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## Remarks on the Policy of Détente

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(1974g-e)

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Contemporary Yugoslavia, little known before 1940 except as part of the troublesome Balkans, has become one of the most interesting and admired countries in the world - at least to many of those who do not judge a country by the number of its automobiles and of the neon lights in its shopping streets.

The reasons for this admiration lie in three extraordinary achievements. The Yugoslavs have fought both Hitler and Stalin. They fought and defeated the Nazis, not as a regular, traditionally trained army, but as partisans. However, these partisans grew into an army which eventually was victorious over the German occupying troops. They were not ‘liberated’ by anyone and particularly not by the Russian armies as Stalin claimed when the war was over.

Their fight against Stalin was of a different nature. It was born out of a fierce sense of independence, courage and executed with a remarkable amount of political realism and skill. They did not have to fight militarily this time because their attitude thwarted Stalin’s idea of an easy occupation. Freedom spoke to power - and won.

The second remarkable achievement is the construction of an entirely new and original type of socialist society. {VI} Instead of the ownership of all means of production by a powerful centralized state, the Yugoslavs, after their break with Stalinist Russia and its ideology, conceived of an entirely new and original idea. Not the state but those who work in an enterprise own and manage it. This system culminated in the by now famous concept of self-management of the workers. Instead of state ownership there was social ownership, instead of centralization, decentralization, instead of the worker being the object of an all-powerful bureaucracy, he was the active participant in his own enterprise. The perversion of Marx’s concept of socialism, the control of the masses by a powerful bureaucracy, was challenged in practice, as Rosa Luxembourg and others, years before had challenged it in theory. The praxis was formulated in the laws of the land and its new social organization.

The return to the real Marx as against the Marx equally distorted by right wing social democrats and Stalinists, was the goal of the Yugoslav school of Marxist philosophy. This school is a third achievement of post-war Yugoslavia. There had, of course been, and are, humanist Marxists in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary ( the most outstanding of Marxists, the Hungarian George Lukács, who passed away recently) but what characterizes the Yugoslav development is the fact that there were not only indi-



vidual philosophers concerned with the restoration and development of genuine Marxism, but that this was a concern and the life work of a relatively large group of people teaching in various universities in Yugoslavia.

The significance of this achievement may not mean much to those who naively assume that Soviet philosophy was the true guardian of the Marxist philosophical heritage; however, quite to the contrary, Stalinist Marxism had essentially only an apologetic function; it had to make Marx fit the practice of Soviet society and like all apologetic {VII} science it had to become dogmatic and dull. This vulgarized version of Marxism made it appear as if socialism for Marx was identical with socialization or nationalization of the means of production and did not include the vision of an entirely new form of society in its human and economic aspects. The Yugoslav school of Marxism restored Marx's ideas to their true meaning with the insight and knowledge of philosophers who were well aware of the philosophical movements in the last hundred years. But this awareness did not turn them into „existentialists“ or „phenomenologists.“ They also did not speak of „socialism with a human face,“ since they knew that socialism has not only a human face but also a human body. They were concerned with a theory for which the root is man, and the goal is a socialist society as the basis for a harmoniously developed, independent, self-reliant individual.

The concentration on Marx's theory was part and parcel of the new Yugoslav social structure. The philosophers were greatly encouraged in their effort by the new and imaginative institutions which Yugoslavian law and social practice developed and these new institutions in turn were greatly supported by philosophical thought which could demonstrate that the theory of Marx was the soil in which they were rooted.

I do not mean to idealize the Yugoslav achievement. Due to many obvious factors, the new social economic system could not be as successful as many friends of Yugoslavia had hoped. A small and relatively poor country in the midst of highly developed industrial countries with whom it needs to have economic relations, is subject to many economic and ideological influences which affect its development. Difference in language, tradition, and especially in economic development make unification of the various parts of Yugoslavia difficult and feed dissent and {VIII} nationalism. The Yugoslav philosophers have understood the reasons for these difficulties very well. They have faith in socialism and in the Yugoslav way of socialism. Because of this, they have not assumed the function of being apologists for errors and defects in the Yugoslav system but have retained the attitude which is basic for any Marxist philosopher - that of being critical. They have followed their own path of thinking with great courage, dignity, and wisdom and thereby not avoided being often criticized in their own country. But it speaks for the spirit of the Yugoslavian system that in spite of some frictions and conflicts, they function productively, not only in their writings, but also as university teachers and by continuing to organize the summer school in Korčula, which for years has attracted outstanding Yugoslav, European, and American Marxist philosophers for discussions of significant problems of Marxism and socialism. Furthermore, *Praxis*, an international journal which contains English, French, and German translations of papers published in the Yugoslav edition of *Praxis*, is well known in the world and gives a picture of the aliveness of the Yugoslav school of Marxist philosophy.

The author of this book is one of the leading members of this school. It is an expression of their own adherence to the connection between theory and practice that this



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school has no stars and that no member of it has tried to make himself the leader. It would be quite in contrast with this tradition if I were to try to single out the author and to emphasize his differences from others. That does not mean that there are no differences and that the various members of the school are not very marked individuals both personally and philosophically, but I am sure the author as well as the other members of the school prefer to be praised as members of a collective, rather than to get special credit. {IX}

This work, like those of other Yugoslav philosophers, is not facile, and „food“ for those who like simplified arguments. It is thorough and honest, and I hope it will interest many people who are fed up with „revolutionary“ phrasemaking presented as brilliant „reinterpretations“ of Marx.