

ARNOŠT KOLMAN AND BERTRAND RUSSELL AT THE 1948 INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF PHILOSOPHY

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The only encounter of the Czech philosopher and Communist official Arnošt Kolman with Bertrand Russell at the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy in Amsterdam in 1948 was unfortunate. Kolman's paper, "The Tasks of Contemporary Philosophy in the Struggle for New Humanism", aroused a vitriolic rejoinder by Russell. However, the text of the paper as published in the congress *Proceedings* has a conciliatory tone. This version could not have aroused such a reaction. There is, however, an article, with a similar title, published in Czech in 1948, stating that this is Kolman's paper from the congress. I argue that this article more likely reflects what Kolman actually said at the Congress. Finally, I provide an English translation of this article.

INTRODUCTION

In August 1948 Bertrand Russell attended the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy in Amsterdam and delivered a plenary lecture, "Postulates of Scientific Inference".¹ Several reports from the congress indicate, however, that the most significant event there was Russell's fierce exchange with Czech philosopher Arnošt (Ernst²) Kolman. In the following I will discuss and present an English translation of the paper that must be a great deal closer to what Kolman presented at the congress.

Arnošt Kolman (1892–1979) was a Czech-Russian mathematician,

¹ RUSSELL, *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy*, I: 33–41; *Papers* II: 13.

² There might be a confusion about Kolman's first name. His given name is "Arnošt". He adopted a German variant of this name, "Ernst", when he was a prisoner of war in Russia during World War I.

philosopher, and Communist official. As a young man he followed Einstein's lectures in Prague. After World War I, he resettled into the Soviet Union and became a key political figure of Soviet philosophy, mathematics, and physics. He worked with Vladimir Lenin and especially with his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya. Marx and Lenin's influence on his thinking was dominant. Kolman was a loyal Bolshevik and one of the main ideologues of the Communist Party. After World War II he returned to Czechoslovakia and became head of the Department of Propaganda at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The Communist Party assumed power in February 1948. That year was also a turning-point in his career. Shortly after returning from the congress in Amsterdam, Kolman criticized, in the party journal *Tvorba*, the Czech Communist Party for its unrestricted admission policy. This criticism led to his arrest and transport to the Moscow prison Lubyanka, where he then spent more than three years. After Stalin's death, he was released and very quickly regained his influence. But these subsequent events—full of other twists—are not part of the present story.

In his numerous books and articles, Kolman criticized Russell (and logical positivism in general) from the standpoint of Marxism-Leninism. Primarily, he applied Lenin's argument against Mach's neutral monism to Russell and Carnap's neutral monism. His conclusion was that neutral monism—as endorsed in logical positivism—collapsed into full-blooded idealism. Furthermore, if the task of philosophy is only the describing of positive facts (and showing that anything that goes beyond is nonsensical), then the most universal methods of science—mathematics and logic—become the main methods of all knowledge. This attitude leads, Kolman argues, to the “fetishization of mathematics”, which is detachment of the physical characteristics of real things or phenomena arising from these things. In this notion Kolman utilizes Marx's idea of commodity fetishism and transposes it onto mathematics. The upshot of his argument is that logical and mathematical fetishes are epistemologically deprived of any historical and dynamic dimension, which results in a charge of political conservatism. Russell's political engagement after World War II was,³ for Kolman, the most striking confirmation of his argument that

³ The connection between Russell's logical and political views is discussed, *inter alia*, in Kolman's Czech book *Kritický výklad symbolické metody moderní logiky* [Critical

mathematical and logical philosophy leads to their fetishization and eventually to political conservatism.

Kolman's reputation as a philosopher and mathematician is controversial. Many saw him as an ideologue without a pinch of talent. In a way, he was even more radical than Stalin and the post-war Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. By contrast, his writings show also a high level of erudition, which was uncommon among scholars in the Eastern bloc. Ernest Gellner wrote in his paper "Ernst Kolman: or, Knowledge and Communism" in 1958: "Kolman is clearly a man of very considerable philosophic sophistication, and in his Marxist apologetics he in fact employs philosophic weapons drawn from other systems and which look odd in the Marxist armoury."⁴

At the congress Kolman read a paper entitled "The Tasks of Contemporary Philosophy in the Struggle for New Humanism". A paper with this title was published in the *Proceedings* of the congress in 1949:

"The Tasks of Contemporary Philosophy in the Struggle for New Humanism". *Library of the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy*, Vol. 1: *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy*, (Amsterdam, August 11–18, 1948). Ed. E. W. Beth, H. J. Pos, J. H. A. Hollak. Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1949. Pp. 140–1. DOI: 10.5840/wcp101949122.

There is, however, another paper, with a similar title, published in Czech in *Tvorba* on 18 August 1948:

"Úkoly soudobé filosofie" [Tasks of Contemporary Philosophy]. *Tvorba* 17, no. 33 (18 Aug. 1948): 647–8.⁵

These papers are completely different (no individual sentences are repeated in the papers). What is more important, their tone and conclusions are almost opposite to each other. I am going to argue that the text published in *Tvorba* reflects more likely what Kolman might have said at the congress in Amsterdam.

Exposition of the Symbolic Method of Modern Logic] (1948), pp. 277–8.

⁴ GELLNER, "Ernst Kolman: or, Knowledge and Communism" (2003), p. 137. First published in 1958.

⁵ Both papers are available online: The paper from the *Proceedings* is here (in English, by subscription): https://www.pdcnet.org/pdc/bvdb.nsf/purchase?openform&fp=wcp10&id=wcp10_1949_0001_0140_0141. The article from *Tvorba* (in Czech) is at <http://archiv.ucl.cas.cz/index.php?path=Tvorba/17.1948/33/647.png>.

Apart from these two papers, we possess the following reports of the congress:

A short report: “Ideologies: the Consolations of Philosophy”, *Time* magazine, 52, no. 9 (30 Aug. 1948): 23. Reprinted in *Russell’s Papers* 11: 115.

An extensive report: “On the Battlefield of Philosophy”, by Sidney Hook, *Partisan Review* 16 (March 1949): 251–68. Pp. 264–7 describe Kolman’s participation. Hook’s report is reprinted almost without change in his autobiography, *Out of Step* (1987), Ch. 25, with later remarks in Ch. 23. Excerpts are reprinted in *Papers* 11: 115–16.

Kolman’s own autobiography: *The Blindfolded Generation: Memoirs of an Old Bolshevik*, written in Russian in the 1970s. There are translations into Czech, Swedish, Danish, and German. I will refer to the Czech edition: *Zaslepená generace: Paměti starého bolševika* (2005). “The Conflict with Russell” is described on pages 255–9 (especially 256). The memoirs are worth reading. Kolman wrote them in his final years after he had realized the true nature of the Soviet regime and that he himself had been—to an extent—blindfolded. His admiration for Lenin, however, remained intact to the end of his life.

A report, in French, in the official *Proceedings* under the title “Entretiens de l’UNESCO: Rapport”. *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy*. Pp. 101–7.

A letter by Frederick C. Copleston to Kenneth Blackwell dated 15 June 1971, to appear in *Papers* 25.

Let us turn first to the paper from the *Proceedings*, consisting of nine numbered paragraphs. It is surprising that there is nothing in it that could possibly bother anybody. The tone is conciliatory. Kolman makes an appeal for what he calls new humanism, which is, in his view, a utopian idea of a free society, peace, and friendship. The bearer of this new humanism, which was born in a social struggle, are the working masses. Kolman concludes that we have to unite in the fight for new humanism as we united in the struggle against the “fascist cannibals”. There are only two allusions to the present political situation of that time: “The contradictions of the two struggling worlds in which the world is split, penetrate all spheres of life and seem to lead inevitably to a collision, disastrous for mankind” (p. 140).

Furthermore, the world is “under the phantom of new world war” (p. 141). Kolman also criticized individualistic tendencies in contemporary philosophy: “This atmosphere creates fashionable philosophical trends, full of pessimism, despair, mistrust in man, mankind and progress of humanity, looking for an escape in unrestrained individualism, mysticism and pathology” (p. 140). Here Kolman probably refers to existentialism, which was at the height of its popularity at that time. There is, however, a paragraph in which Kolman praises “the great Russian nation” and the doctrines of humanism created by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin: “Our age put in the vanguard of fighters for new humanism the Slavonic nations, which gave to the world mainly the glorious humanists of the great Russian nation.” And further: “But this philosophical humanism of the past has not known the real power which would be able to realize it, whereas the new doctrine of humanism, created by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin take it utterly into account” (p. 141). All these formulations are rather tame. Nobody could possibly fly into a fit of temper about them.

The article in *Tvorba* is completely different. There is a very explicit critique of existentialism and, what is more important, of the logical positivism of Bertrand Russell and Rudolf Carnap. Kolman speaks about existentialists’ fetishization of perishing and the positivists’ fetishization of pure science. These accusations are presented rather in a rhetorical manner without being backed by explicit arguments, which would not be possible in a short conference paper.⁶ Kolman’s critique of the present political situation is harsh and crude: “The Capitalist system has now become an unbearable shackles on humanity.” And even worse, Kolman effectively equates American imperialism with German fascism: “Since the time that the last outpost of world imperialism in Europe, namely German Fascism, was destroyed by the forces of freedom-loving nations led by the Soviet Union, the role of usurious usurpers has now been taken by American imperialists that are trying to subdue other nations economically and politically.”

Let us turn now to the reports. The short report from *Time* reproduces two claims from Kolman’s speech and Russell’s reply:

⁶ Kolman provided explicit arguments elsewhere, primarily in his main work from that time, *Kritický výklad symbolické metody moderní logiky* (1948). I provide a critical assessment of his arguments in “Arnošt Kolman’s Critique of Mathematical Fetishism” (forthcoming, co-authored with J. Zouhar).

Then Czechoslovakia's Arnost Kolman (who spent thirty years at Moscow University) rose to read a paper innocently entitled: "The Tasks of Contemporary Philosophy in the Struggle for the New Humanism".

All non-Marxist philosophies, said Kolman, "are fascists and imperialist". Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism is "a variety of sly apology for capitalism". (Fortunately there were no existentialists in the house.) The U.S., he continued, is trying to subject the world to economic bondage. "The world must fight the parasitical rapacious principle, the symbol of which is the abdomen, the worst enemy of the constructive principle, the symbols of which are human hands and brain."

Kolman sat down amid icy silence.

Up rose Britain's lean, aging (76) Philosopher-Mathematician Bertrand Russell. "When you go back to Prague", he rasped, "tell your employers that the next time we have an international congress of philosophy we'd prefer that they send someone not so crude."

The invective against Sartre appears in the article in *Tvorba*, but there is no such report in the *Proceedings*. Regarding the next sentence, the state of affairs is inverse. This sentence appears in the *Proceedings* as its final sentence, whereas no such sentence appears in *Tvorba*.⁷ The only claim that remotely resembles it is where Kolman writes about "Moloch, the all-devouring principle of greed". Given only these two indications from *Time*, we would be unable to resolve the issue as to which of the two papers is closer to that which Kolman presented at the congress.

The report by Sidney Hook is more helpful in this respect. Hook reproduces Russell's reply to Kolman in its apparent full extent. The first sentence, which appears also in *Time*, continues as follows:

If we must listen to propaganda, we prefer to hear it on a little higher level. Mr. Kolman has told us at great length that "higher values" exist in the Soviet Union. He has not, unfortunately, told us in what these values consist and what makes them "higher". Consequently, I am thrown back on the principle of induction to get his meaning. I gather, then, he is saying that the complete absence of freedom of speech, press, and assembly is a higher value than their presence. He must also mean

⁷ The final sentence in the *Proceedings* reads: "Proceeding to defend each one his own opinion, they must unanimously fight the parasitary rapacious principle, the symbol of which is the abdomen, this worst enemy of man, mankind and humanity, of the constructive principle, the symbol of which are human hands and brain" (p. 141).

that the creation of artificial famines, in which millions of lives are lost, is another value of a high order. And presumably he must hold that the existence of slave labor and concentration camps from the Arctic to the Caucasus is a third value of considerable magnitude. However, he has not offered a scintilla of evidence that these are genuine values and that they are higher in the human scale than the practices which prevail in the West. If he can prove that they are really high human values instead of what they appear to be—ruthless means of enforcing the most horrible regime of terror in human history—I shall be the first person to be convinced.

(HOOK, "Battlefield", p. 266; *Papers* II: 115–16)

Kolman wrote in his memoirs (p. 256) that Russell addressed him as an "employee of the NKVD".⁸ The expression "higher values" does not appear in either of the papers. However, it is only in the paper from *Tvorba* that Kolman claims that the Soviet Union and its satellites "have already been forever freed from the yoke of imperialism and its fetishes, or are in the heroic struggle for a better and happier life." And furthermore, Communism "is the only social system that is able to guarantee to all nations and races the freedom, sovereignty, equality, rights, and material welfare and a high level of culture and moral standards for all people of physical or mental work."

Hook provided an extensive summary of Kolman's talk which fits the paper in *Tvorba*. Here is the core of Hook's remarks: "The only genuine humanism [...] could be found 'in the Slavonic nations' headed by the Soviet Union" (Hook, p. 265). Kolman writes, indeed, in *Tvorba*, that dialectical materialism has secured the Soviet Union its famous victory in World War II. Hook continues: "The only correct philosophical principles were to be found in the works of Marx, Lenin and Stalin" (*ibid.*). These names do not occur in the paper in *Tvorba*. They appear in the *Proceedings*, but in another context (see above). Hook writes furthermore: "The only duty of contemporary philosophy was to fight for the higher values of the Soviet Union" (*ibid.*). This remark squares with Russell's reaction to Kolman's talk. Hook reports, moreover, that, according to Kolman, contemporary

⁸ The NKVD (Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del, People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs), which was the Soviet secret police, was dissolved in 1946 in favour of the MVD (Ministerstvo Vnutrennikh Del, Ministry of Internal Affairs). Kolman could not have been an employee of the NKVD in 1948. HOOK (p. 266) mentions MVD in the context of Russell's reply. There is no evidence that Kolman was an employee of any Soviet secret police or intelligence agency at that time.

philosophy has to fight against “Western powers and their miserable philosophical apologists, preachers of defeatism, mysticism, irrationalism and inhumanity” (*ibid.*). This remark is a critique of existentialism. Similar claims occur in both candidates for the actual congress paper. Hook notes, moreover, that Kolman denounced by name Sartre, Russell, and Dewey (*ibid.*). All these names occur in the paper in *Tvorba*, but not in the *Proceedings*. And finally, Hook states that according to Kolman, the Soviet Union has been the only consistent anti-fascist power (*ibid.*, p. 267). And indeed, Kolman writes in *Tvorba* that “German Fascism had been destroyed by the forces of freedom-loving nations led by the Soviet Union.”

Kolman’s memoirs, *The Blindfolded Generation: Memoirs of an Old Bolshevik*, were written more than twenty years after the congress. Here is Kolman’s account of his encounter with Russell:

The next speaker was Lord Bertrand Russell. During World War I, he used to be a pacifist. In contrast, in 1948 he travelled across Europe demanding preventive atomic war against the Soviet Union. Only after the news came out that the Soviet Union had the atomic bomb too, did he become an active fighter for peace—maybe he eventually preferred the existence of the totalitarian Soviet Union over the possible destruction of western civilization and a nuclear war. This outstanding mathematical logician, who nevertheless chose as his life goal the reduction of mathematics to logic (he did not however achieve this, because it fundamentally cannot be done), was not able to find any better arguments in this discussion other than some coarse invectives adopted from the Churchillian press and addressed to me as an employee of the NKVD.

(P. 256; my translation from the Czech)

In fact, Russell lectured in Europe against the Soviet Union in 1947, which aroused heavy criticism in the Soviet press. Kolman must have been aware of this. However, Russell did no travelling across Europe in 1948 up to September. The other thing is that Russell did not think he advocated preventive war, and Kolman’s charge that he did so may have added to his indignation at the Congress. Except for these minor facts, nothing new in this memoir that goes beyond Hook’s report. What we do hear from Hook’s later portrait of Russell, however, is that Russell’s rejoinder elicited some sympathy for Kolman (as noted in Ch. 23, *Out of Step*, p. 364).

Next to last, I will make a few comments on the report in the

Proceedings. Kolman participated in the third session on 16 August at 2 p.m. Besides Kolman, the other speakers were Paul Arthur Schlipp, Narcyz Lubnicki (replaced by John Bowle) and Marten ten Hoor. Herbert Samuel, Bertrand Russell and Sidney Hook, among others, participated in the discussion. The discussion was mostly about dialectical materialism and its compatibility with modern science. Dialectical materialism is discussed in the article in *Tvorba*, but not in the version of the paper in the *Proceedings*. Russell's contribution is summarized as follows:

Lord Bertrand Russell succeeds him [Samuel]; in a brief and incisive speech, he defends first contemporary trends of formal logic against the attacks of Professor Kolman, whom he accused of showing an enforced orthodoxy, with uniquely polemical intentions and subordinated to the "raison d'État" [political purposes]; adopting in turn a polemical argument, he put in doubt, with examples, the assertion of Professor Kolman that the Soviet regime realizes the highest human values.

(*Proceedings*, I: 105; translation from the French)

The idea of subordination is expressed in both articles. In the first paragraph of the article in *Tvorba*, we read: "never before has there arisen the need to subordinate his [Man's] society to the laws of reason." A similar formulation occurs in the paper in the *Proceedings*: "This mankind will subordinate at last also its own social order to the laws of ratio [reason]" (I: 141). The idea that the Soviet regime realized the highest human values is expressed, in substance, in the article in *Tvorba*, but not in the *Proceedings* paper.

Finally, we possess a report by Frederick C. Copleston written in 1971, i.e., twenty-three years after the congress. He was present at Kolman's talk and exchanged letters on this subject with Russell in 1949. Copleston writes that Kolman gave two talks at the congress: one in the session with P. A. Schlipp, followed by the reactions from Russell and Lord Samuel, and another one "devoted to a diatribe against Great Britain."⁹ We have no independent evidence of the latter talk. As for the former talk, Copleston wrote that Kolman attacked the United States and addressed Russell as an ivory tower

⁹ The *Proceedings* have a brief summary of a rejoinder by Kolman on the subject of dialectical materialism (I: 107), which was the subject of Hook's intervention in the discussion.

philosopher. The alleged addressing of Russell as “an ivory tower philosopher” also appears in Copleston’s 1949 review of Russell’s *Authority and the Individual*, but this is not literally in the *Tvorba* paper or in Kolman’s paper in the *Proceedings*. Kolman’s attack against the United States appears only in the *Tvorba* paper. Copleston also provides a paraphrase (not the exact wording) of Russell’s reply to Kolman:

When you get back to the place that you came from, tell your masters that the next time they send a propagandist to the West they had better send somebody with more brains than you seem to possess. You say that you are bringing values to the West, but your only decent statesman (Jan Masaryk) has just thrown himself, or been thrown, from a window.

Given these reports, it is clear that neither of the texts has the exact wording of what Kolman presented at the congress. We know from Hook’s report that Kolman gave his talk and participated in discussions in English. Kolman was a skilled speaker with a good command of English. The article in *Tvorba* was prepared by Kolman in August 1948 shortly before the congress or after his return from the congress. It is, however, doubtful whether Kolman was able to submit his paper for the official congress proceedings. He was arrested in October 1948. The *Proceedings* were published by April 1949.

I present contemporary readers an English version of the article from *Tvorba* whose translation I have prepared with Andrew Naphthine. This document is a witness of its time. It is a piece of Communist propaganda containing many claims that are arguably false. The text shows very clearly how Kolman was blindfolded. It is wholly understandable that Russell found him crude.¹⁰

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¹⁰ I am thankful for suggestions made by Andrew Naphthine, Jan Zouhar, Dagmar Pichová and Ken Blackwell.

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TASKS OF CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY
Paper at the X. International Philosophical Congress
in Amsterdam, 11.–18. VIII. 1948
by *Arnošt Kolman*

Our current times call for the most responsible of decision-making. Never before in its thousand years of history has mankind stood at such a fateful crossroads as it stands today. For never before has Man had such a tremendous opportunity to subjugate the elements to his goals, and never before has there arisen the need to subordinate his society to the laws of reason.

Since the moment when Prometheus first accidentally turned the visible movement of rubbing sticks or striking flints into fire—the motion of invisible molecules—up to the time when, with the help of modern industrial engineering and science, the invisible movement of these nuclear particles have now themselves been transformed into such an explosion—into the movement of huge bodies, the development of our race has never before experienced such a dizzying rise above the animal realm. At the same time, as a result of the continued division of labour, the development of mankind has resulted in an ever larger and ever more severe rupture of its own society. Precisely because of this, the way to a happy life for all of us without exception to a social status, which was dreamed of by the brightest heads and noblest hearts of all ages

and nations, is now leading us today onto the edge of an abyss, wherefrom arises the real danger of the destruction of all the achievements of culture, and the death for hundreds of millions of lives.

How then to keep the world from slipping down this route instead of climbing to the heights of real humanity? And from not falling into complete barbarity and savagery? And how then to alert people today, who are indifferent to these real threats, or are intimidated by them, to take up united action against this horrific danger?

There are those of us who seek in vain not knowing how to get rid of the genie summoned by man: some would like to drive it back into its bottle—banish any further advances in science and technology; others however do not object that the world—for its salvation—must submit to the violence of those who declare of themselves that they are the monopolistic owners of the most powerful destructive means; and the third group are just deceiving themselves, expecting that it will be possible to overcome the relentless greed of the slave masters by calling on humanity—but all of these ways are helpless.

HOW DOES CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY REPLY

to these questioners and seekers? We now wonder whether the bourgeois philosophers have realized that between the First and Second World Wars it was the disruptive ideas of Spengler, Bergson and the like, which actually provided a vital service for the Fascists? For these very ideas have undermined confidence in man himself, and have swayed his confidence in the victory of humanism over the animal principles.

Alas, as is most evident by the current views represented at this International Congress, most of these philosophers have not discovered for themselves the lessons learnt from these cruel facts. The philosophy of capitalist countries—independent of political sympathies and of subjective [inclinations], and often done under the best intentions of their representatives—is today, as ever before, mostly just one component of Imperialist Ideology. This ideology returns back to the twilight [dusk] of human intellect and has created a new era of idolatry. In the name of Moloch, the all-devouring principle of greed, they adore, as in millennia ago, besides numerous second-rate demi-gods, two main idols.

One bares its teeth from a cave, carved deep under half the land. A cave illuminated by the deathly light of mercury lamps, filled with the infernal din of machines, the choking fumes of chemical furnaces and laboratories, producing toxic gases and breeding infectious microbes, it is penetrated by deadly radiation and the swarming of robots. Its stinking throat is spitting out atomic bombs, missiles and mountains of gold for its high priests. At the same time, it is releasing a mash of the powerlessness of man, the meaninglessness of existence, the hysteria of desperate orgies, the mockery of conscience, the despoiling of humanity.

SUCH IS EXISTENTIALISM

regardless of whether it is Catholic, as in Gabriel Marcel, or taken from Jaspers, or even atheistic as in Jean-Paul Sartre or that arising from Heidegger. This is a philosophy whose categories are “anxiety”, “loneliness”, “despair”, destroying Man by fear and awe. It is the philosophy of an “optimistic stubbornness” (*dureté optimiste*), of the conceited Titan or rather a snob who has deluded himself that he is “freely” creating the world. It is the optimism of the Existentialist Man, whether this man fulfills the mission of a social order that was spawned by existentialism, whether he believes in the strength of this order, whether he feels himself to be the master tyrant of the world that he envisaged. However, it is also the philosophy of the blackest pessimism, when such a person then begins to doubt the strength of this order and becomes convinced that he is unable to play in life, [and] in history the role of a Titan. When this point has been reached the Existentialist begins to bemoan, turns from his being to his nothingness, from his “être” to his “néant”, or he seeks solace in supernatural principles.

It is now quite clear that the ground from which this pessimism is being cultivated is the complete

ISOLATION OF MOST OF THE INTELLIGENTSIA
FROM THE WORKING-CLASS.

And one of the main stimuli is the political disenchantment of those who had hoped that the Second World War would have destroyed not only German Fascism, but also and first and foremost even the socialist lands and hereby have postponed establishing the socialist order of Europe for the whole century. Existentialism corresponds to the social conscience of certain strata of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois intelligentsia, their fear of the “mob”, of “uniformity” which is said to be inevitably associated with socialism. This is in full accord with the cynical nihilistic “morality” of the Man-Monster, which has been ever since the time of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche instilled into nations by the apologists of predatory imperialism. For existentialism is only a variety of sly apology for capitalism, without denying the evil nature of its system, but on the other hand actually highlighting this evil as a general principle which justifies the entire capitalistic awe as being natural and eternal. And this perverted “heroism”, this radical “reevaluation of all values” makes this an apology attractive for those who find themselves amidst the righteous wrath of a storm against this wickedness of capitalism, but [who] however are still unable to tear the multiple threads with which they are tied with the ruling class.

The second idol is a huge, blindingly transparent tank taking the form of a kind of endlessly complex polyhedron, located somewhere beyond space and time. It is a tank filled with pure thought, symbols and without any form of judgment and devoid of any content. It is a tank into which their worshippers

plunge their eternally reproducing logical constructions and mathematical schemes of the world. And this game lures them, though it is able to give them their only consolation: that though it may not benefit anyone today, maybe sometime in the future people will find some pebbles in the tank which might become useful.

SUCH IS LOGICISM

regardless of whether it is called “Logical Analysis” as in Bertrand Russell, or “Scientific Empiricism” as in Rudolf Carnap; whether it attempts to reduce logic to mathematics, or vice versa mathematics to logic. It is the return of idealistic philosophy to Berkeley, but also back to Plato and the Pythagoreans, a return that is hiding under the gown of pseudoscience. This is the escape of philosophers into absolute logical truth, an escape not only from material existence but also from spiritual experiences as well, into a world which is said to be elevated over both subjectivity and objectivity.

This escape is caused by the conditions of Imperialism, by its own cataclysmic crises of wars and crises, where their ideologists stagger while seeking a calmer hiding place than that which the philosophy of Kant and Hegel can offer. In this state of the agony of Imperialism, the reactionary classes must endeavour, more than ever before, to prevent the working masses from realizing their invincibility. They are forced now to attempt to take over at any price, right now when mankind has come into a new era of its development, when it is more decisively integrated into the socialist camp, and when simultaneously the energy of atomic nuclei gives them the means whose social revolutionary meaning is proportional to the huge technical changes that they bring to our lives.

The earlier mythologies not only emphasized two opposing principles—Light and Darkness, Happiness and Unhappiness, Good and Evil for man—but placed these two principles up against each other, filled up life with their struggle and gave victory to Good and Justice, if not in this world, then at least in the world to come. However, the Imperialist creators of myths are cynics. They offer us both these idols side by side and each chosen according to one’s taste. So they care only on how they deflect man’s attention away from the struggle for a better, a truly more human world, whatever idolatry they make use of. And the philosophy of the “Third Power”, the eclectic patchwork of all those John Deweys, Léon Blums, Benedetto Croce assists this by acting as a smokescreen.

But neither does the suicidal fetishization of perishing, which the existentialists worship, nor the fetishization of “pure science”, which the “logical positivists” pray to (and which actually means the death of science), have any firm ground beneath them. They are the phantoms over a seething volcano which buries them along with the system of inhuman exploitation during its inevitable impending explosion. A whole half of mankind—the nations of the

Soviet Union, the new democracies of Eastern and Southern Europe, Greece, Spain, China, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Palestine—either have already been forever freed from the yoke of imperialism and its fetishes, or are in the heroic struggle for a better and happier life.

For nearly a third of this century, the axis of overall current events has been a struggle between two camps, into which the world has irretrievably fallen apart: the camp of Imperialism and the camp of Socialism. The Capitalist system has now become an unbearable shackles on humanity. People are today—more than ever before—coming to understand that the days of Capitalism are drawing to an end and that all roads now are leading towards Communism. This is the only social system that is able to guarantee to all nations and races the freedom, sovereignty, equality, rights, and material welfare and a high level of culture and moral standards for all people of physical or mental work.

Since the time that the last outpost of world imperialism in Europe, namely German Fascism, was destroyed by the forces of freedom-loving nations led by the Soviet Union, the role of usurious usurpers has now been taken by

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that are trying to subdue other nations economically and politically. At the same time, they have managed to acquire the role of the major throttlers of the freedom of thought. These monopolists are ruthlessly continuing in their struggle for the domination of the world, by keeping humanity under their iron heels.

Conversely, the Soviet Union, which is the most powerful and now the only reliable pillar of the socialist camp, has never used any coercive means that are offensive to medium and small countries, but on the contrary has helped them to resist imperialist pressure so that they can preserve the right of their own people to freely decide their own matters. Having said this, it is clear that not only are the growing masses of the capitalist world now also gaining a deeper understanding of the messianic task of the Soviet Union, but also now even the best of today's western thinkers are increasingly realizing the importance of this revolutionary world outlook which has secured the Soviet Union its famous victory. It is dialectical materialism which forms the philosophical foundation of its internal and international politics, and of its sciences, arts and ethics. For the first time in history, philosophy has now been combined with this mass movement, and for the first time it [philosophy] has been transformed into the [content of the] daily lives of tens of millions in these countries. That is why world-famous scholars such as in France the late Paul Langevin, or those of Frédéric Joliot-Curie, Marcel Prénant, or in Britain J. D. Bernal, J. Needham, J. B. [S.] Haldane and many others in these and other capitalist countries claim allegiance to it.

This philosophy, which is proven from the numerous battles during its long

development, is today experiencing a new heyday. As from the experience of war and the subsequent deep social changes, so from the great achievements of contemporary science, this philosophy draws new arguments and new optimistic prospects for the final victory of humanism. And it is only this philosophy that most completely reflects the patterns of the development of the real picture of the world, this philosophy which is exempt from the distorting influences dictated by the class interests of the exploiters, and only this philosophy that may be promising for both science and life.

However, if true humanism is not to stay just as an illusory catch-phrase,

IT MUST FIRST BE FOUGHT FOR.

And the victorious battle for this new socialist humanism is only then possible if it is penetrated by the belief in the justice of the cause, if it is penetrated by the pathos of creative work which surmounts everything.

The great battle for humanism is far from being won yet, the world still has not ceased to be an arena for the preparation of a new world war, for blood still continues to flow into streams. This path is still long and arduous, but not at all insurmountable, because the nations do not want wars, their peoples are longing for peace and will not allow themselves to be injected with any more war psychosis. The more people, however, there are who take to this hopeful way, the more people there will be to understand its invincible strength, the easier it will be to overcome all the obstacles that we still have ahead of us, and fewer victims and less privation will be the cost to mankind.

Doesn't there then follow from this for us philosophers a direct obligation to join the ranks of the fighters for a new humanism, as

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[who] are finding such convincing words as those coming from Alexander Fadeyev, Julius Fučík, Louis Aragon, Howard Fast, John Cornford, no matter how we justify our opinions—whether by positive Christianity, by transcendental moral ideals, by scientific socialism, or by any other doctrine?

Our time now requires with great force that all socially constructive people unite in solidarity as they did when they fought together against the German-fascist bandits. Compared to this requirement, everything else is of secondary importance, everything else divides, because today, just as back then, what we are dealing with is the very existence of humanity. Whilst defending all the opinions, which we consider to be true, but still being united in the fight against the common enemy, against the philosophy of extinction and escapism, we philosophers have the noble goal, to which everything else can be subordinated, of humanism which can be especially well summed up with the final sentence of *Ethics*, the main work of the great humanist of Amsterdam—Spinoza: “*Omnia praeclara tam difficilia quam rara sunt!*”, “All things excellent are as difficult as they are rare!”
