

Mary Kaldor reflects on the openings for Eastern Europe

The Hard Sell

Ralf Dahrendorf's book, **Reflections On The Revolution In Europe**, (Chatto & Windus, pbk £5.99), takes the form of a letter to a Polish friend who asked him a series of difficult questions about the future: the role of the market, the consequences of mass culture, the unification of Germany and so on. He seems to have asked all the right questions. The result is a very stimulating essay which throws up all sorts of interesting issues like the interpretation of communism as late-comer modernisation, the dismissal of national self-determination, Habermas' concept of 'constitutional patriotism' as opposed to 'Deutschmark nationalism', the deepening of the European Community, or the characterisation of the Helsinki process as a 'Brezhnevian monstrosity'.

The thrust of Dahrendorf's argument is that there is no 'third way'. What he means by this is that there are many ways. He is against 'systems', against the notion that there is a correct way of organising society, a technique that can solve social problems. The 'third way', he says, is 'another version of system thinking' and 'system thinking lies at the bottom of illiberality in all its varieties'. Instead, what is required is an open society which permits a multitude of ways. 'Europe will forever be a patchwork of languages and cultures, of everyday life, politics and economics. For the countries which have at last escaped the *nomenklatura*, socialism, the return to Europe means, therefore, like the open society, a chance to be themselves and not to conform to an imposed hegemonic model.'

If we accept this interpretation, Dahrendorf is absolutely right. There is no third way. But usually the phrase means something different. It means choosing the West. Because the second way, actually existing socialism, has collapsed, there is no alternative to the Western way. Dahrendorf is insistent that the east European countries do not have to choose liberal capitalism and his criticism of Hayek is

very illuminating.

All the same, Dahrendorf does seem to mean that the east European countries have to choose the West, and by this he means not just an open society, but also materialism. He is, by his own admission, upset by his Polish friend's question about culture and whether the State ought to continue to subsidise films and books. Dahrendorf says that what people want is 'tabloids and hamburgers and shiny motorcycles and holidays in the Costa Brava', and he does not see how the less shallow values can be preserved. Indeed, he suggests that 'modernity, the market and glitter' are necessary to prevent fascism.

The question arises as to whether materialism is not in fact another 'system'? Are we not witnessing the Americanisation of Europe, the assimilation of cultures into a single homogeneous materialist culture, the transformation of citizens into consumers? Can the 'patchwork quilts of languages and cultures' be preserved against the onslaught of McDonald's, Pizza Hut and Sky Television? And do people really prefer hamburgers and dishwashers and motor cycles to clean air and water, living trees and animals? (The environment, such a central preoccupation of east Europeans, is not mentioned in the book.)

There is also another problem. Markets are both destructive as well as creative. The market could be a recipe not for materialism but for the 'Third Worldisation' of eastern Europe - unemployment, inflation, inequality and authoritarianism. That seems to me more likely than fascism. There is a real danger of a new economic division between West and East, akin perhaps to the division between North and South America.

I do not mean to suggest that east Europeans should be denied consumer goods nor that we should be against markets - markets are an important element of an open society. But I do want to suggest that both West and



East have to change, that the West could indeed learn from an 'inter-cultural dialogue', that there are values and experiences which could contribute to an even greater diversity of 'ways'.

Dahrendorf, for some reason, is dismissive of the value of 'inter-cultural dialogue'. He also repeats the extraordinary charge that there were no new ideas in the revolutions of 1989, only old ideas copied from the West. This is, I believe, a deep cultural misunderstanding.

Dahrendorf applauds the new unification of language - the old 'newspeak' of socialist ideology is dead. But even though we speak the same language the words have quite different meanings because of different experiences and cultures. Words like Europe, socialism, privatisation, markets, feminism, have quite different significance in East and West. The east Europeans who made the 1989 revolution pioneered entirely new concepts but dressed them up in familiar phrases.

'Civil society' is such a phrase. Dahrendorf seems to think that the east Europeans meant what Burke and Maddison meant by the term.

In fact, they developed a new concept which had to do with social and political change from below. The writing of Michnik, Havel or Konrad inspired not only the new movements which emerged in east-central Europe during the 1980s but also social movements in the West. Politics was no longer about capturing power but about changing the very nature of power relations.

One final point: Dahrendorf's book, in common with other accounts of the 1989 revolution, does not mention the peace movement. The peace movement in western Europe in the early 1980s was as large as the democracy movements in eastern Europe in the late 1980s. It had a profound influence on democratic culture, especially in Germany, and on ideas about Europe, disarmament and security. The strategy of 'detente from below' pursued by parts of the Western peace movement played a significant role in the events leading up to the revolutions of 1989. I may exaggerate its importance because I was involved. All the same, the way the role of the peace movement seems to be entirely written out of Western (although not Ea-



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BACK TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY:

The Construction of Social Orders

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As an over-reaction to the theoretical provincialism of the early post-war period, Anglo-Saxon sociologists today are so much absorbed by theoretical developments in other disciplines (epistemology, linguistics, etc.) that they have failed to translate the insights generated in neighbouring fields into sociological concepts proper.

In trying to demonstrate the specific logic of sociological theorising, Nicos Mouzelis draws from a variety of theoretical traditions in order to construct a set of interrelated concepts useful for bridging the gulf between macro and micro sociologies. Drawing examples mainly from the sociology of development and from the theory of organisations, he shows concretely how the conceptual framework proposed can help the researcher to avoid both the *reification* of macro institutional structures and their *reduction* to the intersubjective understanding of micro actors.

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stern) accounts of what happened does call into question how open the West really is. If materialism leaves no space for minority cultures, then electoral politics seems to leave little space for non-party politics, (whether supported by minorities or majorities).

Dahrendorf says that 'the round table politics' of the

revolution were not 'normal'. But what are 'normal politics'? How does 'normal politics' succeed in excluding issues like environmental concern or concern about nuclear weapons that large numbers of people care deeply about? These are issues that it would surely be valuable to discuss with our counterparts in the East. ●

Peter Collier on the rise of Pierre Bourdieu

Homo Academicus

Since François Mitterrand declared education a national priority in 1988, his second socialist government has launched an extraordinary campaign to expand institutions and staff, with the goal of doubling the 40 per cent rate of pupils qualifying for (an almost free) university education. This month the education budget has overtaken the defence budget. One possible explanation of this flamboyantly anti-Thatcherite scenario might be that Michel Rocard's minister of education, Lionel Jospin, invited Pierre Bourdieu to join his advisory committee.

It was as if Raymond Williams had been given a blank cheque and asked to redesign British education. Bourdieu, whose work is now being published in English by Polity Press, has spent much of his career demystifying the French education system. **Homo Academicus** (Polity, hbk £35, pbk £10.95) in particular revealed how the professorial mandarins cloned and inhibited their successors, fostering elitism and inertia. Most worrying for the socialist government, still shaken by the failure of its 1984 education bill, were Bourdieu's rude statistics: the real agents provocateurs of the May 1968 revolution were neither student conspirators nor brutal riot police, but a careless government which failed to match its random expansion of student numbers with any commensurable increase in resources.

Bourdieu has shunned media attention, which is perverse in a country where the

Camus-Sartre quarrel was a public spectacle, and where Simone de Beauvoir or Lacan could mobilise teams of literati to publicise their causes. Like Sartre and de Beauvoir, Bourdieu studied the noble discipline of philosophy at the highly competitive Ecole Normale Supérieure, but he surprised his tutor, Althusser, by leaving his research on phenomenology in order to work within an allegedly minor discipline, social anthropology.

Like Foucault, Barthes and Lévi-Strauss before him, Bourdieu is professor at the Collège de France, a famous but marginal institute which enrolls no students and awards no diplomas. But meanwhile he has founded a 'Centre for European Sociology' at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, where he has trained a whole team of graduates who contribute their research to the unorthodox review, *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, which uses techniques borrowed from the popular press (cartoons, photographs, interviews).

Over the last year he has thrown his energies into a multi-lingual review, *Liber*, in an attempt to break the parochial mould of European literary journalism. It was never easy to believe that partnership with the *Times Literary Supplement* would fulfil his path-breaking ambitions. But, in the long term, Bourdieu's work has transformed at least French sociology and its public image.

His works analyse specific cases of behavioural disposition, or habitus, through elaborate survey work. In *Dis-*

inction, photographs, interviews and extracts from magazines mingle cheerfully with statistics on education, income and class. Intricate charts illustrate the social factors leading to divergent tastes for Bach, tennis, Petula Clark, face cream, antiques, and holidays in Majorca.

Despite – or because of – his adventurous methodology and irreverent choice of topics, Bourdieu has been accused of pragmatism, eclecticism and pessimistic functionalism by fellow sociologists. Yet he does not believe that the social determinisms which he exposes are inevitable. He writes in the tradition of Weber, Marx and Irving Goffman, taking what seem to be natural phenomena and exposing their constructed nature: *Homo Academicus* detects social snobbery in the adjectives used by a professor when grading her students' essays; **The Love of Art** (Polity, hbk £29.50) extrapolates from questionnaires distributed at museums by Bourdieu's students in order to disclose how neatly aesthetic feelings correlate with levels of schooling.

Bourdieu owes a part of his success to the creation of a new language. Recycling terms from Freud and Marx, he reveals a social unconscious, and exposes the economic drive behind moral and cultural matters. He takes his metaphors – without always accepting that they are metaphors – from economics: agents work to amass cultural capital; they invest in education and receive interest in the form of social power as well as high salaries. Language plays a key part in creating and sustaining this social world. **In Other Words** (Polity, hbk £29.50, pbk £8.95) shows how politicians and sociologists themselves manipulate opinion by using terms like 'the people' as a convenient way of avoiding analysis of the social construct.

It is through this attention to language that Bourdieu returns to philosophy with a vengeance. In *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* Bourdieu examines

the public discourse of Weimar and the Reich, and plots the transposition of social and political judgements into sublimated philosophical system where they are reformulated in terms of 'care' and 'being'. In France this iconoclastic essay was met with disdainful silence.

Many of the above mentioned works were collective efforts by Bourdieu and his colleagues, reflecting a conscious drive towards cultural egalitarianism and scientific collaboration. But Bourdieu refuses to claim objectivity. On the contrary, he admits and studies the problem of the social scientist's presence as a participant in the field of his research. And his strong personality emerges in the complex language which articulates his work. His phrases crawl with alternatives and



after-thoughts (or 'tendrils', to quote David Lodge). But there are reasons. Bourdieu is alert to the unconscious transactions that underpin discourse: determined not to yield to linguistic facility, he persistently filters and refracts an argument, hoping to preempt a whole range of potential misreadings. And there are times when a little more complexity in public thinking about society must be welcome. We have seen the havoc wrought when the literal-minded are entrusted with power. ●