

editorial

WITH the Fourth Issue, *U.L.R.* enters its second year of published life. Something of a re-appraisal needs to be made of the work which we have undertaken in the *Review*. *U.L.R.* came to life in that historic pause between the re-entry of Soviet tanks into Budapest and the first combined assault on Port Said. We were at the end of the first decade of the Cold War, entering the terrifying but challenging period of disengagement and advance. The orthodoxies, as we said then, had been outstripped by historical events, confirmed in their reaction by humane protest: but we moved forward—many of us politically for the first time—into a period when, for want of a constructive alternative, they possessed enough momentum to wreck the world. Our view at that time was that these events would release untapped sources of thought and energy on the Left—that the job of young and inexperienced editors of a *Review* directed, principally, at young people—was to act as handmaidens of the revolution. We opened the pages of *U.L.R.* for a hundred schools to contend.

We have not altered our view of what was—is—needed. Rejecting, on the one hand, the view that socialism has ended with the Welfare State, on the other, the simple identification of Stalinist regimes with "the socialist half of the world"—we have to nerve ourselves to a genuine search and enquiry, whatever the consequences. Our purpose has never been to overturn the tradition of socialist thought, or to brush aside, in the search for a contemporary tone, the experience of the recent past. What we looked for was the genuine confrontation between socialist values and contemporary experience. What we need now more than ever, as we open up the undiscovered area beyond the Welfare State, is a deep, radical critique of our society, a critique informed by humanism (so little in evidence in either of the competing ideologies), holding to the revolutionary perspectives of socialism, which could break out of the cramp of orthodoxy into the freedom of new possibilities. A re-statement of the humanist basis is necessary, not only to purge away the crimes committed in the name of socialism, but as a first premise in a new argument, as an indispensable beginning to coherent thought on what the word *means*. If we have learnt anything in this past year it is our need, not merely for new analyses of the shape of contemporary capitalism—though our shortcomings in this field are urgent enough—not just an assessment of the "errors" of the Cold War period, nor a simple return to the original sources of socialist thought: but a real re-definition of aim. Without this, socialism is condemned to a kind of spiritual atrophy, either through despair, as the original vision pales into a tarted-up version of Welfare State capitalism, or through a refusal to communicate with contemporary society—a self-imposed isolation savoured in the intellectual and moral ambience of past struggles. What have we to propose as an alternative to the "property-owning democracy"?—the slogan of the Right and the official programme of the Left. A society more efficiently run, without the "wastage of competition"? Or have we some more positive notion of "community" and "co-operation"—some society in view, in the possible world, in which men and women can find a meaning for their lives through a greater control over their work and leisure? What does this mean in terms of workers participation—and how can we give this term concrete meaning in a society in which even these revolutionary ideas are threatened by the technical advances of human society? Does it require a reversal of the whole trend towards centralized direction—and, if so,

doesn't that involve a critique of the emphasis and directions of industrial society, of our culture itself, and the crude notions of human relations which we bring with us from a period, a century, of the terrors and successes of what is still, inadequately, called "capitalist accumulation"? What would such a notion of community involve—in terms of education, of the cultural and moral values we accept or propagate? Most important of all, what kinds of change would this require in terms of *people*—not a political abstraction, but the new man, already *there*, struggling to be free, struggling to give his life meaning and value? And what changes in *us*: *are* we strong enough to do this work, to take the ideas upon ourselves, to make them exist in our lives, and so to carry them forward?

This is uncharted territory, as yet a wasteland where no flowers bloom and few schools contend. If *U.L.R.* has not been as much a "forum" as its editors—and some of its readers—had hoped at the beginning, it is for this reason. What we could not have done at the time of our first Editorial was to reckon accurately the extent of the damage wrought in the period of the Cold War. We had no full sense at the time of the degree to which socialism had been whittled away, particularly in the Labour Party and the Trade Union movement. We have had to face the fact that the bulk of the new ground remains to be broken.

Our first year of life, therefore, has been a period in which we tried to confront our tasks more specifically, to name them to ourselves, and, gradually, to direct our readers to them. The task of *U.L.R.* is to try to make some principled critique of the quality of contemporary life, and to take a perspective on *the socialist and humanist transformation of our society*. Our concern is with man, in the concrete richness and fullness of his life—all of it. There will always, of course, be place for articles and documents of different kinds in *U.L.R.* What we have tried to do in recent months is to locate the centre. The centre is, roughly and for simplicity, fourfold: A study of contemporary capitalism as a social and economic system, a rapportage and critique of the "culture" of post-Welfare Britain, a study of the nature of a humanist society, and a re-examination of the values and attitudes of socialist humanism.

A critique of the quality of life in our society implies a conception of the singleness of human life, an awareness of its multiple facets and of its unity which, to our way of thinking, is one of the essential roots of humanism. We are trying to make a conscious break with those ideologies which have, for the sake of a worthwhile end, sacrificed this sense of man as a totality, in favour of an impoverished image. We want to break away from the traditions which see economic or political man as separate from man in the centre of a web of human relations, which draw him into the full life of his community—which consider "economic" or "political" life as a lower form of existence, as an external prop to the private life of the individual, rather than as his very nature. We want to break with the view that cultural or family life is an entertaining sideshow, a secondary expression of human creativity or fulfilment. There can be no simple base-superstructure model here, for that is to offer too limited a conception of our social nature. Man, as Marx himself said, is both limited and free, both formed by his society and free to transform it. His imagination, his moral sense, his capacity for communion, as well as his labour, his skill and his technology represent—*together*—the powers with which he can remake his life and give it value. Literature and art as well as the machine can be made the groundwork of a fuller life for the human person and the community. Our purpose is to struggle to discover how best and how quickly the things he made can be turned to his proper use.