

# New Left Journals Shape Fascist Debates

The ideologues of the New Left in the United States and Western Europe, since the summer of 1977, have initiated an open debate directed toward the creation of a belief structure appropriate to a new fascist movement. The layers being tapped for that movement will include avowedly terrorist "extremists," terrorism's "liberal" sympathizers, and the broader self-styled "radical" movement, especially environmentalists.

The primary agencies shaping the debate have been heirs of the Frankfurt School tendency: the publication *New German Critique*, and the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) of Washington, D.C. The mouthpiece for IPS has been *Radical America*, a New Left publication that evolved out of the 1960s IPS pilot project, *Studies on the Left*.

A number of recent articles in these publications have gotten the debate started among susceptible circles, thus providing a springboard to actual organizing forums and the cultivation of appeal for their ideas among sympathetic layers.

To this end, a conference under the title of "Eurocommunism and the political and economic future of Europe" took place in Frankfurt, West Germany, last weekend, bringing together the likes of Jochen Steffan, a close associate of Peter von Oertzen in the "left-wing" SPD, *Die Zeit* editor Theo Sommer, Italian Communist Party member Sergio Segré, and the sister of Italian auto magnate Gianni Agnelli.

In the United States, the liberal *Washington Post* has recently conducted a series of "bleeding heart" articles on discrimination against and harassment of environmentalist groups, and NBC television producer Paul Altmeier is preparing an "objective" documentary on the subject. Assisting Altmeier is Donna Warnock, director of the Nuclear Surveillance Department, an offshoot of the now-defunct IPS publication *CounterSpy*.

## New German Critique:

### The Common Roots of Socialism and Fascism

Over the past year, the *New German Critique* has attempted to portray a "historical continuity" between Marxism and fascism in a series of articles on the career and writings of philosopher Ernst Bloch. The *Critique* itself is published by a group of primarily expatriate German academics at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

The person who introduced this subject into the journal's pages in an early 1977 issue is Oskar Negt, along with Angela Davis a star pupil of Herbert Marcuse. In that issue, Negt celebrated Ernst Bloch's 90th birthday by drawing out the conceptual bases of Bloch's 1935 work, *The Heritage of Our Times*, which was officially condemned at the time of publication by the Comintern as an apology for fascism.

The *Critique's* editors devoted the entire summer 1977

issue to Bloch, featuring an editorial and detailed analysis of Bloch's 1935 book under the byline of Anson Rabinbach. Excerpts of the Negt article, the summer 1977 *Critique* editorial, and Rabinbach's analysis are reprinted below.

### Negt: "Socialists Lack Fantasy"

Initially fascism has to do with the same interests and needs as revolution. It is not the beyond, the completely different of the revolutionary process, but rather an obstructed revolution, produced in part by socialists' lack of fantasy, but reversed in its teleological content and turned in a destructive direction... (what fascism has that socialism lacks is, in Negt's words, the) blood and soil, leader, esprit de corps, images and archetypes with an enormous power of attraction and mobilization....Hitler mobilized the people's anxieties with symbols and archetypes of salvation and strength ... socialism, this most human of all concerns, requires a human face at the top.

### Rabinbach: "Fascism Fills the Void"

Because Bloch takes seriously the power of myth in the contemporary world, he is able to take seriously precisely those "irrational" or mythic elements to which

## British Intelligence's Frankfurt School

The Frankfurt School was established by British intelligence in Germany in the 1920s, employing a variety of leading British-agent intellectuals in the socialist movement. Among these were Karl Korsch, the leading agent of British intelligence in the early years of Comintern, and such others as Theodore Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. Oskar Negt, a frequent contributor to the University of Wisconsin publication, *New German Critique*, is a protégé of Marcuse.

As Marcuse's own career exemplifies, the Frankfurt School's principal role for Anglo-American intelligence agencies was to develop the synthetic ideology which later would be employed throughout Europe and the United States to create a "New Left" movement.

The Frankfurt School itself moved to New York during the period of Hitler's regime, attaching itself to Columbia University under the name "Institute for Social Research." It was here that the school conducted intensive profile studies of the German Nazi and Italian fascist models, and developed the techniques, for example linguistics, that would later be used to create the protofascist New Left.

fascism appealed: not only does he attempt to reveal the fertile and productive soil from which these ideas emerged, but he is concerned with them as an *unclaimed* radical heritage passed over by the left in its abstract critique of the illusory and "false consciousness" of fascism.... Thus, the accent in heritage of our times ...rests on Bloch's commitment to the view that even if fascism's claim to earthly transcendence is itself false and hypocritical, the myths behind it are not exhausted by their misuse. These images retain their power despite their appropriation by the right....

Bloch's contribution, therefore, is to show where fascism filled a void at the heart of Enlightenment rationality.... The desires unleashed by fascism are not merely those irrational drives which bourgeois society necessarily repressed, but the genuine striving for commonality and emancipation — the cultural surplus — that was also abandoned by Marxism and is expressed in Bloch's motto: 'Human beings do not live by bread alone, particularly when they have none.' ...Therefore, even the revival of the occult and mysticism under the Nazis has to be taken seriously, not only because the mystical critique of science was taken seriously, but because it contains precisely those motifs which could not be absorbed in the universum of technical rationality.

#### Editorial:

#### "Fascism Is Romantic Anticapitalism"

As heirs to the Enlightenment, neither Marxism nor Liberalism could grasp that positive content of the Fascist revolt which, as the restoration and actualization of "authentic experience," as the aestheticization of everyday life, pointed to an immanent critique of instrumental rationality. Nothing could be more misleading than critical theory's interpretation of fascism as an extension of the rationalized domination of nature in extremis. Even (some of) the contributions in this issue .... Do not go far enough in underscoring the point made by Bloch: that fascism is the heir to the legitimate and powerful tradition of romantic anticapitalism, a tradition that emerges from the critique of enlightenment rationality as a fettering of experience. By fusing aesthetics and politics, this links fascism explicitly to the history of the European avant garde and its attempt to aestheticize everyday life. This is done not merely in the negative sense which rejects the history as "irrational," but rather in order to demonstrate that the power of fascism lies in its ability, in contrast to the Left, to evaluate precisely that positive critical impulse which is the heart of the cultural experience of the avant garde. The recognition of the legitimacy of those powerful and potentially critical impulses that lie at the center of fascism is also the starting point for its criticism. In this way the real *ambivalence* that is at the heart of fascism becomes the critical problem.

## Radical America : Clamshell Alliance Is Revolutionary Movement In The Making

*The September-October 1977 issue of Radical America featured an in-depth analysis by Marty Jezer of the political evolution of the New England-based Clamshell Alliance, an anti-nuclear coalition which espouses both violent and nonviolent action. Of primary importance in the article is Jezer's analysis of how the Alliance, which has a relatively large social base, is well on its way "into the mainstream of the revolutionary movement." Excerpts of the article, "The Socialist Potential of the No-Nuke Movement," appear below.*

The no-nuke movement is currently the most visible manifestation of radical protest activity within the United States....

The Clamshell Alliance builds on the tradition of the ban-the-bomb movement and the nonviolent phases of the civil rights and anti-war protests. The model has become a familiar and — to a point — a successful one. Dramatic acts of personal witness publicize an issue and lead to the creation of single-issue mass movements based on moral courage.... But concessions defused the issues, and the movements never achieved the political basis to sustain themselves past the initial stage of moral outrage....

The Clamshell Alliance has broken decisively with the main organizational thrust of this model. It is structured to involve everyone in the political direction of the organization.... The anti-intellectualism and spontaneity so endemic to the New Left is for the most part missing. If the Clam seems theoretically naive from the outside, it is because there are not enough politically mature leftists acting as organizers and educators on the inside. The opportunity is there. Individual leftists within the Clam have been able to raise political issues and win support for their positions. In the past year, the Clamshell Alliance has moved away from liberal environmentalism to a more leftist perspective...

Leftists within the Clamshell Alliance, some of them looking beyond the immediate issue of nuclear power, have been urging the Clam to build contacts with working people and to expand its base of support. The situation is ripe for such a move...

... The Clamshell Alliance is predominantly white, middle-class with a counter-cultural orientation. But with the economic depression, this class is rapidly becoming proletarianized. Most "back to the landers" have not been able to buy land. To settle down in rural areas means going to work side by side with the native working class....

A number of new political understandings are implicit in that decision. People are now beginning to define

“direct action” in broader terms....

Until this past year, the nuclear issue was fought primarily on the issues of environmental health and safety. Recently, leftists within the Clam and within the no-nuke movement in general developed an analysis that portrayed the nuclear industry and the investor-owned utilities ... as a paradigm of monopoly capitalism.... Nuclear plants are more expensive to build than other generating facilities. The increased capital investment is included in the rate base and passed through to the consumer. Moreover, capital to build nukes comes from banks and financial houses who invest heavily in the utility industry.... A cut-back in electric use lessens the need for an increase in generating facilities and destroys the opportunity for financial interests to profit from capital investment.

This argument is now an accepted part of Clam literature. Not everyone is willing to accept this paradigm as an economic model for the rest of society, but the mystification of economic theory has been shattered and the argument for socialism has ceased to be an ideological abstraction. By looking at the utility industry, people begin to see why socialism is a concrete prescription for running the economy in a humane and sensible fashion.

Once the economic issue is raised the limitations of

single-issue environmentalism become apparent.... If the Clamshell Alliance decides that nuclear power cannot be stopped by direct action confrontations, no matter how militant or large, it must abandon its single-issue approach, broaden its analysis, and reach out to new constituencies. This is where leftist input could be decisive and the movement's socialist potential realized.... Marxists, in general, perceive the environmental movement as middle-class and consumer-oriented. Correctly, they have criticized it for its insensitivity towards class issues and worker demands. But, on the whole, they have not analyzed it objectively to see what environmentalism can and should mean as opposed to what it is now....

While Marxists have generally faltered on environmental issues, anarchists have made it their special field, and when people in the Clamshell Alliance begin to move left, it is anarchism that has allure....

The Clamshell Alliance offers a vehicle for a synthesis between environmentalism and the left. Insofar as the left can integrate itself with the working class, it offers the opportunity to integrate environmentalism with a working class movement. Leftists willing to work within the Clamshell process and to develop its political analysis can move the organization towards socialism and into the mainstream of revolutionary politics.