

OCCASION OF THIS THINKSHEET: A theologian friend, whom I'll here call Jack, asked me to contribute to the Revolutionary Communist Party, whose organ is THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKER (Box3486 Merchandise Mart, Chicago IL, 60654).

Dear Jack:

After reading this letter, you may not feel that I feel honored by your invitation to contribute to the RCP, but I do. It means that you believe that this old radical, even though having recently attained age 65, is still radical enough to feel rousements from the left and react, to some extent, positively. On this, be assured that your faith in me is not entirely misplaced even though I cannot bring myself to support the RCP. Here are some glimmerings as to why:

1. *Deja vu.* The Russian Revolution was only a few months old when I came into the world --so I don't go "all the way back." But I was in communist cells (tongue in cheek) during the Great Depression, and in the McCarthy Era got caught by Harold Velde's House Un-American Activities Committee for using communist money in my efforts to subvert the committee, and in the Vietnam Era I got fired for refusing to submit my radio and television "scripts" to my employer for "editing." I always have chosen which side of the barricades to be on, and never have cared who was standing with me (red-white-and-blue, red, or any other color[s]). And when I read RCP material, I get the "I've been here before" feeling; and I gain a bit of sympathy for a statement I heard time and again from my laity (a statement that, betimes, enraged and discouraged me): "We tried that and it didn't work." Yes, I do feel ambivalent: my heart goes out to any and all who put in and pay up for vision-action toward a more human world, for our Book and Faith spring from and preach the tension between what is (anywhere on earth) and what should be. Further, you know my struggle against Fundamentalism: the RCP is fundamentalistic, scribistic, reality-defying in the same spirit as the fundamentalism I struggled against. The parallel is in history, not only in attitude. As Fundamentalism was obscurantist orthodoxy after historical-critical method ("modernism"), so the RCP is literalistic Marxism after massive, consistent evidence that Marxist stirrings are soon coopted to tyranny: Marxian analysis in practice does not correlate with human rights even as well as does *laissez faire*--and I am no doctrinaire capitalist!

2. General cultural analysis sometimes contraposes "classical" to mean emphasizing the collective to the peril of the individual and "romantic" to mean emphasizing the individual to the peril of the social fabric and tranquility. As I tilt collective in my mind and have a romantic soul, I haven't been happy on either side of the street--or in the middle of it, for that matter. My thinksheet on "identimacy" (#983) preaches the marriage of intelligence and compassion (the former leading toward impersonal unity, the latter toward hyperpersonal anarchy; e.g., the RCP as the former and ACLU as the latter). The rigorist dogmatism of the RCP does not allow sufficient philosophical ambience or political forum or social-religious pluralism to provide these polar values with freedom to evolve a more human society. Our present American society, though "far from the Kingdom," does provide the open space for us to slouch toward a Better Way. For one thing, I can fight and lose or win and still survive: the RCP tells me it will eliminate religious men like me if "we" (the RCP and religious folk) win on our side of the barricades: tell me, why wouldn't that mentality lead straight to tyranny?

3. As colonialism and the neo-colonialisms fade, we are right back again up against tribalism and feudalism. For these, the RCP's primitive Marxism, and the neo-Marxisms, are at least awkward if not inept and even irrelevant. The just-concluded (Mar/83) conference of nonaligned nations was the least ideological so far: the Third World is beginning to face its need for structures and processes of mutual benefit motivating capitalization for production of good and services. "Capitalism" and "Communism" are both seen as failures at least in the sense of offering salvation from misery; hope, the non-aligned are beginning to see, must be home-grown. In all I've read of the RCP, I see no awareness of this oceanic shift of consciousness. The RCP seems "out of it."

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4. I am a revolutionary in the sense that I'm convinced that only "violence" can sufficiently destabilize power (i.e., the regime, the establishment)--or, more clearly and less succinctly put, destabilize a society enough to cause significant realignments and rearrangements toward a closer approximation of justice. I put "violence" in quotes because I include in it all forms of inner/outer coercion --thus making it the antonym of "power," which as antonym means all stabilizing use of coercion (police, military, monetary). Under the conditions of history, "power" is interested in (1) expanding itself, with decrease of justice for the powerless, or at least (2) freezing the justice/injustice situation in being. In either case, "power" must be confronted by "violence" or there will be no improvement in the lot of the *am haaretz*, "the wretched of the earth." The academic discipline "Modern History" begins with revolutions--the American, the French, the pan European risings of 1848 (whence the Communist Manifesto, whence the Russian revolution, whence the Chinese and the Cuban and the current "wars of liberation"). Of the few certainties about the historical Jesus, this is one: he was on the side of the destabilizing forces and thus, according to the broadest definition (above), a "revolutionary." He was cynical about the justice-potential of "power" (religious and political) in his world, and he preached "violence" (as defined above), putting in God's hands the when and the how of the Kingdom's coming. A Christian who is not thus a revolutionary has some explaining to do. The central unfairness of the two anti-NCC/WCC *READER'S DIGEST* articles and the *60 Minutes* blast is that they occluded (by ignorance or worse) the utterly vital fact that Christianity, when it does not prostitute itself to power, is naturally destabilizing and therefore naturally on the destabilizing side of the barricades. Complexity: the other utterly vital fact about Christianity is that it furthers virtues and values that foster justice and therefore peace with processes for increasing justice, all especially when (as in America) wedded to the Western humanistic tradition (Hellenisticism, Renaissance, Enlightenment). In fact, in America the mix has been so successful (in comparison with the justice/freedom imbalance elsewhere) as to lend plausibility to the chauvinistic claims of the Moral Majority and the Inst. for Religion and Democracy (the thinktank behind the articles and blast mentioned above). My best way of explaining my personal political history is this: I've bespoken a fair shake for both these aspects of Christianity, and I've emphasized in each situation the neglected aspect (on the conviction that it's what you leave out that wrecks you). As you are a (neo-)Marxist, I may be waving the American flag in your face!

5. "Violence" sometimes opens possibilities of recapitalization: this is its primary economic significance--see Gottwald's *THE TRIBES OF JAHWEH*, and Nazi Germany, and Red China, and Castro's Cuba. Since currently Marxism is the world's most destabilizing-violent ideology, Marxism can be viewed as a stage on the way to neo-capitalism (such as is occurring in China today). Coincidentia oppositorum: Third World Christians are helping to free Christianity's image from colonialism and capitalism, and I thank God and them for helping move the world off the fatal ideological confrontation of USA capitalism / USSR communism. We are well into Synthesis, though we may suffer nuclear war as the dying gasp of Antithesis. And those of us who are into Synthesis should not call ourselves by the old labels or even (I think) by the prefix "neo-" on the old labels.

6. Economic freedom involves, for persons and nations, both access to, and the skills of managing, capital. In working on "consumer education," some of us decided it was not enough: as long as the people we were trying to help were only consumers and not also owners, their economic freedom was only a function of the capital-controlling class (back to square-1 Marxism!). Among the flaws of doctrinaire Marxism are these assumptions: (1) the prols can, are able, to seize and use capital; and (2) when the prols seize capital, they will make better use of it for humanity than did its former owners-managers. The first assumption bypasses the need for capital-management education; the second bypasses the question whether the prols have the "character" (virtues/values/aptitudes) for capital management. The first presupposes the second, which is tougher. Two current projects addressing both are the Heifer Project and the Fund for Humanity. Both work directly with the people needing capital/consumer education. I can't call it "people's capitalism," but I can and do call it "people's capitalization," a process natural to the advanced stages of both capitalism and communism.