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THE ENLIGHTENMENT'S ROOTS IN SOCIALIST REALIST THEORY AND ASPECTS
OF REVISIONISM IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY

By

Helena Stevens

Presented to the Stalin Society 28th November 1993 London

The first lecture on Socialist Realism: "Stalin and the Arts"

By

Bill Bland

Copies of texts and original audio tapes of both these lectures
are available from:

The Stalin Society,
BM Box: 2521.,
London WC1 N 3 XX.

REVISIONISM

1. Does not develop a political theory.
2. Eliminates objective reality of a class, class struggle and the role of the people in history.
3. Emphasizes bourgeois spontaneity as against conscious awareness of Marxist-Leninist ideology.
4. It chastises achievements of Socialist Realism.
5. Deals in "Humanism" for all classes versus class struggle.
6. Deals in idealism and myths, and mysticism, subverts and confuses.
7. Believes in an abstractly conceived man, not born out of struggle.
8. Believes reality is conceived in an artist's mind.
9. Hostile relations not seen as antagonistic class contradictions.
10. Idealism and mythology and human nature take the place of historical class contradictions.
11. Trotsky, the arch revisionist wished to post-pone the question of new art until the formation of a classless society.

Art is one of the most ancient forms of social consciousness.

The historical and slow developement of the theory of Socialist Realism has matured the concept of the nature of human beings in relationship to the society in which they live.

Certain aspects of what we now identify as Socialist Realism were originally considered almost two hundred years before the October Revolution of 1917.

Because Lenin and Stalin, as Marxists, understood that aesthetics and politics were an integral part of each other, they encouraged the development of a concept stemming organically from the past and honed and developed this concept, which political, industrial, people had never done before, had never recognised art and literature as the superstructure to the extent that a Marxist must. Cultures have always had their artistic base, but its vital importance to the base, as a scientific necessity with specific laws is essential.

As Ralph Fox, who gave his life in the Spanish Civil war said in 1930 during the developement of the theory of Socialist Realism in the USSR as we knew it; he said of bourgeois art:

"The lack of dialectic, of a philosophy which enables them really to understand and to perceive the world, has led them along the false trail of supplementing materialism by a creaking artificial symbolism."

On radio and television today in intellectual bourgeois discussions they are crying out that the novel is dead. The Booker Prize, which is given once a year, allows the novelist to sell his work to the film industry. Now he may be an exceptional man with words, a literary man, and if bourgeois society is dying, and according to bourgeois critics the bourgeois novel is dying, but the novel as a literary genre does not need to die and it can and will rise again using the concepts of Socialist Realism which will concentrate and explode the history of man against the background of struggle so that man's struggle is seen in dialectical-historical terms; which will extend our consciousness and sensibility, and extend our own concept of the nature of human beings.

Neil Bartlett the Artistic Director of the Lyric Hammersmith, which is about to disappear along with the Shaw Theatre at King's Cross, stated:

" Theatre as we know it today may well come to an end."

The two thousand pound Turner prize for art was won by R. Whitehead for cementing a nineteenth century neighborhood house in now yuppie Bow in the East End. She also won forty thousand pounds for the worst art and the council are destroying this edifice to modern art.

Murial Gray on a television programme last august 1993 interviewed some unemployed people in a pub on what they thought about art. They were then taken down to the great galleries in London, into the basements and asked to pick out any art which appealed to them. They were then sent back up to Lancashire, and one house with a nice carpet was emptied and the paintings mounted for an exhibition for the town. They enjoyed themselves thoroughly and did it a second time.

But the remark made by Murial Gray almost under her breath during the interview was very amazing. She stated that the reason she had been sent up North to mount this project with the unemployed was that the art historians and collectors in London, the powers that be in the art world were fearful that nothing is developing in the new art world, and they thought that they might get an answer from the uneducated blokes in a Northern pub.

Ralph Fox recalls:

" In the New York Tribune of 1851 Engels was extremely critical of the literary movement in Germany from 1830-48. Engels: ' A crude Republicanism was preached by almost all writers of the time. Poetry, novels, reviews and drama teamed with what was called tendency that is, exhibitions of an anti-governmental split.... which was a stage of what art historians call romanticism.'

The romantics insisted that only what was free from conventions, formulas, and common places should count as art or poetry.

Their experience that a desperate desire to be original, is likely to lead to crass conventualism, only increased their fear of the cliché. Instead of realising the inevitability of the conventions belonging to every formal language, and contenting themselves with being as original as possible withing those limits, they tried to escape from conventions altogether, and got all the more hopelessly enmeshed in them.

An art in which everything had to be original would be not only impossible in practice, but even unthinkable, for where everything is original nothing is original. Conventions, provide not only the conditions of existence for artistic achievement, but also the standards by which these are evaluated.

Whereas early anarchists and socialists in the past century relied on Utopian Romanticism, a Socialist Realist uses the passion of romanticism while developing the concrete social struggle of classes, leaving the undeveloped socialist artist whirling in a utopian fantasy with no social basis, thereby allowing those who are taken in by it, unable to continue, or carry out real revolution.

Romanticism is an early phase of Critical Realism. Romantic protest against bourgeois society turned more and more into criticism of that society.

Both of these camps are symptoms of the estrangement of the individual from society, and each seeks to remedy this estrangement in a way that suits its own interests, and purposes, one part insisting on the value of authority, and the other by levelling differences. Arnold Hauser says in 'The Philosophy of Art History':

"Individualism as an expression of protest is an unmistakable product of the enlightenment; later the spiritual situation became complicated through socialism diverging from its origins in the enlightenment and developing an anti-individualist philosophy of history while its bourgeois opponents developed a myth of individuals to glorify the 'great man'."

In the novel 1793 Victor Hugo's development led him away from utopian romanticism and made him a forerunner of the humanist revolt against the growing barbarism of capitalism, and he takes over much of the ideology of the enlightenment. But it is in this particular novel that he begins to separate from bourgeois romanticism and leans towards socialist romanticism. Victor Hugo has revolutionary figures in his novels. After all, the revolutionary is a character created by capitalist society.

In the early stages of the movement the ideology of the romantics was a reaction against the bourgeois revolution and the enlightenment (bourgeois democratic). The romantics looked to the middle-ages for their ideal.

Realising the incompatibility of capitalism with beauty they turned to the catholic church and idealised the age of chivalry and was therefore reactionary. But the Revolutionary Romantics looked toward the republicanism of antiquity for their ideal, civic equality and social liberty.

Shelley's utopian socialism: "The Defence of Poetry", Schiller and Hegel were influenced greatly by Rousseau who thought it necessary to return to the primitive art forms preserved in the masses, i.e., he believed folk poetry superior to individual poetry.

Schiller's aim was to elevate man-kind as a whole to a level at which they could be appreciated.

A great artist is always abreast of the most advanced spiritual, -or philosophical aesthetic tendencies of his time, whatever their country of origin. Breugel, for instance cannot be interpreted as a Flemish painter only. His work became a mirror of his people's struggle for political and spiritual liberty precisely because he had mastered the outstanding intellectual and aesthetic achievements of his Italian, Spanish, French, German and English contemporaries, as well as his native heritage. The extension of relations in Europe were due to the discovery of the new world.

In the 18th and 19th centuries great progress was made toward revealing the contradictions in the development of art in a class society and the central problem was that of the accessibility of art to the masses.

Hegel in his "Aesthetics", raised a whole series of problems relating to the people (this is a word Lenin used) and stated :

"Art does not exist for a small exclusive circle, a restricted group of highly educated men, it exists entirely for the whole people."

Amazingly, Hogarth is a marvellous study of concentration of a total concept, of, for instance, bourgeois marriage, the use of unity of opposites that is the tearing apart of the two partners at critical points.... equals an absolute explosion of the terror of the meaning of bourgeois marriage. The sharp selection of action and symbols demonstrates a marvellous mind of great perception. The extension and compression is extra-ordinary. This is Hogarth in the 18th century quite some time before Hegel's or Marx's dialectics, let alone Lenin and Stalin.

In the 18th century Lessing, stemming from the Bourgeois Enlightenment Period, felt the artist should combine elements of folk art with the most progressive ideas, and make use of the entire battery of techniques evolved throughout the ages.

Elizabethan literature reaches its height before the English commercial bourgeois achieved political power. Marlowe's plays are the first great artistic expression of the class struggles of the Elizabethan period.

Hegel understood the dialectical sense of advance through conflict. Ibsen applied Hegelian dialectics to the structure of his plays. Hegel felt that the aim of realism is to analyse causes and take possession of phenomena through recognition of relationships and not to think of them as mysterious.

Ralph Fox tells us:

"Fielding, in discussing the theory of the novel as early as 1790 always emphasized it's epic and historical character!" He said : 'You cannot show man complete unless you show him in action'. 'The novelist is not a mere chronicler, but an historian'. 'The novelist as opposed to the chronicler, must use the method of those writers who profess to disclose the revolutions of countries.'

Ralph Fox interprets Fielding by saying that:

" that is to say, he must be concerned with change with the relation of cause and effect, with crisis and conflict, and not merely description or subjective analysis."

"When the novelist again accepts Fielding's view of his function, we shall have a new realism.... Penetration into the essential differences must mean the revelation of those contradictions, which are of human actions, both the inner contradictions in a man's character and those external contradictions with which they are inextricably connected.

The magistrate and English writer Fielding in his satire "Jonathon Wild" shows the criminal as a social type.... as he considered Walpole. Fielding's devastating wit into the lies and pretence of bourgeois society accurately exposes the sham of society which we see even today.

Lenin read the song of the weavers of the Silesian weavers whose first industrial strike was 1844. Lenin saw this as evidence of the ability, and desire of workers to create their own art. So popular art was encouraged in the USSR.

Peasant art has a different ideological content to proletarian art because their day to day social practice is different.

In Marx and Engel's "The German Ideology" it states :

"The exclusive concentration of artistic talent in particular individuals, and its suppression in the broad mass, which is bound up with this is a consequence of division of labour."

In class society art became an independent field of activity isolated from materialist production.

Form in art work is what an artist learns in a school.

Concept in art has always been dictated by the ruling class of that country and period of history as we can learn from a tape recording here at the banquetting hall in London where Charles 1st was beheaded. It says:

"King James the first wrote two books. Basically he claimed to be equal to God and should be treated as such. Maskes were created and the great In go Jones designed the sets and costumes which were to depict these Godly royals so that the people would look up to them in fear.... as God was feared in those days.... Thus creating the all powerful royalty through their art or propaganda.

So that under Socialist Realism the ruling class, which would be the proletariat, had need to demonstrate in art, the same as the ruling classes preceeding them.... To demonstrate in art who was the class enemy and for what, and for whom was the socialist state standing and defending.

Their art regulations were then formulated under that code just as other regimes in history had codified their demands for their ruling class.

Franz Mehring, a German Marxist, stated of a proletarian theatre in 1891 that the 'Free People's Theatre' must not be a mere continuation of opposition to bourgeois culture, but must rather create dis-continuity. Mehring said:

"A proletarian theatre must not be merely a discount house for bourgeois culture. "

His ideas could not get through because of the bourgeoisification of the German proletarian movement, and its leading party the Social Democrats.

When Mehring, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg formed the German Communist Party at the end of 1918 he did so in the belief that the development of working class culture was not possible as a compromise with the bourgeois. Instead he felt it could only be the result of the revolutionary transformation of reality. Unfortunately bourgeois apologists took over as literary spokesmen for the Volkstheater movement and introduced workers to an ideology of Culture and Property. Only in 1920 did Erwin Piscator and Brecht and critic Herbert Ihering create an anti-bourgeois theatre movement. Piscator mounted a theatre of revolutionary class struggle. It became revolution staged before a bourgeois public. Marx had taught "Play the tune proper" to the German conditions in order to set them dancing, thus to get them moving. But even Piscator became a "possession" of the well-meaning, known as "a cultural experience".

Brecht and Piscator had demanded replacement of the bourgeois substance and function in the theatre with the pre-requisites and standards of the revolutionary workers world. But Marx and Brecht himself had come to be props for the bourgeois world.

Revisionist theatre is a restored and restorative world which is exploited, only the patterns and objects of exploitation being changed. Without a revolution that is current in society can many plays be, not just understood, but responded to in revolutionary terms; like my own play "The Cocoa Party" which was about patriarchy in the family, breaking down the family itself as well as the individuals in it. It took almost forty years before it was bought and produced in London by the "Black Theatre Co-op", and toured.

Brecht's epic theatre and his methods of producing his theatre in direct opposition to the re-actionary Wagner's ideas of slipping into empathy with the characters. Brecht's Marxist objectivity in East Berlin could never be totally transferred to the subjective pragmatic western theatre.

Brecht's methods were a tremendous break through. They were an amalgamation of his own period of history of film, psychoanalysis and Marxism. He broke the bourgeois concept of the living room stage set which occurs from Ibsen to the American contemporary black writer August Wilson. The living room is the essence of the bourgeois family; hardly a frame-work for American black slave history. Brecht's epic play stems from viewing a character, not within the bourgeois family but; within society as a whole, everywhere the character is affected, moulded. So Brecht, the Marxist used music hall and melodrama to illuminate the class struggle, a character up against society.

You don't transform reality with a play, you can satirise society. You can demonstrate the reality that we, as Marxists, know exists and that many people who are not Marxists know exists. What to do about it? Well, no one can do anything about it until the conditions for action present themselves.

People who say Brecht's plays never encouraged the audience to go out and make a revolution do not understand, one awaits the conditions to present themselves. You don't blame a playwright for not presenting the economic and political conditions for revolution. Those who do are utopian romanticists at best.

As early as 1851 there was a hot discussion about Courbet's painting "Burial at Ornans". The art critic Champfleury stated "There is not a trace of socialism in "Burial at Ornans".

Courbet T.J. Clark says:

"Conjured out of privacy, out of obscurity of a small-town funeral, an imagery which was public and political. Not just art that caused an out-cry, but images which undermined the bourgeois sense of what was art and what was bourgeois, images which addressed themselves to another public, the public that crammed the Salon Carré each year, on their day off work. If any artist came close to creating the conditions for revolutionary art, it was Courbet, later the Commune in 1871."

Clark states:

" Art's effectiveness, in political terms, is limited to the realm of ideology".... " In certain circumstances, works of art can attack, dislocate, even subvert an ideology.... Capital and sometimes, rarely, that dislocation has some political significance."

Courbet's art, his discovery of a situation was the centre of a web of ideologies. "In the decades after 1848, the examples of Courbet and Baudelaire, and the different responses to politics they embodied, stayed obstinately alive. Later Manet tried to combine both responses."

Clark continues: " The problem was in fact: to discover the point at which public and private intersect and thus be able to attack one by depicting the other.".... " Only Daumier in an occasional lithograph portrayed social conflict as such, a definite confrontation of classes."

In the "salon of 1846" Baudelaire made the century's most famous piece of art criticism when Baudelaire called for a painter to celebrate the heroism of modern life.

Baudelaire said: "We should begin by seeing the significance of our privacy and the grandeur of its uniform, the despised frock-coat and spats.... it is the garb of our suffering age, which wears the symbol of perpetual mourning, at once political and an expression of universal equality, an expression of the public soul, an immense cortege of undertakers' mutes (mutes in love, political mutes, bourgeois mutes). Each of us is celebrating some funeral."

Four years later Courbet did not acknowledge Baudelaire's concept but "Burial at Ornans" is Baudelaire's concept. It is the best image of the 1848 Revolution; the most complex picture of the bourgeoisie. Not a picture of Paris, not a location of the revolution in the countryside, not a portrait of the bourgeoisie, not even a commitment to the fact of the struggles of 1848, universal suffrage, the end of Feudalism, the "social question". Only Courbet managed any of these."

For many artists who might respond to the revolution.... the revolution invades their private lives but it does not take on form. It is there, but they do not know how to use it; above all, they do not know how to become part of it.

When it came to the next and greatest revolution of the 19th century, the Paris Commune of 1871, Courbet tried a new strategy and paid for it by being jailed, by being part of the revolution as an activist.

Manet, when he drew his Barricades was non-committal. He suppressed the action: he kept the faces out of focus.

The Cult of the Individual is not nearly a campaign to expose the alleged personal weaknesses of Stalin but a plot to abandon a revolutionary policy of the Communist Parties pursued under Lenin and Stalin, and replace it with a policy of conciliation with capitalism in order to lead to the defeat of the working class. The phrase "Cult of the Individual" is in fact a bourgeois phrase. Marxist concepts dwell on "society" not on the individual"

In a capitalist society the ideology of the ruling class is partly echoed in the art of the masses. There is an Afro-American tv cable channel named "IDTV" meaning "identity television." Their interview programmes, and discussion programmes are extremely interesting to those of us who have never heard bourgeois blacks discuss within their own community in this way. One programme discussed rap dancing. Two musicians, one older man Rodney who had played since the fifties and Peter Noel, from the "Village Voice"- a liberal New York weekly, Peter Noel a Trinidadian musician and Rodney were upset and confused as to what had happened to their music. Their music to them as composers was pure and warm hearted, indeed a people's music.

In the late eighties and nineties those who market black music in America had guided, or manouvred this music to represent the most vicious anti-gay and anti-women lyrics, that were absolutely shocking to these musicians, who had wanted to make a living from their music. So much of the black artistic work that needs to be seen or heard..... what one might call today's folk art is being driven to the ground. If you want to hear it or see it you have to go out and search for it. But how many people in America would dare go when they hear the messages of viciousness seemingly coming from black artists. In this case I would put this down to a covert operation by the CIA to de-stabilise the black community's relationship with Women and the Gay Scene, and the black community itself. This is why in a socialist society elements of ruling class ideology, survivals of capitalism must be isolated and expunged.

During the period of the 'Personality Cult', the official policy on the arts, although designed to encourage Socialist Realist Art was distorted in theory and even more in practice. These distortions undermined the credit of Socialist Realism in terms of genuine art, and provided matter for revisionist attacks. The reasons why revisionism in aesthetics gained so much ground in that period in that period were:

1. It attacked the sense of party commitment and within this it questioned the right of direction of the party.
2. It emphasized bourgeois spontaneity as against conscious awareness of Marxist-Leninist ideology.
3. It attacked the realist demand for totality by invoking the theory and practice of naturalist, and symbolist literature.
4. It impuned the achievements of Socialist Realist Art.
5. It claimed a leading role in the arts, especially literature.

A double campaign was mounted against dogmatic abuses of Socialist Realism and the revisionist representations.

In the Krushev period in the sixties in the Soviet Union, they had a method called "Micro realism" and also the theory of "The de-heroisation". They also had something called "The critical trend" which was considered a "new epoch" which denigrated the time of Stalin and the past generations.

The angry young men of that period viewed everything around them with contempt and distrust, aiming at a comfortable petty bourgeois livelihood with lofty ideals or sacrifices. The heroic theme was proclaimed to be invented, not developed slowly from past history, and it was replaced by abstract humanist motifs. The many discussions about realism in Soviet criticism had as their main objective the legalisation of the new formalist literature, which was being inaugurated there at that time. This literature, which had nothing in common with the literature of Socialist Realism, was taken under the wing of the official critical circles. New means and arguments were found for its approval. Thus, the thesis was spread that in the countries where socialism had triumphed, literature must give up dealing with socio-political and moral problems, because these are dealt with the organs of power concerned, whereas literature must preserve only its aesthetic function.

Thus literature loses its educative and political functions; it is isolated from the ideological struggle and the criterion of the beautiful is proclaimed to be its main criterion, divorced from social and moral problems. Such a platform has nothing in common with progressive literature, and is very convenient for formalist literature of various shades. This innovation is nothing but a complete violation of the basic principles of the method of Socialist Realism which emerged from the world experience of revolutionary art since 1848, and which has been elaborated on by Marxist-Leninist aesthetics.

Metaphysicists deny historically acquired consciousness on the basis of social practice and they replace it with the impossibility of knowing the world with certainty, and replacing the term "class-struggle" with "human nature". An exposure of bourgeois ideology is part of the class struggle to see what is now so obvious a breakdown in society as a reflection of a decadent imperialist culture.

There can be no popularisation of the proletarian philosophy of historical and dialectical materialism without a complete refutation of the idealistic trends like the theory of human nature, even so called "evil in human nature" when they talk about little boys who murder, or people who steal to make a living denied to them by the society they live in.

It is not in the worker's interest to occupy himself with sex instead of organising himself against oppression and exploitation. The sexual aberration is an American patriarchal imperialist concept of life with propagandist connotations, and must be seen as such.... Anything to deter the unemployed working class from class struggle. A bourgeois novelist ignores the highest aspects of the working class and makes his own class outlook seemingly the outlook of the whole American people.

The essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each separate individual. The essence of man is the ensemble of social relations. Man in the abstract is a fiction! The essence of man can have no meaning other than the social relations of men and their struggle with nature. Consciousness is the reflection in the mind's of men of these social relations.

As early as 1846 Marx and Engels had proved that a contradiction between consciousness(including art) and life was not only possible but under certain circumstances even inevitable. Marx and Engels believed that of all forms of society that of fully developed industrial capitalism, in which that division between material and mental labour reaches extreme point, was most hostile to art.

On the occasion of the anniversary on the Chartist's "People's Paper" April 1856 Marx speaks of; " All our inventions and progress seem to result in endowing material forces with intellectual life, and in stultifying human life into a material force. This antagonism between industry and science, on the one hand, and modern misery and disillusion, on the other; this antagonism between the productive forces and the social relations of our epoch is a fact" not to be denied.

Marx's explanation of the temporary estrangement of art from life had nothing in common with Hegel's view of the irredeemable decline of art; for Marx pointed out that the very factors which lead to a temporary decline of art at the same time create the conditions for it's resurrection once men have freed themselves from their enslavement 'to other men or to their own infamy'.

Marx's method of explaining all forms of consciousness in terms of the ever changing relations with men in society, also lay the foundations for a scientific history of art which attempts as yet only a mere description of its ever changing forms.

Just as Marx was able to explain the characteristic trend of 19th century art.... the trend which culminated in the formalism of today.... in terms of the contradictions of 19th century life, so historical materialism can disclose the social roots of the entire, complex history of styles. The art of a decadent epoch must be decadent.

In speaking of the hero in revisionist literature Mary Ellen Brooks states:

"Revisionists have reverted to the bourgeois position on the questions of the hero and ideology in order to use the outlook of idealism for strengthening capitalism in the Soviet Union.

The ideal according to bourgeois revisionist ideology grows in the mind regardless of material conditions of life. It first emerges, they say, as the product of thought and then is only realised in life. The mind, they say, creates new reality. But as Marxist-Leninists we know that it is not man's mind but his ability to learn from his social practice of class struggle how to change the world which decides his future. The distinguishing feature of bourgeois revisionist aesthetics is that it appeals to an abstractly conceived man and does not therefore serve the working class. Heroes are born out of struggle not inspired by the mind.

Since idealists and revisionists deny the Marxist theory of class struggle i.e., working class struggle not their own upper class struggle against the working class, they grab onto the idea of supremacy of mind over matter and put out to the ordinary people that heroes, not the masses of people, make history. "Superman, Popeye, and Micky Mouse are the myths that feed the mind's of our children today into an imperialist frame of mind.

The Hungarian Georgi Lukacs was unfortunately of this revisionist ilk. A brilliant man in his field of literature, it wasn't until 1949 and 1950 and again 1957/8 that the great Lukacs's debates occurred. He was born in 1885.

That old conception of 'real' or 'pure' democracy loudly propagated between 1945/8 found itself in opposition not only to fascism and formal democracy but also to the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the prospect of socialist revolution. In many of his formulations Lukacs left the class content of the concept of democracy undefined; its equivalent aesthetic quality, on the other hand, he clearly indicated to what he called 'great realism'. To Lukacs, communism was identical with the best interests of humanity. He did not believe his 'realism' to be specifically communist, but rather, he thought of it as 'objectivistic' and applicable to 'mankind as a whole'.

Lukacs identified the peoples' front of the party seriously and that after hopes for a revolution were dashed, he continued to believe in a democratic humanistic community of all anti-fascist parties, while for Moscow it was only a manoeuvre. Lukacs did not realise that he had gone over to democracy. As long as communism, as a revolutionary ideology appeared to stand for the liberation of mankind they could make do with the literature of the twenties, a literature that used and propagated the spirit of human feeling. But, from the moment that communism established itself as a ruling system (that also was forced to commit atrocities) such a writing proved untenable.

Lukacs's views by idealising the 19th century of Dickens and Tolstoy also impeded the unfolding of Socialist Realist art, and theory in a further and indirect way. It was said: "Lukacs made no criticism at all of critical realism from the socialist point of view. In the last resort his conservatism was closely connected with his rightist political ideological views. Georgi Lukacs's theory of 'great realism' In spite of giving the correct answer to a number of questions of the Marxist interpretation of realism.... provided that at one and the same time a theoretical confirmation of both:

1. The mis-representation of revisionism.
2. The restrictive tendencies of dogmatism.

It thus blocked the way to the healthy development of aesthetic theories. And as the dogmatic approach was abandoned and revisionism relegated to the background, it became increasingly obvious that his theory was incapable of answering the new questions - arising in the development of Socialist Realism.

One of the debates included Anna Seghers the German Jewish writer who escaped Hitler's Germany and fled to Mexico. The book she is best remembered for in English is "The Seventh Cross"

Lukacs felt Soviet developments supported his own view-points. Formalism and realism were being discussed in the USSR. Lukacs in his argument had not actually come out for Socialist Realism. It merely seemed as if he had. All he had in common was a Stalinist cultural policy was a critical attitude towards the Avant Gard's writing and toward the lack of social-political content of modern literature of that period. However, the realism he envisaged was very unlike the Stalinist ideal.

Artistic power and intellectual honesty are not enough. Lukacs felt that political utility is inherent in the event if it's realistically portrayed. Anna Seghers objected to Lukacs's contention that the writer must mirror all of reality, society in its totality. This she said was not possible in a period of transition, a period of crisis calling for new methods of mirroring reality. The art of our epoch calls for the shaping of new fundamental experiences.

She said: "What you (Lukacs) call decay seems to me a kind of stock taking. 'Bits of new subject matter' you say. What you look upon as experimentation with form I see as a violent attempt at new means, an inevitable attempt at new meanings. An artist of necessity must approach new reality gropingly, trying to grasp fragments and tendencies."

Socialist Realism Garaudy the French revisionist insinuates, is simply a reflection of the reality but not a process of participation of a new society.

This kind of statement brings out the idealistic foundations of revisionism. Garaudy urges artists to go beyond what he calls the "negative phase of class war" and thus to "play his part in awakening men to consciousness of their human and therefore creative quality".

For revisionists like Garaudy imperialism is not the eve of revolution and will not be replaced by socialism. Garaudy repeats Maurice Thorez another French revisionist by saying 'an artist must grope in the dark and image different models in the future'. 'This is what artists have done in the past and should be given the freedom to do the same in socialist countries'.

It is interesting to hear a programme on the world service interviewing a former dissident of the former USSR. For years he wallows in his dissidency and now he is allowed "freedom". The result is that he doesn't know how or what to paint. He has no concept. So much for dissidence, and he was a dissident of the Khrushchov period.

Socialist Realists are wrong, revisionists tell us, because they entrench themselves in historical development. Garaudy and his ilk believe not in class struggle but in a transcendent brotherhood of man which sounds like Christian Science, or Buddhism. Garaudy and those who follow in his footsteps, have achieved a revisionist's ideal of becoming one with the bourgeois. The Bourgeois and Revisionists are one. Their common goal is to preserve imperialism and to mislead the working class and oppressed people about the possibilities of revolutionary change. The upper classes use their influence in the ideological sphere to defeat, to corrupt, and sabotage socialists and the proletariat. The literary and art sphere in particular is used by them as a bridge head for propagating the reactionary world outlook, and restoring capitalism where ever socialism breaks out.

The Soviet Revisionists renegade clique made literature and art an important sector for creating counter-revolutionary public opinion and they had to be dealt with.

The French revisionists Garaudy claims that:

'The true realism is not that which affirms man's destiny but that which concentrates on his choices'.

Instead of bringing about revolution by class struggle and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, the revisionists want to brood over human choices and withdraw into the bosom of the bourgeois for comfort and reward. Revisionists substitute for class struggle the question of human choices and discuss it in the abstract. Instead of waging class struggle Garaudy would like the working class to participate in dialogue. The 'plural reality' of society which Garaudy is devoted to is a world without contradictions, a world in which imperialism and socialism combine into one 'humanistic' society, a society in which pluralism stands for a revisionist intellectual's devotion to bourgeois idealism.

Religions are great allies of this 'humanism'. In Norwich Cathedral gallery of photos near their cafe several years ago it was pointedly pleaded for the 'human face of communism' to be mixed with capitalism. That is the grand-mix people unable to see any deeper can hope for. Is the capitalism which they conceive of what former prime minister Edward Heath called "the unacceptable face of capitalism". Now that is a pretty interesting concept!

The Italian Vitore Callvora says:

"Realism concentrates its attention on the description of the most essential aspects of reality. Because realist writers thought historically it enabled them to reproduce the rhythm of life, the contradictions of reality and the depth of the internal psychological world of man".

But today the various kinds of modernism proceed from anti-historic principals; they do not accept the dialectical development of human society and as a consequence the concrete, historical, and individual particularities of life remain outside their conception.

Hegel stated that the Myth is an historic category, a stage of development of artistic thinking.

Twentieth century writers consider the "myth" a form of intuitive thinking, a kind of logic which is supposed to be a constant characteristic of the nature of man. In the work of modernists there is no connection of symbols with life, which is conceived of by them as chaos, whose elements and parts can never make up a whole. The mythological work of modernist art contain a subjective and a fantastic presentation of the world based entirely on situations unreal or irrational. They have used the term "the realism of hallucinations".

Divorcing art from sphere of ideology is the doctrine of all the anti-realist trends which sees art as independent of class ideology. They do not view art as an ideological structure.

Ernst Fischer, an Austrian revisionist theoretician sees that both capitalism and socialism: alienation of the individual. He sees this as a permanent conflict between the individual and society. He sees no difference. He's trying to unite realism and modernism. So we see even Marxist's can be revisionists and not recognise it. Fischer has a complete denial of revolutionary periods he has a tendency towards de-heroisation. He participates in the cult of the intimate world of disillusionment and spiritual manifestations, the falsification of history. This type of revisionist uses bourgeois pacifism and "objectivism" particularly in works about war. The pragmatist inclination is to praise and justify everything which has to do with the revisionist policy, and in the former USSR with great Russian Chauvinism.

We see this in particular with Solzhenitsyn. Recently he accepted a top award from the right wing in America. And now he has come out in favour of a return to Tzarism. So he has gone beyond the limits of usual revisionist leaders who want to hide the truth and preserve themselves.

These revisionists stand in the same position of treachery and complete bourgeoisification.

The French novelist Louis Aaragon became a revisionist himself, siding with Garaudy. Aaragon returned to his earlier surrealism. His subjective lyricism continues down the formalist road of Proust. None of us are immune and must be vigilant in the cause of the revolutionary tradition.

In a class society art develops along two distinct lines reflecting the class split, the split in the society itself, each class developing its line. folk art continues to develop amongst the masses, but the ruling classes develop professional individual or academic art which is to varying degrees inaccessible to the masses.

The first great Russian theorist Belinski (1811/48) defined two distinct periods in the history of every people: an early instinctive period and later conscious period. In the first period the national peculiarities of the people are more sharply expressed and the poetry is therefore highly individual to it and consequently inaccessible to other people. He cited the impact of the Russian folk songs in Russian and the difficulty of conveying the impact to non-Russians. Hence the South African experiment begun in 1993, experiments in the people's art, will be inaccessible to westerners.

But Belinski states that in the second period poetry attains a higher level of sophistication, becomes less accessible to the masses but is proportionately more accessible to other people, signifying the end of the divorce of art from the people. Each new historical situation is the outcome of a different line of development and so has its own preconditions, and for another because the various effects bring to light different features, and different aspects of the same historic events.

The British black poet Benjamin Zepharias satirically set himself up as the new poet-laureate here in Britain, but of course, his people's poetry with people's concepts was accessible basically only to those whose background was the same as his. Because we have a class society only the elite poet was "correct" for the royal queen of the bourgeois. It was a poignant joke which undoubtedly only the masses understood. When you have a society of classes the same number of streams of art work will flow from their separate springs.

So a socialist society preserves the best in folk art. Folk art instills new ideas into them leading to a fusion of traditional forms with the finest achievements of academic art, universal education and the consequent raising of the cultural level of the entire people, with improved living standards and ample leisure which then will give rise to the communist art which Lenin predicted.

In a world service programme about Africa, broadcast by the BBC, and how the ANC is already proceeding in the area of the arts. A most amazing concept emerged, one which I even wonder if the producer of the programme understood fully.

The major art area gallery in Johannesburg has been taken over by a woman art historian. She couldn't be anything but a Marxist. All the renaissance art in the gallery is being set aside.... not destroyed.... set aside as it has no meaning to the indigenous people of South Africa. The black people of South Africa have been crushed and oppressed, murdered and shunted off into the prairies to make their patched up villages. What does even Van Gogh or Cezanne mean to them, or even the communist Courbet's work mean to them? It is the history and development of white patriarchy that will be set aside. Now if you translate that to the fact that here in London and England there are in the past twenty or thirty years dark skinned people of several religions and several different types of culture; what do our art galleries mean to them.

Therefore we can expect the second stage in the South African arts to occur in future. Those who might be stupid enough to denigrate the idea of the new South Africans for setting aside Van Gogh, renaissance art and western art in general for the present in order to encourage the rage and pain that will emerge in this period from 1993, this, their 'earlier work' of the masses in South Africa, will not realise the powerful ground work of folk art in this coming period will be laid for a future outstanding South African art in the next century.

The Hungarian Communist Party Cultural Theory Panel suggests some of the problems of Socialist Realism still awaiting theoretical research are; the application of the theory of Socialist Realism to music and architecture.

The clarification of the problems of that "revolutionary romanticism" which was stressed in the thirties by Gorki and Fadeyev and others but has lost its importance today.

The question of the positive hero, the socially active man.

The concrete and historical investigation into relations of content and form.

The establishment of general criteria applicable to the Socialist Realist arts developing in different national societies.

Socialist theory applied to film, television, and radio.

The elimination of the biased standards of the 19th century.

And further work of the history of Socialist Realist theory itself.

Discussions which have been neglected are: the individuality of the creative artist.

The role of ideology in the process of creation.

The relation of realism as a method to other trends and styles.

What Marx said of legal institutions applies in a wider measure to artistic and literary forms.

"They cannot stand higher than the society which brought them forth".

Indeed, since they deal with the deepest human laws, problems, and contradictions of an epoch SHOULD NOT stand higher.... in the sense, say, of anticipating coming perspectives of development by romantic-utopian projections of the future into the present. For the tendencies leading to the future are in fact more firmly and definitely contained in what really is than in the most beautiful utopian dreams or projections.

Socialism is the first society of which the decisive criteria maybe scientifically conceived before it has come fully into existence.

Socialist Realism is the reflection in art of the conscious formation of a society.

Socialist Realist art is imbued with a humanism which is more active and more communal than any existing heretofore and expresses the best efforts of, and desires to exert an influence on the broadest masses.

The dominant form in Soviet arts has been Socialist Realism. It is the most advanced form of realism yet reached.

Socialist Realism is characterised by diversity.

Socialist Realism requires the artist to present reality in its revolutionary course of development, in a true and historically concrete manner.

*** (Association Socialist Writers 1932).

The literature of the period of Lenin and Stalin, especially that born in the conditions of the revolution, with its great theme, and later on the theme of the great patriotic war was in the main its most important period, a true manifestation of Socialist Realism.

Arnold Kettle states that "Socialist Realism like socialism itself opens out potentialities hitherto unknown to man."

The principle underlying the connection between party commitment and Socialist Realism is that the discovery of reality, the mastery of revealing reality, and the uninterrupted over-taking of reality represent the vital interests of the working class.

In a socialist society elements of ruling class ideology survivals of capitalism must be isolated and expunged.

The understanding of Socialist Realism is an ideological weapon for you to use to estimate what Imperialist Culture is doing to mould people's minds, to deflect them from class struggle no matter if it is violent, sexual, or idealistic, or mystical: identify it and tell people about it, use every means at your disposal whether it is letters-to-the-editor or a talk-in show.

Without a thorough going socialist revolution on political and ideological fronts including literature and art the socialist system will never be consolidated and the bourgeois dream of restoration can be come a reality.

To shatter the class enemies plea for restoration, the proletariat must battle the class enemy, consider and instigate a programme for a socialist super-structure in all cultural areas.

To help the younger generation recognise the protracted and complex nature of struggle:

Heighten our vigilance
Conduct socialist education in all fields
The arts serve the base.

And to remember: the future belongs to Socialist Realism, you know what I'm saying!

ADDENDA I

The film "Dead Poets Society" which was not escapist or violent dealt with an important issue, the education of young people.

Its aspect of Utopian Romanticism of 'do your own thing' as against more authoritarian bourgeois methods implies the kind of idealism that will ultimately fail any young revolutionary, and will collapse at the feet of the powerful well organised conservative ideology of reactionaries.

The cant and hypocrisy was seen for what it is. But, it is this undermining idealism which must be exposed for what it is. Organising against conservative power must necessitate a basic Marxist-Leninist self-education and a Communist Party devoted to the attaining and maintaining socialism.

During the McCarthy period in the United States there was a beautiful actor named Frances Farmer who played with John Garfield on Broadway and in the film of Clifford Odets' "Golden Boy". Frances Farmer went to Hollywood and was always a communist activist, the film they made about her in the last few years showed a story of a woman who didn't agree with her mother, was put in a mental home and lobotomised. However the film forgot to state (Ha ha!) it was because she was a communist, not because she did not agree with her mother.

ADDENDA II

'Heimat' made in 1984 is Edgar Reitz's sixteen hour sanctification of the German homeland.

Ruth Perlmutter, a professor at the University of Ohio in the most re-actionary country in the world, defines this film as an example of German revisionist film making.

It chronicles the lives of one family living in a fictional called Schabbach in the Hunstruck, a remote agriculture region.

The story starts with Paul Simon, the son of a blacksmith, who returns from military service, marries Maria, the mayor's daughter, sires two children and is an inventor. He leaves suddenly for a fifteen year period and goes to America to 'make good'. We follow Maria during the Nazi period ending the film in 1982.

M.M.Bakhtin, a Russian literary theorist distinguishes three common elements in the form called 'idylls.' An idyll is, since folk law time, a devotional literature grounded in the consecration of love, agricultural labour and the family. It is a 'self sufficient' spacial world where generations play out all the cycles of life. It is an idealisation of the phases of life, work, food, drink softened to emphasis the seeming importance of everyday life.

Heimat has this melancholy finality, like "Elegy in a Country Churchyard".

It tries to substitute narrative 'truth' for history.

It even has soap opera strategies. It's lyrical sense of life close to the soil, its fixation on the family of man. Perlmutter claims that Heimat retreats into elemental tendencies and to archaic pastoral forms in literature.

Edgar Reitz himself claims to want to tell stories which 'will revive life, the eternity of life and the important moments of life'. He eulogies the 'wisdom of simple folk'. This seemingly humanistic notes are valuing dying remnants of the provincial, or patriarchal worlds' which according to Bakhtin is regressive even in the idyll.

Reitz equates Germaness with reactionary agrarian romanticism and the same essential impulses that allowed 1945 Germans to accept amoral, acultural, totalitarian society.

Reitz describes his own goals as needing to restore national pride to a country unable to mourn. The Americans had made a video soap film "Holocaust" this was a German response to the American carthartic exorcism. For his personal "filmic truth" Perlmutter says Reitz is forced into organised forgetting of one whole area of experience and reality, in order to give value to his other source of melencholy and guilt; the troubling dependency and insularity surrounding the archaic idealisations of the family and the nation.

The nazi presence is totally over-shadowed by the more compelling seductions of the narrative, of the family's personal trials, love affairs, and deaths of friends, the women who waited were their husbands and sons to return from war. The actual nazi atrocities are dealt with off screen as if the things that happened in the big cities, and not the countryside, Nazism casually intrudes. It is without violence or any aryan notions that we know swept Germany with hysterical fervour.

Jewishness is relegated to a kind of "inconvenience" when the central woman, Maria falls in love with a soldier whose mother was Jewish. So nazi fanaticism is defused by modifying its depravity.

Perlmutter points out to us that in another movement, a brother is sent to Berlin to cure his lungs but has an affair with a prostitute while the gigantic Reichstag rally is going on under his window. The theme that emerges is that nazism is a noxious but transitory city phenomenon.

Other more insidious treatments of nazism in pasant is a depiction of the village men who seem to have been unwillingly conscripted or are mis-fits, and therefore easy targets for the seduction of nazi favours. One member of the family becomes a local nazi official and another panders to the nazis out of his desire for luxury, rather than any nationalistic political commitment. He is goaded into becoming mayor by his ex-prostitute wife and entertains nazis lavishly in garish mansion; all motivated by ambition.

Focussing on the women Reitz tries to discover more palatable roots, but it does not alter reality. These women gave sustenance to their family without raising any effective voice, but this kind of focusing on the role of women diverts attention from the male chauvinist nazi savagery.

The Valhalla-like last scene the family and nature are integrated through death.... a harmonisation that purifies all.

Reigning metaphors equate cannons, shooting and bombs with love and sex i.e., a soldier compares his girl's legs to a cannon, and an amunitions factory is described to a child as a bon-bon factory. (a pun on bomb).

Perlmutter concludes: Reitz's Heimat is an attempt to reflect on the German past as a way of re-organising the present. In his hope to unblock collective German guilt by foregrounding every day family concerns, rather than analysing and breaking down the influence on social reality of political events.

In Fassbinder films he questions the authenticity of the characters and interrogates notions of national identity, the patriarchal world and the nazi legacy, their generation inherited. Fassbinder viewed the family as an example of a reactionary involution, bred by the insidious influences of capitalism, on the philosophy of the nazi party. Fassbinder exposed family oppressive relations as microcosms of the dominant/submissive framework of fascism. To Fassbinder a oppressed and oppressors are victims of the German system which is nothing but a baleful microcosm of capitalist greed, and contemporary homogenised commodity culture.

In 1984 the Venice Film Festival invited some of the greatest film makers in Germany: Herzog, Wenders, Kluge, Scholondorff, and Von Trotta; they sent a telegram urging it to show "Heimat" 'This European requiem for the common people'. But Gertrude Koch lambasted these film makers for falling prey, warned of the cosmopolitan words of the telegram. Reitz in his book "Love of the Movies" repeats historic anti-semitic connections between capitalism and 'money grubbing Jews' which of course underlines his amazing decline of historic sensibility.

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