

recent developments in Soviet defense policy. What is now needed is a thorough analysis of Soviet bargaining strategy dealing with arms control negotiations so that we may be better prepared to understand the manner in which the Soviets are conducting themselves at the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks.

For a decade or so we were ill-informed by various officials in the national security apparatus who allowed their beliefs to refract their judgments

about Soviet strategic force deployments. We cannot allow a similar process to decide our attitudes on Soviet arms control. We do not have the time.

William Schneider, Jr.

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Deceitful Peace: A New Look at the Soviet Threat

by Gerhart Niemeyer
Arlington House, \$6.95

Between Nothingness and Paradise

by Gerhart Niemeyer
Louisiana State University Press, \$8.95

The Cold War seems to have passed into the hands of the historian. The politician and political scientist are now concerned with detente, relaxation of tensions, disarmament, and in general, reordering our national priorities from a foreign war that is over to a domestic war on social problems.

The last chapter of the Cold War is supposed to have been written because communism has been perceived to have lost its militant urge to conquer the world. Sometimes it is admitted that communism is not as peace-loving as we would like, but that being patient and willing to prove our good intentions, the suspicious masters in the Kremlin, Peiping, and elsewhere will see that they too can afford to relax tensions and reduce their arms budgets. Sometimes this latter line of reasoning is applied retroactively to support the conclusion that if the United States had not built up so many alliances all over the world, Stalin's suspicions would never have been aroused. The United States is then seen to be the cause of the Cold War since we supposedly overreacted to a system which was not actually our enemy. The Communists' ideology is supposed to be a mere cover for power — and that's the way we are too, right?

Whether it be argued that communism has changed, or that the United States is finally taking the appropriate measures to allow Communists to get along with other nations, the argument stands or falls on both the historical record and on the nature of communism. Gerhart Niemeyer, Professor of government at Notre Dame has provided a needed analysis of these questions in his two latest books.

To grasp the nature of communism, one of course usually begins with Marx. Niemeyer places Marx in the camp of those who, because they are motivated by a profound alienation from the world, fashion a total critique of society. The total critique of society is in turn used

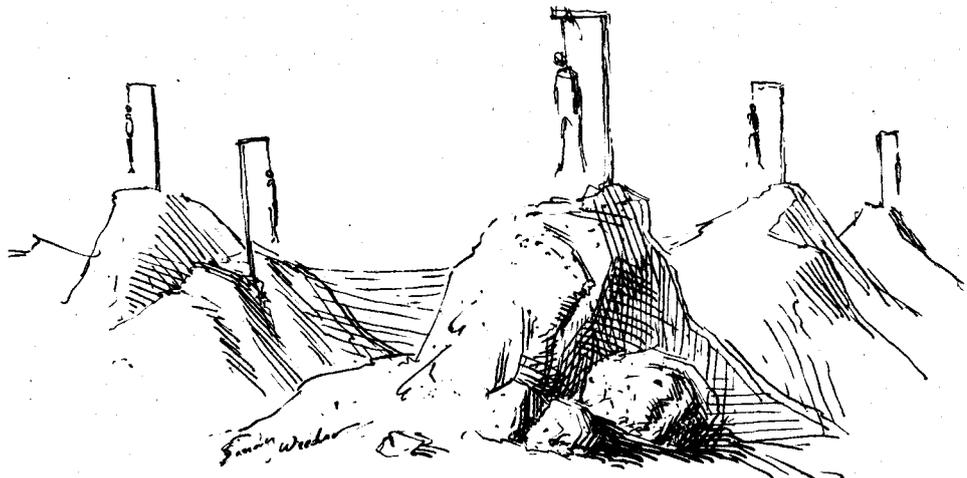
as a call for total, or permanent, revolution. Such a critique goes a lot deeper than a mere complaint about particular wrongs in society. Rather than a simple reformism, this critique calls for salvation through the liberating experience of smashing everything.

In *Between Nothingness and Paradise* Niemeyer finds that Marx welded two previously developed total critiques of society. The one critique (axiological) sees all of history as alien to the true order of reality and human nature. Human experience, both past and present, is seen as unreal. There is a gnostic aspect of this critique — a secret knowledge is said to be available to the thinker-as-messenger. By making known his secret knowledge, the thinker will cause the present unreality to collapse, releasing the redemption available only through participating in the true reality. Other than a sort of magical leap in being to the true order, this critique is otherwise short on prescriptions for action.

The second total critique of society (teleological) that found its way into Marx's thought sees history as a concatenation of stages toward an ultimate end. Although there is no logical reason for doing so, this critique posits the final "goal" stage as the only time when man will live in a true reality. History once again is seen as alienation. The particular seductiveness of this critique is the pretension of positive knowledge of the future. Since all value is seen to lie in the future, knowledge of that places one beyond the limits of present moral judgments or historical imitations. This critique can only accidentally provide a picture of the inevitable Goal.

The teleological critique claims to reduce man to an objectively known product of the meaningless flux of things. The axiological critique tends to overlook any consideration of the historical and to see man only in terms of a "true" nature, of sheer desirability in a "possible reality." Marx combined the advantages of both in an attempt to eliminate their deficiencies. In either case, the total critiques: "have assumed an Archimedian point beyond the realm of experience from which the world of experience can be surveyed, criticized and even declared a nothingness." The Archimedian point, in turn, a realm of phantasmal perfection, appears as paradise when viewed from the point of view of actual nothingness. A polarity between nothingness and paradise is characteristic of every ideological total critique of society, which always extends to a critique of all experienced reality."

The ideologist of a second reality (the true one as opposed to the unreal) has committed himself by definition to a destruction of the present reality. What a far cry from Augustine's total critique of society which was based on the Biblical doctrine of the corruption of the human soul. Society, in the Augustinian view, is not seen as the enemy, since it is but a product of the flawed constituent. Evil is seen as man's problem here and now to be faced rather than hidden by resort to the use of a future possible reality. Salvation is God's work, not man's. Augustine's view permits a choice outside of the phony dichotomy of a complete acceptance of the status quo or its total destruction.



East European Landscape

In Lenin we see Marx put into practice. The Communist Party is that gnostic group which possesses the secret knowledge of the future reality. Since only the Party is working for the supreme good, then whatever means the party chooses in order to advance history toward that end are immediately justified. Reformism (as opposed to compromises of necessity) implies an acceptance of the present reality. Only a commitment to the overthrow of the present is permissible for those initiates of the secret knowledge. Only in this way can one exist.

Lenin viewed the dictatorship of the proletariat as an organization of war. In any war there may be truces which allow for regroupment and resupply; the goal of war, of overcoming the enemy's resistance, remains. The war applies to the Party's attitude to foreign governments as well as fellow countrymen who do not adhere to the Party's premises.

The only zone not in a state of war is within the Party. It is a zone open to entry for only those who recognize that the one single possible system of order is the future reality. Anyone who is willing to make peace with any or all of the present is automatically at war within the Party. The road to the future is seen, as in the past, a succession of stages called "transitions to socialism" by the Party. Since the future stays ever out of reach, more "transitions" are added in order to justify why the revolution remains permanent.

As Niemeyer points out in *Deceitful Peace*, even the West has tended to accept the Party's claim to represent the Revolution, and to view the Revolution as inevitable. The expansion of Communist control in the last fifty years, as well as the leverage secured through allies in strategic areas of Africa, the Middle East and Latin America have not provided any reason for the true believer to doubt his faith.

Many have argued that Communists have not followed the letter of Marx's historical materialism, and have concluded that Communists are either losing their faith, or have never really had a faith, but have only used their ideology as an instrument of social control. Niemeyer argues that while it is true that Communists have abandoned elements of their ideology, the crucial question is which elements.

As long as the doctrine of the revolutionary overthrow of the present-day society has not been touched, the central core remains intact, and no substantive change has occurred. Truces and retreats the Party has made, but whenever in doubt the Party has consistently chosen "that alternative which favored irreconcilable struggle and its power requirements." Why else would Communists maintain their unity and discipline were it not for "a common cause and a common principle in which they believe?" (p. 149)

That the Communists would prefer even death as the outcome of false confessions to trumped-up charges to risking the security of the party's rule is a matter of record. For examples see Robert Conquests' *The Great Terror*, and Anatoli Granovsky's *I Was a NKVD Agent*.

Although Communists are committed to permanent revolution, the announcement of a policy of "peaceful coexistence" has been interpreted by some to represent a change of heart, a willingness to live and let live. No doubt this phrase has been seized upon more often than any other single phrase to "prove" that communism is mellowing.

Aside from the historical record to the contrary, we have Khrushchev's explanation of the phrase as reported in 1958 by Walter Lippmann. According to Lippmann, Khrushchev understands the status quo to mean the permanent revolution (overt or covert wars of aggression); aggression is understood to mean Western resistance to the "status quo."

The West has been gullible in face of the Red peace offensive. Niemeyer ascribes the ideology of enduring peace (e.g., One World, the United Nations, etc.) and the notion of "no enemies to the left" as reasons for this blindness. The Soviet peaceful coexistence line has achieved additional credence in the West from the Sino-Soviet split. The Chinese verbal assault on the Kremlin line of peaceful coexistence is taken as evidence of Kremlin sincerity. Instead, Niemeyer argues, the real split involves two communist power centers disagreeing only on whose interpretation of Marxism-Leninism authoritatively prescribes the destruction of limited government and free enterprise.

Niemeyer's analysis of communism

casts considerable doubt on the hopes of those who expect to deal with Communists as if they were just another group of politicians. The reader of Niemeyer's latest two books could best express his conclusion of the author's message in the words of Patrick Henry's famous "give me liberty, or give me death" speech. "Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer upon the subject?... Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves longer. Sir, we have done everything that could be done to avert the storm which is coming on...Gentlemen may cry peace, peace, but there is no peace. The war is actually begun." (Moses Coit Tyler, *Patrick Henry*, Arlington House, pp. 142-145)

If Henry's electrifying speech rang true to the American colonists opposed to a British over-lordship, then his words are all the more urgent in the face of a militant totalitarian ideology.

Lawrence D. Pratt

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Movies

Pass the Syringe, Baby (and Never Pass Go)

Didacticism in the cinema is a bore, usually. Generally the congruence of art, or what passes for art in most films, and moral instruction, or what resembles that, is awkward. People read all sorts of lessons into films, and we are informed by some critics that we have been told the Very Truth about the redneck mentality (*EASY RIDER*), or the Indisputable Message about hardhats (*JOE*), or of the necessity to curb the military (*PATTON*), or about the perfidy of today's fascisti (*Z*), and on and on and on.

If one prefers to criticize films from the point of view of an apolitical, rather demanding film lover, as I generally do, one gets it in the neck from those who must divine political meanings in every flick; or, as sometimes happens, if one finds oneself confronted with an overdose of manifest propaganda in a movie and writes about it from that angle, one's arty buddies drip condescending scorn. So one loses anyway; *tant pis*.

A new film has just hit the theatres, one so significant as didactic cinema in the best sense, that I

draw it to your attention. *THE PANIC IN NEEDLE PARK* is directed by Jerry Schatzberg, whose last film was *PUZZLE OF A DOWNFALL CHILD*, and screenwritten by John Gregory Dunne and his wife, Joan Didion, the novelist and former *Nation Review* contributor, from the book by James Mills. It is photographed by Adam Hollander, whose camera sees the real Needle Park of New York's West 70s, the cheap hotels, luncheonettes, garbage-strewn alleys and tawdry pads of the city. The tendency of many reviewers, faced now with a surfeit of perfectly dreadful movies designed for the youth audience and with a simultaneous spate of films (like *LOVE STORY* and *SUMMER OF '42*) turning away from Message to Romance (heralded by *Time* and other journals as the Coming Thing), will be to ignore *PANIC*. At our peril, I would suggest. Especially at the peril of those of us on the right, who are so rarely fed anything intelligent about drugs in our journals. Of late, only Suzanne Labin's superb piece on hashish in *National Review* (13 July) is an exception to that general rule.