combat for hegemony.

In the postwar debate, the first person to use the phrase 'the end of ideology' was Albert Camus who, in 1946, wrote that if the French socialists renounced Marxism as an absolute philosophy, limiting themselves to its critical aspect, 'they will exemplify the way our period marks the end of ideologies, that is, of absolute Utopias which destroy themselves, in History, by the price they ultimately exact'. The context of the phrase was a debate within the French Socialist Party in which one faction sought to reaffirm Marxism as the unyielding logic of history, the other to restate socialism as an ethical force. Camus wrote: 'The chief task of the last party congress was to reconcile the desire for a new morality superior to murder with the determination to remain faithful to Marxism. But one cannot reconcile what is irreconcilable.'[2] Ideology, for Camus, was a form of deception.

The theme of ideology as a form of self-deception was developed subsequently in a number of powerful arguments, personal and intellectual. *The God That Failed* (1949), edited by R.H. Crossman, carried the testimony of Koestler, Silone, André Gide, Richard Wright, Louis Fischer and Stephen Spender about the illusions of Bolshevism. Czeslaw Milosz, in *The Captive Mind* (1953), used the Muslim term 'ketman' to show the way intellectuals deceive themselves by embracing the *diamat* (dialectical materialism) as a new theology; 'ketman' was an emblem of the contortions of ideology. George Orwell's *1984*, with its portrayal of the intoxication of power when ideology and politics are fused in a totalitarian system ('If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face — forever'), was unmistakably aimed at Stalin and the Soviet Union. And Raymond Aron's *The Opium of the Intellectuals*

2 Albert Camus, 'Ni Victimes, Ni Bourreaux', in *Actuelles; Chroniques 1944–1948*, Paris, 1950. The essay first appeared in the newspaper *Combat* in November 1946, and was reprinted in *Politics*, July–August, 1947, translated by Dwight Macdonald, under the title 'Neither Victims, Nor Executioners'. The essay was republished as a brochure by Continuum Books, New York, 1980, with an introduction by Robert Pickus. The quotations here are from p. 39 and p. 36 of that edition.

(1955) was a withering demolition of the arguments for 'historical necessity' as the justification of terror.

Khrushchev's 1956 revelations of the malign crimes of Stalin; the subsequent Polish October led by young intellectuals, which forced out the old Moscow-imposed regime; and the Hungarian Revolution in 1956–57 (led by the Communist Prime Minister Imre Nagy, who was executed by the Russians) closed the book for another generation of believers, as the events of the late 1930s had marked the close for an earlier generation.

Aron had concluded his 1955 volume with a chapter entitled 'The End of the Ideological Age?', and that question became the theme of an international conference in Milan in 1955 sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom. It was in the papers for that conference that the ideas of Aron, Michael Polanyi, Edward Shils, C.A.R. Crosland, Seymour Martin Lipset, and myself found common ground. In the next several years, though emphases and themes differed somewhat, the central thought was elaborated in various seminars and books. And the final pages of my expanded epilogue (written in 1961) noted, in melancholy fashion, a new phase:

The end of ideology closes the book, intellectually speaking, on an era, the one of easy 'left' formulas for social change. But to close the book is not to turn one's back upon it. This is all the more important now when a 'new left' with few memories of the past is emerging...

It is in attitudes towards Cuba and the new States in Africa that the meaning of intellectual maturity, and the end of ideology, will be tested. For among the 'new Left,' there is an alarming readiness to create a *tabula rasa*, to accept the word 'Revolution' as an absolution for outrage ... in short, to erase the lessons of the last forty years with an emotional alacrity that is astounding.

Though this is a 'political' book, in the sense that I have been a participant in these intellectual wars, intertwined with the politics is also a sociological concern, the effort to break free of the strictures of 'conventional' sociological categories; and in that context, Marxism is also 'conventional' in its 'holistic' or 'totalistic' view of society. Against the holistic modes, my thinking about society has proceeded on the assumption of a disjunction between culture and social structure. A functionalist or a Marxist view sees these two either as integrated, with the value system regulating behaviour, or as a totality, in which the substructure of the material world 'determines' the political, legal and cultural orders. I have argued that such views confuse the different rhythms of change in the

different levels of the history of societies. Changes in economy or technology, since they are instrumental, proceed in 'linear' fashion, for there is then a clear principle of substitution: if something new is cheaper, better, more efficient or more productive then, subject to cost, it will be used (though Marxists would argue that in practice the 'social relations' of property inhibit the expanding 'forces' of production). In culture, however, there is no such principle of substitution: the portals of culture either are guarded by tradition, or they swing wildly through syncretism. But aesthetic innovations do not 'outmode' previous forms, they widen the cultural repertoire of mankind. Historically, the several realms may sometimes be joined loosely (as in the coupling of the bourgeois character, culture and economy in the eighteenth century), but more often, as today, they are in tension with one another. But there is no necessary unity.[3]

Clearly, however, more than a dispassionate interest is evident here, for the analysis, the tone, and the intensity fuse the experiences of my generation with a judgment about human nature and history. I had, like many others, joined the Young Socialist movement at an early age (in 1932, at thirteen). Living through the 1930s and 1940s was a heartbreak house limned with dread. There had been the Nazi death camps, barbarism beyond all civilized imagining; and the Soviet concentration camps, which had cast a pall on all utopian visions. How was one to explain them? A naturalist view, such as that advanced by Sidney Hook, argued that they were shaped by the cultural patterns of these societies and were therefore distinctive historical phenomena. Against this was the neo-Augustinian view of Reinhold Niebuhr, who saw in these ghastly actions the recurrent duplicity of human nature, of man as *homo duplex*, who in modern times seeks for self-infinitude and ends in idolatry when he transgresses the bounds of finitude. For myself and my friends, Niebuhr's was the more persuasive explanation. As I wrote in one of these

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3 This mode of analysis underlies my two books of the 1970s, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* and *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. And it is most strongly exemplified in the discussion of 'secularization' in my Hobhouse lecture, 'The Return of the Sacred'. There I argued that the term 'secularization', which most sociological commentators use to describe the modern Western world, confuses changes in two different realms: in the *institutional* realm, where there is a shrinking role of ecclesiastical authority, and changes on the level of *beliefs*. But the rise and fall of belief systems in religion do not derive from the change in the institutions. Thus I divide my analysis, using the terms sacred and secular to deal with institutions, and holy and profane for the character of beliefs. The lecture is reprinted in my book of essays, *The Winding Passage* (1980).

essays, 'ours is a generation that finds its wisdom in pessimism, evil, tragedy and despair'.

Out of this came the fear of mass action, of emotion in politics and of the politics of passions and hatreds; and these have framed my views throughout my life. In early form, this fear was shaped by a study of populist movements in the United States and the discovery not only of their conspiratorial view of the world but of their anti-semitism and their identification of Jews with money, a set of notions that strikingly anticipated Nazi ideology; yet these were largely ignored if not suppressed by 'progressive' historians in the United States, who saw in populism only a virtuous form of agrarian radicalism.[4]

And this fear was expressed in my monograph, *Marxian Socialism in the United States* (1952), which explored the tensions of ethics and politics, of what Niebuhr had called 'moral man in immoral society'. The controlling metaphor I used was the dilemma of a political movement (not just an individual person), as living 'in but not of the world'. The Bolshevik movement, I argued, was neither in nor of the world, and was therefore unencumbered by questions of 'usual' (for them 'bourgeois') morality, so that any and all means — including terror and murder — were ethically acceptable by the justification of their ends. The trade-union movement, living in the here-and-now of a continuing reality, had to make its accommodations to the society. But the socialist movement, rejecting capitalist society, found itself hoist by the dilemma of taking responsible actions which might strengthen that society yet which 'contradicted' its political theology; and so, it often found itself paralysed.

For me, this tension between ethics and politics was stated most forcefully by Max Weber, in the conclusion of his poignant essay, 'Politics as a Vocation', where he posed the polarities of the 'ethics of responsibility' and the 'ethics of ultimate ends' as the modes of action that any political activist has to confront. As I explained in

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[4] These ideas were first expressed in an essay in 1944 and noticed by my friend Richard Hofstadter, who later wrote:

'It is characteristic of the indulgence which Populism has received on this count that Carey McWilliams in his *A Mask for Privilege: Anti-Semitism in America* (Boston, 1948) deals with early American anti-Semitism simply as an upper-class phenomenon. In his historical account of the rise of anti-Semitism he does not mention the Greenback-Populist tradition. Daniel Bell: "The Grass Roots of American Jew Hatred", *Jewish Frontier*, Vol. XI, June 1944, pp. 15–20, is one of the few writers who has perceived that there is any relation between latter-day anti-Semites and the earlier Populist tradition.' (Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, New York, Knopf, 1955, n. 3, pp. 80–81.)

those pages (and later), my choice has invariably been the 'ethics of responsibility'.[5]

And yet, in the postwar West, there was some political hope. (Optimism of the will, pessimism of the heart has been the unresolved tension of my temperament.) In Great Britain, the Labour government of Clement Attlee had introduced in seven short years the foundations for a just welfare state, with the Beveridge social security and the National Health systems. Attlee's successor as the leader of the Labour Party, Hugh Gaitskell, had launched a campaign to drop the stilted 'Clause Four' from the Labour Party constitution (written by Sydney Webb), which had focused on the nationalization of industry as the principal goal of the Labour Party. And Gaitskell's protégé, Anthony Crosland, with whom I had many conversations at the time, was engaged in a rethinking of socialist philosophy that placed equality, opportunity and merit at the centre of Labour's hopes, a set of themes he developed in his influential *Future of Socialism*, in 1964.

In Germany, the Social Democratic Party, at Bad Godesberg (1959), had adopted a new party programme that scrapped the orthodox Marxism to which it had been bound since the Erfurt Programme of 1891, written by Karl Kautsky under the supervision of Frederick Engels. The German SDP proclaimed that it would no longer be a 'class party', that democracy was central to any socialist political order, and that it sought reform rather than revolution.

These political developments were buttressed by theoretical explorations. Ralf Dahrendorf argued in his book *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (American edition, 1959) that class could no longer be the division which polarized a society along a single axis, as was true before the Second World War. The theme of 'the shrinking of the ideologically-oriented nineteenth-century party' was emphasized (in 1957) by Otto Kircheimer, a sometime member of the Frankfurt School, who succeeded Franz Neumann in political philosophy at Columbia. Most striking, perhaps, were the intellectual reversals by two men who in the 1930s had been immensely influential in persuading the intellectual public of the inevitable collapse of capitalism and the necessity of socialism. One was John

5 The last pages of Weber's essay had always seemed to me to be a 'hidden dialogue' with a younger man who was taking the political step of 'ultimate ends' that Weber disapproved of. In my essay 'First Love and Early Sorrow', *Partisan Review*, No. 4, 1981, I have told of the unravelling of this 'moral detective story', and the uncovering of that hidden face — Georg Lukács.

Strachey, whose book *The Coming Struggle for Power* became a best-seller in the Depression, and Lewis Corey, whose *Decline of American Capitalism* (1932) argued that an irreversible crisis had set in because of the falling rate of profit. Twenty years later, both men had become proponents of the mixed economy and of economic planning, but as Corey put it, 'without statism'.

The nineteenth-century ideological vision, with its roots in the French Revolution, had been framed in terms of the total trans-formation of society. The normative consensus emerging in the postwar years in the West held that civil politics could replace ideological politics; that the dream of organizing a society by complete blueprint was bound to fail; that no comprehensive social changes should be introduced, necessary as they might seem, with-out some effort to identify the human and social costs; and that no changes in the way of life (e.g. collectivization of land) be under-taken if they could not be reversed. In short, it was — and is — a view that is (mistakenly) called pragmatism in politics (a word with less philosophical freight would be *prudence*), or what Dewey would have called, ambiguously, 'intelligence' — the focus, *within a frame-work of liberal values*, on problem-solving as a means of remedying social ills and inadequacies.

This, then, was the political and intellectual background of the theme, 'the end of ideology'. It was a theme that, not surprisingly, gained resonance, after the publication of my book, in the words and beliefs of John F. Kennedy. In a commencement address at Yale University, in June 1962, President Kennedy said:

> ... the central *domestic* problems of our times are more subtle and less simple. They do not relate to basic clashes of philosophy and ideology, but to ways and means of *reaching common goals* — to research for sophisticated solutions to complex and obstinate issues . . .
> What is at stake in our economic decisions today is not some grand warfare of rival ideologies which will sweep the country with passion but the practical management of a modern economy ... political labels and ideological approaches are irrelevant to the solutions.[6]

6 The Yale speech is in: John F. Kennedy, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the US*, US Government Printing Office, 1963. No. 234 Commencement Address at Yale University, 11 June, 1962, pp. 470–475.

THE CRITICAL RESPONSE

The publication of *The End of Ideology* struck a nerve.[7] 'Indeed', writes Howard Brick in his retrospective view of the responses to the book, '... "the end of ideology" came to bear the weight of the intellectual's focal concerns in years to come: what were the prospects and limits of change in modern society; why had radical movements so far failed in the United States; what were the responsibilities of intellectuals to their country and its culture, what stance — adversary or affirmative — should intellectuals take towards existing social relations, to what extent were intellectuals complicit in abuses of power by entrenched elites'.

There were five different criticisms levelled at the book:

1. The end of ideology was a defence of the 'status quo'.

2. The end of ideology sought to substitute technocratic guidance by experts for political debate in the society.

3. The end of ideology sought to substitute consensus for moral discourse.

4. The end of ideology was an instrument of the Cold War.

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[7] Two books published toward the end of the decade collected some of the major essays and exchanges. These were: Chaim L. Waxman (ed.), *The End of Ideology Debate*, New York, 1968 and M. Rejai (ed.), *Decline of Ideology?*, Chicago, 1971. The Waxman book collected the major polemical exchanges; the Rejai volume, somewhat sympathetic to the thesis, brought together essays from Finland, the Netherlands, Japan and Europe, to provide some empirical evidence, as well as some critiques.

The book, and my work in general, have prompted a large number of Ph.D. theses, particularly in recent years, and a fair number have been published. These include: Job L. Dittberner, *The End of Ideology and American Social Thought*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, UMI Research Press, 1970; Benjamin S. Kleinberg, *American Society in the Post-Industrial Age: Technocracy, Power and the End of Ideology*, Columbus, Ohio, Charles E. Merrill Publishing, 1973; Alexander Bloom, *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals*, Oxford University Press, 1986; Nathan Liebowitz, *Daniel Bell and the Agony of Modern Liberalism*, Greenwood Press, 1986; and Howard Brick, *Daniel Bell and the Decline of Intellectual Radicalism*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986.

The particular thesis I advanced about the fate of socialism in the US, in the Princeton monograph, and in chapter twelve of this volume, has itself provoked a large scholarly literature. A major collection of these essays is in the volume, *Failure of a Dream? Essays in History of American Socialism*, edited by John H.M. Laslett and Seymour M. Lipset, Anchor Press/Doubleday, New York, 1974. See, in particular, my essay 'The Problem of Ideological Rigidity', a reprise of the essay in this volume, plus the subsequent exchange between Laslett and myself. Laslett acknowledges that 'Bell's major argument ... is probably the most influential attempt to explain the failure of American socialism to appear in the last twenty years ...', (ibid. p. 112).

S.M. Lipset has written voluminously on the theme of the end of ideology. Many of these essays are collected in the expanded and updated edition of *Political Man*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1981, especially Ch. 13 and Ch. 15, 'A Concept and its History: The End of Ideology'.

5. The end of ideology was disproved by the events of the 1960s and 1970s, which saw a new upsurge of radicalism and ideology in Western societies, as well as in the Third World.

What is most striking is that none of the criticisms challenged the substantive analyses of structural changes which cut at the heart of classical Marxism — i.e. the Marxist picture of and predictions about Western society, and its dogmatism about the inevitability of a deepening economic crisis and polarized class conflict under capitalism. None of these dealt with the argument that foreign policy was not a 'reflex of internal class divisions', or the economic rivalries between the powers, but the outcome of historic clashes between nations.[8] Nor did anyone take up the structural changes in the nature of economic power in which private property has played a declining role as against technical skill, or the rise of a 'salariat' to replace a 'proletariat' as the occupational base of the society. As Howard Brick has pointed out: 'It is striking that none of Bell's critics directly challenged his central argument that socialism was no longer relevant to the problems of Western industrial society'.

Why these many 'misreadings' of the book? The intellectual reason, I believe, is due to my unwillingness to put forth a formulation of *the* single problem, or of a single answer to complex questions, because a modern society contains many different currents (in part because of the disjunctions of culture and social structure; in part because of the 'co-existence' of many overlapping social forms, such as property and technical skill as the basis of power), so that my central aim has been to avoid a single conceptual term (such as 'capitalism') and to make analytical distinctions relevant to the complexities. These analytical distinctions run through almost every discussion of structural changes in this volume. Thus it has been easy for polemical critics to pick up one or another side of these distinctions in order to enter a critical objection.

These are questions of intellectual 'misreading'. But other, emotional elements were involved. Given the underlying tone of disenchantment, and the repudiation of romantic radicalism, many critics read their *own* presuppositions — and anger — into the volume, and

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[8] In 1925, in his book *Whither England*, Trotsky predicted that the next, and perhaps final, war of capitalist society would be between the United States and Great Britain, for these were the last two major capitalist countries in the world, and since the US was undermining British financial supremacy the two would come into deeper conflict as a result.

reacted accordingly. As Dennis Wrong put it in his dissent to my book: by accepting the 'end of ideology', intellectuals 'are failing to perform their roles as unattached critics and visionaries'. To which one can only respond: are intellectuals only to be critics, and not 'constructive'; and don't they have to accept the responsibility of their visions?

The argument that the 'end of ideology' reinforces the 'status quo' is a resounding vacuity. What is the 'status quo'? As I have pointed out several times, no society is monolithic, nor can any single term, such as 'capitalism', embrace its different dimensions: a democratic polity, with contending groups espousing different values and different claims to rights, a mixed economy, a welfare state, a pluralist diversity of social groups, a syncretistic culture, the rule of law. Nor are each of these directly dependent on each other. A democratic polity is not the product of a market economy but has independent roots in the legal systems and the tradition of rights and liberties of societies. Occupational structures change in conse-quence of technology, not social relations. The expansion of civil rights — witness the inclusion of blacks in the political process in the past twenty-five years — was not dependent on economic class conflicts. The book did advocate 'piecemeal' change in a social-democratic direction. Is that the 'status quo'? So be it.

Equally null is the argument that the book advocated 'techno-cratic guidance' of society and, in the phrase of C. Wright Mills, made a 'fetish of empiricism' out of sociology. Both phrases are meaningless since a number of essays in the book (see particularly 'Work and its Discontents') deplore the rationalization of life, the thread of Max Weber's concerns, and more than half the essays are devoted to detailed discussions of theories 'not merely for the purpose of debunking them or revealing their misperceptions of empirical fact but also to show the necessary presuppositional role of theory in the observation of fact and in the formulation and resolution of 'problems' in social analysis.[9] And while I have always recognised the need for empirical grounds for social policy, there

[9] In this book, I wrote:
'There is now more than ever some need for utopia, in the sense that men need — as they have always needed — some vision of their potential, some manner of fusing passion with intelligence .... The ladder to the City of Heaven can no longer be a "faith ladder", but an empirical one; a utopia has to specify where one wants to go, how to get there, the costs of the enterprise, and some realization of, and justification for, the determination of who is to pay.' (See p. 405.)

has always been as well the insistence on the primacy of principles and values — and the necessary play of politics — in the formulation of policy.

The charge that the end of ideology means 'an end to *moral* discourse and the beginning of consistent "pragmatic discourse" in every sphere of political life', a charge levelled by the late philosopher Henry D. Aiken, is particularly wide of the mark.[10] Mr Aiken, for example, misconstrued my call for an 'end of rhetoric' to mean the end of eloquence, of moral judgment, of philosophical statements (such as 'general welfare', 'common good'), of political abstractions, of poetry (for 'since Plato, rationalists have been afraid of poetry'), of figurative language, and accused me, in fact, of promoting a pessimistic *carpe diem* philosophy 'which would render us helpless in the world struggle against the ideology of communism'!

A very different turn was the sharp, bitter (and personal) attack by C. Wright Mills, who called the end of ideology 'a celebration of apathy'. In 1952, when *Partisan Review* ran a symposium under the rubric 'Our Country, Our Culture', Mills, with the habitually truculent posture of the outsider, wrote: 'Imagine "the old PR" running the title "Our Country" … You would have cringed'. For Mills, this was not 'our' country. In 1959 Mills had gone to Cuba, been charmed by Castro, and written the book *Listen Yankee*. In 1960, Mills went on the offensive, writing a famous 'Letter to the New Left' (published in the English *New Left Review*) in which he declared that the 'end of ideology' is 'historically outmoded', that the working class as an agency of change is 'historically outmoded', and that a new force, 'a possible immediate radical agency for change', was rising, the students and the intellectuals.

Since the battlefield of hegemony was the cold war of the intellectuals, Mills centred his attack on what he called 'the NATO intellectuals' who were the Western counterparts of the Soviet intellectuals, making a moral equivalence between the two, often to

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10 Aiken's essay, 'The Revolt Against Ideology', appeared in the April 1964 issue of *Commentary* and was followed by an exchange in October 1964. These are reprinted in the Waxman volume, op. cit.

the discredit of the former.[11] Mills ended his essay with a ringing cry, 'Let the old women complain wisely about "the end of ideology". We are beginning to move again'.

It is difficult to derive a coherent argument from Mills's essay: it is written in a peculiar staccato style, punctuated by interior monologues, and contains repeated exhortations for 'radical change'; but of *what* there is nary a word. In the classic ploy of sectarian rhetoric, one does not make an argument, but 'locates' the players (calls it the sociology of knowledge), and assumes that derision is sufficient. As intellectual substance it is worthless; as polemic it is highly effective. Mills had sensed a rising mood, and his essay became an ensign for the young new left.[12]

THE UPSURGE OF RADICALISM

The event which, to many observers, seemed to contradict the end-of-ideology thesis was the upsurge of radicalism in the mid-1960s and 1970s. Its intensity, its anger, its rhetoric, its calls for

11 This simplistic doctrine 'moral equivalence' is particularly meretricious, especially about the 1950s. In the Soviet Union, Stalin had renewed the crackdown on dissent and Andrei Zhdanov had reinstated the orthodoxy of 'socialist realism', denouncing, for example, the great poet Anna Akhmatova, whose poems about Leningrad had helped inspire the defence of the city, as 'half-nun, half-whore'. After the war, the Jewish artists Feffer and Michoels, who had organized the anti-Fascist resistance, were executed, along with Bergelson, Markish and other noted Jewish writers. And we know that Stalin was preparing a 'show trial' of sixteen Jewish doctors from the Kremlin hospital, with plans for public executions, a new campaign of anti-semitism and mass deportation of Jews from major cities, a grisly plan aborted by Stalin's death in 1953.

Throughout Eastern Europe there were new purges and show trials. In Czechoslovakia, following the takeover of the country and the defenestration of Jan Masaryk in 1948, the Czech and Slovak party leaders, Rudolf Slansky and Vlada Clementis, along with a dozen others, 'confessed' to being Zionist agents in league with R.H. Crossman and Koni Zilliacus, left-wing leaders of the British Labour Party, and were hanged. (The episodes are related in the book by Artur London, one of the survivors, and dramatized in the film of Costas Garvas, *L'Aveu, The Confession*.) Similar trials were held in Hungary and Bulgaria, resulting in the execution of Laszlo Rajk and Nikola Petkov, the agrarian leader.

The full history of those events still has not been told. This was an aspect of the Cold War not discussed by Mills, nor by most of those in the New Left, even though many resigned from the Communist Parties after 1956.

12 Mills's 'Letter' is reprinted in Waxman, op. cit., pp 126–140. I replied in *Encounter*, December 1960, under the title 'From Vulgar Marxism to Vulgar Sociology'. It is reprinted in my book of essays, *The Winding Passage*, New York, Basic Books, 1980. There is a critical account of Mills by Irving Louis Horowitz, (*C. Wright Mills: An American Utopian*, The Free Press, 1983), who had been one of his literary executors. That book contains a discussion of my early friendship and relation with Mills, whom I first published in *The New Leader*, in 1942.

radical change all seemed to bespeak a new phase of ideology. Yet, as I have pointed out, little or none of this radicalism spoke to economic issues or was even able (except when some later latched onto a heretical Marxism) to formulate a coherent political philosophy. It was moral and moralistic.

The radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s conjoined four currents: somewhat independent in their source, at times they seemed to fuse, though later they broke apart. These were: the emergence of a youth culture flaunting a freer life-style, with sex and drugs; the dramatic rise of black-power movements, especially in the 'five hot summers' which saw widespread burning and looting in a number of major cities in the United States; the spread of 'liberation' movements and the rhetorical manifesto of a Third World that declared itself, self-consciously, in opposition to the West; and the Vietnam War, which, like the Algerian war against France, radicalized a large portion of the student population.

1. *The inchoate youth culture in the 1950s, symbolized by the Beats, who had dropped out of what they deplored as the dullness of American Society.* In principle, this was little different from recurrent and similar Bohemian and youth movements of the past hundred years — Rimbaud's adolescent homosexual vagabondage with Verlaine and, at age twenty-two, seeking adventure in darkest Africa; or, a century or so later, Allen Ginsberg taking his troupe to Kathmandu. The divergences, however, lay in two crucial facts: first, the extraordinary expansion in numbers of the youth cohort as a result of the postwar baby boom, a cohort conscious of its distinct identity; and secondly, the extraordinary broadcast, through the mass media and the burgeoning music and record industry, of these tantalizing models, and the avid embrace by so many more youths of this presumed liberation, the 'democratization of Dionysus'.

The flaunting of sex, at the centre of this new rock-and-drug culture, was a conceit. It proclaimed itself in opposition to 'bourgeois prudery', an attitude that had almost vanished fifty years before in the 'jazz age' of their parents. What it was, in fact, was the acting out of the *liberal culture*, which had accepted these attitudes in literature and the imagination (and often behind closed doors) but could not condemn such views when they transgressed the boundaries of the imagination and became a defiant life-style. And it flourished, ironically, because the affluence of the society allowed these 'flower children' to drop out and live off the remittances sent by their parents.

2. *The emergence of the black movement, too, was an instance not of repression but of the 'liberal polity'.* The Democratic administration of John F. Kennedy (after almost a decade of Republican rule) had promised reform but, as Tocqueville had foretold more than a century before, once reform is under way, it invariably seems too slow to those who had long waited for change. The resentment could now be more openly expressed, for it was abetted by the guilt of white liberals for the years of injustice.

Much of this was exploited by the Black Panthers, a group of black nationalists in Oakland, California, who proclaimed a new ideology: that the oppressed were not the working class but the criminal, the junkie, the drifter — those whom Marx, in a classic passage in the *18th Brumaire*, had called 'the lumpen proletariat' and who were now hailed as the historic agents of revolutionary change. Eldridge Cleaver, a prisoner convicted of rape, put forth these ideas in an eloquent book, *Soul on Ice*, which became a best-seller. And the Black Panthers achieved national publicity in a dramatic photo of their leader, Huey Newton, sitting in a wicker chair holding a rifle in his hand, as an African chief might have once held a spear.[13]

The Black Panthers, given their revolutionary ideology, found themselves increasingly torn, as is true of any movement which has to live 'in the world', between making ever more extreme pronouncements and demands, or coming to terms with the system. In the end, the Panthers collapsed. Cleaver fled abroad, was feted in Cuba and Algeria, but returned home years later, claiming disillusionment and re-emerging as a born-again Christian and a supporter of Ronald Reagan.

The more serious side of the black movement did begin the slow climb into the political system and reaped the steady gains of political action: a civil-rights law, affirmative action and considerable electoral success, so that in the 1980s there were black mayors in Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Newark and hundreds of other small towns and cities. But in the 1960s and 1970s, the turbulence generated by the blacks fed into the wider tumult of the times.

13 The irony — again, for irony is the hallmark of this period — is that Newton and Cleaver were both employed on a US government community agency project, while fashioning their ideas and spreading their propaganda. Stalin had to rob banks to gain funds for the revolution, but he lived under a reactionary Tsar; Newton and Cleaver were more fortunate in living under advanced capitalism. White liberals on Park Avenue rushed to throw fund-raising parties for the Black Panthers, a phenomenon savaged in Tom Wolfe's memorable essay 'Radical Chic'.

3. *If there was a striking new word in those two decades — a word that derived from the movements of the Third World — it was 'liberation'.* Liberation had two connotations, one psychological, the other political. The psychological aspect was most vividly dramatized in the work of a French-educated, black, North African psychiatrist, Frantz Fanon, whose book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, argued that blacks could gain emancipation from the heritage of colonial oppression only by a cleansing act of violence, even if this violence was directed against the 'innocent' descendants of the old oppressors. What was unique in Fanon's thinking was not his justification of violence, though this received the most notice, but his subtle and original diagnosis of *humiliation* as the source of radicalism. Eighty years before, Nietzsche had stressed the idea of *ressentiment* as the source of lower-class motivation (and morality), but *ressentiment* in Nietzsche's (and Scheler's) sense was based on envy, and the desire to strike out against one's superiors. Fanon's work provided a much more acute sense of the impulses of affirmation which lay behind the anger of those who had been living under colonial rule. His book, introduced by Jean-Paul Sartre, had a profound influence on French intellectuals — especially as France found itself, after Indo–China, engaged in a 'dirty war' in Algeria — and, of course, on black intellectuals everywhere.

More dramatic was the electrifying triumph of Fidel Castro and Ché Guevara, men just thirty years-old, who re-ignited the flame of revolution at the time when Western Marxists had decided that revolution was a foregone impossibility in Western industrialized societies. The idea — the word — *revolution* had been a magic talisman for intellectuals since 1789. The unanticipated victory of Lenin and Trotsky in October 1917, seizing power at the head of a small disciplined party, had fed the fantasies of café intellectuals before World War II, longing for similar theatrical roles. The spectacle of a small band of guerrillas, from a base in the Sierra Maestra mountains, toppling an army-based regime, thrilled young radicals, and as Ché then carried the torch of revolution first to Africa and then to Bolivia, thousands of youths in New York, London, and Paris placed his picture like an icon on their walls, and sported berets and beards as they strode the streets in defiance of the local bourgeosie to denounce United States imperialism.

The emergence of the Third World, and the spread of national liberation movements — a set of events that no one had predicted

before World War II — provided a new set of actors on the stage of world history. Nkrumah, Sukarno, Nehru, Chou-en-Lai seemed to be the major figures in a new phase of world politics. And behind all this was the looming presence of Communist China, of the holy presence of Mao, and in the Cultural Revolution, a new transformation of man in which purity, selflessness and moral incentives all seemed to prove that utopia could be a reality. If Marx was wrong in believing that socialism would arise as an historic necessity out of capitalist forms of production, history could take a leap of faith when propelled by those who remained pure in heart, and when there was sufficient will fused with ideas — which is, after all, the 'authentic' definition of ideology. So the new appeal was fashioned.

4. *The Vietnam War posed three problems*: the moral ambiguity of its purposes; the argument that, in opposing an indigenous people's movement seeking to end colonialism, the US was like Canute, trying to hold back the tides of history; and the ideological displacement of the cold war against the Soviet Union onto the selfless idealism of a Ho Chi Minh.

The crucial fact, again, was that it was a liberal's war. The escalation of forces in Vietnam was initiated by John F. Kennedy (on the advice of General Maxwell Taylor and the national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy) and inflated by Lyndon Johnson at the very time, ironically, that he was expanding the Great Society programmes in education, health (Medicare and Medicaid), social security, as well as affirmative action. The Kennedy administration had stepped in after the French colonial forces had left and the reactionary emperor Bao Dai had been replaced by Ngo Dinh Diem, an ascetic Catholic from the north. But the idea of democratic forces opposing communism could never be made convincing against the 'people's' myth of the Vietcong, while the bombing and use of napalm, seen nightly on television, made the war increasingly abhorrent to the public.

The leaders of the protest were the students, especially when conscription made them liable for military service, though in fact the deferment of those still in school meant that working-class and black youth made up the bulk of the troops under fire.[14]

14 The administration, in order to reduce opposition, initiated a system of rotation so that no individual served longer than 18 months in Vietnam. The effect, however, was to widen the pool of eligible persons who could be called up and to diminish the motivations of those in Vietnam as they neared the end of their tour of duty.

Student radicalism exploded in the *évènements* of 1968: at Berkeley, at Columbia and, in the contagion of defiance, at the Sorbonne and other European universities. If one looks for some interrelated structural elements underlying these student explosions, one can perhaps identify three factors. One was the 'bunching' of the cohort. From 1940 to 1950, the youth cohort, as a proportion of the population, had been stable; from 1950 to 1960, it was stable; from 1960 to 1968, as a result of the postwar baby boom, it increased 54 per cent in eight years. The second element was the sense of an 'organizational harness' that seemed to loom as the future for this generation. The size of the cohort increased the competition (and frustration) to get into 'good' colleges, increased the pressures to get into graduate school and professional schools (in the Ivy League colleges at that time, more than 90 per cent of each graduating class planned to continue in school, a career purpose reinforced by the fear of conscription), and heightened the competition and pressure to push through the narrow funnels of school admissions. And third, if one seeks an idealistic cause, there was a rejection of 'white-skin privileges', and an identification with the Third World and the idea of liberation.

Eruptive fantasies of revolution lead, as Karl Mannheim wrote about earlier chiliastic movements, to the fantasy that the world can be transformed in a flash, that *die Tat*, the deed — a shooting, a bombing, a general strike — would turn the world upside down and usher in the new day. Yet any such romantic spasm could only pass, leaving the next, grey day of reality to be faced. A few would go on, as did the Weathermen, to a 'day of rage' in Chicago, provoking the police to acts of violence, and to desperado tactics of bombing (though the explosion of a 'bomb factory' in Greenwich Village killed a number of the young Weathermen), or living in the 'underground' for years, waiting for the revolutionary movement to arrive; again, a *parousia* promised by their eschatology. Living on the thin gruel of revolutionary rhetoric, the student movement (unlike the blacks) could not transform its inchoate ideology into a tangible programme, and was fated to sputter out.[15]

15 As I wrote in 1969:
The SDS will be destroyed by its style. It lives on turbulence, but is incapable of transforming its chaotic impulses into the systematic responsible behavior that is necessary to effect broad societal change. In fact, its very style denies the desirability of such conduct, for like many chiliastic sects its ideological antinomianism carries over into a similar psychological temper, or rather distemper. It is impelled not to innovation, but to destruction. (From 'Columbia and The New Left', *The Public Interest*, Fall, 1968, reprinted in Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol, *Confrontations: The Universities*, New York, Basic Books, 1969, p. 106.)

Did the upsurge of radicalism in the 1960s 'disprove' the thesis of the end of ideology? I think not.[16] What one saw in the West was not a political but a cultural (and generational) phenomenon. If there was a single, symbolic *pronunciamento* that defined this phenomenon, it was the famous poster plastered onto the bolted door of the Sorbonne in May 1968, which declared:

The revolution which is beginning will call into question not only capitalist society but industrial society. The consumer society must perish a violent death. The society of alienation must disappear from history. We are inventing a new and original world — *Imagination au Pouvoir*.

It was a utopian dream. But from a dream one awakes, or one continues into a nightmare. In all this turbulence there were no new socialist ideas, no ideologies, no programmes. What one saw was the outburst of romantic yearning which restated the Arcadian visions of earlier generations. It was a reaction against rationality, against authority and hierarchy, and even against culture. There were real issues: the rationalization of life which Max Weber had deplored more than a half century before; the privileges of old elites (including university professors) who had not earned their authority; and the spread of a spurious and manufactured culture, the mass culture of the day, of which, ironically, the rock and heavy-metal music itself was an integral part.

But all this was a reaction, as I indicated, against the 'organizational harnesses' that societies were imposing on individuals entering into the new bureaucracies of the world. With some hyperbole, yet with some truth, I described these as the first 'class struggles' of post-industrial society, just as the Luddite machine breakers had reacted a hundred and fifty years earlier to the factory discipline of the first industrial revolution. Yet without any hard-headed sociological analysis and understanding, it could, again, only erupt as a romantic protest.

16 As Raymond Aron wrote, reflecting on these debates:
'No one has refuted the diagnosis — that there is no ideological system extant to replace Marxist-Leninism if and when it dies out. What events have contradicted is the apparent if not explicit confusion among doctrinal systematization of ideology, fanaticism and chiliasm. At the same time, themes of social protest forgotten during the cold war overshadowed by the economic success of the West have acquired new currency. Thus, the weakening of the last great ideological system did not promote a pragmatic approach to politics but, quite to the contrary, encouraged wide-spread social protest ...' (Raymond Aron, 'On the Proper Use of Ideologies', in *Culture and its Creators, Essays in Honor of Edward Shils*, edited by Joseph Ben-David and Terry Nichols Clark, University of Chicago Press, 1977, p. 3).

What was left after the events of 1968 was a generation in search of an ideology. As the late philosopher Charles Frankel once observed: it is not that Marxism creates radicals; each new generation of radicals creates its own Marx. In this instance, the generation that began to find (tenured) places in the university, in publishing, in the media, discovered its ideology in the heretical Marxism: in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, in the rediscovered writings of Georg Lukács, in the opening of the seals of Antonio Gramsci. What is striking about the use of all these writers (different as they are from each other) is that the plane of criticism was cultural (the self-enclosed world of the *intelligenty*) and not economic or programmatic. There were no positive proposals; the socialist ideal had become a ghost. And, equally true, none of those writers — and few of the acolytes who read them — openly confronted the nature of Stalinism or the tragic paradoxes posed by Niebuhr about the corruption of idealism in the use of total power to transform society and man — the corruption that reddened Cambodia in 1975 during the reign of the incorruptible Pol Pot. (*To be continued.*)