

THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF MARX AND ENGELS. Vol. 1: MARXISM AND TOTALITARIAN DEMOCRACY, 1818–1850. By *Richard N. Hunt*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974. xiv, 363 pp. \$11.95.

This gracefully written, massively researched, and generally magnificent work is heralded by its author as the first of two volumes devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the political thought of Marx and Engels. Since the exposition of this volume frequently culminates in promissory notes for redemption in the next, final assessments of Hunt's conclusions will have to wait until the whole work is at hand. Nevertheless, this first part of the effort, concentrating on the political theories and practice of Marx and Engels through 1850, makes it abundantly clear that, as a consequence of Hunt's labors, conventional analyses of Marxian political theory will be radically transformed.

The work is a devastating criticism of the interpretation of Marx and Engels's political program(s) widely accepted by Western scholars (at least since 1945). Hunt questions views which, variously nuanced and qualified, have been endorsed by many of the best known and most influential of contemporary Marx scholars, including Berlin, Lichtheim, Wolfe, and Stanley Moore, and which, in addition, have provided the more or less articulate major premise of many contemporary Soviet and Communist studies, of comparative politics, and of scholarly treatments of the history of radicalism since Marx (such as that of J. L. Talmon, whose work provides Hunt with the title for this volume and with an excuse to roll out the artillery), as well as for the popular press, Western political elites, and mass public opinion.

According to the traditional, grim account, Marx and Engels were, throughout their lives, or at least through 1850, protototalitarians, in the popular connotation of this extensively abused word. Whatever their other merits or final benevolent intentions, the integral parts of their strategy for revolution (allegedly) included: a vanguard party, the seizure of power by a minority, an elite-administered educational dictatorship monopolizing the instruments of coercion and communication, mass terror, and the politicization of everyday life—tactics which have branded them as precursors of twentieth-century totalitarianism, on a track of Jacobin revolutionism that runs straight from the extreme Left of the French Enlightenment to Babeuf, Buonarroti, Blanqui, and, finally, to the Finland Station, where it branches into innumerable lines. Hunt, by taking a magnifying glass to the actual writings of Marx and Engels, and patiently reconstructing the contextual vicissitudes of the pair, effectively disputes any meaningful attribution to them of the hallmarks of broadly "Jacobin" politics. He vividly conveys Marx's frequently expressed contempt for the authentic Jacobins among his contemporaries, such as Blanqui, and observes pointedly that Marx consistently declined even to meet with the French conspirator when the opportunity presented itself. And he emphasizes that Marx, far from promoting political centralism, very early in his career, exhibited a strikingly modern anxiety about the potential for abuse inherent in a strong executive.

Hunt shows how this concern stimulated Marx, in his *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right,'* to couple a demand for universal suffrage with proposals aimed at deprofessionalizing politics, including the abolition of the Prussian civil service examination and the institution of public referenda on critical issues. Moreover, despite many claims in the antecedent literature that the logic of

Marx's rejection of bourgeois formulations of the Rights of Man implies a denial of individual rights, Hunt establishes—once and for all, we may hope—that Marx always, and ardently, defended “*politische Freiheit*,” defined to include the “civil rights” of assembly and free speech (pp. 72–73).

Hunt is persuasive when he argues that, as Marx and Engels developed and pursued their several strategies for revolutionary action, they maintained an unbroken stress on the value of mass participation expressed through universal suffrage (as a method both for making and securing the revolution) and were simultaneously concerned to limit violence to an absolute minimum. By sifting carefully through external evidence, and scrutinizing the available drafts of relevant documents, Hunt demonstrates that Marx's role in, and conception of, the Communist League exhibited a splendid congruence with his previously expressed democratic convictions, and, except for his dissolution of it in Cologne in 1849, would almost have qualified him for admission to the Democratic Convention of 1972 under the McGovern Commission guidelines. Hunt vigorously underscores the earlier conclusion of Hal Draper, that the language of the so-called “March ‘Circular’” of 1850—which later scholars have deemed so inflammatory—actually contains studied ambiguity, reflecting an emergency compromise between Marx and his more radical Blanquist allies, with whom he and Engels had temporarily federated to coordinate resistance to the counterrevolution.

Another of the author's virtues as an interpreter of Marx is his willingness to acknowledge Engels's creative role in the formation of Marxism. Hunt goes further than previous commentators in his carefully documented assertion that Engels contributed seminal, not only to Marx's economic analysis, but also to the Marxian theory of the state. Hunt is the first to notice explicitly that Marx's early works treat the state less as an instrument of the ruling class than as the private property of the ruler and the state bureaucracy. Although Hunt probably underestimates the extent of Marx's own evolution toward the theory of the class-state, his contention that it was Engels who first formulated this important doctrine (in the course of his on-site analysis of Chartist agitation in England) constitutes an important correction to traditional views. Hunt's further claim, that Marx and Engels's later theory of the state represented a synthesis of both of the earlier contrasting positions, is also noteworthy.

The focus, so far, has been on the merits of this remarkable work. Yet, even the sun has spots, and some notice must be given to the less satisfactory aspects of Hunt's treatment.

The scope of the book is rather less sweeping than its title suggests. The “political ideas of Marx and Engels,” which Hunt discusses, are restricted to those that bear chiefly on revolution in capitalist social formations, and the socialist aftermath. Beyond gestures in the direction of classical Greece and Rome, their views of “political” life in other types of society are not mentioned. Hunt does not analyze either the specific role that Marx assigned the state in capitalist society, or the place he afforded the state in the plan for his never completed *Economy* (of which *Das Kapital* was conceived as a first part). Consequently, important aspects of Marx's theory of the state, such as the so-called “*Ableitungsproblem*” now extensively discussed in West Germany, escape attention. Moreover, Hunt elides the problem of the theoretical content of Marx's notion of “politics.” He himself operates throughout with a wholly conventional (Marx would have said “bourgeois”) notion of what “politics” is. This approach produces some

spurious contrasts between the “political” and the “economic” in Marx’s thought, the eccentric judgment on page 77 that “the *Paris Manuscripts* are almost totally unpolitical,” and, in my opinion, several less clear-cut errors of interpretation of Marx’s notebook entries and intellectual evolution.

The author is evidently unacquainted with one of the few works of contemporary Marx scholarship that is as good as his own, that is, Paul Kaegi’s *Der Genesis des historischen Materialismus*. Kaegi’s book presents evidence that refutes some of Hunt’s chronological arguments concerning Marx’s intellectual evolution, notably the premature date he suggests for Marx’s conversion to communism. Other inviting targets for critical comment are also found in the Hunt volume, including the heavy emphasis accorded Marx’s “moralism,” and the starkly alternating contrast of this “moralism” with his alleged “scientism”; some inconsistency in the treatment of Lorenz von Stein’s influence on Marx; a few particulars in the discussion of violence; the nonchalant treatment of Lenin as an undiluted Jacobin; and Hunt’s reconsideration of the relationship between Marx and Rousseau. But none of these faults, however real and ultimately of abstract consequence, can eclipse Hunt’s concrete achievement. Hopefully, the thesis of the Jacobin filiation of the political thought of Marx and Engels will never again be put forward in its traditional form, or with blithe confidence.

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BAKUNIN: THE FATHER OF ANARCHISM. By *Anthony Masters*. New York: Saturday Review Press, a division of E. P. Dutton & Company, 1974. xxiii, 279 pp. \$9.95, cloth. \$3.95, paper.

Anthony Masters, a British novelist and biographer, has produced the first full-length life of Bakunin in English since E. H. Carr’s *Michael Bakunin* (published in 1937). Carr’s work, though scholarly, readable, and indispensable to anyone interested in Bakunin, nevertheless placed undue emphasis on the more eccentric aspects of Bakunin’s personality and career, while paying insufficient attention to his major writings and their impact on the revolutionary and working-class movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There has long been a need for an up-to-date biography, correcting these deficiencies and incorporating the recent findings of other Bakunin specialists, such as Arthur Lehning and Michael Confino.

Unfortunately, Masters does not satisfy this need. His life of Bakunin, far from being an “exciting” biography—as described by Roderick Kedward in his brief but interesting foreword—is characterized by hasty writing, skimpy research, and inadequate documentation. Masters, who apparently does not read Russian, leans heavily on Carr and on the English-language anthology of Bakunin’s writings compiled in 1971 by Sam Dolgoff. He does not appear to have used Max Nettlau’s three-volume German biography of Bakunin, or Lehning’s multivolume *Archives Bakounine*, the most important source to have appeared in recent years. Moreover, he has drawn upon the research of Michael Confino without acknowledging him by name. Because this year marks the centennial of Bakunin’s death, further biographies, written by qualified historians, can be expected. One hopes that they will do greater justice to the life and ideas of this major revolutionary figure.

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