

crisis, Marx in late 1850 resolved on the 'retreat to the study' which was to last until the mid-1860s, during which he produced the *Grundrisse* of 1857-8 and which culminated in *Capital*. He was not involved in politics during this period, but, as Fernbach rightly says, we may learn much from his vast journalistic output over these years, as, for example, the articles written in December 1851 and January 1852 which Weydemeyer published as *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*—Marx's second, and classic, study of the failure of the 1848 revolution. Despite the interest of the journalism of the period (many examples of which are published in Volume II), Fernbach is justified in his shrewd observation that: 'Revolutionary political theory can only develop in response to the new problems and tasks raised by mass struggle, and this was completely lacking in Marx's England' (Vol. II, p. 19). Fernbach goes on to discuss the development of Marx's political thought between 1851 and 1864: while allowing that the thought did develop, and that it widened beyond its previous 'Europocentrism', yet he argues that Marx 'made several errors of judgment. He did not understand the peculiarities of the British social and political system. He did not understand the general character of European development after the defeat of the 1848 revolution. He exaggerated the negative role of tsarist Russia, and the positive role of federal America. More seriously, he did not develop a theory of imperialism' (p. 33).

The translations in both volumes (by different translators; see Vol. I, p. 4 and Vol II, p. 4) are extremely readable and almost always accurate. There are however some errors and omissions. Perhaps the most interesting omissions are two made by Samuel Moore who did the 1888 translation of the Communist manifesto which anthologies ever since, including Vol. I of the present collection, have faithfully reproduced. On p. 72, line 31 of that volume Moore's translation omits the sentence 'Sie hemmten die Produktion, 2statt sie zu

fördern' (*Marx Engels Werke*, Vol. IV, p. 467) which says of bourgeois production relations that at a certain stage 'They restricted production, rather than encouraged it', a not unimportant explicitation of Marx's theory of revolution. On p. 79, line 8, Moore's version omits the phrase 'die Anhäufung des Reichthums in den Händen von Privaten' (*MEW* IV, p. 473), which specifies as a condition for bourgeois dominance 'the amassing of wealth in the hands of private persons'. I have checked other reproductions of the Moore translation; the fault seems to be Moore's (and Engels's), but *somebody* should have thrown an eye over the 'canonical' translation in the intervening eighty-five years! Moreover, Moore's version, which tells us that man's consciousness 'changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence' (p. 85) is an excessively mechanistic rendering of 'mit den Lebensverhältnissen der Menschen . . . auch ihr Bewusstsein sich ändert' (*MEW*, IV, p. 480). Other omissions in the two volumes are relatively minor, except that page 128 of Volume II tells us that the economic upswing has been at work in France since 1850, whereas *MEW*, VII, p. 95 tells us that it has been at work since 1849 and especially since the start of 1850; in view of Marx's concern in these chapters with the effect of economic on political events, this is not a trivial omission. And finally, one howler: Cavaignac's attitude of resignation is described as 'antirepublican' (Volume II, p. 68), whereas the original in *MEW*, VII, has 'antik-republikanischer' (p. 40; my emphasis), which means 'old (i.e., ancient or classical) republican'. Even Marx's love of paradox could not have stretched to calling the Cavaignac of 1848 'antirepublican', so that the misreading should have been ruled out by an understanding of the argument. These criticisms, I repeat, are of the relatively few faults in two well-translated and readable volumes. They are well worth buying, and essential to the student of Marx's political thought.

JOHN MAGUIRE

THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM, by David Coates. *Cambridge University Press*, 1975. 257 pp. £5 hardback, £2 paper.

This book must be unique amongst works on politics, since its author changed his opinion in the course of writing it. 'This study'—Mr Coates

writes in his introduction—'was begun in an attempt to assess, and hopefully to find, the Labour Party's road to socialism. In the event, and with great

reluctance, it became obvious as the preliminary work progressed that the road did not exist'.

That actually expresses the spirit of the book quite well, permeated as it is by a kind of reluctant resignation. Coates makes it clear enough that the Labour Party's road to socialism is not in fact a road at all but a swamp; we, however, whilst sharing Coates' discomfiture with the situation would rather be told how to get out of this swamp and onto the road again. We should also, perhaps, like to hear something about why we should want to be on that particular road anyway.

These limitations aside, the book actually does contain much valuable factual and some analytic material on the Labour Party, its history and its political nature. Coates reminds us that the Party originated historically out of an alliance between trade union leaders who wanted reliable parliamentary representation, and middle-class intellectual Fabians who saw socialism in terms of legislation from above and technological rationalisation. He shows the result of this in political action—that the Party's occasional radical-socialist gesturing amounts to little more than a response to rising militancy in the Party's electoral working-class base. And he shows also that because of the Party's merely electoral relation to that base the gesture has to remain no more than a gesture. Given that electoral relation, and the parliamentary strategy in which it finds its place, the Party must play down that militancy and subject it to the dictates of parliamentary party-warfare and election gimmickry. 'Don't strike now lads, you'll spoil my chances of getting to Westminster—calm down and wait till I'm elected, you can rely on me'. Now in order to make real inroads into capitalist power it is no good relying on 300 individuals in Westminster—it is necessary to mobilise the counter-power of the working class and to mobilise it where it exists, viz. outside parliament, in the factories, the shipyards and the mines. But that is a long-term strategy for winning workers' power, not a short-term strategy for winning elections. From which Labour Party leaders have always concluded that it must at all costs be avoided, as one result of which they eventually end up losing the elections as well.

So far, so good: Coates is trying to show that even the best socialist intentions cannot be realised through Labour's parliamentary strategy. This is important, because there are many

Labour Party people who have had the very best of socialist intentions. And in today's conditions of intensifying crisis such people are once more raising their voices within the Labour Party. But what Coates fails to do is to give any clear account of what the attitude of socialists should be toward fellow-socialists in the Labour Party today.

The point here is that for all its parliamentarianism the Labour Party did at one time focus the political aspirations of militant workers, and drew into its leadership those who had stood at the head of real-life militant struggle. In such circumstances it is right for socialists to direct much work toward the Labour Party, to attempt to affiliate to it as a body or even enter into it individually. Right, because that is where the workers are, and socialism can be implemented only by the workers themselves. Not that the Labour Party with its parliamentarianism could ever be a means for socialist change, but such a Labour Party with such a composition could be transformed to become such a means.

But the situation today is different. The modern Labour Party is no longer that kind of focus for the political aspirations of militant workers. Its leadership, including the Left, no longer has that kind of connection with real-life workers' struggle: it is the difference between Cook and Maxton on the one hand, Foot and Benn on the other. Besides, as a result of the long post-war boom the locus of working-class reformism shifted from the Labour Party and trade union officialdom to the shop floor and the shop-stewards movement. 'Reformism from above' was replaced by 'reformism from below'—and whilst the localised shop-floor struggles were limited and partial they were at least based on working-class self-activity.

Today as boom gives way to crisis that 'reformism from below' is outdated: it is increasingly difficult to win even partial demands on its basis. But it is no use turning to the even more outdated 'reformism from above'. The need of the moment is to turn to the grass-roots militancy which still exists and is potentially stronger than ever, and to build out of it, by whatever varied forms of organisation and struggle are necessary, a mass revolutionary socialist movement.

That is a difficult task, not because the potential is not there amongst workers but because of the long isolation and consequent inexperience of socialists. But its realisation is the only

way—the only way out of the crisis, and the only way also to win over those in the Labour Party who genuinely want such a way out.

Having settled accounts with the Labour Party, we must then set to work. For beyond the Labour Party there is that social force which it once

represented after a fashion and in whose name it still claims on occasion to speak—the working class. And more, much more than the future of the Labour Party now depends on whether that class will at last speak for itself and in its own voice.

BRUCE YOUNG

THE SCOPE OF UNDERSTANDING IN SOCIOLOGY. Towards a more radical Reorientation in the Social and Humanistic Sciences, by Werner Pelz, *Routledge and Kegan Paul*, London, 1974. 283 pp. £5.50 hardback, £3.75 paper.

When a writer promises a radically different approach to the problem of knowledge in sociology and chastises us yet again for not taking it seriously, my first reaction is to ring the editor and pretend I've reviewed the book for someone else.

Ever since Alvin Gouldner conned his fellow-academics into believing that the day of reckoning was at hand with *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*, sociologists have become cynical about fundamental reorientations and reappraisals. Gouldner's mistake, having apocalyptically proclaimed the new order, was to spell it out in clear, readable prose. Good millenarians, however, know better than to expose themselves to argument; far wiser to wrap the message in mystery and make a virtue of incomprehensibility.

I can find no other virtue in Pelz's book. It is badly written, with irritating errors in punctuation and a dull, heavy style that leaves the reader thumbing desperately for light relief . . . a humorous remark . . . ? . . . a humorous quotation . . . ? . . . a few pictures. . . ? The book moves relentlessly, packed from chapter to chapter with allusions masquerading as explanations and silly, rhetorical questions pretending to be flashes of inspired thinking.

At the outset, the author poses the problem by begging the epistemological question he intends to address: 'Is it possible', he asks, 'to reach an understanding not *totally* conditioned by the situation it tries to comprehend?' (p. 2, my italics). Of course it is, and not even Gouldner—who was never soft on classical methodology—would deny it. Scientistic sociology, which may be defined as that procedure which makes the observation and interpretation independent of the observer and implicitly lays claim to total objectivity, is no longer a live issue, even if it still survives in some American colleges. It was not killed by total relativism such as

Pelz assumes, however, but by 'relative' relativism: the position that makes scientific criteria of validity applicable to sociological theory both as a test of its objectivity and as a demonstration of its cultural conditioning. It would require a book to elaborate on this for the unconverted; it is enough to note here that social relativism taken to extremes must be resisted in the same way and for the same reasons as philosophical solipsism. Pelz's brand of relativism, moreover, is nowhere substantiated in his discussion of the classics. Indeed, he deplores sociologists' needs to read the classics—a regressive tendency which sociology shares with psychology and philosophy:

(Sociology) has not yet begun to explore possibilities of mutuality and dialogue through which, analogous to the scientific method but not in imitation of it, the conversation, not argument, between the living and the dead, is kept alive, so that the originality of a thinker may retain some of its pristine originating power and impact (p. 103).

Pelz is turned off by argument. And in common with others who are similarly into 'dialectics'—not the Marxian method, but the disease of the mind that appeals to reason when attacking others but decries it as an artefact of Western culture when it threatens oneself—he has built in his own defence against nasty reviewers 'who are not interested in interesting work' and will not allow the sociologist to give 'free play to his debilitated contemplative faculty' (p. 234). If man is to understand man, he tells us in one of his elliptical statements, he can only do so by conversation. 'In arguments he merely comes to understand logic' (p. 104) and logic is the weapon of that devil which must be exorcised from the social sciences: scientism. But it is not scientism as I have defined it above. Pelz identifies scientism with positivism,