

RADICAL PHILOSOPHY ELEVEN

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Open Meeting June 7th

The next Open Meeting of the Radical Philosophy Group will be held from 11am at North London Polytechnic, Kentish Town Road. The meeting will be in two parts. The first session will be concerned with the organisation of course criticism and alternative ways of learning, and will be introduced by students from 'Ideas in Education for Sussex' ('ie - Sussex). The second session will be a 'business' meeting, discussing the magazine and conferences, and, most important, the possibilities of revising, reviving and improvising, the organisation of a network of local radical philosophy groups. Definite proposals will be presented to the meeting.

Belgrade Protest

In the last three issues of *Radical Philosophy* we reported on the continued harassment of philosophers in Yugoslavia. The following letter from eight Belgrade philosophy professors was sent to the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Serbia earlier this year

The seven year long campaign against us - in which, in a way unprecedented in the postwar history of this country, all repressive propaganda means were used and many political authorities mobilised, the present ones and some past ones - has by the force of mechanical necessity reached its climax. By an arbitrary decision which is contrary to the basic legal acts and the principles of self-government on which the very foundations of the existing order should rest, we have been ousted from our teaching positions at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade.

This was done because all the pressures and threats used against us during those seven years, intended to split us and to compel us to capitulate, eventually failed. The banning of books and journals; elimination from mass media, from official cultural and scholarly institutions and from all public life; suspension of financing for the projects of research in which we participated; the spreading of insulting rumours, confiscating passports; harassing and arresting the students who dared to support us; attempts at corruption; threats of closing the Faculty of Philosophy; and of splitting it into two parts; of abolishing self-management and introducing compulsory management - none of these measures turned out to be sufficient to ensure either our voluntary withdrawal or our democratic removal by the self-governing bodies of the Faculty.

The Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, although exposed to long, constant pressure, refused to act contrary to its beliefs and to bow to sheer arbitrary force. With impressive dignity and courage the Faculty has maintained its firm conviction that it must take its decisions in an independent, democratic way with full moral integrity. It evaluated all proposals and demands only with respect to publicly declared reasons and evidence, only on the grounds of the basic principles of our socialist society and of university self-management and not with respect to the political authorities behind them. In the history of Yugoslav socialism the Faculty of Philosophy is the first and, until now, the only institution that was able to resist bureaucratic pressure and successfully to defend basic university and human rights: the right to freedom of research and scholarly publication, the right to assume a critical attitude towards the existing social reality and towards every ideology, the right to be equal with any political figures, the right to autonomous decision-making. As a consequence of the need to adjust the law to arbitrary bureaucratic will, the University law was drastically changed twice in one year, and exclusively for the Republic of Serbia. First, in 1973, the demand was incorporated into the law that the university professors must satisfy moral and political criteria in addition to scholarly ones. At the same time, university self-management was transformed into co-management by including half outside members on the Faculty Council. The second change of the University law in November 1974 made complete violation of self-management possible by giving the right to the Republican Assembly to fire all those professors who allegedly 'damaged social interests'

Until this very day the Yugoslav mass media, which have produced an incredible amount of misinformations and untruths about us, never confirmed the result of the legally prescribed, self-governing procedure of examining our 'moral and political suitability', namely that committees composed of thirty-five outstanding scholars from various Yugoslav universities wrote very favourable reports about our activity and that these reports were accepted by an overwhelming majority in all self-governing bodies of the Faculty in July 1974. Although, according to the Constitution and to the existing laws that decision had to be considered final, it did not satisfy political authorities. They continued to demand our elimination from the Faculty.

In the interests of normalizing the work of the Faculty of Philosophy we have expressed our readiness temporarily to abstain from teaching and to take leave for scientific research. We only requested minimal guarantees that persecution of the students and further pressures on the Faculty would be stopped. But the authorities were not satisfied with anything but unconditional capitulation.

lation. The political campaign was continued with redoubled abusiveness, the University law was again adjusted and supplemented. This act of bureaucratic violence constitutes a heavy blow to Yugoslav culture, to self-management, and to the reputation of socialism in the contemporary world.

Our crime consists in taking democratic socialism seriously, in expressing publicly the truth about the present crisis of Yugoslav society, about its cause and the possibilities of its future development.

We are accused of 'corrupting the youth' and of being engaged in political activity. The first of these accusations is as old as the history of philosophy: its victims have been precisely those who have most contributed to the progress of the human mind and true knowledge about men and about the world. The second accusation is grotesque: it has been expressed in a country in which the active political commitments of every citizen, active participation in all political decision-making, is the basic assumption of its economic and political system. Unless, perhaps our professional political leaders consider that all should be politically engaged except Marxist philosophers and sociologists? Naturally, any relevant critical social theory has certain political implications. To accuse scholars of political engagement in the sense of struggling for power on that ground solely without any other supporting evidence clearly only reveals bureaucratic obsession with power and a poorly hidden intention to create a suitable atmosphere in which any repressive measures could be justified.

We have been accused of holding a 'monopoly in scientific and cultural activity'. In a manner worthy of the heroes of Orwell's novels, those who have a complete monopoly on the mass media, publishing houses, funds for cultural and scientific activity and indeed of all socialised property, accuse of monopoly those who have no power, no property, whose basic human rights have been violated, and who are not even allowed, contrary to the law, publicly to reply to all attacks and to the most outrageous insults.

We have also been accused of cultivating 'connections with foreigners' - in a country that one decade ago adopted an 'opening towards the world' as one of the basic goals of its policy. It is true, we have many connections abroad, but with scholars and progressive people all over the world, and not with politicians, businessmen, financial magnates, generals, kings and emperors. Those numerous persons in various other countries who have been supporting us, expressing their concern and dismay because of this deplorable development of repression, are not enemies of socialism - as the official propaganda tries to present them - but some of the most active and most brilliant defenders of socialism and democracy, some of the greatest friends of Yugoslavia and its socialist future. Utterly vague, unsubstantiated allegations about growing enemy forces, about ever present 'hostile activities' invariably serve a single purpose: to scare, to suppress any dissident thought, to silence all those who refuse to conform.

One of the most absurd accusations is that we deny the revolutionary character of the working class. The truth is that we deny the revolutionary character of all those social forces, first of all of political bureaucracy, that prevent the working class from becoming a real historical subject. And this is the very reason for the present conflict, and similar conflicts between bureaucratic leadership and the theoreticians of the International labour movement. We exercised the freedom to not merely serve bureaucracy but to speak up

as Marxists, as the theoreticians of democratic socialism. We defended that freedom consistently, not merely for us and for some particular practical purposes, but for all and in principle. On the other hand, there are and there always have been powerful forces in the labour movement that tended to win complete freedom for themselves but to prevent it among their followers. In his letter to Trier of 18 December 1889, Engels has very clearly formulated the nature of the problem:

The labour movement rests on the sharpest critique of the existing society. Critique is its life principle. How then can the labour movement avoid criticism and stop debate? Do we demand freedom of speech only in order to destroy it in our own ranks?

Two years later, after the news had reached him that the German Social Democratic Party planned to introduce censorship of its own newspaper *Neue Zeit*, Engels wrote to Kenchi (on 25 February 1891):

This is really a brilliant idea to impose a new anti-socialist law on German socialist science, just after it was liberated from Bismarck's law against socialists. And this new law has to be introduced and implemented by the Social Democratic Party leadership itself.

In the letter to Bebel of 12 May 1891, and to Kenchi of 11 February 1891, Engels described in the following way the attitude of the theoretician who found himself under attack by the leadership of his own movement.

No party in any country can condemn me to silence if I decided to speak up. It is high time that people once and for all stop wearing silken gloves in all their relationships with Party functionaries, in fact their servants, and that they stop behaving humbly instead of critically toward those infallible bureaucrats.

Already Marx and Engels, whose Party friends Bebel and Kautsky attempted to prevent the publication of the *Critique of the Gotha programme*, found themselves in a situation which will become typical for a theoretician of socialism whenever he takes the ideals of the revolutionary movement seriously, whenever he takes the liberty of searching for truth and of expressing critical statements about the errors and inconsistencies of the functionaries of the movement, whenever he refuses to keep silent and to stand humbly and obediently in front of those powerful and infallible bureaucrats.

Together with Marx and Engels we have been considering that critique is the life principle of the labour movement 'not only in capitalism but also in socialism'.

How there can be a real workers' movement and a real socialist society which forbids discussion and criticism, and which treats free speech as a hostile act to be punishable according to the norms of the Criminal code?

All our critical remarks: against the professionalisation of politics, against bureaucratic privileges as a form of exploitation of the working class, against reduction of self-government to a disintegrated cluster of councils which plays an inferior role in the distribution of social power and represents only an appendix to the Party and the State, against the utterly uncritical transfer of the 'laissez-faire' model of market economy with well known consequences (such as the rise of social inequality, growth of the new middle class, irrational competition among socialist enterprises, destruction of the solidarity of the working class, creation of the artificial needs and the domination of the petty bourgeois consumerist mentality),

against incomprehensible neglect of the workers' education, against authoritarian relationships within the League of Communists, against the introduction of censorship and bureaucratic pressures for self-censorship, against increasing repression in the field of culture - all those critical remarks are clearly in the spirit of the basic principles of a classless socialist society, and, furthermore, in the spirit of the 1958 Programme of the Yugoslav League of Communists. That Programme requests members of the League of Communists to fight bureaucratism. It is nearer to the truth that in that respect we have done less than possible, rather than more than was needed. On the other hand, there is hardly any doubt that the Party leadership has given up most of its own programme. It experienced our critique as the voice of its own uneasy conscience and that is perhaps its main motive in trying to silence us. Its accusation that a few philosophers are eager to seize power is not only an utterly unconvincing rationalisation but also the expression of its own obsession with power.

Rejecting all such wild accusations that not only endanger a few of us personally but freedom and socialist culture of the whole country, we wish to emphasise as strongly as possible that every theoretical thought that moves solely within the framework of the existing structure, that conforms and adjusts to it instead of transcending it - deprives socialism of its future. Such thought can hardly be anything but a superficial and mystifying apology for the given. Such thought is not guided by the interests of the workers' movement

and of universal humanism, but by shortsighted particular interests of the ruling apparatus of power. It is very characteristic that parallel with the development of the campaign against us there is an obvious growth in the influence of the ideologists of Stalinist dogmatism who have patiently waited for their hour of revenge ready to justify every voluntarism, every twist and turn of daily politics, and on the other hand, ready savagely to attack any attitude, any idea if it is merely different from the infallible leadership.

In the long run this bureaucratic, apparently legitimate violence turns against those who use it. Nothing weakens a ruling elite more than to order such acts which can no longer be convincingly ideologically justified, which even lack proper legal basis, which do no longer rest on any other authority but the authority of power. On the other hand, no party in any country can condemn to silence a person who has decided to speak up. Ideas cannot be defeated by preventing them from being expounded from a professor's chair. We are convinced that a bold, dignified, truthful scholarly community like the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade will not be demoralised and disabled in continuing to defend the great principles of freedom and integrity of scholarly research, merely because it has temporarily lost eight of its members.

Zagorka Golubović/Triva Indjić/Mihailo Marković/
Prayiljub Micunović/Nebojsa Popov/Svetozar
Stojanović/Ljubomir Tadić/Mileidin Zivotić

Belgrade, 28 January 1975

How to Defend Society Against Science

Paul Feyerabend

The following article is a revised version of a talk given to the Philosophy Society at Sussex University in November 1974

Practitioners of a strange trade, friends, enemies, ladies and gentlemen:
Before starting with my talk, let me explain to you, how it came into existence.

About a year ago I was short of funds. So I accepted an invitation to contribute to a book dealing with the relation between science and religion. To make the book sell I thought I should make my contribution a provocative one and the most provocative statement one can make about the relation between science and religion is that science is a religion. Having made the statement the core of my article I discovered that lots of reasons, lots of excellent reasons, could be found for it. I enumerated the reasons, finished my article, and got paid. That was stage one.

Next I was invited to a Conference For the Defence of Culture. I accepted the invitation because it paid for my flight to Europe. I also must admit that I was rather curious. When I arrived in Nice I had no idea what I would say. Then while the conference was taking its course I discovered that everyone thought very highly of science and that everyone was very serious. So I decided to explain how one could defend culture

from science. All the reasons collected in my article would apply here as well and there was no need to invent new things. I gave my talk, was rewarded with an outcry about my 'dangerous and ill considered ideas', collected my ticket and went on to Vienna. That was stage number two.

Now I am supposed to address you. I have a hunch that in some respect you are very different from my audience in Nice. For one, you look much younger. My audience in Nice was full of professors, businessmen, television executives and the average age was about 58½. Then I am quite sure that most of you are considerably to the left of most of the people in Nice. As a matter of fact, speaking somewhat superficially I might say that you are a leftist audience while my audience in Nice was a rightist audience. Yet despite all these differences you have some things in common. Both of you, I assume, respect science and knowledge. Science, of course, must be reformed and must be made less authoritarian. But once the reforms are carried out, it is a valuable source of knowledge that must not be contaminated by ideologies of a different kind. Secondly, both of you are serious people. Knowledge is a serious matter, for the Right as well as for the Left, and it must be pursued in a serious spirit. Frivolity is out, dedication and earnest application to the task at hand is in. These similarities are all I need for repeating my Nice talk to you with hardly any change. So, here it is.