

Democracy and Marxism

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acting in the present—possessing a long range policy. In his *Humanisme Intégral: problèmes temporels et spirituels d'une nouvelle chrétienté*, he enlarges upon these envisaged groups, "truly and specifically political," dedicated to a long-distance work of transformation.

THESE cells of political action, having non-Catholics enrolled as friends of the group, are not directed toward the welfare of any one religious group or any one class, but the *totality of citizens*. And to regard these groups as more than political activity by some Catholics can be the beginnings whereby both a religious faith and a secular faith will be compromised. In its domain this activity, like all political action, is free and not a contrivance of the church. Though all political activity, no matter how necessary and important, is confined to a human and secular plane, there will be always present the great temptation to link religion to some political party or association.

As citizens, Catholics may form, or be a member of, any political group, association or party—deterred only by an official condemnation for doctrinal errors or dangers of spiritual deviation. Hence, I am again raising the question of a political association side by side with political parties for the furtherance of a democratic charter. I have presumed that there are many Catholic liberals who take Jacques Maritain as their most prominent spokesman. Twenty years have passed since Maritain advocated in *Lettre sur l'Indépendance*, in the order of political action, new formations, which he then called a "third party"—though serving and

EVER since Msgr. Mermillod set up a commission of Catholic sociologists and moralists (the Friseur Union), guides and conclusions have been hammered out for the modern socio-economic field. But the political continues to be a neglected zone. It is my opinion that a part of this long-range policy should be to provoke greater scrutiny of the customs, forms and patterns that constitute the political. In such a needed analysis, it can undoubtedly be shown that political ethics is far from being unrealistic or impracticable.

Then too this policy must be aware that the right kind of political forces must exist and be strengthened in every country. No worthwhile world organization, for instance, will work or come into existence if the wrong kind of political forces prevail.

The proposed "Friends of the People and Freedom" would be an association, whose members possess a common bundle of ideas and a creative vision, not intending to dispute the field with political parties but endeavoring to establish a sound method for directing the exploration of the future. Therefore, I continue to believe, any realistic vision of a new age must include groups of political-minded men acting in the present in anticipation of a better world with the spirit of a philosopher's passionate eloquence: "... every audacious folly, every challenge to the prudence of reasoners, makes a burning image stand forth and beats back the circle of the night."

SOCIAL ORDER

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HERE is much writing today about the meaning of Marx. One group obviously tries to rescue Marx from the clutches of Lenin, Stalin and their ideological successors, such as "Comrade Mao" in China. Equally so, there are those outside the communist fold who have been impressed with the Leninist-Stalinist interpretation of Marx and Engels.

It is not startling to discover that a considerable variety of people are found in both camps. Those who would identify democracy with some ultimate version of Soviet democracy naturally are inclined to say that Marx and Engels have legitimate successors in Lenin and Stalin. Those defenders of the "free world" who are not socialists, welfare staters or planned-economy liberals may argue they have no interest in rescuing Marx from the hands of the communists. In contrast, the liberal and socialist groups very likely consider something of importance has been attained if Marx's philosophy is shown to be different or in contradiction with some of the interpretations of socialism found in Soviet writers.

H. B. Mayo is evidently trying to rescue Marx from his communist captives. Any such argument becomes extremely complex and technical. I might add that much of it is incon-

1 DEMOCRACY AND MARXISM. By H. B. Mayo. Oxford, New York, 1955. xii, 364 pp. \$4.00.

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quential to anyone who is not a Marxist, socialist or communist. In other words, the rescued Marx is likely to be as disagreeable after his rescue as before. That is, if one happens to be a Christian, unconvinced of a materialist interpretation of politics. Rescued, Marx is still the father of a secularized and materialistic social system. Under such circumstances, Mayo is hardly to be recommended, except for those concerned with the technicalities of Marxian controversies in our time.

contents

The volume begins with a brief introduction by Walter Bedell Smith, though it is difficult to say why, unless there should be some close personal relation between them. Mayo gives a clue to his own mode of thought when he says in the preface that if democracy is destroyed in North America it is likely to be done in the name of anti-communism. (p. ix) Dialectical materialism is examined in the opening chapter and the volume then moves into a discussion of the economic interpretation of history. The "class struggle" introduces the party revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Following this, the topics of more particular interest to Mayo are developed: Marxism as a philosophy of history; Marxism as related to scientific methods; Marxism in connection with mor-

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* Luigi Sturzo. "The Philosophic Background of Christian Democracy," *Review of Politics*, 9 (January, 1947) 3-15.

5 Though the distinction be kept perfectly in this political action, I imagine there will always be some to call it "clerical" or "religious."

ality and religion; the theory of democracy and, finally, its relation to Marxism. It is no doubt true that all interpretations of Marxism are controversial either as to substance or as to use of the proper words to explain Marxist concepts. It should be observed here that Mayo's interpretations are more than ordinarily controversial, and only a few of the more crucial ones can be considered.

At the moment there is a lull in the recently acrid discussion of communism in America. The new age belongs perhaps to the "anti-anti-communist." It is a time in which the controversy with communism is being restated so as to deny there is any domestic threat and hence no need to investigate communists or, indeed, to impose any loyalty tests. It is a time in which the international conflict with communism will be emphasized, especially in Europe rather than in Asia. It is the dawn of a great new era of "coexistence," in which conferences at the "summit" will relax international tensions.

positivism

All this Mayo welcomes, but there will soon come others whom he may not so readily welcome: those who begin to minimize the difference between patterns of Western democracy and the Marxian view of life. And any particular efforts to contain communism will be rejected by groups which, in the large and general sense, deny they have any sympathy with communism. But this reviewer would say that the profound differences between a Christian and a materialist philosophy will remain. Any international episode or the discovery of new subversives without the country could restore the heat of conflict. At such a time Mayo's theory of a cautious, semi-military and polite coexistence would hardly be a possible position to take at all.

Under what sign does Mayo rescue Marx from the communists? Under what alternative philosophy? It seems that Mayo is a kind of nineteenth-century positivist. He professes ideals, but there does not seem to be much mortality outside of economic circumstances. There a deep hostility toward any religion with a theology, and his animus toward Catholics is not subject to misconstruction. A scientific theory of society, very much in the last-century sense, obtrudes as the alternative to Marx, because, it appears, Marx is not scientific after all in his analysis of society. Against dialectical materialism, he proposes a positivist theory of science as the basis of attainable truth and as the foundation of democracy.

Many students of Marx in times past have tried to reduce dialectical materialism to economic determinism. In effect, this is what Mayo attempts to do. He would strip Marxism of dialectical jargon and the notion of inevitability and express it in a tentative fashion as the cultural and social lag. He says:

The Marxist conception of history is known by a variety of names, of which the most common are the materialist conception of history, historical materialism, the economic interpretation of history, and economic determinism. Of these the last is the least inaccurate. (p. 38)

The Marxist would reply that Mayo has overlooked the fact that historical materialism is in fact a subdivision of dialectical materialism, and that it is an application of dialectics to the development of man. It involves the analysis and strategy of the class struggle. Mayo seems, indeed, to deny the existence of a full philosophical question in Marxism, just as his positivism and empiricism deny the reality of metaphysical issues.

A Catholic could surely comprehend Marx on this question better than

Mayo. Dialectic is subject to refutation, but in philosophical terms; and the Catholic can see that between him and the Marxian or communist there is a vital philosophical problem at stake, which is to be decided in the manner of rational philosophical inquiry. The European mind has generally moved beyond an unimaginative positivism. New forms of inquiry, such as both Christian and atheistic existentialism, have stood in contrast to the dialectical system of Marxian thought.

science

Another issue of profound significance is the theory of science, and social science particularly, on which Mayo rests his view alternative to Marxism. Knowledge is scientific only because it has been acquired by scientific methods, he argues. "Metaphysics, theology and literary criticism, say, whatever their status, are not generally agreed upon to the same extent because they are not open to the same public tests of reliability that scientific methods can apply." (pp. 182-83) The scientist is the eternal skeptic of both facts and theories; he is not dogmatic; and he is "open-minded." One wonders if there are liberals skeptical of liberalism, or scientists who consider the method itself as tentative. But the important point for Mayo is that the values, the prescriptive judgments and the chartered rights of society are purely tentative, unproved and to be accepted by the scientist only as experimental ideas. It means this: there is not, nor can there be, in his view, any proof of a philosophical issue, of an "ought" in social conduct or of any religious judgment.

Mayo says: "We may avoid the deep philosophical issues in Pilate's question But how? "For instance, if we adopt the theological type of explanation which explains whatever happens as the will of Providence, then no con-

flicting facts will ever be found." (p. 190) Mayo clearly knows little about theology, and here he is surely not open-minded but tenacious of his ignorance. He believes the battle against authority and obscurantism has been won pretty generally by the natural scientist, and religion is in retreat. Now, Marxism is easy to refute since it is not a science of society. It has some values, some judgments, some propositions proved logically and dialectically, and all of this can be thrown out.

In other words, one refutes Marx by ignoring most of what Marx and his followers considered of supreme importance. "Dialectical materialism may be omitted from consideration here, since it concerns philosophy or the metaphysical foundations of Marxism, and cannot be empirically tested." (p. 201) A Catholic, who considers the propositions of theistic philosophy subject to proof (though not through the techniques of modern calculators), meets dialectical materialism as philosophical propositions that are subject to philosophical rejection. The Catholic answer is strong precisely in that theistic philosophy is no enemy of facts or experience, yet it meets materialistic philosophy with the common tools of metaphysical warfare.

praxis

Having rejected the dialectic, Mayo proceeds to analyze the scientific proofs he will accept, and here, indeed, is one of the stronger or more valuable sections of the work. He denies on several counts that the Marxist theory fits the facts which he believes both Marxists and non-Marxists might accept as facts. However, the communist might say that Mayo's failure to understand "praxis" in dialectical materialism perverts his analysis of "facts" in relation to Marxian theory and prophecy.

Praxis is fundamental for it postulates the union of theory and practice.

Theory to the Marxian has value only in connection with a problem, and Marx conceived of his ideas being tested constantly in practice. Indeed, a theory of history is a way of making history. Capitalism has evolved, as Mayo urges, but so has Marxism. Such development is legitimate development, and it is not a rejection of Marx. There are moments when name-calling seems to him a more useful argument against the communists than sober analysis. Positivism and radical empiricism is much given to calling philosophical inquiry some form of "intellectual rubbish." (See, e.g., p. 213)

I think it may be said of Mayo that he does not ask: What is man? He raises no ontological issues; he opens no fundamental vistas. He seems, at times at least, skeptical of all things, even the fundamental principles of human life. Marxism is not thus skeptical. Nor in the end is Mayo, for he manages finally to talk a few moments as if natural rights might be more than mere myth. Alas! The sinister anti-intellectualism of our time is the belief that reason can prove no value, either of heaven or earth. In the end, what strength will positivism have against Marxism if it can promise man nothing but tentative and experiment? It can offer no proof of ends, values or of justice. Marxism offers to the worker a logical proof of what the just life in economic society might be. It promises much, too much, and more than it can deliver, to the downtrodden of the earth. In its stead Mayo offers empirically determined welfare legislation. And I think it can be said that it is the bureaucracy which would determine just what is for the welfare of man under the new religion of science.

democracy

We come now to Mayo's great issue of democracy in relation to Marxism. Here, it seems, Marxism is essentially

the creed of the communist world. His democracy is that of the positivist, the Deweyian and the experimental collectivism of centralized political systems. Mayo stresses quite properly the political aspects of democracy, though he would assume that "there is no way known to man by which anyone can prove conclusively that political democracy is always and everywhere the best form of government." (p. 259) And democracy has a strong tendency toward the secular state, that is, he says, toward the strict separation of church and state. He fails here to recognize the general tendency of Protestantism to be an established and historically intolerant church in Europe. He suggests that churches that adapt to autocracies are inconsistent with democracy, though it is to be mentioned that some American Protestants have said kind things about their religious life in the Soviet Union.

The point Mayo approaches seems to be this: the authoritarian personality is incompatible with democracy, but the tendency toward authoritarianism is peculiarly characteristic of religion, especially, it would seem, of Catholics. There is no space here to state the Catholic position on a number of important points. Mayo covers his acceptance of Paul Blanshard's ideas only quite thinly, and one might assume in the end that he would accept the Soviet Union in preference to Spain with its present regime.

One need hardly explore the profound and disheartening confusion between totalitarian systems, such as communism and fascism, and the need of authority in democratic government. Even Mayo is authoritarian about his concept of the scientific method. One could wish that the author were willing to separate Jacobin democracy with its inhumane destruction of moral liberty from the balanced, moderate system

praised from Aristotle on down through the founders of our own republic.

future

In the final chapter, Mayo considers the problem of what a given parliamentary democracy should do in relation to communism. What about the philosophy? What about communists within the country? What about them in international affairs? To Mayo, philosophies of history seem to be enemies of democracy, because democracy means an "open" faith in the future. Strangely, he asserts that Marxism denies the efficiency of politics here and now in any of the liberal democracies. But it may be said: only in capitalist societies is this true and not in the politics of a revolutionary movement.

Revisionist socialism would, in contrast, be compatible with democracy, especially because of the changes in capitalism and the rise of the democratic welfare state, or the mixed economy. While the communist party may not claim toleration as a matter of right, communists should be treated with extreme care or generosity. Mayo confuses the prevention of conspiracy with inquiry into personal beliefs. (p. 317) And he concludes that anti-communism is a creeping miasma that is already spreading its terrible shadow over the free world.

Because he minimizes the fact of conspiracy, Mayo can also say that com-

munist is successful only where the "real" problems of the "real" world are not being otherwise faced and met. (p. 321) Such a view overlooks the fact that communists win by some version of the revolution—infiltration, sabotage, espionage, the *coup d'état* or civil war. One might add they also advance their cause very considerably by befuddling positivist liberals like the author of the volume we are considering. To Mayo, it is fear that unites the West against Russia, and not ideology or religion or what not. (p. 329) The Russians, being a sensitive and proud people with some ground for suspicion and fear of the West, cannot be brought to terms by denouncing them, but through international agencies. Mayo concludes in the conventional vein: it is a race against time and the outcome is uncertain.

This volume is a sample of a literature on Marxism more distinguished by its quantity and repetitiousness than by its insight into technical Marxism and philosophical argument. One may readily concede a large area of disagreement on immediate policy toward Russia, on the extent of the welfare functions of the state and the practical and prudential difficulties of liberty within the state. But volumes which offer only an empirical and positivist rejection of philosophy as an alternative to Marxism provide little consolation to those at war with communism and generate little fear in the communists themselves.