

"What we call the
beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to
make a beginning".

F. S. FLIOT: LITTLE GIDDING.

THE NEW LEFT IN FRANCE : 1968 - 1973

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**Dissertation Submitted in Partial fulfilment
of the Requirement for the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

of the

**SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI**

1981

PREFACE

P R E F A C E

The New Left in France has been a subject of intense controversy during later 1960s and early 1970s. The present work is a modest attempt at reviewing and clarifying some major controversial aspects of the "New Left" phenomenon. Indeed, this movement has been so complex that it received no encouraging response from the Old Left. Perhaps, the latter did not recognize it as the voice of protest against the oppressive nature of the state machinery in France. Since then major differences arose in regard to the methodology adopted by the "New Left" for social change; it was viewed not only as impractical but also counter-culture. Hence some Old Left intellectual activists characterized it as too "Utopian" and too "infantile" to be accepted as an effective vehicle for systemic change. As a result, the movement not only suffered from the support of the PCF but it also met with apathetic response from the general mass of the people in France. In the process it led to its break-up into several splinter groups which are yet to make any

significant break through in the power politics of France.

I owe debt of gratitude to a number of people who helped me in a wide variety of ways-with material, with ideas and with information - in the completion of this work. In particular I have the pleasure to mention the intelligent and patient guidance given by Dr. H.S.Chopra, (my Supervisor, in the Centre for American and West European Studies). Without his help the thesis may not have seen the light of the day. Besides I would like to express my indebtedness to Dr. S.Kaviraj and Dr. A.K.Ray of the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, for taking keen interest in the progress of my work. I am equally thankful to a number of my friends and elders like B.Rangarajan, K.Bankrishna, H.S.Sedi, A.K.Deb, K.C.Swain, T.N.Swain and P.N.Lenka for their invaluable contribution in terms of advice, suggestions and criticism for the completion of this difficult subject of research. I also express my thanks to the librarians and the staff at the Jawaharlal Nehru University library and the Indian Council of World Affairs for making readily available to me relevant materials.

Lastly, I must thank to Mr. P.K.Verma for having
skilfully typed my M.Phil Dissertation.



NEW DELHI

Dated: 26th Feb. 1981.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

INTRODUCTION :

Though the New Left as a movement had its origin in the U.K., in 1957 it was in the U.S.A. that it became force to reckon with. Started by the American youth and called the Black movement, it resulted in the growing involvement of upper middle class students with a view to changing the social system. In course of time the New Left movement transcended the boundaries of the U.S.A. and spread to Western Europe. A significant group of French students having Left leanings lent their ears to the ideas and issues outflowing from the U.S.A. and succeeded in giving a new shape and dimension to the movement. As a result, there occurred the student-worker revolt in France in 1968.

Notwithstanding the fact that the leaders of the New Left were essentially drawn from the affluent upper middle strata, they did have definite beliefs and ideology, even if to start with a negative one. It is negative in the sense that the aim of the movement firstly was to liberate people from the long-standing illusory ideology of the traditional "Left" parties. Secondly, it was to liberate them from the oppressive

state machinery. Even the goal of setting up a new society is worded negatively. It says that it "does not give scope to the illusions of the bourgeois nor the reformist Communist practices".

The New Left believed in freedom and democracy and subscribed to a synthesis of all that is best in democracy and Marxism. Even within democracy, participatory democracy was stressed as it bore a revolutionary notion. Thus the ideology and the entire approach of the New Left can be discerned from the composite whole of participatory democracy and Marxism.

One more element of novelty in the New Left thinking is its glorification of violence. The leaders of the New Left maintained that violence is necessary to overthrow the existing social system.

Besides, they believed in dialectical reasoning, and social revolution which endowed the ideology with extreme radicalism.

The present dissertation aims at studying the New Left in France between 1968 and 1973.

The New Left movement started there in the latter half of the sixties. In the year 1968 it took a new turn and spread over to neighbouring countries.

At that time three ideologies were dominant throughout France : the Right, Left and New Left. Ironically the existence of the rightist and leftist ideologies gave an added impetus to the growth of the New Left ideology. While the rightist political parties did not withstand the social irritations and political uprisings among the workers, the leftist political parties represented by the Communist Party (PCF) was alienated from the core section of workers due to the workers' dissatisfaction of the way it was functioning. Thus the process of alienation of the (PCF) seeped into worker participation as well as into production. This is when French society transformed itself into an urban and industrial formation from the rural one. In the increasing industrial expansion, the work force increased manifold. The workers were conscious of their rights and involvement in the management of industries. Thus the period of the explosion of class consciousness among the workers in France, helped the students from Paris and other Universities with their newly acquired New Left leanings to organize themselves in order to find solutions to the immediate problems of chaos and confusion.

The workers readily accepted the call of the students and formed different organizations. The most important organizations were the Union of Communist

Youth (WCF), the Union of Young Farmers (CNJA) etc. The political uprisings from 1968 onwards were due in the main to the participation of the New Left organizations, organizers and the workers.

The period 1968 to 1973 engages our attention because it is in early 1968 that the New Left movement gathered momentum. From 1970 onwards it showed a tendency of decline. By the end of 1973 it slowed down in such a manner that people seldom talked about it, but the power structure in France was alive to it. No better example of this can be given than by stating that even those who considered the movement in 1968 as a force and opposed it vehemently think of it now as withering away.

The revolt or the movement launched by the New Left could not succeed because of various reasons. Absence of mass support is an important one. Nevertheless the movement could not be said to be either a total failure or as completely ended. But it has splintered into many groups, such as the Rosa Luxemburg group, Trotskyite group, Sartre's group, Philosophical Society, etc.

Chapter I deals with the genesis and development of the New Left as a movement in the world. In this

the factors that led to its brith in Britain, its spread to America and its reappearance in Western Europe will be studied.

Chapter II goes into the beliefs and ideology as they have come to be accepted by the leaders of the New Left movement. In this the great philosophers and their contribution to the shaping of the movement will be studied, especially, Sartre, Marcuse, Sordit, Frasnaron, Rosa Luxemburg etc. In this chapter the growth of the movement in France will be studied in its entirety, with special reference to the beliefs and ideologies. An attempt is also made to compare it with the traditional left party keeping in view the non-revolutionary role played by the French Communist Party (PCF) during the crisis of 1968.

Chapter III deals with the questions of the future of the New Left as a force: Is the movement declining? Can failure of a movement in a particular struggle mean the complete negation of the movement itself? Does the movement exist in France at all? If it does, where does it exist?

The last chapter will be observations and conclusions wherein certain broad generalisations from the movement will be drawn for either the success or failure of similar movements elsewhere.

CHAPTER - I

GENESIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW LEFT IN WORLD

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In the history of ideas, the inward-looking of ideologies gave rise to three kinds of consciousness - pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial. Feudalism was the product of pre-industrial consciousness and its manifestations, like social relationship, its impact on 'feudal mode of production'¹, its influence in conditioning the "human consciousness"² and then interpretations in measuring the level of consciousness, were irrelevantly relevant during that period. Later on, it became relevantly irrelevant and therefore was done away within the industrial period.

This ushered in a new age called industrial society where new scientific discoveries and growth of technology played a key role. Capitalism as an

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1. Thomas H. Greene, Comparative Revolutionary Movements (London: Prentice Hall Inc. 1974), pp. 50-50.
 2. Herbert Marcuse Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Enquiry into Freud (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1969), p. 40.

economic system assumed its great role of modernizing society as a whole. From this capitalist system emerged two streams of ideologies,³ liberalism and Marxism. Thus in the beginning of the nineteenth century we find both these ideologies taking root. John Stuart Mill, F.H. Green, etc. were the exponents of liberalism during that period till the mid nineteenth century.⁴ At that juncture Marxism gave its clarion call in the Communist Manifesto Published in 1848. Gradually, within the four walls of industrial capitalism, these two ideologies clashed and in the process liberalism was checkmated and overpowered by Marxism.⁵ The radical consciousness, of course, the product of industrial capitalism.⁶

In the third place, the post-industrial consciousness is the new rebellion. Capitalism has entered

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3. Lefebvre Henn, The Explication: Marxism and the French Hobsbawm. Tr. Alfred Ehrenfeld (New York: Modern Reader, 1988), pp. 43-45.
 4. Antonio Gramsci, Selections from his Political Writings (1921-26). Tr. Quintin Hoare (New York: International Publishers, 1978), p.159.
 5. A.Meyer, "Theories of Convergence", in Chalmers Janson (ed): Change in Communist System (Stanford, 1970), pp. 310-12.
 6. Santiago Carrillo, Problem of Socialism Today (London : Lawrence and Wishart, 1970) pp. 120-22.

the "technocratic era"⁷ with the acceleration of the pace of technological revolution. Within the characteristic features of post-industrial society like sex, violence, alienation, rising expectations, anti-intellectualism, anti-ideology, technology etc., the new consciousness is the rebellion of the new social segment-young students belonging to schools and universities of western societies. It is a consciousness of new radicalism or a new Marxism.

Within the framework of Marxism this tendency is aimed at denouncing orthodox tradition in the name of slavish adherence to the party line and tortuous defence of prescribed positions and thus boasts of its autonomy.⁸ The new movement is appropriately called as "New Left."

What does the term New Left signify? The significance of the term is best grasped with the understanding of the term "Left" which signifies protest, negation, revolt and the like, aiming at overthrowing the existing social system and replacing it by another which has on its banner rationality, humanism, equality and human happiness. In other words, "the Left is generally understood to include those parties and

7. A.W. Gouldner, The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology (London : Heinemann, 1970) p. 380.

8. Maurice Cranston, The New Left (London : Bodley Head, 1970) p. 7.

movements that demand wider popular participation in government, push activity for reform and draw popular support from the disinherited, dislocated and disgruntled".⁹ To go a step further, the 'Left means :

"Structural criticism and reportage and theories of Society, which at some point or another are focussed politically, as demands and programmes. These criticisms, demands, theories, programmes are guided morality by the humanist and secular ideals of western civilization, above all, reason and freedom and justice. To be 'Left' means to connect up cultural with political criticism, and both with demands and programmes."¹⁰

So the 'Left' is a "left over"¹¹ of the preservation and maintenance of the old system or old style of living and it is considered to be progressive, dynamic, rational, practical and revolutionary.

The understanding of the 'Left', provides the key to understand what is new about the 'Left'. The New Left is a movement which was started by a group of Marxist intellectuals known as Modern masters. They began to point to evils from both the capitalist and socialist societies. They denounce the affluent

9. Kenneth K. Krough, "Weeded New Political Labels" in W.J. Stenki & Wicz (ed) : Political Thought Since World War II. (New York : The Free Press of Glencol, 1964) p. 445.

10. C. Wright Mills, "Letter to the New Left" in New Left Review. London, No. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 1969) pp. 20-21.

11. Paul Jacobs and Saul London, The New Radicals (Toronto : Vintage Books, 1965) p. 42.

social system of capitalist societies and criticise the socialist societies as repressive because of the denial of individual freedom.¹² In other words, they severely attack both the capitalist and socialist systems and strive to bring about a new order in which the individual is free from the onslaught of the exploitative capitalist system as well as from the suppression of a communist state. While attacking the capitalist system, they theoretically take the inspiration from Marx but at the same time they denigrate the bureaucratic and repressive role of the Communist Party of Soviet Union.¹³ They consider both the systems as debasing and dehumanising the individual. They mount their attack on official Marxism on the basis of the writings of the early Marx, or young Marx. Thus, the New Left intellectuals go back to the early Marx and, in fact, expose Leninism and Stalinism as deviations from the humanism of the early Marx which links him to the early Christians and the ancient Greeks.¹⁴

12. Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man (London : Sphere Books, 1972) p. 10.

13. Herbert Marcuse, Studies in Critical Philosophy, Tr. from German into English by Joris de Bres, (London : NLB, 1972) p. 5.

14. V.R. Mehta, Beyond Marxism : Towards an Alternative Perspective, (Delhi : Manchar, 1978) p. 27.

The new aspects of Marxism which are outlined by New Left intellectuals are : humanism, democracy, freedom and revolutionary violence. To put it in another way, the New Left aims at building a new Socialist Society where socialism is integrated with democracy and humanism. The means to achieve this kind of society is revolutionary violence.¹⁵ It cries for the end of ideology :

"The New Left took care to distinguish itself from the old Left of the thirties and forties in as much as while the latter was largely associated with communism, with socialism of various kinds and to some extent with anarchic syndicalism, the New Left was critical of both the bourgeois culture and Marxism."¹⁶

New to the revolutionary thought is the establishment of libertarian socialism. This is the goal of the New Left movement.¹⁷ The new radicals have the vision of a society in which human needs take priority over the imperatives of capital. These

15. P. Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth. Tr. from French into English by G. Farrington (London : Penguin Book, 1967) pp. 80-82.

16. E. G. Genovese, "American Left-New and Old" in National Guardian, Feb. 19, 1966.

17. Herbert Marcuse says, "But the alternative, precisely in these terms, I still believe the alternative is socialism. But socialism neither of the stalinist brand nor of the post-stalinist brand, but that libertarian socialism which has always been the integral concept of socialism but only too easily repressed and suppressed" in Massimo Teodone (ed) : The New Left A Documentary History (London:Jonathan Cape, 1969) p. 469.

human needs which are self-evident are, the minimum biological conditions for human life must be met : adequate food and shelter, clean air, free and easily accessible medical care. Just above the bare minimum of human survival are the needs for leisure, entertainment etc. Besides, there are other sorts of needs, like love, affection, friendship etc. They also require work which is both personally satisfying and socially meaningful. Finally freedom is essential in order to safeguard and enjoy these needs.¹⁸ That is, freedom to do what he wants to do. It is clear that a society which can meet these needs for the greatest number of people must be organized differently from the capitalist society. The shift from capitalist priorities to human priorities entails a new aspect of Marxism.¹⁹ Thus, they need a society where these needs are met for all people.

The New Left intellectuals reject the society which suppresses individual freedom, which provides health and comfort for a fraction of its members

18. Giuseppe Fiori, Antonio Gramsci : Life of a Revolutionary, (London NLB) p. 123.

19. P. Anderson, Considerations on Western Marxism (London : NLB 1976) p. 72.

and not for all, which gives prime importance to bureaucracy, which provides physical security for all but reserves creative expression for a tiny elite. They also reject a society in which "anyone is denied the means for his full development as a human being."²⁰

ORIGIN OF THE NEW LEFT

The radical movement has undergone many ups and downs in the history of revolutionary struggle. In the 1930s and 1940s, the movement was steady and forward-looking. The Communist groups were given world-wide support. But in the 1950s, a new phase of Communist movement raised its head. By the mid-fifties the movement was almost dead. The Communist Party declined both in terms of theory and practice in the post-war period, because of internal ideological squabbles and "coming crisis of capitalism" which offered new ways for social change.²¹ The trade unions were no longer crossing and many were radical anti-official Marxism, and had become

20. J.P. Sartre, Between Existentialism and Marxism, Tr. from French into English by John Mathews (New York : Pantheon, 1974) pp. 136-37.

21. Daniel Bell, The Coming of Post-Industrial Society (London : Heinemann, 1974) p. 47.

the supporters of the Establishment. Some Marxist theoreticians were barely "distinguishable from the liberal democrats."²²

In late 1950s and the early 1960s a group of New and Young radicals took a different stand on Marxism and its application to different aspects of human development. Faced with Western imperialism and brutal Soviet Marxism, these intellectuals began seeking "a fresh way out of the crisis and developed a new theme of Marxism",²³ what C. Wright Mills called as the New Left.

It was in the year 1957, that the New Left movement started in England. A group of university intellectuals took the initiative in publishing two new journals : Universities and Left Review and the New Reasoner. But by the end of 1959 both the journals merged into the New Left Review. The members of the editorial board formerly belonged to the Communist Party at Oxford. They were critical of the non-revolutionary role of the Communist Party and

22. Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau, n.1, p.13.

23. Isaac Deutscher, Marxism in our Time (San Francisco : The Ramparts Press, 1971), p. 83.

thought that the failure of Marxism in Britain was due to the vulgar communist Marxists than of the theory itself. In their new journals they wanted to popularize the re-discovered ideals of socialism and rescue humanism that had become a casualty due to the purges, war and cold war.²⁴ The new radicals debated and discussed the ideas, keeping in view the changing pattern of capitalist system and the crisis in socialist ideology. These ideas could not be worked out within the framework of Soviet Marxism. The most prominent among the ideas and issues discussed by them were "alienation and humanism."²⁵

Influenced by the British New Left, a group of University intellectuals began to develop a similar ideology around the campuses of Wisconsin, California at Berkeley and Chicago. They marked the transition from old Left Marxist dogma to a new period. Their discussions and debates were not limited to politics but covered every aspect of life from sexual freedom and pornography to civil rights and peace issues.²⁶

24. Herbert Marcuse, Five Lectures : Psycho-Analysis Politics and Utopia (Boston, 1970) pp. 83-88.

25. Ayn Rand, The New Left : The Anti-Industrial Revolution (New York : Signet Book, 1968) pp. 83-85.

26. Paul Jacobs and Saul Landou, n.11, p.11.

As a result there was a new ferment among the intelligentsia and the campuses became breeding-grounds of political activity and fight for civil rights. Most of the young students took a keen interest in the movement and began to exhibit an inclination for activism and a spirit of anti-intellectualism which was partly a rejection of the very University system²⁷ in which they were involved. The University came to be regarded as part of the Establishment and as the point of immediate contact, the most oppressive part.²⁸

This movement later on spread to various campuses of the world. In the early 1960s, it was vigorously active in Berlin and the late sixties it emerged as a phenomenal force in almost all Universities of France. Therefore, it is said that the New left movement is bred not in the slums but in the Universities.²⁹ In the following paragraphs are discussed the growth of the New Left (after its origin in England) in the various campuses of the U.S.A., West Germany, France, Italy and elsewhere in the West.

27. Cohn Benbit, Obsolete Communism : The Left-Wing Alternative (New York : McGraw Hill, 1968) pp. 23-30.

28. Ayn Rand, n.25, pp13-26.

29. Ibid, p. 97.

THE NEW LEFT IN THE U.S.A.

The New Left movement began in the U.S.A. in the early 1960s due to certain compelling factors. These were the social, political and economic make-up of the affluent American society; unequal treatment to the Blacks - oppressed section of the American society, "denigration of the moral values and the dignity of man by the technological society"³⁰ and the imperialist American foreign policy in attacking Vietnam.

The development or the growth of New Left in the U.S.A. has undergone various phases : the Civil Rights movement, free speech movement and protest against the U.S. policy towards Vietnam.

The Civil Rights Movement

The civil rights movement began in the year 1960. It was the first movement to signal a new struggle for liberty and democracy in the United States. It had many characteristic features "like a new style for action, new idealism, a new participatory democracy".³¹ These fundamental characteristics became

30. J. Ellul, The Technological Society
(London : Jonathan, 1964) p. 250.

31. Richard Gombin, The Origins of Modern Leftism.
Tr. from the French by Michael K. Perl.
(England; Penguin, 1975) pp. 14-18.

the part of the New Left later on. The movement spread to almost all parts of the U.S. and engaged the attention of the power structure. It provided a new impetus to the ruling class to think and bring about a change in the decision-making.

The outcome of this movement was the revival of politics itself, both in terms of participation by people in the decisions affecting their own lives and in the rebirth of a radical movement which, in the course of a few years, would come to involve an ever-growing number of young people.³² Out of this movement emerged the radical wing of upholders of participatory democracy and human values also emerged.

This civil rights movement was limited in nature and strictly related to issues of individual liberties and specific policies of the Administration. The students supporting the cause of the Blacks began a stir on campuses and in the streets. They came to the street not "in the name of an alternative political vision or a revolutionary strategy but for essential liberal³³

32. Ronald Aronson and John, C. Cowley, "The New Left and the United States" in the Socialist Register (London : Merlin Press, 1967), Summer p. 67.

33. William A. Williams ; The Contours of American History (London : Jonathan Cape, 1962) Part III, pp. 129-31.

and humanistic motives. Their political involvement moved from the particular to the general (inductive method), from moral concern to an analysis of structures. Anyhow the motives and the scope of the movement were very broad in the real sense of term, yet it provided a source for the broad movement of the New Left afterwards.³⁴

Free Speech Movement, 1964

The free speech movement at Berkeley raised some fundamental issues of American affluent society. It started with a decision by the administration to ban all fund-raising and propaganda for any political or social purpose which they did not approve. The student-radicals of this movement put their demands before the administration. The students were concerned with "free speech, they defended their right to participate in politics, and in particular to protest against the war in Vietnam"³⁵. These immediate reasons provided the impetus for rallying support as well as for the

34. David Horowitz, Student (New York ; Ballentine Books, 1962) pp. 45-46.

35. Jack Weinberg, "The Free Speech Movement and Civil Rights" in Hal Draper, The New Student Revolt (New York ; Grove Press, 1965) p. 143.

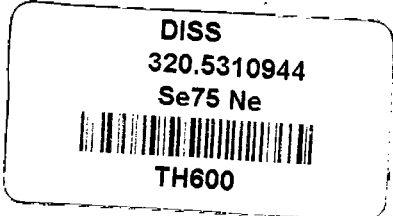
continuance of the movement. "The students' basic demand is a demand to be heard, to be considered, to be taken into account when decisions concerning their education and their life in the University community are being made when one reviews the history of the Free Speech Movement, one discovers that each new wave of student response to the movement followed directly on some action by the administration which neglected to take the students, as human beings, into account and which openly reflected an attitude that the student body was a thing to be dealt with, to be maintained."³⁶

In its academic aspect, the revolt was against the liberal bureaucracy. But in the process of representation of ideas and issues, there appears contradiction between the two terms which characterized the University administration. The right of a bureaucracy as such to administer a given institution and the prerogative of a ruling class which permits liberty, but only to the threshold of conflict with established goals and values, to call itself liberal.³⁷

Behind the issue of 'free speech', a more basic confrontation was taking place between those who wanted

36. Ibid, p.188.

37. Nassani Teodori (ed), n.17, p.30.



to use the University as a mechanism for maintaining and rationalising the status quo and those who wanted to begin realizing the hope for a different America right there. Hence the conflict. The conflict between these two positions which exploded in Berkeley revealed for the first time that "the University was one of those vital nerves of American Society in which basic conflicts manifest themselves"³⁸. It nevertheless contained seeds of radicalisation which sprang from its very nature as a mass institution and from its unique function in modern society. The radical tone of the revolt reveals that its aim was to destroy the existing structure of the Universities and discredit the authorities. The student revolutionaries wanted to make use of the Universities as instruments with remaking of the social order. They were identifying the Universities with the Establishment and therefore attacked the University as the most important wing of the Establishment. Talking about American students and the student movement, Herbert Marcuse says :

"they are opposed to a democratic well-functioning society which does not normally employ terror and is made up a majority which includes the working class. They oppose the way of life, the

38. C.W.Mills, Power, Politics and People (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 48-53.

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pressure of the system and its distinctive productivity which degrades and dehumanizes as it turns all of life into a buying and selling process. The civil rights struggles brought these students the traumatic awareness of the injustices within the democratic system as they exist on a national scale. Vietnam, on the other hand, extended their awareness to the international level where aggression and expansion take place. In all of this, the radical student opposition is still only a preparation but a necessary one, for the coming crisis of the system³⁹.

The last but not the least important phase of New Left movement in the U.S.A. was during 1968, when the students from Columbia challenged the imperialist policy of American capitalism. Students, sickened by the imperialist policies of their country, especially in Vietnam, showed their solidarity with the Vietnamese peasants and workers and with the oppressed racial and economic minorities in their own country. They made known their refusal to become privileged members of the American bourgeoisie.⁴⁰

As far as the American New Left movement is concerned, the organization, Students for Democratic Society (SDS), played a noteworthy role in revealing

39. Albert H. Friedlander, "The Student Revolt, 1, Berlin, 1968", in Hightman, vol. 70, (New York June/July 1968), pp. 27-28.

40. Cohn Bendit, n. 27, pp. 35-40.

the evils of capitalism and imperialism. Since its formation in 1962, it has been trying to propagate the New Left ideology in a famous slogan "Democracy of Individual Participation"⁴¹ where each person shares in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life. Secondly, the SDS aim is not to create a free University within an unfree society but to create a free society.⁴²

In essence, the growth of the New Left movement in the United States suggests the stern protest against the affluent society and America's involvement in the Vietnam war. This is again the consequence of an industrial and technological revolution. While attacking the evils of the industrial society Herbert Marcuse, said :

"motivated by a disgust at affluence without dignity, desire for beauty as well as democracy, belief in creativity rather than consensus, wish for community and communal values and vehement rejection of depersonalized bureaucracy, desire to build a "counter society" with parallel institutions and not simply to be integrated into and to be accepted by the dominant institutions,

41. *Newswatch*, "Who are these SDS?" vol. 71, (New York: May 20, 1968), p. 30.

42. *Ibid*, p. 32.

hostility to what is conceived of as the dehumanization and alienation of a cash-nexus society, preference for individuated, intensely felt, and self-generated interpersonal style, including fuller sexual expression and experimentation are the elements that provide stimulus to this movement in the United States."⁴³

NEW LEFT IN WEST GERMANY

The Berkeley model was copied by the west Berlin University a few years later. In Germany, the "call for University reform became a rallying cry for students and a strong one, in the absence of an effective Parliamentary opposition to the West German capitalism"⁴⁴. As a result, the German student movement became the standard-bearer of resistance to the German state as well as to American atrocities in Vietnam.

In the early 1960s, the student-rebels were under the influence of the Nazis and fascists. They were, in other words, under the control of bourgeoisie. In 1966, the youth movement in West Germany assumed a radical dimension. In that year, for the first time since the end of the war, West German capitalism was hit by an economic crisis that had profound political and financial consequences. One of these was the formation of the CDU.

43. A.W. Gouldner, n.7, p.399.

44. Cohn Bendit, n.27, p.24.

Social Democrat Coalition government. Beginning with 1967 the various youth movements and trends acquired a class colouring. The anatomy of social development of the youth in the Federal Republic was determined by the political economy of State-monopoly capitalism.⁴⁵ There is no such thing as an economic, political and ideological history of youth separate from economics and politics. So the young radicals evolved a critique of society keeping in view the economic and political development.

The student radicals under the leadership of Rudi Dutschke advanced the demands for renovating society. Their theory strongly revealed the crisis of state-monopoly capitalism and of the crisis of its policy in relation to the youth. They found the contradictions of capitalism in relation to the crimes of U.S. imperialism in Vietnam. Another contradiction was that between the technological revolution and the extremely low level of education in the Federal Republic.⁴⁶ The education was class biased, that is why it accounted for a mere 5 per cent of the working class children in the University.

45. David Feurbach, in New Left Review, n.56, July/August, 1969, p.64.

46. James Chowing Davies, When Men Revolt and Why? (New York: Free Press, 1971), p.206.

On the other hand, the New Left movement does not support the policy of the Communist Party because it is not a powerful force of attraction. They do not agree with the Communist Party which has abandoned its one-time revolutionary positions. It has become a part of Establishment, by adhering to middle-class reformism. Their criticism of the Communist Party is therefore not "anti-communist but communist, for they uphold revolution"⁴⁷.

Thus, the New Left movement in West Germany started with the student-radicals becoming the most explosive new political force on the German scene. Its development was rapid with the influence of the revolutionary ideas of Trotsky, Che Guevara. Behind the issue of University reform the student-radicals, who cultivated the outlook of Che Guevara, attacked the power structure regulating the rules and administration of the Universities. So the New Left target was, on the one hand, to eliminate the manifestations of capitalism and, on the other, to bring about a revolution in the revolutionary ideas.

47. Roger Garaudy, The Turning Point of Socialism (London: Fontana, 1969) pp. 142-44.

ITALIAN NEW LEFT

When the student rebels in the U.S. and West Germany were raising the fundamental problems of society and the revolutionary mistakes of the traditional Left parties, the Italian counterpart were observing the "in-built crisis in the moral values of bourgeoisie".⁴⁸ Alongwith that, the war in Vietnam did show them the utter rottenness and abomination of imperialism. These factors provided the impetus for their revolutionary undertakings.

The disturbances that swept through a dozen of Italy's largest Universities since 1967 were originally motivated by the desire to reform an anarchic system of higher education. Among other things, Italian student-revolutionaries demanded better physical facilities, a voice in University administration and subsidies for needy students. Behind these apparent issues, the student-revolutionaries were embarking upon a struggle for the total radical change of Italian society. Fighting for the demands within the framework of the University order, the

48. J.P. Sartre, Being and Nothingness
Tr. from French into English by H.E. Barnes
(New York : Washington Square Press, 1966) p. 18.

student-radicals produced a unique form of struggle against the system and raised issues relating to the strategy and tactics of the state. Within the network of their radical ideology, the New Radicals of Italy blamed the Communist Party for its failure to create a revolutionary situation which a revolution warrants for its success.

NEW LEFT MOVEMENT IN SPAIN

Similarly, the accumulated dissatisfaction among the student in Spain brought to the lime light young revolutionaries who challenged the nature of the state and of the ruling class. They wanted an end to the dictatorial exploitation by the Franco regime. That is, they in fact wanted freedom, participation in the governmental process, liberation of the exploited masses and the realisation of workers' demand for the democratisation of the political system.

THE FRENCH NEW LEFT

While the American student-rebels, including Mario Savio, Mark Rudd, were trying to spearhead the New Left movement; the German rebels led by Rudi Dutschke were challenging the system; the new revolutionaries were questioning the moral values

of the bourgeois society in Italy and threatening the dictatorial regime of Franco in Spain; their French colleagues were becoming increasingly alive to the total failure of the reformist policies of UNEF (National Union of French Students). The new radical students of France were not only influenced by the emergence of new radicalism elsewhere—the U.S.A.; West Germany, Italy, Spain etc., also derived lessons from their experience to apply to the situation in France.

The new revolutionary leaders, including Cohn Bendit, Alain Geismar, Alain Krivine, took advantage of the situation in France and raised the basic contradictions of de Gaulle's authoritarian regime between 1958 to 1968. The contradictions of French capitalism were challenged in the name of academic issues. They showed before the world the need for total reformation in the Universities. That is why they attacked the old educational system which served the needs of the capitalist machine. The Universities were nothing but "cogs in the capitalist machine"⁴⁹. To the outside world, the University

⁴⁹. Cohn Bendit, n. 27, pp. 42-45.

reform became a rallying point for the student revolutionaries.

But the real issues were behind and beyond the academic reforms. The student radicals were showing to the old revolutionaries the crisis of capitalism as well as the crisis of socialism. In the second place, they were trying to prove that the old and official Left is nothing but a brake on the revolutionary movement. In this context they exposed the bureaucratic nature of the Communist Party and proved that the behaviour of the French Communist Party during the May crisis was nothing but pre-revolutionary. Daniel Singer aptly says in this context :

"..... the inevitable communist argument is that the party behaved in such an orderly electoral fashion because the situation was not revolutionary. Naturally, history does not allow for experiments, and there are no laboratories in which a situation could be analysed, then scientifically labelled "quasi-revolutionary", pre-revolutionary or whatnot. The examination must, therefore, stick to established facts. The Communist Party does admit that the strike was unprecedented, the 'situation' exceptional. The only question is whether the Communist leaders did everything in their power to exploit this exceptional situation to the full and if a successful revolution to the full and if a successful revolution was impossible, to turn the May crisis into a dress rehearsal. The party was not the driving force in this movement. It was the permanent brake."⁵⁰

50. Daniel Singer, Prelude to Revolution : France in May, 1968 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970) p. 10.

Critique of French Society

The New Left movement in France was⁷⁷⁻ inspired by the intellectuals like Jean Paul Sartre and Herbert Marcuse and student activists like Cohn Bendit, Alain Krivine, Henry Weber, etc. The growth and development of a movement is a long process. The radical movement of the new revolutionaries became prominent in the late sixties, though the foundation had been laid in the early sixties. The new approach to Marxism was explicit in the aims and the objectives of the intellectuals during the May crisis. They were of a totally different nature from those of the thousands of French intellectuals who fervently joined the protest movement. "Theirs was the painful awareness of the deprivations which organized society-imposes on human beings. They rebelled against the humbug of French intellectual life, the pomp of officialism, the social press were of a bourgeois society."⁶¹ They no more tolerated the atrocities of the brutal society. They wanted to throw everything over and think it all out anew. Their thirst for freedom for meaningless

61. Patrick Seale and Maureen McGonville
French Revolution, 1968 (London : Penguin Books,
1968) p. 226.

constraints broke out into high minded manifestos. What the New Left radicals were doing was the "first full-scale challenge in a western state to the in-human efficiency of modern industrial life."⁵²

Crisis in Socialist Theory as well as Practice

The New Left radicals, in the days of the May crisis, threw a bright light on socialist theory as well as practice. The Communist Party of France did not attempt to seize power, because it was no longer in its nature to be revolutionary. It mouthed slogans about class struggle, but no longer believed in them. Over the passage of years it has "become a sober workers' party, mesmerised with cars and television sets, the French equivalent of the British Labour Party."⁵³ May 1968 revealed to public gaze that the de-stalinisation of the PCF, obscured by the continuity of the leadership and the central committee's tradition of secrecy had in fact taken place. But in the process, the

52. Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968) pp. 35-40.

53. Patrik Scale and Maureen McConville, n.51, p. 227.

Communist Party had lost the fighting spirit. In seeking to adjust to a modern increasingly classless and affluent society, "its revolutionary past was more a liability than an asset"⁵⁴. So, it was the party of some workers but not for them. Thus, the May 1968 crisis was the clear expression of the growth and development of New Left in France.

The New Left movements in all Western societies have carried the germ of a hope that the intellect, the revolutionary spirit and the imagination, if given the free range and scope, cannot only create the revolutionary situation but also can exploit the situation to bring about a world revolutionary change.

54. Eric Fromm, Socialist Humanism (London : Allen Lane, 1957) p. 28.

CHAPTER - II

BELIEFS AND IDEOLOGY: A COMPARISON WITH THE OLD LEFT

CHAPTER - II

BELIEF AND IDEOLOGY : COMPARISON WITH THE OLD LEFT

"When the finger points at the moon, the idiot looks at the finger." (Chinese Proverb). This was written on a wall of the Paris Conservatoire de Musique, in May 1968. This slogan has an ideological overtone in the context of Old Left - the PCF vis-à-vis - the student force - the New Left.

"If the grey laws were broken, it is because they have grown old and become breakable. To each according to his imagination...." a severe attack on PCF by the intellectuals of the New Left.

The beliefs and ideology of the New Left can broadly be divided into two phases : early New Left and the later New Left. The separate discussion about both the phases is to bring out the picture of the ideology of the New Left at different points of time and situation.

THE IDEOLOGY OF EARLY NEW LEFT

The main concern of the early New Left intellectuals was reformism,¹ in other words, the intellectuals

1. James L. Wood, New Left Ideology : its Dimensions and Development, (London : Sage Publications, 1975) p. 52.

of that period (from early sixties till 1965) were highly attached to reformist ideologies concerning civil rights for Blacks in the U.S.A.² Though the early emphasis on "participatory democracy"³ and involvement of the poor and Blacks in decisions was ideological, yet it did not contain radical elements. But it was committed to some kind of ideology. All these efforts made by the early New Left intellectuals as well as theoreticians were to generate change within the existing social system and hence were of reformist views⁴. The clear illustration of these views was, for instance, the year 1964 which saw and raised the famous reformist issue of free speech - the Free Speech movement⁵ at Berkeley. The critiques

2. Massimo Teodori(ed), The New Left : A Documentary History, (London : Jonathan Cape, 1970), p. 151.

3. Jack Newfield says that as a social system the SDS seeks the establishment of a democracy of individual participation governed by two central purposes : that the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life; that society be organized to encourage independence in men and provide the media for their common participation.
See in his book : A Prophetic Minority, (London : Bloomsbury, 1967), p. 41.

4. Michael Walzer, Radical Principles : Reflections of an Unconstructed Democrat, (New York : Basic Books, 1980), p. 110.

5. Robert E. Dewey and James A. Gould, Freedom (London : Macmillan Co, 1970), p. 207.

against restrictions of speech as well as educational system were reformist in nature.⁶ They were critiques but not radical critiques that focused on the whole social system.

It was a period, when the growing population increased was felt almost at all Universities of France. The students were demanding educational reforms within the Campuses.⁷ For these demands, the student-radicals were stressing on the physical construction of buildings for accommodation, for the change of syllabus and last but not the least the students' participation in the University administration. Their approach to the reforms in the Universities was influenced by the issues raised by the student-radicals at Berkeley.⁸ Thus in the early phase of the New Left a reformist tendency clearly existed.

However, along with this reformist tendency, there was also a non-ideological tendency in the movement. It was branded by many commentators from

6. Frank Gerstein, The University and the New Intellectual Environment (Canada : Macmillan, 1968), p.25.

7. Jean Bloach Michel, "France-A New Kind of Rebellion", Dissent (New York : 1968), July/August, 1968, p.290.

8. Ramesh Ganghvi, "France Ablaze", Blitz (Bombay : 1968), June 1, 1968, p. 11.

certain corners of social sciences as non-ideological⁹ because it did not offer a radical socialist or communist alternative to the existing liberal capitalist society. Secondly, it did not throw a critical challenge to the capitalist system as such. In sum, the early phase of the New Left did not launch a radical critique of the existing capitalist system, nor did it propose radical alternatives to the system.¹⁰ As a result, the New Left in the early 1960s was called non-ideological. This non-ideological tendency referred mainly to the lack of radical positive programmes in the New Left, as well as to the lack of radical

9. Tom Bottomore, in the context of whether New Left is non-ideological or anti-ideological, feels that, the New Left is characterized by "the avoidance of dogmatism, and in a more extreme form the outright rejection of any ideology."
See his Sociology of Social Criticism (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1975) pp. 198-200.

10. Anthony Tinkersley says that the absence of genuine commitment to ideological principles by student-militants was the prime reason why he quit the movement and renounced revolutionary violence. In his words, "I began a paradox. The objective of the New Left is to obtain a more human society, a society that was based more on peace and being human, yet these people accepted violence really without question. I could also see that many of the people who went into the political movement were hung up on their personal problems and joining the political movement was a kind of an opt out. While you cannot deal with your own problems, how can you deal with something more aloof?"
see his article - "An Ideology", Berkeley Daily Gazette, (Berkeley, 1971), 14 June 1971, pp. L-2.

critiques in the early part of the 1960s.¹¹ Thus, it is possible to have a reformist tendency when the term non-ideological is defined in this way. It was confirmed that there was a hesitancy about radical ideology in the early phase of the New Left¹², but there was a positive affirmation of various reformist ideologies at the same time.

Reasons for the Distrust of Radicalism in the Early New Left.

There are a number of reasons that could explain the distrust of radicalism in the early 1960s. Among these, the most prominent single reason said to be is :

" the discrediting of universal radical ideology the concomitant lack of viability of French Communist Party in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. The iron policy, i.e. anti-working class policies of Stalin, was revealed during the period beginning from mid-1950."¹³

11. Michael Munk, "The Guardian from Old to New Left" Radical America, March/April 1968. pp. 43-51.

12. Lewis Feuer says that the first wave of the student movements was marked by a tendency to reject not just the ruling ideology but the need for revolutionary theory as such. See his book the Conflict of Generations (New York : Basic Books, 1969) p. 165.

13. James L. Wood, n. 1, p. 18.

These revelations about Stalin sent shock-waves throughout the Old Left movement in the mid-1950s. Secondly, the self-confident communist solution to the problems stood discredited for many in the Old Left when Stalin's crimes were made public. This discrediting of communism left a radical "vacuum"¹⁴ which members of the early New Left tried to fill with reformist solutions.

In the early 1960s, a new addition to the theories of ideology was made by Daniel Bell. That evolved in a form of tradition known as "end of ideology".¹⁵ The students of many Universities were influenced by this new tradition and it had a sway on most campuses at the time. Out of many themes, the dominant theme of this tradition was that communist and fascist movements were quite similar in their totalitarianism, although they might differ ideologically. Stalinism was linked with Hitlerism

14. Michael Walzer, Obligations, (New York : Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 68.

15. Daniel Bell stresses on his pronouncement of an end to ideology in the West. He says that for the intellectuals who had articulated the revolutionary impulses of the past century and a half, all this (the tragedies of the two decades between 1930 and 1950) has meant an end to Christic hopes, to millennialism, to apocalyptic thinking - and to ideology. For ideology, which once was a road to action, has come to dead end. They had outlived, outgrown, or outmanoeuvred the various radicalisms of their youth, arriving finally, many of them, at and a state of mind that Daniel Bell called the end of ideology. See in his book, End of Ideology, (New York : Free Press) pp. 302-25.

in the minds of many intellectuals in the early sixties and both were pronounced as evils.¹⁶ As a whole, an important part of the influence of this tradition was a condemnation of radical ideology.

There is a final set of reasons why the early New Left was not radical. These reasons could be organized and outlined under the heading of "professed prior ignorances"¹⁷ of the source of dangerous social evils. That is, one of the reasons activists themselves have given for the lack of radicalism in the early New Left was an ignorance on their part of the overall source of a variety of problems namely French capitalism and its severe exploitative nature.¹⁸

LATER PHASE OF THE NEW LEFT

The increasing role of the radicalism in the later phase of the New Left was realized in the context of the revelation of the truth of the exploitative

16. George Armstrong, "Italy's Student Strikers", New Statesman, Vol. 75, April 1968 (London) p. 438.

17. Regis Dobray, Revolution in the Revolution (London : Monthly Review Press, 1968), p. 42.

18. Carl Winter, "What happened in France", Political Affairs, vol. 47 (July 1968), p. 85.

nature of French capitalism. The radical political consciousness¹⁹ among the New Left student activists especially in the later part of the 1960s was a strong reaction against French capitalism, the imperialist tendency and some other ideological issues like Vietnam war, racism.²⁰ In this section, we will present largely qualitative analysis of capitalism, imperialism, on one side and socialism, Anarchism and Trotskyism on the other. These topics are the aspects of radical points of view of the New Left. These Radical aspects were debated during the May 1968 crisis and afterwards.

19. James L. Wood, defines radical political consciousness which is concerned with making changes of the social system in order to obtain freedom and equality. The concept of changes of the social system refers to the large-scale rearrangement of the existing system. Further more, the concept of the systems can refer to large-scale changes of various systems and sub-systems such as the national social system the economic sub-system and the race and ethnic sub-system students activists have commitments for radically alternative social systems vis-a-vis existing capitalist system. These alternative systems would include socialism and an anarchist society without the state of other forms of external regulation of individuals.

See his book : Political Consciousness and Student Activism (California : Sage Publication, 1975), pp. 9-19.

20. Jean Paul Sartre, "Masses, Spontaneity, Party" in The Socialist Register : 1970), (London : The Merlin Press), p. 235.

Capitalism

Capitalism is the common enemy for both the Old Left and the New Left. Socialism or Communism as a social system emerged out of the inhuman exploitation of capitalism. Although the New Left is not as quick to derive various social political conclusions from capitalism as the Old Left, still many in the New Left view capitalism as the source of many problems.²¹ Many of its activists do see capitalism as the source of imperialism, poverty and exploitation. The intellectual²² members of New Left shed new light on the events of May 1968 in the context of capitalism. The focus is here on activists' view of capitalism.

Capitalism refers to an economic system in

21. Alan Swingswood, Marx and Modern Social Theory, (London : Macmillan, 1975), p. 85.

22. James L. Wood, categorizes the intellectual members of New Left under three heads : Student or former students, older white radical thinkers and third world thinkers. The major activists (New Left Critics of Capitalism) are Mark Rudd, Harold Rubin, Alexander Cockburn, Robin Blackburn, Carl Oglesby, Rudy Dutschke, Daniel and Gabriel Cohn Bendit, Alain Krivine, Maria Savio and Carl Davidson. This group of new Left theorists consists of students or former students. The second group of New Left intellectuals consists of Herbert Marcuse, Jean Paul Sartre, C.W. Mills, Andre Gera, Louis Althusser as well as classical old left theorists such as Marx and Trotsky. The other group of New Left theorists is comprised of third world thinkers such as Frantz Fanon, Jacy Newton, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara. See his book, n. 1, p. 20.

which the means of production are privately owned instead of societally owned. Classically a capitalist system involved a sharp division between the owners of the means of production and those who worked for the owners. Marx, of course, referred to this division as the separation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.²³ But in modern times, with the advent of the modern corporations, there has been a change from smaller scale private to large scale corporate capitalism.²⁴ Although there are important differences between classical capitalism and corporate capitalism, both the forms nevertheless involve a smaller group of people owning the means of production and a larger group of wage earners who work for the owners. It is the capitalist system - especially in the modern form - that activists tend to oppose because they feel it leads to exploitation in every aspect of human development.²⁵ In France the New Left activists came out with the observations

23. H. Evans, Karl Marx (London : George Allen and Unwin, 1975), p. 28.

24. John Dunn, Modern Revolutions : An Introduction to the Analysis of Political Phenomenon. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972) p. 75.

25. Ayn Rand, Capitalism, (New York : A Signet Book, 1967), pp. 1-6.

and analysis that under capitalism, it is the law of accumulation of capital that dominates, that imposes its own logic, the logic of technical progress, of the ever-growing effect of production, of the administration by a strong bureaucracy.²⁶ These together had blocked the growth of intellectual freedom and individual liberty. The New Left intellectuals, young and old, held the view that the source of exploitation and repression is capitalism. However, Herbert Marcuse also discusses another modern source of oppression : exploitative bureaucracies which could include modern capitalist and socialist bureaucracies. In his book One Dimensional Man²⁷ Herbert Marcuse has taken another road to polemic, putting all the blame on corporate capitalism. He attributes a large portion of socialist repression to the global domination of corporate capitalism. He feels that this global power keeps the socialist orbit on the defensive, although he is still critical of repressive

26. Conor Cruise O'Brien (ed), Reflections on the Revolution in France, (Harmondsworth:1968), p. 170.

27. Herbert Marcuse has criticized repressive capitalist and socialist bureaucracies in his polemic against "industrial society", not just capitalist society. That is, he felt that technological and bureaucratic requirements of all industrial societies did not permit the fulfilment of many of man's basic needs.
See his Book, One Dimensional Man, (London : Sphere Books, 1972), pp. 19-25.

tendencies in socialist countries.²⁸ Nevertheless his prime target is corporate capitalism.

Marcuse in his Marxist mode of interpretation asserts that the capitalist market system²⁹ has not undergone fundamental change. The market model society has always been one of exploitation and thereby of domination, insuring the class structure of society. However, Herbert Marcuse and Jean Paul Sartre were well aware that at least in France as in U.S.A. many commodities are available to the working classes as well as the upper classes. The existence of these commodities does not prevent them from criticising capitalism for a variety of reasons. First of all, capitalism cannot support all of its citizens, amidst affluence there exists an underclass. Second, the goods and services required for the maintenance of the standard of life in France are directed for imperialist expansion and finally the quality of the commodities offered to the masses by the

28. Ibid, p. 33.

29. Herbert Marcuse on Market Society : His theory of this society is that where the sellers and buyers are in the market and fight in the terms bargaining. In this process one does try to gain over the other. This perpetuates exploitation and domination by rich.
See, An Essay in Liberation, (London : Penguin, 1969), pp. 12-15.

corporate elite is alienating and repressive. The above discussion shows why the new radicals oppose French capitalism (in modern times, corporate capitalism).³⁰

Imperialism

The New Left intellectuals view imperialism in the same breath as capitalism. It is conceived of as a system of relationships - exploitative - that can be supported or opposed as a system. Hence, an opposition to imperialism as a social system would be another instance of radical political consciousness.

Imperialism³¹ usually refers to some form of involvement of one country in the economic, political or military affairs of another country. This became clear when the U.S.A. was involved in aggression in the late 1960s. It was one of the most radical causes for students' Revolt at Berkeley in the U.S.A. and the May 1968 crisis in Paris. The French capitalism in its exploitative phase (imperialist phase) can do

30. Anthony Arblaster, "Student Militancy and the Collapse of Reformism" in Socialist Register 1970, p. 156.

31. George Zichtheim, Imperialism, (London : Allen Lane, 1971), p. 56.

any kind of harm to the working class movement as well as the society as a whole thereby the concept of rational society on the basis of revolutionary ideas and ideals would be a myth and an illusion. In the situations in U.S. and France in the late sixties, the new radicals like Mark Rudd, Rudi Dutschke, Daniel Cohn Benbit, Jean Paul Sartre Alain Krivine, Henry Weber etc. took the ideological position that the central focus of the New Left is to oppose imperialism. They specifically singled out Vietnam in this context, but the fear of imperialist policies of other industrial societies including France was in their minds.

Up to this point we have primarily discussed what the New Left is against - there is evidence of many members of the New Left are against capitalism, imperialism and power structures. Before discussing of what the New Left is for, the ideology of New Left reflected in May 1968 in Paris is analysed in the next section.

The student movement of 1968 in France was not a kind of students' unrest as happened in other countries.³³ It was a pointer to many things: traditional

33. Paul Jenson, "The New Spectre haunting Europe" New Statesman, (London : 1968), vol.76, 24 May 1968, p. 675.

as well as revolutionary. In regard to the former aspect, the student movement started due to certain accumulated reasons like the rigid centralization, the rigid decision of faculties leaving student little chance to switch the ruthless guillotine of examinations, the absence of contact between professors and students, no library facilities for the increased number of students, no scope for social life, disorderly reforms in syllabus.

Broadly speaking the ideological or revolutionary character of the student movement was determined by two dominant trends; anti-establishment and also against the anti-establishment. In other words, it was against de Gaulle's regime and at the same time it was against traditional old left - the French Communist Party. Objectively looking at the crisis of the French society would pose two important questions: first, what were its causes and objectives? In the University - the French crisis was a crisis within this institution - the students discovered the absurdity of a centralized system unchanged for the 150 years, incapable of changing, distilling a culture out of touch with the needs of present society.³³ Deprived

33. Daniel Cohn Bendit, Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968) p. 66.

of any possibility of joint work and exchanges with Professors, to say nothing of contention and of working for the future - they found themselves faced with a government whose reforming ambition was limited, under the guise of adaption, to tightening the bonds of education to the capitalist system. The students influenced by the ideas of revolutionary "gurus", challenged the content of education, pedagogical methods, and the social significance of the culture, its class character and therefore demanded both a legitimate place for student power and autonomy for the Universities.³⁴

The student-radicals linked the student movement with that of the workers and made a French connection, i.e. the factories became Universities and the Universities were converted into factories. The influence of the students on workers was more effective than the traditional or official left parties. The culmination of it was the occupation of the factories by the workers.

For its part the workers' movement, by the spontaneous occupation of factories and the general strikes of May 1968 was a struggle against capitalism. The principal reason was the policy of voluntary

34. Jean-Francois Revel, Without Marx or Jesus (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1971), pp. 40-43.

slow-down of expansion and of induced unemployment, reflected in de Gaulle's stabilization of an authoritative and repressive capitalism.³⁵ The economic choices of the government were accompanied by classic counterparts in the capitalist regime: growing social and regional inequalities and fiscal benefits to private profits and companies at the expense of wage earners. In the face of a policy so unfavourable to their interests and in the face of so many accumulated affronts, the workers, and notably the youth, did not feel that the old forces of the left were capable of bearing the burden of their protest nor above all that the Parliament was adequate to translate it into action. They occupied their factories, thereby insisting on a regime that would better satisfy their demands. In actual fact that means a regime of socialism - which the New Left student-radicals were demanding.³⁶

The students were carrying two flags: black and red, the first representing anarchism and second for Marxism. The student leaders (who were theorizing the May events) of both the radical trends were heading different groups, namely anarchist group, Trotskyists

35. Ibid., p. 12.

36. Daniel Singer, Prelude to Revolution: France in May 1968 (London: Jonathan Cape 1970), p. 33.

group, Maoist group and unified socialist students.³⁷ These group leaders did play a key role. Their aim was to overthrow the repressive consumer society³⁸ by a kind of creative or spontaneous revolutionary method advocated by Daniel Cohn Benbit. On the other extreme, there was an alienation of students from the ideology of the official Left.

The student-radicals who were vehemently opposing the traditional outlook of the old left (French Communist Party) made two assumptions regarding the creation of a new revolutionary parti vis-a-vis the official left. The first assumption was the formation of a new revolutionary party to the left of the PCF

37. Patrick Scale and Maureen McGonville, French Revolution 1968 (London: Penguin Books, 1968), p.128.

38. Consumer Society: In this context, the consumer society is defined by the student-radicals like, Cohn Benbit, Rudi Dutschke, Alain Krivine, Henry Weber influenced by the revolutionary masters Herbert Marcuse and Jean Paul Sartre - is that where the so-called abundance of goods contradicts and ignores the demands of life. In May 1968, the solidarity with Vietnam went hand in hand with the rejection of the consumer society. French capitalism is the most complete model of this society. The New Left radicals forced this consumer society to come to the negotiation table - consumer or industrial society, it is called carnivorous flower.

Cohn Benbit, n.33, pp.20-21.

consisting of all these Maoists, Trotskyites and anarchist Communists who for many years had been harassing the party of Waldeck-Rochet and who undoubtedly joined the PSU and the most hard-line worker elements. The second assumption was that the crisis of May 1968 signified the emergence of a student movement which had to be reckoned with as a force in the French political scene. The second seems to be more significant because its original thesis was to breakaway from the old traditional left.

The minority groups made a commendable contribution so that the capitalist society was shaken to its very foundations. Because of their leadership and efforts, the rebellion against a repressive University was turned into a struggle against an oppressive society.³⁹ The ideology of New Left during the late 1960s or particularly in 1968 is expressed by these groups. Here we would discuss one by one different groups and their ideological content vis-a-vis old communists-^{the} Communist Party of France.

39. Josef Schloifstein, "Modern Problems of Revolutionary Struggle", Political Affairs, vol. 47, June 1968, p. 25.

Anarchism :

Anarchism as a political philosophy has the following principles: First, Man is essentially a benign creature. He was born good or with a potentiality for goodness but he has been corrupted by the habits and institutions of society - particularly private property and the state are artificial agencies through which man exploit and corrupt each other. Second, social change must be spontaneous, direct and mass-based. Political Parties, trade unions - indeed all organized movements are themselves creatures of authority. Third, industrial civilization, no matter what the form of ownership of the means of production, warps the human spirit. Any society built on an industrial structure is bound to debase the motives and impulses of those who live in it. Essential for anarchist thought, however, is the rejection of all coercive authority exercised by men over men.⁴⁰ Anarchism postulates that without coercion and stringent outside regulations everyone would have greater possibilities to develop his potential creative personality. Some anarchists reject violence. But revolutionary violence is advocated or atleast implied but, unlike

40. The Encyclopaedia of Britannica, vol.1, p.575.

the communist variety, it is to come to pass without benefit of a hierarchical party on leaders who impose their will on an organized movement.⁴¹

Daniel Cohn Bendit who was leading the May 1968 students' revolt was representing the ideology of anarchism. The anarchist leaders had the ideological position that their political attitude was not determined by a study of Proudhon or Bakunin or Kropotkin - the famous anarchists. It combined hatred for Gaullist capitalism, disappointment with the Soviet experiment and contempt for communist bureaucracy, leading to a mistrust of any structured organization.

Trotskyism:

Trotsky is for the party-liners an old enemy. Trotsky, who was Lenin's partner in the October Revolution 1917 and the founder of the Red Army, was for years the hated heretic. The party-liners thought they had got rid of his shadow. The revolutionary lull and Stalinist methods made it possible to isolate the Trotskyists. The ideas of Trotsky - his criticism of Stalinist bureaucracy and his concept of permanent revolution⁴² - found a new public among the young. In

41. E. Salvort, Revolution and Revolutionaries, (New York: Elsevier, 1976), p. 123.

42. Leon Trotsky, Revolution Betrayed (London: Faber, 1937), pp. 280-95.

May 1968, the famous Trotskyite organizations like FER (Federation of Revolutionary Students) and JCR (Jeunesse communiste révolutionnaire) or (Revolutionary Communist Youth) were prominent. Alain Krivine was the famous Trotskyite theoretician of that May crisis. Trotskyite groups became violent by necessity. The young people from these social categories in contact with realities tried to change the society. They wanted to smash Stalinist bureaucracy.⁴³ The Stalinist bureaucracy was confronted by the growing revolt of the students and workers in all workers' states. The intellectuals of this group alongwith others wanted to create a revolutionary Marxist organization that would fight for the victory of a socialist revolution so that the power of the workers would not just be an empty phrase.

Maclat's Group:

The members of this group attacked the orthodox whom they preferred to call the revisionist communist party. These students were interested in organizing

43. Cohn Bendit said "what I enjoyed after 13 May demonstration, was to have been at the head of the parade with the Stalinist Scoundrels in tow in the rear." See Cohn Bendit, n.33, p.57.

the workers in order to serve the people. Their attack was both on the system and the Old Left. This group of revolutionaries was influenced by the Chinese cultural revolution with its anti-bureaucratic message.⁴⁴ Mostly school students were the members of this group. Their slogan was - 'Freedom of Action in School', by which they meant agitation, distributing tracts, boycotting classes, disrupting exams. In their minds they often equated class struggle with struggle in class rooms. Like their revolutionary elder brothers and sisters, they fought for the same rights: freedom to run their own affairs, freedom to have their say, freedom to take part in politics, freedom to make love, and normal sex life at seventeen.

Syndicalists:

Besides these groups, there was another group which merited the attention of the old traditional left. It was the Syndicalist group - Unified Socialist Students. Jacques Sauvageot was the Syndicalist leader. The members of this group opposed and criticized the repressive aspects of corporate capitalism. They repeatedly called for liberation of oppressed people by student activists as well as for their own liberation from

44. Lowell Dittmer, Liu Shao-chi and the Chinese Cultural Revolution, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p.128.

bureaucratic constraints, power structures and other inhibiting circumstances. These demands were all aspects of antagonism to external controls over individuals, especially by such agencies as the state.

These were the ultra-revolutionary groups which were upholding the platform of Marx, Bakunin, Lenin, Trotsky, Sartre, Marcuse, Mao, Frantz Fanon, Castro and Che Guevara. Though these groups thought differently, they worked together against the Establishment and wanted to break the revisionist force of Stalinist Communism. The student-rebels spoke out on many things which provided food for the survival of the New Left. Among these, the prominent ones are oppressive consumer society, guerrilla warfare, revolution, alienation, working class and old left.

The students, in addition to the academic reasons, took a strong objection to the character of French society. They complained that technocratic society does not prepare them to play any role, does not offer them enough opportunities and they rejected the oppressive society and its principles in toto. The student-rebels opposed the technical society neither for its technology nor the technician, but for the diversion

of technology towards ends which they judge oppressive for mankind.⁴⁵ Even those who did not state the matter so clearly felt at the very least the absence of any ideals or goals for human action in technocratic society. They found neither a career waiting for them, nor any logic in beginning a career at all in a world where there are no longer any ideological movements to carry them along.⁴⁶ There were radical slogans during the student revolt: "Your society is sick and you and your capitalism are the sickness requiring destruction."

Secondly, the students were radically influenced by the ideas of Che Guevara and Regis Debray. Specifically, they picked up the dominant and effective revolutionary principle, guerrilla warfare. The students stood in the presence of a genuine revolution, but modelled on the Cuban revolution of Fidel, Che, and Regis Debray rather than on the classical prototypes. Any way the student-rebels plan conformed to a model of revolution. Revolution in the Revolution by Regis Debray was their handbook for action.⁴⁷ One

45. Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man, n. 27, pp. 56-60.

46. J. Ellul, The Technological Society (London: Jonathan Cape, 1964), p. 222.

47. Oglesby Carl, "Revolution, Violence and non-violence", Liberation, July/August 1968.

of their most important doctrines of the book is the guerrilla movement. It was steadily applied during the fateful days of May 1968. Observers witnessed a number of guerrilla technical achievements of the students: accurate positioning of barricades, pneumatic drills and quick destruction of pavements for missiles, wires placed across the streets at ankle and neck level to break the police advance in the night, Molotov cocktails, hit and run tactics, etc.

Alienation :

These students' interest in Marx centres mainly on the recently rediscovered early writings, with their emphasis on the total alienation of man in present society from the true and free life of the species. What the new radicals or new ^{left} radicals are asserting is a combination of paranoid conspiracy theory and a similarly extreme approach to the theory of knowledge.⁴⁸ They are asserting that the total structure of the world we live in is biased and corrupted by "the class system to the extent that nearly every aspect of existing society is engaged in distorting, crushing and oppressing the human spirit which is, as a result in a state of

⁴⁸. B. Pileman, Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in a Capitalist Society, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p.83.

complete alienation from its true and free nature"⁴⁹.

The alienation as argued by the New Left intellectuals has two broad dimensions: alienation from the radical ideology of the Old Left, and the alienation from the political system. As far as the former category is concerned, the working class, particularly the younger section of the workers, was completely alienated from the French Communist Party. They held that the French Communist Party had adopted a reformist approach to the problems of workers, what the old CP has been doing is nothing but middle class reformism in the name of working people and working class movement. Secondly, the French Communist Party generally speaks with two voices, combining Leninist ideological phrases with electoral and reformist practices.⁵⁰ So this kind of reformist behaviour of the old CP provided the scope for the alienation of workers from the left ideology as such.

49. Lichtheim, P. "Alienation" in David L. Shils (ed) International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, vol. 1, (New York: Free Press, 1968), p. 35.

50. Daniel Cohn Bendit says "The Communist Party of France continues to publish some works of Marx and of Lenin and of other revolutionaries, even though these writings have ceased to have any bearing on the party's practical policies. It behaves like all reformist bodies plays the electoral game, adopts the practices of bourgeois democracy, is deeply involved in the system and makes pacts of all sorts with capitalists.

Cohn Bendit, n. 33, pp. 147-50.

Besides, the New Left leaders also talk about the alienation from the existing political system which was nothing but the personal property of General de GAULLE for ten years (1958-1968). The attack of the New Left on political system does tell how the exploitative system has made individuals to alienate from the self as well as from the external environment. There is alienation from the existing political system which the authorities and the power structure have arranged in such a way as to keep real dissent from challenging that power structure.⁶¹ The issue that runs through all ideological debates is the right to dissent in societies that have been eroded or have never developed that right. In the attempt to develop the concept of dissent nearly all the radical New Left leaders advocate the theory which stresses on workers' control as an expression of the decision to move the focal point of personal freedom from the abstract to something more concrete. Freedom and participation in one's place of work are to replace constituency or party list democratic choice.

61. Daniel Bell, "The Debate on Alienation" in Leb. des (ed) Revisionism, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963), pp. 93-95.

NEW LEFT VS OLD LEFT

Although the New Left activists employ the usual terminology of the left in denouncing conservatism, capitalism, and bureaucracy, yet their bitterest contempt is reserved for traditional communism. Traditional communism is disliked by the New Left militants almost as much as capitalism, the dictatorships of Eastern Europe, together with the general increase in prosperity that has taken place in the western world. [Since Marx made his dire prophecies of gradual pauperization, events have rendered traditional communist approach extremely unattractive. 52]

The role of the French Communist Party in the May 1968 revolutionary crisis showed how the conservative left party is outflanked by the new militants. The French CP and the CGT (Confederation General de Travail - General Confederation of Labour), had been constantly taken by surprise during the various phases of the revolutionary crisis in May. They neither saw the crisis in capitalism nor the social crisis coming which were properly understood by the new radicals. For several days they did not believe that a major political crisis, perhaps leading to the fall of the regime, could be possible. Nor did they

52. Herbert Marcuse, Soviet Marxism (New York, 1958), pp. 17-58.

believe in the strength of the revolutionary groups of the extreme left. This explains why the French Communist Party was constantly running behind the revolutionary tide. It was not able to direct the events of those days until after it had resumed control over the situation. This is a result of the hesitations (which were fatal to the revolutionary theory as well as to practice) and the instinctive distrust of the party towards the complex movements which take place outside the party's own schemes and which sometimes inspire a certain kind of fear in it.⁵³

The old conservative Communist Party did not openly want to go beyond the limits of legality and in this respect it was backed up by the CGT - labour union of the Communist Party. This was true partly because it did not really want a power take-over for which it was not prepared and which would have become

53. Cohn Bendit says, "The Communist Party during the days of May played the game of the state and the bourgeoisie in theory no less than in practice. The party did not make an attempt to analyse the real function of a University in a hierarchic society, namely its support of the hierarchy. The party also did not oppose to a social hierarchy."

Cohn Bendit, n. 33, pp. 118-21.

possible only after a gigantic and unexpected surprise. During this period of May, the action of the CP was less aimed at revolutionary conquest by direct force than at getting the regime to yield in the face of intimidation and intoxication through a skillful policy of pressure.⁵⁴ The PCF tried to smother the government, to exhaust it in a war of nerves of exceptional intensity, rather than to overthrow it by pure force. It wanted the government to resign so that it could appear as its quasi-legal successor, (a clear expression of the reformist policy of conservative Communist Party). The PCF decided not to go beyond the limits of legality and it shied away from insurrection. This was certainly not because it respected the former and repudiate the latter. The essential reasons were that it realized that it was very difficult to achieve its goal beyond the framework of legality, because the holy alliance between the old CP and the middle class would be disrupted. Secondly, the decisive reason was that it was afraid of the determination and strength of General de Gaulle.

54. Christian Garcia, "French CP, Communists, Some Unpardonable Errors", Le communiste, (Paris : No. 143, 1968) June, p. 2.

Lastly, the revolutionary potentiality of the Communist Party was at stake, that is why it considered de Gaulle, the Lenin of the movement 1968*. The Communist Party which gradually lost the support of the workers, particularly the young workers, was very critical of the extreme left militants. It resumed the language of insult to militants of the left with whom it did not agree on classless society.⁵⁵ Moreover, in the background the PCF and the CGT have constantly sought to put a brake on the movement instead of letting it develop all its strength. There are two reasons for this. The first is the refusal of the PCF to let a socialist transformation take place over which it would not have complete control. There is no possible compromise with this attitude; it must go either because the PCF evolves or because it is replaced in the leadership of the struggle.

The second reason for the CP braking effort is still more important. In multiplying the

55. Classless society : Althusser writes, "In a class society the ideology is the relay through which and the element in which the relationship of the people to their living conditions is regulated for the benefit of the dominant class. In a classless society, the ideology is the relay through which and the element in which the relationship of the people to their living conditions is lined for the benefit of all the people." Louis Althusser, For Marx, (London : Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 200-25.

initiatives of popular management at the base, the recent movement has given an image of very great freedom to the socialist society it is working to create⁵⁶. But in the eyes of the Communist Party a socialist society is a centralized and authoritarian society over a very long phase. Hence, the May movement of 1968 appeared to the Communist Party mistaken in its orientation. This is the fundamental ideological conflict.

What it all boils down to is that the ideological errors committed by the leaders of the Party and the CGT were unpardonable because firstly, they helped the Gaullist government to survive and secondly, they allowed to take advantage of a breathing space, while it could have fallen before the mighty assault of the working class and new radicals. J.P. Sartre, who was helping the new revolutionaries theoretically as well as practically, said that the Communist Party betrayed the May Revolution. "If the flag of

56. Freedom in the socialist society

Socialist society is a free society. France is a country developed enough not to need police pressure to accelerate the centralization of the collective savings. It is not the Soviet model that can represent the socialism here. The crisis that France has just lived through shows that the Communist Party has changed nothing of its basic orientation and in the type of society for which it is working.

Andra Compara, "Towards a New Extremism Left in France", Le Figaro(French)(Paris, 25 June 1968)p.7.

the socialism is not flying from the Eiffel Tower, the fault lies with this Communist Party trained since 1945 not to take power, not to question the divisions of the world performed at Yalta."⁵⁷ He also added that the communists had stopped to ask themselves how one should make a revolution in advanced countries. The party leadership was afraid of the revolution because it had no confidence either in the revolutionary abilities of the workers nor in that of the new radicals. It has become a bureaucratic brake on revolutionary change. It failed to behave like revolutionary cadres but like of the leaders of scared petty bourgeois, bewildered by events and scrambling around for something to say

57. Marcuse calls the working classes of advanced industrial society as the hell of the affluent society. He thinks the working classes are as much deceived and corrupted by material prosperity as everyone else.

Herbert Marcuse further goes to the extent of saying that worst of all, industrial society has killed the urge to resistance. The class war between bourgeoisie and workers has ended not only in collusion between the labour unions and the employers but in a reconciliation of the workers to their own condition, they are all so well off in their own eyes that they can no longer act as agents of historical transformation. Workers and bourgeois, united by their desire to preserve existing institutions, suffer from the same disease, the Hegelian "happy consciousness" form of comfortable self-deception about their own true interests; they believe that productivity, industrial output, more and more consumer goods are to everyone's advantage. Georges BOURARD, "Why the Flag of Socialism is not flying from the Eiffel Tower" Humanite (French), (Paris, 16 July, 1968), p. 4.

in a vacuum tube.⁵⁸ To say, in concrete terms, the traditional left is bankrupt. It should go.

The New Left as a movement had certain beliefs and ideology. Though the leaders and activists of this movement were drawn from the affluent upper middle class stratum of the western society, they did not have that middle class hangover on bourgeois rationalist mode of thinking. They wanted to liberate the people of the lower order of society from the oppressive state machinery and also from the long-standing illusory ideology of the traditional left parties. Simultaneously they wanted to set up a new society which does not give scope to the illusions of the bourgeois nor of the reformist communist practices. The Marxism of the New Left is not based on Old Marx but on a New Marx.⁵⁹ For the Marx the New Left intellectuals follow is not so much the economist, the later Marx, the author of Das Kapital, but rather Marx the sociologist, the author of the early writings, of

58. Richard Jonson, The French Communist Party versus the Students, (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 123-25.

59. Maurice Cranston, The New Left, (London : Bodley Head, 1970), p. 11.

the Philosophical and Economic Manuscripts. Their Marxism is that they consider themselves as Hegelian metaphysicians, neither positivists nor scientific determinists.⁶⁰ Hence their Marx is the philosopher of alienation. In other words, the New Left gives new life to Marx in the role of a philosopher.

[Secondly, the New Left differs from Old Left on the question of the role of working class as a revolutionary force. Marx himself theorizes that the working classes of advanced industrial society would become progressively more impoverished. In the process they would reach such a situation that it would be humanly intolerable for them to bear the economic burden and the poverty. Then only, they would be in a position to enact the role of the universal revolutionary class overthrowing the capitalist system and introducing socialism. This theory of Marx has become an outdated one. The New Left does not entertain this hope. It despairs of any revolutionary action from the workers of the western world. Herbert Marcuse's approach to this

60. Chalmers Jonson, Revolutionary Change, (Boston : Brown and Company, 1966), p. 138.

problem is a notable one. In the analysis of New Left such workers have become status-quoist and bourgeois and thereby the part of the Establishment. ⁶¹

While the New Left does ^{not} believe in the revolutionary role of the working class in the industrial society, they, at the same time, have found another proletariat suggested to them by Mao and Frantz Fanon. This new proletariat is composed of the impoverished peasants and rural workers of the third world and also the Negro inhabitants of the American ghettos, together with miscellaneous alienated drop-outs from the western bourgeois universities. Colonial revolts are seen as signs of life in this new proletariat. ⁶²

Thirdly, the New Left believed in freedom and democracy and was prepared to fight for these ideals. Jean Paul Sartre who gave a philosophical base to the movement has been emphasising the freedom of individual. For freedom, endows him with a sense of responsibility. This view of freedom was

61. Richard Coabin, The Origins of Modern Leftism, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 14.

62. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, Tr. C. Farrington, (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 70.

supported by Herbert Marcuse. That is why the New Left believes and subscribes to a synthesis which brings and binds together the best of democracy and Marxism. The intellectuals of the New Left stress also on participatory democracy because within the contemporary approaches to democracy, participatory democracy is a revolutionary notion. The entire approach of the New Left built on the notion of participatory democracy is designed to produce a sea-change in modern politics and society.

The most dominant principle of the ideology of the New Left is the glorification of violence. This aspect of the New Left ideology sharply demarcates it from traditional Marxist thought. To Marx, revolutionary violence might be inevitable in the need of the hour before the creation of revolutionary situation. But Marx regretted it and he had no sympathy with those insurrectionists and anarchists who relished the prospect of revolutionary violence. Equally, the orthodox communists, irrespective of their approach to different situations in different periods of history, play down the role of

violence. The communist theory proclaims minimal force.⁶³ It speaks of peace.

Fanon gives several reasons for thinking that "violence is good." Violence alone, he writes, violence committed by the people, violence educated and organized by its leaders makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths and gives the key to them. At another place Fanon writes : "At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force." He advocates the use of violence as an important device in the struggle against European colonialism. "Violence frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction. It makes him fearless and restores his self-respect."⁶⁴ Fanon goes further and suggests that violence is politically advantageous as well. "When they have taken violent part in the national liberation they will allow no one to set themselves up as liberators.. illuminated by violence, the consciousness of the people rebels against any pacification. From now on the demagogues, the opportunists, and the magicians have a difficult task." Hence, Fanon's faith

63. Lawrence Stone, "Theories of Revolution", World Politics, Vol. 18 (January 1956), p. 159.

64. Maurice Cranston, n. 59, p. 13.

in violence has already become the established principle of the New Left ideology.⁶⁵

Jean Paul Sartre was also the champion of violence in politics. Violence, he says pervades all existing institutions and political relationships, therefore, the only way to make any impact on them is to use violence. He argues that all political societies rest on institutionalized terror. Marcuse agrees with Sartre that the institutions of existing societies rest on violence and that violence is required to overthrow them. The New Left does not advocate the violence used to uphold domination but the violence used against the established authorities. Marcuse does say that revolution entails violence. He only gives support to the philosophy of New Left that as long as violence comes from below, from the 'oppressed', it is acceptable. Here Herbert Marcuse is very frank in his scorn for the belief of Gandhi and Martin Luther King in non-violent resistance.

When the students of Paris in 1968 evoked

65. F. Fanon, Wretched of the Earth, n. 62, p. 74.

the wretched of the earth, they were thinking of Frantz Fanon. The revolt is pure violence and violence is the motive force of every action. It was the logical line for the movement of Daniel Cohn Bendit. The radical students of May 1968 in Paris were raising slogans that without revolutionary violence no revolutionary movement is possible. Daniel Cohn Bendit was holding the banner of "violence is joy, violence is fruitful because in it, desires take flesh".⁶⁶ Besides, they believed in dialectical reasoning, changing society by revolutionary action and social revolution.

66. Daniel Cohn Bendit, "Student Power and the Business of Intellectuals", *Reportage*, vol. 6-7, (1967-69), June 29, 1968, p. 22.

CHAPTER - III

DECLINE OF THE NEW LEFT IN FRANCE ?

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The early part of 1960s witnessed the reformist ideology of the New Left but the later part of 1960s went a step further in its radical surge. Apparently, the New Left movement in terms of activities reached its peak in the late sixties. It is said that the early 1970s is the period of decline for the New Left. The debatable point is about the decline of the New Left. Here, our intention is to study in the following pages whether it is declining and if so how and why, and if not where does it exist.

An objective analysis of the ideology of the New Left predominantly portrays two things :

- i. the role of the revolutionary ideas; and
- ii. the role of revolutionaries.

THE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS

As far as this topic is concerned it is the modification of the revolutionary ideas of the earlier period in the context of the spirit and demand of the situations and circumstances. Most conspicuously, the role of the working class as a revolutionary

force is minimized in the western industrial society. Marx predicted that the workers would act as the agents of social transformation in the coming future, and that the workers would be armed with the theories of revolution and build a "classless" society where only one class exists - the proletariat. Secondly, about the role of revolutionary violence for overthrowing the capitalist society is also a modification of the official Left.¹ Along with this, other modifications to the traditional communism are only the play and interplay of revolutionary ideas.

This kind of debate about the theories of revolution, Marxism, by the intellectuals of the New Left is always of the highest level. Some of the intellectuals of the New Left have developed a critique of the ideology which is destroying higher education and simultaneously the working class movement.² The new radicals also are debating how the workers have become status - quoist. They feel

1. Herbert Marcuse says, "New Leftism considers that violence as the essential force that weakens the protest against it" in Robert P. Wolff, Barrington Moore and Herbert Marcuse, A Critique of Pure Tolerance (Boston : Beacon Press, 1966), p. 103.

2. Goran Therborn, "The Frankfurt School" in New Left Review, (London : No. 60, March-April, 1970), p. 94.

that the workers are losing their revolutionary potentiality not only because of the advantages of the consumer society but also due to the failure of the official left to politicize them in the line of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy, so by evolving a critique of ideology, the members of the New Left want to give a new base to Marxism, thus giving a new lease of life to it.

The critique that the left radicals uphold is only effective if it is taken up by the exploited masses in a revolutionary struggle. It is true that at that moment (during the late sixties and early seventies) the students and the self-proclaimed revolutionaries were fighting for the global revolutionary struggle. But the revolutionary action on the part of the working class has not disappeared in the western countries. During the days of May crisis, it took the form of wildcat strikes and outbreaks of violence led by the young workers. All this theorization about the revolutionary potentialities of the workers, the prospect of revolution in western countries, the emergence of new radical ideology as an alternative to the official left, revolutionary vanguards, the new proletariat, students and the intellectuals as new social forces etc. have remained at the

level of abstraction. These ideas were confined to the ivory towers where the revolutionary students and the intellectuals stay in for the formal discussion on Marxism.

Secondly, the revolutionary ideas of many New Left activists are not systematized in a particular ideology. There are always many theses, anti-theses, therefore, the synthesis was diluted, forbidding the evolution of a particular ideology. So the concrete expression of an ideology is yet to be formed. The New Left intellectuals belonging to the western countries and third world countries are riding different vehicles, going by different roads to reach the same destiny. That is why there are different constituents of the New Left, like anarchists, Trotskyites, Maoists etc. Therefore, their arrival at the target of building a socialist society is yet to take place.

Thirdly, the critique of the ideology by the New Left must be accepted by the exploited masses if their goal is to be achieved. During the period between the late sixties and the early seventies, their ideology was attractive only to the young workers. They did not have a particular organization in which the workers could organize

for the revolutionary undertakings. They had only different groups representing various themes of ideology of many revolutionaries like Trotsky, Herbert Marcuse, Che Guevara.

Fourthly, the call for revolutionary violence to overthrow the regime of de Gaulle was not accepted by the old workers.

Finally, the student radicals did not stand to the appreciation of the masses for the creation of new kind of society because the student rebels were considered as romantic revolutionaries, or at most utopians.³

All these reasons were attributable to the failure of the New Left activists' attempt to change a capitalistic exploitative system into a socialist one. But that was more a failure of the New Left activists in bringing a revolutionary change in French society, but not a decline of the New Left. It was a revolutionary failure which is a springboard. As a source of theory, it accumulates

3. Edward Batalov, The Philosophy of Revolt : Criticism of the Left Radical Ideology, Tr. from Russian into English by Katherine Juderson (Moscow : Progress Publishers, 1975), p. 20.

experience and knowledge.⁴

The decline of the New Left ideology is visualized only in the context of a particular historical situation, May 1968. In other words, it was a failure at a particular point of historical phase of social conflict to change the world and transform the human condition. The revolutionary failure of the New Left provided a new theory to the philosophy of Marxism. The revolutionary phenomenon was placed in its historical context. The critique of everyday life became the core of the new radical theory. Every revolutionary project, therefore, required that a profound analysis of modern society and the forms of alienation characteristic to it be undertaken. The light of theoretical analysis was thus redirected from the study of economic factors (mode of production, law of diminishing returns, surplus value, etc.) towards the critique of everyday life.⁵

4. Roger Garaudy, The Turning Point of Socialism (London : Fontana, 1969), pp. 125-35.

5. Richard Gombin, The Origins of Modern Leftism (England : Penguin Books 1975), pp. 60-65.

THE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARIES

The other dimension regarding the New Left conizance is the revolutionaries or the new radicals. The outward as well as the inward posture of these new radicals is simply the postures of the dissident groups. They are either alienated ^{from} the ideology of the official left or they are fighting for a place in the revolutionary struggle. These revolutionaries comprised of professors, student-radicals, a few revolutionary theoreticians and activists. Their social origin is from the middle class and they are fighting against the middle class ideology.⁶

This group of new revolutionaries did develop a new perspective of Marxism which, on the one side, invented the crisis of capitalism and, on the other, the crisis of socialism. It was very much true that in the late sixties and early seventies French capitalism was entering a different historical phase of actual exploitation. It entered a phase of prolonged stagnation, intensified international competition

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-72.

and monetary disorder⁷ which compelled the bourgeois government to impose certain reformist programmes on the working class. In the meantime, the Communist Party also did not take any revolutionary initiative to exploit the situation. Had the situation been exploited, the story of the Leftism in France would have been different. The old communist party failed to recognize that the situation was pregnant with conflicts and social upheavals.⁸ Hence, this phase of French capitalism generated many contradictions which led to the crisis in Capitalism.

The New Left thinkers did not agree on all essential points. For instance, Herbert Marcuse was contradicted by many including Kolakowski, Cohn Bendit, etc. The main reason for this was that the New Left included many, ranging from the neo-Marxists disillusioned with the bureaucratic communism of Soviet Union to neo-Hegelians like Marcuse.⁹ The result was that complete unanimity, considered to be an essential feature of a constructive and

7. John Gretton, Students and Workers (London : Macdonald and Co. 1969), pp. 25-30.

8. Cohn Bendit, Osaclete Communism : The Left Wing Alternative (New York : McGraw Hill, 1968), pp. 49-52.

9. Goran Therborn, n. 2, p. 53.

coherent ideology, was not found in the approaches of New Left radicals to socio-economic problems. It is, therefore, said that the New Leftists :

".... are inspired by a genuine concern to protect human person and rights. But they are not clear as to what changes they envisage and how can they achieve them They seem to oscillate between their allegiance to Marxism which was a product of the nineteenth century industrial revolution and the new world that is emerging in the wake of industrial and technological crisis of our time ... They are perhaps all transitional thinkers trying to solve the problems of advanced technological society with the help of an apparatus belonging to a former one."¹⁰

The New Left intellectuals did attack the orthodox and reformist communist as developed in the Soviet Communist Party behind the iron curtain. Instead they thought of a new variety of socialism based on the practicable propositions of Marxism. In this context Herbert Marcuse said, "We are today faced with a highly developed technically advanced industrial society, which is at the same time a well-functioning and cohesive society. The alternative to this state of affairs is socialism, neither

10. V.R. Mehta, "Marxism in the Modern World" in Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. XXXVI, No. 4, 1975, p. 320.

of the Stalinist brand nor of the post-Stalinist brand but that of libertarian socialism which has always been the integral concept of socialism." This type of socialism would be in step with the premises of a democratic system, so that people would have the boons of freedom, development and happiness. It also would provide a new condition for creating new man and new needs. It does not simply consist in providing "to the masses those forms of comfort, luxury or art, once the sole prerogative of the privileged classes, but rather in creating new needs and new means of satisfying them, thus also creating unprecedented forms of happiness, of beauty and of life itself."¹¹

The New Left radicals were not clear as to the kind of socialist society nor of the revolution. any ways to achieve it. All the same the New Left is revolutionary. Despite all the revolutionary talk that could be heard in France even today among radical young people many have no clear idea of what a revolution implies and no one knows how a revolution is going to be made in a country like France.

11. Roger Garaudy, n. 4, p. 199.

The student revolutionaries agree in the long run they want to replace capitalism with a non-repressive socialistic society but are confused and divided over short-run goals. Their idea of establishing a libertarian socialistic society remained as a fictitious entity - it is too abstract to be implemented. It became an impossible task to the part of the New Left intellectual minority to make the revolution successful because the workers in their majority were beyond their reach. At that period in the early 1970s the question was : how students could make contact with workers and influence them in a revolutionary direction. When all the workers of France did not become the part of New Left ideology, only a minority section of the 10 million workers supported them, it was obvious that their new-fangled libertarian socialism had not such attractive force.

The most important reason which is attributed to the failure of the New Left during the early seventies was the challenge coming from the basic Leninist conception of the party : the hierarchically organized, highly disciplined vanguard claiming for itself a monopoly of revolutionary leadership. The New Left seemed to have a very clear idea of what to put in the place of this conception but the general

tenor of New Left thinking seemed to be reliably reflected in the following statement by Gohn Benoit, one of the founders of the March 32nd movement.

"It is necessary to abandon the theory of the leading avant garde to adopt another much more simple, much more decent and honest - of the active minority which plays the role of the permanent fermenting agent, encouraging action without claiming to lead ... In certain objective situations - with the help of an active minority spontaneity that permits the thrust forward and not the slogans and directives of a leading."

The idea here seems to be that the active minority was organized probably loosely in a number of groups and tried to exercise its influence on the masses through action and example rather than through attempting to educate and organize them. Here it is easy to see how this kind of thinking developed as a reaction to the rigid dogmatism and authoritarian pretensions of the traditional communist parties with their dismal no-win record stretching back (in the advanced capitalist countries) over a half a century. The impossible task of the New Left was to bring out a successful revolution with the help of an active minority based on loose groups and organizations and spontaneity. Hence, the lack of solid party organization with the concrete revolutionary ideology

made it an impossible task for the New Left in France to achieve the goal. To conclude : it is futile to imagine that a revolution can be accomplished without strong centralized leadership, without authority, without discipline is to fly in the face of all the lessons of history.¹² So the outright rejection of Lenin's concept of the party by the New Left created certain disbelief and mistrust among the workers and contributed to the failure of the revolutionary movement.

On the other hand, the new intellectual radicals provided a new theory of organization in the early seventies. This new theory says that organization must grow out of action and reflect the needs of action. Strategy, planning over fairly long periods, coordination, and organization may be necessary to accomplish them. But organization can never be an end in itself, nor can theory or planning or coordinating be ends in themselves. Organization must grow out of these needs and must be completely fluid, changing with the shape of the

12. Roger Garaudy, Harrison in the Twentieth Century (London : Collins, 1970), pp. 40-46.

needs within these bounds. So the heart and brains of any organisation must be in its activists and its local action committees not in any central committee.¹³

To sum up, the reasons for the failure of New Left movement in achieving liberatarian Socialism were abstract theories of Marxism, abstract ideas which were not accepted by the working class as a whole, incoherent, interpretation of the philosophy of Marxism, the betrayal by the French Communist Party, the non-responsiveness of the workers and the accumulated forces of bourgeois democracy.

It might be wrong to say that the seventies was the period of the decline of New Left. It is hence correct to say that at a particular point of time and stage of the historical class struggle, the New Left movement failed. Since then (after May 1968) the splinter groups like Anarchist groups, Trotskyite groups, Maoist groups are operating with the same ideological wings. They are waiting for another historical opportunity which will prove that

13. John Barbara Ehrenlich, "European Students Movements" in Monthly Review, vol. 20, (New York: May-Nov. 1968), pp. 25-32.

men fight and lose the battle, but the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat and when it comes, other men have to fight for what they meant.¹⁴

14. J. P. Sartre, Between Existentialism and Marxism
from French into English by John Mathews
(New York: Pantheon, 1974), pp. 128-30.

CHAPTER - IV

CONCLUSION

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By way of conclusion, it can be said that the New Left is not a kind of movement which can be said to have ended. It is a process which involves a continuous debate, no end to it in the near future. Hence certain observations are made, along with some lessons drawn from the May 1968 and the prospect of new radicalism in France.

Although all historical events have a fading resonance and attempts to solve current problems of society by boosting dead sounds do not seem to work, yet it is not wrong to call 1968 event a high tide of revolutionary upsurge. The lessons drawn from this movement are highly philosophical and intellectual. The prominent ones are elaborated below.

Firstly, the May 1968 ferment did aim at profound social change. This kind of social change was reasoned in the context of the technological revolution in the West in the twentieth century. The technological revolution has accentuated the role of the intelligentsia in production and society.

From the other end, capitalism has squeezed the technological revolution into the narrow framework of the techno-bureaucratic hierarchy of the monopolies and their subordinate state institutions.¹ As a result of this, the scope for human happiness and freedom is narrowed down. Hence the new rebellion, or the possibilist tendency that was expressed and expounded by Cohn Benoit and his Comrades against the repressive aspects of technological culture. The new tendency gave an impetus for the primacy of a curious mixture imagination, reason and social necessity over the established and conservative forces of French Communists. Cohn Benoit and others, explored the realm of possibility in the technological society and wanted to achieve some of these possibilities. Their attempts culminated in an unfinished revolution, appropriately known as May 1968: first phase of the French Socialist Revolution.

Secondly, the common understanding that a revolution is possible only under leadership of the Communist Party proved to be false in western societies. The new radicals take up the position

1. Michael Walzer, Radical Principles: Reflections of an Unconstructed Democrat (New York: Basic Books, 1980), pp. 202-204.

that revolution without the conservative Communist Party is more likely than otherwise. The May 1968 brought out the real truth in this context. In May 1968 the workers did not take over power in order to build socialism. If this did not occur, if the bourgeois state was finally able to regain the reins of power, it was due exclusively to the betrayal by the leaders of PCF and the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), who controlled the great majority of workers.² These leaders of the PCF and CGT did everything possible to isolate the student-radicals and the revolutionary vanguard from the mass of workers and thereby blocked a test of strength in the streets where the relationship of forces was eminently favourable for the revolution.

This betrayal was a consequence of their adoption of various policies and reformist practices. Firstly, it was the PCF's adherence to the Kremlin's doctrine of 'peaceful coexistence'. Secondly, the PCF, for a long time, was involved in electioneering and the Parliamentary routine. The leaders of PCF

2. Alain Krivine, "The Struggle Continues" International Socialist Review (New York: International Socialist Review Pub. Association, 1968), vol.29, July/August 1968, pp.2-3.

advocated in their radical manifesto, peaceful and Parliamentary road to socialism, with the excuse that a revolutionary crisis could in no case occur in France, when such a crisis did actually occur, the same reformist strategy was used to dissipate the possibility that was objectively present for a take-over.³ Thirdly, the weakness of new capitalism under the apparent stability of the 'consumer society', economic expansion and the 'strong state' were revealed. The development of the productive forces, because of technical education and the deep industrialization of the country and some other changes were consolidated by the capitalist regime. Though these were regarded as the success and signs of modernity, they turned against the capitalist society. This was so because under the capitalist system every development of the productive forces increases the economic and social contradictions.

Last but not the least was the revelation of an inadequacy of Leninism, because the theory of revolution has been accepted as a theory of seizure

3. Pierre Frank, "We Will Emerge Stronger than Ever!" International Socialist Review, vol. 29, pp. 6-8.

of power by PCF. Hence, the result has been an inability of communist parties to analyse advanced capitalist societies and to foreshadow the goals which the revolution must reach.⁴ In other words, the PCF leaders failed to understand the new needs expressed by the movement.

These lessons drawn from the analysis and observations of the revolutionary activists of May 1968 clearly indicate two things : the New Left as a movement is not dead, it is only a temporary break in the revolutionary struggle; and secondly, the French socialist revolution has begun - the European revolution has resumed its march forward. The New Left movement in France with the outbreak of May 1968 student radicalism assumed a broader dimension. The major tendencies of the movement, like anarchist, Trotskyite and Maoist attempted to give a new push to revolutionary ideology. They failed to achieve this because of the reformist policy of the PCF leadership. In the early 1970s, when Pompidou became the President of the French Republic, the

4. Joseph Hansen, "Is Marxism - Leninism Obsolete?" International Socialist Review, vol. 23, July/August 1967, pp. 3-6.

splinter groups did not come up to the proposed strategy of revolution because of the repressive state apparatus run by the experienced personality like Pompidou. Still they are operating here and there and carry on the objectives of "revolution."

The second thing, which is accepted as the beginning of the French socialist revolution, is about the prospect of New Left in terms of its ideal of libertarian socialism. The existence of three categories : of consciousness, class struggle and organization has enlivened the prospect of New Left in France.

Consciousness is essential for the creation as well as the exploitation of the revolutionary situation. Consciousness is only born in struggle, the class struggle only exists in so far as there exist places where an actual struggle is going on.⁵ In France the majority of workers are not only conscious of their own strength and their own possibilities but also conscious of exploitation of the

5. J.P. Sartre, "Masses, Spontaneity, Party" Socialist Register, 1970 (London : The Merlin Press 1970) p. 237.

apparatus of suppression. But surprisingly, they have become a conservative force, this is because of the fact that in one dimensional society the instinctual drives which once tended to throw the individual into opposition to his society have been transformed into the very means of binding him to it.⁶ Hence, the workers in the industrial society have lost their potentially oppositional character and themselves become elements of manipulation. In other words, the qualitative change in the level of working class consumption destroys the revolutionary potential of the working class. Yet a section of working class - the young - does not accept the concessions of the bourgeois state, because these concessions are nothing but the satisfaction of "false needs."⁷ This section of workers is behind the new rebellion - the New Left movement, though the majority of workers is to a great extent integrated for ever. Therefore, the class struggle is in-built in the capitalist system. The revolutionary

6. David Horowitz, "The Case for a Neo-Marxist Theory", International Socialist Review, Vol. 28, 1967, pp. 27-29.

7. Carl Griffer, "Questions for the New Left" New World Review, vol. 35-36, 1968 (New York: N.W.R. Publications, 1969), p. 33.

consciousness with its second wave can intensify the class struggle in France by the new working class that extends the range of the exploited. Though the New Left movement does not subscribe to the revolutionary party for leadership, yet it confides in small groups, concentrated on the level of local activists, thereby foreshadowing what may in all likelihood be the basic organization of libertarian socialism.⁸ The splinter groups, or different tendencies of the New Left, still operate in different parts of France. These are organizations which will be providing leadership to the New Left in the future.

Finally, it can be said that once this New Left radicals gain a revolutionary response from an appreciable part of the working class, it will have no difficulty in acquiring the strategic and tactical capacity indispensable for tomorrow's extremely arduous struggles. The revolutionary movement cannot be dissolved, the socialist revolution remains

8. Massimo Teodori (ed), The New Left : A Documentary History, (London : Jonathan Cape, 1969), pp. 470-72.

on the agenda.⁹ another revolutionary wave may follow. It is impossible to say when it comes. However, the objective conditions in France will play^a determining role in touching it off.

9. Pierre Frank, n. 3, pp. 11-12.

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