

November 20, 1985

Dear Cyrus,

Your commentary on Michels' Political Parties is very good and will be valuable for the subject of what I hope will be my next work on the Dialectics of the Party. The few comments I have -- and only two of them require citings -- will show what is the relationship of our kind of commentary and the academic requirements. For example what is the ~~addition~~ ^{relation} which you cite? Academia may want it just because they like a lot of footnotes and yet it is very significant for us because of ~~that~~ History in the Marxian concept.

the significance of

Nothing has annoyed me quite so much as to see how many editions Ebel's Woman and Socialism has gone through and the recognition that that is exactly what we were all raised on. In a word the popularity is actually the proof of how false ideology is not only characteristic of the bourgeois, but of people who live in that same period. So Michels' book, which unfortunately has been an actual Bible to all who avoid looking to the Dialectic of the Party and are happy that they can immediately identify it with bureaucracy and the fact that your professor in 1985 has it on the required list, is most important. A simple date tells both the concrete edition ~~that~~ someone who wants to find your quotation and tells Marxist historians that a work published in 1912 means so much to the present who disregard such great contemporaries as Rosa Luxemburg. If I remember right ~~xxxx~~ he mentions her once and as if she wasn't a leader and the author of the work he does cite on the general strike not only disproves his contention about "always" but shows the falsity of "leadership shows bureaucracy, but you must have leaders blah, blah, blah." Please also cite me the ~~xxxx~~ page for the quote you do give in your first paragraph. Also is there a direct quotation for the phrase "leadership is stable"?

On page 2, first sentence, "Nationhood will solve the linguistic-cultural problems that lead to war..." I would like any direct quotation on anything to do with "linguistic-cultural" both because linguistics is so important a bourgeois diversion in philosophy the more and more philosophy died for them, and yet on the other side -- and we have had the closest relations to the leaders of the Chomsky's revolutionary view of language -- it has meant the world to us when Marx showed how ~~th~~ even the ruling ideology leaves its ~~Marx~~ marks even on revolutionaries precisely because the "take for granted" that it is just words. Marx laughed to Engels when he was digging deep into what we call the Third World and found that the word general which meant universal to Hegel was just the original word for common.

Do please be specific i.e. the number of pages or number of times of his few references to Marx. I was very pleased to hear the fully 300 pages are spent on the opportunism of the 2nd International. How many pages is the whole book? I would also like a quotation with the word "administrative" in it *from Nechle*

Finally, the reference to Bukharin is extremely important to me. I don't remember a full work by Bukharin on Michels. Is it an essay? Is it just a reference? Is it really in the same context as overproduction? Could you devote a whole paragraph to Bukharin on Michels if there is such a thing? If it is in Historical Materialism give me the pages. That book happens to be my favorite proof of how a great Marxist can be so damn mechanistic, so technical, absolutely forgetting about the proletariat when he talks about statistics, as he begins to use numbers as pure measure whether it is human beings or pieces of paper.

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which election are you voting? since it became a battle for many many districts have been said to ①

Robert Michels' Political Parties was originally published in 1912 in Germany. The English edition was published in 1915 with a preface and an added chapter on Party Life in War Time. The first 300 pages of the book expose the very deep opportunism in the Second International in the first decade of the century. Michels claims this is "conclusive proof of the existence of immanent oligarchical tendencies in every kind of human organization." *RF 122*

Michels shows how the leaders become rulers when they get hold of the administrative machine. Over and over we are shown that the trade union leaders, the political leaders, whether intellectuals or workers, are separated from the rank and file as soon as they become bureaucrats. His argument is the following: Democracy leads to oligarchy no matter what your theory, because the problem of democracy is a practical, administrative one. When the initial spontaneous action is over, new leaders arise because of mass's incompetence, and their worship of leaders. Leaders become rulers due to their superiority in administration, politics and culture. Leadership is stable. Struggles among leaders end up usually to the detriment of the masses. All opposition is crushed. *go down? massing*

The organization is itself the creator of petty bourgeois layers.

In the final section Michels ties this to the "conservative basis of organization", i.e., organization takes on a life of its own and principles are sacrificed. And in the final chapter he denies the possibility of social development without a "politically dominant class". Class struggle is degenerated to the struggle among cliques. "Marx's theory of state", affirms, this in that it recognizes the state as the ruling class's executive committee. The contention that abolition of private property leads to abolition of proletariat, ignores that the new state will become bureaucratic and a new class will emerge. Social revolution does not accomplish anything. *as long as bourgeoisie is not destroyed*

Michels criticism directed towards Marx is really an affirmation of Lasalle's remark to Bismarck about the workers inherent tendency towards dictatorship. From the very first paragraph of the preface Michels lays the ground for his conclusion, when he singles out three fundamental problems in the following manner. The first two are economic and nationality. Both are readily solved with Lasallean

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formulas: Nationhood will solve the linguistic-cultural problems that lead to war, and "laborer's right to the full produce of his labor" will solve the economic problem. Having thus narrowed the perspectives of the revolution he has nowhere to go but to constantly counterpose how the goal of democracy is impossible because of the nature of organization. While almost every other sentence is about the incompetence of the masses.

The few references he makes to Marx are very important, they show Marx saying workers need to walk by themselves; attacking socialists' attitude towards criticism as crime, differentiating between the organized workers and the lower and deeper layers. But despite this and despite the fact that Michels refers to the Critique of the Gotha Program, Marx remains a Lasallean economist and a theoretician aloof from "practical" matters. Out of CGP the only word that sticks to his mind is "dictatorship" and nothing on the analysis of labor, or its internationalism. He makes an abstraction out of the concrete struggles and his criticism remains in the straight jacket of vulgar materialism.

A manifestation of this is in the total ignoring of the 1905 Revolution. Michels refers to the Mass Strike pamphlet, but only as far as it suits his own purposes of exposing the attitude of trade union leaders. But as for Luxemburg's description of 1905, of her concept of spontaneity, of revolutions not being school mastered, and of the lessons of the Russian Revolution for the German Proletariat, nothing is ever mentioned.

His statement about Marxists never engaging in anything but parliamentary activity, betrays his incomprehension of Marx's activity throughout his life. Theoretical activity to Michels has no relationship to the practical. Just as the nature of organization never gets related to the creativity of the masses who create it. And farthest from all this is the theoreticians need to be rooted in those struggles.

Note On Bukharin: His response to Michels was that under socialism the overproduction of organizers will counter-balance the stability of leadership, and therefore the immutable category of "the incompetence of masses" will be overcome.

Cyrus -- November 7, 85

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From Cyrus

November, 29, 1985

Dear Raya,

The edition I used for the summary of Michels' Political Parties is (1962; Collier, Pp371). It includes an introduction by Seymour M. Lipset which is about 25 pages long, from which you can see that it was indeed the Bible for a lot of intellectuals who broke with the CP, especially in the early 40s and mid 50s. Political Parties was originally published in 1912. The first English translation was in 1915, with chapter added on WWI.

Bukharin's reference to Michels is in the final 3 pages of his work Historical Materialism, under the section The Classless Society of the Future, which I am enclosing (pp 309-11). Stability of leaders, which Bukharin also points out in Michels, is the title of a chapter. Here Michels discusses how the German SD's leaders all go back several decades; then states that this often leads to establishment of cliques; and efforts to remedy this such as short term of office, or "reduction of leaders to simple executive organs" is useless. Here is a quote: "The sentiment of tradition, in cooperation with an instinctive need for stability, has as its result that the leadership represents always the past rather than the present. Leadership is indefinitely retained, not because it is the tangible expression of the relationships between the forces existing in the party at any given moment, but simply because it is already constituted." p 121

The quote on Michels' claim that this is "conclusive proof of the existence of immanent oligarchical tendencies in every kind of human organization", is on page 50.

On "Cultural-linguistic", Raya, I had made a mistake. This is how the quote reads:

The so-called principle of nationality was discovered for the solution of the racial and linguistic problem which, unsolved, has continually threatened Europe with war and the majority of individual states with revolution (Preface, page 5)

The references to Marx and to Luxemburg follow:

p.76, "Marx and his followers regard parliamentary action as one weapon, theoretically, but in practice employ this alone...they recognize perils of representative system, even when based upon universal suffrage, but add that the SP is free from it." (ftn.: Cf Kautsky, Luxemburg and Marx's Revolution and Counter Revolution in Germany)

p.89 refers to letter from Marx to Schweitzer on the need to teach German workers to walk by themselves; Oct 13, 1868. Michels says here that Eduard Bernstein shares this attitude with Marx.

p.93-96 In the chapter entitled "cult of veneration among the masses" although the discussion is about Lassalle, he acts as if Marx was the same.

p 194-5 Discusses the 1st Int'l alongside of Lassalle's party, and dismisses it as being "subject to the iron will of one individual, and ridicules Marx's designation of it as "common leadership",

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p.217 refers to a letter by Marx, that Michels says "deplores leaders who ask to receive special respect", but in fact the letter is about the attitude of Parliamentarians to criticism as if it is a crime (sept 19, 1879) and two pages later p.219, he quotes from Luxemburg, "On no account must the faith of the people be disturbed...all lively criticism of the objective errors of the movement are stigmatized as an attack on the movement itself..."

p.228 Cites the Communist Manifesto to "prove" that socialist consciousness comes to proletariat, because the bourgeois has to fight reaction.

p.239 refers to Marx's children as exceptions, but as a rule children of bourgeois socialists become bourgeois, says Michels.

p.263 Cites Marx's differentiation of working class into mental and manual workers, and the formation of an elite

p.285 cites Marx to prove that workers never make good theoreticians: "workers who become professional writers make a mess of the theoretical side",

p.286 & 291 refers to Marx's opinion of British T.U leaders to "prove" that worker leaders are always less revolutionary etc...

p.314 Taking issue with Marx's connotation of "Declasse" in referring to the Russian revolutionaries

p.336 & 339 To prove his point about the "conservative basis of organization" he refers to Engels' "timid legalism" in the 1895 edition of Marx's Class Struggle in France; and to Kautsky's introduction to the CGP in Neue Zeit that "Marx closed his eyes to serious faults of the GSD".

p.346-49 In these last pages of his book he starts talking about Marx's "theories", such as "Marx's affirmation of immanent necessity for the perennial existence of the 'political class'", . Next he defines "Marx's theory of state" and refers to CGP as proof that dictatorship as means can not be reconciled with democracy as aim. and finally: "the defects of Marxism are patent directly as we enter the practical domain of administration and public law, without speaking of errors in the psychological field and even in more elementary spheres." (page 349)

This last quote mentions "administrative", but there are several others throughout the book, actually a whole section with six chapters is called Technical and administrative causes of leadership.

Raya would you like me to do more work on this? I am not really planning any academic involvement. Did you think I should also follow up on Chomsky's ideas as you had mentioned them? Yours, *Ayns*