

# Marcus G. Raskin

(1) AMERICAN SOCIETY NEEDS A BROAD-BASED political party which does not scare the working class as a hippie, boring or communist project, and which can utilize the energies of the surplus, self-controlled-time middle class, and "tax" the wish-to-do-good rich for projects. Beyond this technique, it must present to the poor a way out of carrying the burdens of poverty and exploitation, while presenting new political forms which have their legitimacy and support. There is another formal requirement. A new political party has to come on conservative in style, low key, and radical reconstructive in thought and action. At present, the style of some in the movement is more flamboyant, very talky, with very little substance or purpose served.

We are in the second stage of formation of such a party, now called the New Party.

(5) The social and class base for revolutionary change in America is non-existent. There is, however, a social base for repression, because many people at this stage in history see themselves as instruments of control over others. Indeed, the society can be seen as investigator and investigated. A society which becomes conscious of itself as playing out other people's lives and decisions, goes beyond the old definitions of working class and forces us to see that in America the class definition *per se* should give way to the society as colonizer and colonized. Unfortunately, the working class in its traditional sense is too busy working to be able to serve as the primary instrument for massive social change. Where it thinks about itself, it will identify its interests with the investigator, so long as we have a union leadership which sees itself as the strong left arm of the corporate manager pursuing Selig Perlman's ideas to their natural conclusion.

(a) The fact that Nixon is President does not change the fundamental need of organizing outside of the two-party system and extending politics to major national institutions of American life which are, by their nature and activity, public. Thus, democratization and in some cases dismantling for the purpose of reconstruction should be undertaken in unions, private governments such as the industrial corporations, universities, hospitals, bureaucracies. While the new political party includes electoral politics as it is presently defined, it also includes the creation of shadow councils and governments within organizations which would operate to serve the people most affected by those organizations.

The result of the New Party operating to set up such councils and New Party groups is to question the legitimacy of the present institutions, their purposes, and their inability to provide needed services to people.

Such questioning will either challenge such institutions to change and become democratic or they will lose their legitimacy in the eyes of those most immediately affected by the institution. Where institutions lose legitimacy, their political and psychological and economic hold over people ends. In this sense, legitimacy and sharing of authority become the central purpose and *situation* of the new politics. The third activity of the New Party will be the initiation of economic projects which will be controlled by the poor. They will form their own co-operatives and, through aid from some of the members of the upper economic classes will label their own products which people in the black communities and students would have universities buy. The label of the product would indicate the social services which would be provided by buying the particular product. The products would be owned by the poor and the surplus would be invested into poor communities according to services they wanted.

(b) The political mood of the country is no more to the right than it was prior to the election. Those who bothered to vote, voted their exasperation. Indeed an argument can be made that those who voted for Nixon showed great shrewdness, on the assumption that if he wanted to end the war in Vietnam, he would be in a far better position to leave that unhappy land than Humphrey would have been because of Nixon's cache with the right and the military. However, the Nixon Administration will find the war hard to stop and the chances are that it will continue at the level it was fought in 1966 for several more years unless anti-war sentiment in the United States can again be energized.

The war in Vietnam and related questions of United States military involvement in colonial wars remain the key operational issue on which the now-larger but quite-fragmented peace movement can receive broad support beyond itself. Such support will be forthcoming from unexpected domestic allies such as the business community, the middle classes and those on fixed incomes, when it becomes clear that the United States is unable to fight successful, colonial wars only with black and Southern mercenaries. This will become even clearer domestically to such groups once the inflated balloon-like economy is unable to meet any social welfare services because of the war and archaic notions of state-subsidized waste in the national security industry.

(3) (5) (8) Organizing around national issues can be conducted on a longterm basis in two ways: (a) within organizations such as unions, bureaucracies, hospitals, etc., *across* functional lines so that organizers will be able to relate to people outside of *corporately*-assigned functions, and (b) in building counter institutions.

(4) Those not inordinately concerned with comfort should leave

the Democratic party to build the New Party, unless they are prepared to repeat the mistakes of the bureaucratic socialists of the Weimar Republic . . . who ended up running the corporate-military machine.

(6) (7) The New Party is integrated, and where black liberation in the ghetto dictates the formation of community and political units without white people, that should be done. There is no firm line between separatism and integration. The question is tactical. What is *not* tactical is repression. If the New Party or the movement is able to create projects that black people control, black and white people will be equal in the movement and will move toward each other in a spirit of equality.

(8) (3) (5) The movement should forget about revolution. It will only breed a form of puerile fantasy and uncontrolled state repression. There is a more profound issue. If violence is the instrument of building a new society or a new political party, it is on the assumption that human nature is *set*: that violent means are the only serious way to see change. The idea of revolution being based on a reactionary view of human nature is too hard to swallow. It is too difficult for mere human beings to make dialectical relationships of violence come out non-violent and egalitarian in practice. The day to day use of violence will dictate the character of revolutionary behavior and the revolution itself. What do you do with the gunman after the revolution? Make him a hangman? For tactical, political, strategic and moral reasons violence is the wrong route. This view is based on the idea that space exists within the society to build alternate structures which by their nature and example command change. It is harder, but more important to build counter-institutions *and* through their existence have a base to confront the rest of the society as well as models of what people want their institutions and their lives to be like.

(9) It is obvious that we can learn things from other countries. However, we must build our own understanding of America, neither relying on the socialisms or liberalisms of the past or the present.

(10) Yes.

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## Martin Jezer

WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS for American Radicalism? For the first time in thirty-five years radical social change is not only possible, it is happening. Small revolutions are happening in many places throughout the land. People are taking control and responsibility for their own lives. They are liberating themselves and one another. The momentum of these small, unpublicized revolutions is bringing about the existence of an alternative society with revolutionary implications.

Of course, this Movement has little to do with ideology, power relationships, programs or issues. Instead, it is about politics in the broadest and most complete sense of that word. It has as much to do, or even more to do, with the cultural and psychological condition of individuals and their society as it has with the political machinations of the government and the ruling Establishment. I agree with the Beatles' prescription for Revolution, at least as it refers to the post-industrial affluent society of the United States: "You tell me it's the institutions, well you better free your mind instead." Therefore, in evaluating the future of American radicalism, I am concerned with the new ways people are living their lives, the value systems they are adopting and the way they are perceiving and relating to one another. I am more interested in the stage of their social consciousness than I am with their ideology and whether or not they have what I consider **THE CORRECT LINE** on specific issues of the day, such as the Middle East, black separatism, Czechoslovakia, or Vietnam. And because peoples' heads are changing, in great numbers among the young, and because these changes seem permanent, I am optimistic about the future.

Revolution is a continuous life process which develops through evolutionary stages. Revolution cannot be won, it can merely be lived. Traditionally, we have viewed revolution in terms of mass movements: People against the state or fighting for their liberation against a foreign power. The Vietnamese are fighting for their national liberation. They would perceive themselves, not as individuals, but as patriots, as part of a national movement. Blacks in America are engaged in a similar struggle. As colonial people dominated by a foreign power which neither represents nor reflects, nor is beholden to them, they must first win their racial or cultural independence before they begin to perceive themselves as individuals. Nations against state. People against State. These are and were what the American, French, Russian, Cuban, and Vietnamese Revolutions are or were about.

What we are experiencing in America today, in addition to the struggle of the black man for black liberation, is a revolution in life style. Existential in nature, it does not wait on events for a revolution