A semantic legacy of Hitler's and Stalin's practices, our vocabulary has been enriched by "genocide" and "Gulag." Unfortunately, even though the two dictators are long since dead, these terms are not just of historical interest.

Originally, "genocide"—a concept formulated by Rafael Lemkin in connection with the Holocaust—was defined as the deliberate destruction of an ethnic group. But it has come to mean the wholesale extermination of any category of people by a political authority controlling them; thus it applies not only to the annihilation of Jews by Nazis, but also to the victims of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia.

"Gulag" is a term which did not originate as a concept. It was an acronym of the Main Administration of the Camps (Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerey) in Stalin's Russia. But when Solzhenitsyn gave it general currency in the West, it came to be applied to other cases of what David Rousset had defined as l'univers concentrationnaire. In France, a recent book about the Vietnamese "re-education camps" is called Le Goulag Vietnamiens; and Charles Sternberg (the executive director of the International Rescue Committee) has called them a contemporary version of the Gulag Archipelago.

The two terms evoke, more vividly than anything else in the language, the specific form of man's inhumanity to man in our time: the gas ovens of Auschwitz and Treblinka, the white hell of Vorkuta and Kolyma, the inescapable mass "evacuation" of the capital city of Phnom Penh and the subsequent Khmer Rouge bestialities. What was involved in all these 20th-century horrors was not only torture, starvation, and violent death inflicted upon defenceless people, but also the fact that they were committed not as acts of war, but as civil actions in which the question of personal or individual guilt had not even arisen. For the individual it is not a matter of "having done something," but simply of being something (or being so accused). For him there is no way out; no alternative behaviour can help him avoid his fate. At the time of the inquisition, Jews could at least convert to becoming Marranos. Under Hitler they were unconditionally condemned to perdition on racial grounds. Under Stalin "enemies of the people" were exterminated according to such general categories as "kulaks," "Trotskyist wreckers," or "rootless cosmopolitans." Under Pol Pot, people ("the intellectuals") were killed simply for being literate (often "proved" by their wearing spectacles).

One day, perhaps, we will have a comparative study of genocide, and the story would be incomplete without a picture of the international reactions in the outside world to these atrocities. It is striking what great, evidently deep-seated, reluctance there was in each historical case of genocide to accept the hard facts and recognise them for what they were. Universal condemnation was delayed on each occasion by a tendency to ignore, obfuscate, or rationalise the facts. Were those who denied them anything but moral accomplices?

Wilful blindness is not so visible today, but we are dismally confronted by many forms of moral insensitivity about the problem at present. For one thing, the term "genocide" is increasingly used as a trivial metaphor. For instance, at the recent Labour Party Conference, Neil Kinnock MP referred to the Government's school policy as "Tory educational genocide", while another delegate, objecting to rising unemployment, spoke of "industrial genocide in the North." (The Communist Morning Star of 5 October 1979 published a photograph of a shipyard-worker carrying a placard with the words' "Industrial genocide (sic) on Tyneside"). But the Labour Party's Conference resolution on Cambodia actually managed to avoid mentioning the horrors in "liberated" Indo-China.

Denying the Undeniable

There seems to be a virtual consensus on the subject of "Genocide"—yet although everybody duly abhors it, how often this is accompanied by ambiguities and inconsistencies! The skeletons in the mega-closets are so
Under Western Eyes

I ideologically embarrassing that it is frequently difficult to distinguish between the process of selective amnesia and an onset of new myth-making, between cranks and non-cranks, even between Left and Right.

The former US Attorney-General, Ramsey Clark, a leading American “progressive”, has called Israeli actions in South Lebanon—"genocidal," James Baldwin declared in The Nation (29 September 1979), after the dismissal of Ambassador Andrew Young, that he had “attempted to ward off a holocaust” and he added quickly, lest he be suspected of harboring ethical or humanitarian sentiments, that “the state of Israel was not created, for the salvation of the Jews: it was created for the salvation of the western interests…”

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, the American Black activist who went to the Middle East on a “peace mission”, has declared that he is “sick and tired of hearing about the Holocaust….” After visiting the newly opened Yad Vashem memorial he said that “in all, the Nazis had killed more non-Jews than Jews—more after all, 60 million blacks had been exterminated during the slavery era.” (Newswest, 8 October). The point of this postmoderately inappreciable comparison presumably to indicate that blacks suffered more than Jews. Roots—si, Holocaust—no. But why should even those who learn this history from the TV soaps want to weigh up the beastliness of chattel slavery against the gas-chamber horrors of genocide?

Like the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Vanessa Redgrave also embraced the PLO’s Yassin Arafat. When she received her “Oscar” award for fighting the Nazis in the Hollywood film on and by Lillian Hellman, the local American Nazis demonstrated to support her against the protesting Jews. Unlike Mr. Jackson, the obviously is not “sick and tired of hearing about the Holocaust”: in her next film she is playing the role of Panja Fénelon who happened to survive Auschwitz because she was a violinist in the camp orchestra.

Où se trouve le sentiment? And what an admirable combination—a Trotskyite and a Christian; Vanessa and Jesse; Rouge et Noir; white cast; and black hypocrisy (or vice versa); Nazi genocide and soul-food for thought. But not a murmur yet about the (red) graves in Cambodia.

Anxieties have recently been expressed that the German wave of interest in Adolf Hitler, manifested a generation after his downfall—may possibly reflect a desire to vindicate some of his policies, even though the neo-Nazis have remained a tiny and insignificant group. The phenomenal interest in the TV series Holocaust (seen by over 53 million German viewers) has put paid to such speculations. Whatever its artistic merit, the series made it more difficult to cast doubts on the Nazi atrocities.

Who could now dismiss Hitler’s genocide of the Jews as “a Zionist myth”? This, after all, was a permanent theme of neo-Nazi propaganda in its attempt to exploit the universal reluctance to believe the horrors and, indeed, the specifically German reluctance to face the Schuldfrage: it is ironical that so many of the specious efforts to whitewash Hitler, contributing to the perpetuation of the unbewusste Vergangenheit, the Germans’ “unmastered past”, have come from outside—Germany.

In Britain the pseudonymous Richard Harwood published a pamphlet, Did Six Million Really Die? an attempt to “revise” the established image of the Nazi murders by declaring them to be “genocides”, spread by Jews and Communists. According to Gitta Sereny in the New Statesman (2 November 1979), the real name of the author is Richard Verrall, the editor of the National Front monthly, Speerhead. The pamphlet has now been translated into German and French, reprinted in Great Britain, and serialised in the USA by a Louisiana monthly, Christian Vanguard.

Another contribution to the myth-making about Hitler, also coming to Germany from abroad, is the book by David Irving, Hitler’s War. Irving, who expurgates Hitler from complicity in “the Final Solution”, has been soundly thrashed by the leading British specialists on the subject, such as Alan Bullock and Hugh Trevor-Roper; and his book has been dismissed by serious journals such as The Economist as “a masterpiece of disinformation.” But it has undoubtedly helped spread confusion and has provided the German neo-Nazis with welcome succour.

In the USA the associate professor of electrical engineering at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, Arthur R. Butz, has written a pseudo-scientific book (with 444 footnotes!), The Hoax of the Twentieth Century, in which it is claimed, yet again, that the Holocaust was a “Zionist” and “Marxist” propaganda invention. It has been published in German translation as Der Jahrhundert-Betrug and has evidently also influenced a number of cranks in Britain, France, and Australia. In a letter to the New Statesman (4 August), the author “strongly objects” to the characterisation of his book as “neo-Nazi”; but it was put out by the same publisher as Harwood’s pamphlet and has been used by the neo-Nazis here and elsewhere to “demonstrate” that the Holocaust is “a fairy tale.” The neo-Nazi weekly Deutsche National-Zeitung published excerpts from it, with a red banner headline above the masthead: “WER ERFAND DEN SCHWINDEL VON 6 MILLIONEN VERGASTEN Juden? (Who invented the hoax of 6 million gassed Jews?)”
Another academic crank in America, a former professor of economics, Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., provides a spectacular example of effortless transition from New Left to New Right, if such labels still retain any significance.

As in other manifestations of the Commu-Nazi syndrome, anti-Semitism today plays a prominent role. LaRouche is the chairman of the so-called “U.S. Labour Party” and its candidate for President in the 1980 elections. He has been politically active since 1966, but first appeared as a leader of the Marxist National Caucus of Labour Committees during the 1968 Columbia University “student-revolution.” In 1972, after a visit to Germany, LaRouche turned his party on a new path, preaching an economic policy based on a “corrected” Marxist “theory of value,” a “humanist-outlook” and anti-Semitism. He does not whitewash Hitler, but considers that the monetarist economic policy à la Milton Friedman would also lead to “slave labour and death camps.” He declares that “the current monetary and economic policies of the Carter Administration are fascist,” and that “the Zionist lobby in the USA is a fascist political formation.” As a New York Times editorial (10 October), it warned “a thousand well-organized followers that he is a target for assassination by conspiracies involving the Rockefeller family, the Carter Administration, the Israeli secret police and even the Queen of England....”

Is anyone still under the impression that Cartesian clarté must be less blind than Anglo-Saxon empiricism? In France, two academic figures have tried assiduously to deny the existence of the Holocaust. One of them, the late Paul Rassinier (from the Académie de Besançon), was himself imprisoned in Buchenwald. He wrote some four books (Le Mensonge d’Ulysse; Ulysse Trahi par les Sires; Le Véritable Procès Eichmann; Le Drame des Juifs Européens—all also published in Germany) in which he vehemently attacked “the legend of Nazi diabolism.” Another French academic who rejected “the myth of the Nazi gas-chambers” is the associate professor of literature at the University of Lyon, Robert Faurisson. In his lectures and communications (Le Monde, 16 and 29 December 1978) he referred to 20 books (among them the aforementioned) which established “this fact.” His allegations were immediately refuted by a number of surviving eyewitnesses and qualified historians; but who can tell how many gullible innocents may drink from this well?

The bes of the myth-makers confuse the ignorant and poison the memory of humanity. And when the contemporary witnesses are dead, who knows what effect such obnoxious and cranky falsifications may have in undermining the historical truth about the genocidal abominations? With the passage of time the traumatic impact of such crimes and their memories fades, and myths will increasingly encroach on authentic history.

In Australia, the Melbourne lawyer John Bennett (the secretary of the liberal Victorian Council for Civil Liberties) created a sensation by publishing a letter in the Melbourne Age (22 January 1979) and in the News-Weekly (31 January 1979) which repeated the assertions of A. R. Butz. His letter has been followed by another media “debate” in which the deranged ravings of a mythenmanique manage to achieve the status of “controversial” opinions.

The “controversy” in the respectable organs of the Australian press raged more intensely than the one with Harwood in the London Daily Telegraph and with Faurisson in the Paris Le Monde. It flourished in the National Times and The Age in January-April, and again in June-July 1979 in the Australian Nation Review. Bennett declared that he had been conned for 30 years by the Holocaust propaganda and said that “the idea of Holocaust is a spill-over from wartime propaganda.” His odd mentality produced a peculiar “progressive-reactivity” symbiosis whitewashing all genocidal regimes:

“The Holocaust legend is extensively used for propaganda reasons to support the diplomatic position of Israel. The legend is no more reliable than the atrocious stories about genocide in Kampuchea and Uganda, or the 20 million killed by Stalin legend.”

This kind of Right-Left symbiosis reminds one of the German “libertarian” terrorist Ulrike Meinhof, who did not deny the fact of the Holocaust, but argued during her trial (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 15 December 1972) that

“Auschwitz meant that six million Jews were killed, and thrown on to the waste-heap of Europe, for what they were: money-Jews (Geldjuden)...”

Specific beliefs about the significance of genocide, or indeed about its extent, may differ; yet there is no mistaking the remarkable constancy of attitudes reflected in the ideological prejudices and political stereotypes of the mythenmaniques, on both the Right and the Left.

In matters of genocide also, les extrêmes se touchent...—

Holocaust & Gulag

In the Soviet Union there is constant harping on the theme of “neo-Nazism”, but not on the theme of the Holocaust. Soviet propaganda has always tried to obscure the fact that Jews were a
special target of Hitler’s “Final Solution.” That Hitler singled out European Jewry for “special treatment” is glossed over. When, after resisting for decades the proposal to erect a local memorial to the massacred victims of Babi Yar, the Soviet government finally built one there, there was simply no comment at all to the slaughter of Jews! Until recently, the term “genocide” was scarcely used in Soviet publications; but it suddenly, was very current when it became necessary to justify the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia.

Occasional references to the Jewish tragedy may appear when they are used to lend credibility to the alarm over “the neo-Nazi menace.” It was quite exceptional when Literaturnaya gazeta (20 September, 1978), reporting on the Richard Harwood pamphlet, wrote that “the first to deny the fact, known to the whole world, of the extermination of millions of Jews in the Nazi concentration camps” it seemed almost a slip of censorship control. Such statements are practically never encountered in Soviet publications. They would not encounter the open and official anti-Semitic campaign which is increasingly conducted in the Soviet Union. The campaign is based on the famous Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a book, International Zionism: World of Menace (published in 1977 under the title of an institution than the Soviet Union) exposes, asserts that “the Jewish-Internationalists” with firms as Lazard Frères, Lehman Brothers, Kuhn Loeb, J.P. Morgan, Bankers Trust Co., and Goldman Sachs, pursues its ancient goal of world domination by seeking “the expansion of their positions in the economy of the largest capitalist states... and in the economic system of world capitalism as a whole.”

It is but a small step from this accusation to the charge that Jews actually “collaborated” in the Nazi genocide. A recent exhibition of Soviet art featured a painting showing a Nazi soldier and a Jewish prisoner with a Star of David, and both grinning over a pile of corpses.

Yet not even a whisper can be uttered in the official media of Brezhnev’s Russia about the millions who perished in Stalin’s genocide. There are corpses, and corpses.

Vartam Shalamov, a Soviet writer with even greater experience of corpses in Stalin’s concentration camps than Solzhenitsyn, has written:

“Kolyma was a great test of the moral strength of man... of ordinary human morality, and of 99% of the people who have not passed that test.”

This sober conclusion about human behaviour in an extreme situation evokes melancholy reminiscences about those of us who observed it from the outside. Can one ever forget how a great part of the Left passed that test during “the low, dishonest decade” of the 1930s, when a Daily Worker headline on the Moscow Trial screamed: SHOOT THE REPULSES! Khrushchev’s speech came as a shock to the “progressives.” What has happened since to “their unbewilderte Vergangenheit,” their own “unmaskten past?”

On this face of it, this past may seem to have been overcome on the Left. European–Social Democracy was, on the whole, never pro-Soviet, and with the emergence of the “New Left” and “Euro-Communism” practically everybody seems to be condemning the Stalinism of yesterday. French Communists; who first denounced Khrushchev’s speech as “a bourgeois falsification” and then maintained that they were not “aware” of its authenticity because their delegations at the 20th Congress of the CPSU had just “not been told about it,” finally admitted in Humanité that this threadbare excuse was indeed a lie. British Communists have denounced the Nazi-Soviet Pact for its “disastrous consequences” (which, as the Morning Star of 23 August admitted, included “handing over German Communists who had sought political asylum in the Soviet Union”).

Those Communists who disagreed with such bold criticism said that the “Soviet-Nazi Pact was no crime” (Morning Star, 31 August). But although they added that “of course we should remember the crimes and mistakes committed by Stalin”, their real attitude is better reflected in a remark by one of the disgruntled delegates at the 79 Party congress: “Let’s stop picking our sores...” (The Guardian, 12 November).

Such “picking” has always been extremely private. The neo-Stalinists within the Euro-Communist parties (like the Soviet apparatchiki themselves) are hypersensitive about it. None of the Communist parties, in Europe or elsewhere, has treated Stalin’s genocide in anything like a forthright manner. The reality of these crimes is avoided by euphemisms, circumlocutions, evasions, and, above all, when an actual Orwellian “memory hole” is not involved, by making historical references as unspecific as possible.

Is it just a question of a few unreconstructed Stalinists and fellow-travellers (like the late D. N.?
Ritik who until his death still retained his belief in the veracity of the Moscow Trials?

Even the “critical” Communists only hit at what they know, without making it explicit. Previously they did not want to face the facts, now they do not like to live with them, although, in one form or another, they cannot help admitting them respectively. Any reader who had to rely on Western Communist publications would find it very difficult indeed to comprehend what happened in Russia under Stalin. We would know about “certain negative phenomena” or even crimes. But, even though a reference to “millions of prisoners” in Stalin labour camps was once made in the Morning Star, its significance could not make much impact on the imagination of its readers, who are so soundly from such themes that they can hardly visualize what it was all about.

Any such “anti-Soviet” writings are sedulously ignored. Schelkunov’s is discussed as a reactionary. Neither his Gulag Archipelago nor any other book of the subject was ever reviewed, even negatively, in the Morning Star. Instead one can read pathetic (and euphemistic) little homilies, such as the assurance of the Party secretary, Gordon McKenna, that “We have always made clear that our disagreement with some actions taken in Socialist countries is from the point of view of principle...” (12 November). Nor are the French or Italian Communists more candid in this respect. Truth is contraband, to be smuggled in when the dark opportunity presents itself. But then it serves only as another apologetic rationalisation, the pieces of such black-market “truth” only confuse spirits rather than make them free.

The official verdict of the French Communist Party that Stalin’s Russia was on balance a factor for progress is a dismal illustration of this. (Even so, the book L’URSS et Nous, dealing in part with the Communist “unmastered past,” was attacked in the Soviet press, in spite of its restrained character and the French Party blessing.) The real psychological background to the ideological reluctance to settle scores with the past squarely can be seen in the intellectual demeaning of the French palace and ex-“true believers.” More than in any other country, the scene in France is full of ex-Stalinists baring their souls; by now their memoirs could fill several bookshelves. Their related discovery of the obvious throws light on one phenomenon only: the varieties of self-deception.

Why Lied about the Camps?

The latest two such memoirs have a particular bearing on the problem of reactions in the West to Stalin’s genocide. Claude Morgan and André Warusse were the two principal protagonists of the memorable 1949 trial in Paris—the libel suit brought by a Soviet Russian defector, Victor Kravchenko, against the Communist weekly, Les Lettres Françaises (of which Morgan was then the editor and Warusse one of the chief contributors). It was the first occasion on which “the Gulag Archipelago” received worldwide publicity. Kravchenko, whose best-selling book I Chose Freedom, published in 1946, described the Stalinist terror, the purges, and the system of forced labour camps, produced a number of witnesses who testified from their own experience to the truth of his assertions. Among them were Margarete Buber-Neumann, the author of Under Two Dictators, who had been imprisoned in both Stalin’s and Hitler’s concentration camps, and Alex Weissberg, who had had a somewhat similar experience and had described it in his book Conspiracy of Silence (in the USA entitled The Witches’ Sabbath). Both of them had been handed over by the NKVD to the Gestapo in 1940. David Roitse, a former inmate of a German concentration camp, found himself ostracised by all his “progressive” friends because of his support for Kravchenko.

The defence mobilised some of the best-known names of the French intellectual Left: Tito, Curie, Vercors, d’Asnier de la Vigriére, Pierre Cot, Roger Garaudy, using them as witnesses to discredit Kravchenko and his outrageous assertions about “the Fatherland of all progressive humanity” and its “great Leader and Teacher.” They all declared that Kravchenko’s book was a tissue of lies and that the testimonies of the eye-witnesses were the anti-Soviet inventions of reactionary émigrés manipulated by the US State Department and intelligence services. Pierre Dax, Morgan’s successor as editor of Les Lettres Françaises, wrote a special pamphlet for the occasion: Les Camps Concentrationnaires Soviétiques n’existent Pas (“Soviet Concentration Camps Do Not Exist”). And the lawyer of Les Lettres Françaises, Joe Nordmann, even paid homage in his conclud- ing speech to the “objective manner” in which the notorious prosecutor in the Moscow Trials, Andrei Vyshinsky, had conducted the cross-examination of the accused.

Such was the atmosphere in post-War France that Kravchenko, despite the documentary evidence presented on the Soviet camps, was awarded only the symbolic minimum damages of “un franc,” a judgment which Le Monde (25 September 1979) characterises even today as “a homage rendered to the character and the past of the Communist writers who led the attack on Kravchenko.” And such is the persistence of “progressive” stereotypes that when 17 years later Victor Kravchenko tragically took his own life, the London Times (26 February 1966) published an obituary which was full of cheap ironies and
hostility. It did not mention his suicide. It characterised him as "one of the noisiest and most controversial figures at the height of the Cold War," serving "cold-war propaganda." As it came after Khrouschév's and Solzhenitsyn's "revelations," the Times obituary almost admitted that "there was, for all its exaggeration, a strong basis of truth in Kravchenko's autobiography, Close Freedom, with its lurid stories of the Stalin purges in the 1930s, with its harrowing accounts of the police terror in Russia..." Far from being any kind of "exaggeration", Kravchenko's account was actually something of an understatement of the extent of Stalin's genocide. In reality the Gulag was even more "horrible", as not only Solzhenitsyn, but also Nadezhda Mandelshtam, Shalamov and many others have testified. Kravchenko had no comparable literary talent, but he did have an important message for which he was vilified in the West, not yet ready for "premature truth. If he was "horrible", so was Anna Akhmatova's Requiem.

However, it was not a question of literary quality, but of the unwillingness of the "progressive intelligentsia" at that time to face the truth about Soviet reality.

Today, 30 years after the trial, Claude Morgan has finally admitted in his autobiography, Don Quichotte et les Autres, that Kravchenko was right! He confesses that after Kravchenko's suicide he wanted "to pay him homage, but it was as yet too early..." He reveals that the original article, "How Kravchenko was Fabricated", published in Les Lettres Françaises under the signature of "Sim Thomas" (presented as a US journalist), was in fact written by André Ullman, a French contributor to the journal Morgan and Wurmsper had claimed that Kravchenko "was not even the author of the book."

André Wurmsper, however, has evidently refused to do a mea culpa in his recent autobiography, Fidément Vôire. For him, Kravchenko was not telling the truth, he was deforming it..." Answering Morgan, who reproached him for upholding his old charges against Kravchenko ("One must know how to admit being in the wrong; I am afraid he is not sincere"), Wurmsper now explains in l'Humanité (20 September) that Kravchenko's "book, or rather the book which he signed..."

Reduced the whole history of the USSR to Stalinist arbitrary measures. He mixed fiction with one aspect of Soviet reality. He, the Communist ignorant at that time... We were unfortunately mistaken in asserting, as progressives did the world over (contrary to what the 20th Congress of the CPSU later revealed to be the truth), that the camps did not exist in the Soviet Union. The condemnation which our Party pronounced, confirmed, and repeated against the methods of Stalin needs no reminders..."

So much...for Kravchenko, so much for genocide..."

Unlike Claude Morgan, who still considers himself a Communist although he has left the Party, Pierre Daix has made a radical break with his past, as his books (J'ai cru au maïs and Les Chemins du Printemps) testify. He became an early advocate of Solzhenitsyn in France and was prepared to admit his past errors. The main protagonist of the Kravchenko affair, Roger Gaury, left the Party after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, although he declared that "Kravchenko's 1956 speech was a turning point of my dreams" (Le Nouvel Observateur, 29 October). Until then, he confessed, "I could not imagine that Stalin was a dictator."

Ironically enough, if their past presents a problem to the Communists, their present practices no longer provoke such censure from the Socialists and the New Left as they did in older times. They show themselves increasingly reluctant to condemn in a clear and outspoken manner even such barbaric Communist actions as those which have occurred in Cambodia and Viet Nam. As one Social Democrat, Carl Gershman (Commentary, October 1979), reminds us: "On these questions, as on all others regarding brutality by Communist regimes, the Socialist International has remained silent..."

Similarly, the New Left, whose emergence was influenced by a reaction to Khroushchev's "revelations" about Stalin, has become less unfriendly towards the Brezhnev regime which has ended "de-Stalinisation." The closing of the circle of confusion can be seen in a New Left Review editorial (September–October 1979):

"One of the most salient features of the later '70s has been a widespread recrudescence of Cold War politics in the West. The relative novelty of this second round of orchestrated international reaction has been its overwhelming concentration on the USSR as a target... it has become an increasing vogue among sections of the Left as well, which in their frustration at the impasse
of the labour movement in the West, have taken
to discharging their aggression upon the USSR."

our Workers' Paradises, still being put upon by
divic scribblers! Thus not only do we have ex-
communists, and ex-Stalinists, we also now have
Western Leftists, and we are even beginning to get
new Old Leftists. The lessons of Genocide and
Ard are lost on secular materialists and their
slaw-travellers, old and new. In his conversation
with Régis Debray (published in the French journal
"Change"), Noam Chomsky has been ironical about
Western intellectuals who, according to him, gave
so much "publicity" to the Cambodian genocide.
He detected conspiracy (Le Monde, 22 March
1979):

"It is striking that the discovery of Guîa
was made at the end of the Vietnam war, when it was
convenient to divert attention to other things."
The conspiratorial ways of the Western press are
indeed far-reaching. For Régis Debray Western
perception of truth goes even further: for him
Guîa "is a word imposed by imperialism."

Cults & Crimes

Santayana's acute characterisation of "those
who do not learn from history" (being conden-
med to repeat it) and Hegel's melancholy reflection
on "the only thing we learn from history" (that we
never learn from history) do not go far enough. It
may be that each generation fails to learn from the
experience of its predecessors; but some genera-
tions, one suspects, even fail to learn from their
own experience.

When the generation of the 1930s was replaced
by the generation of the 1960s, and the cult of
"good Uncle Joe" was replaced by the cult of good
"Uncle Ho"; perhaps the most infuriating aspect of
the new decade for those who remembered the old
one was not just the feeling of déjà vu and the re-
emergence of dfnt political attitudes, but the fact
that so many people who should have known better
were ready to embrace them and join the Cageman
rush. The naïve "revolutionary" utopianism of "the
kids" has been matched by the postures of their
elders trying to re-acquire political virility. As
Norman Podhoretz recollects in his just-published
memoir, Breaking Ranks:

"To be pro-American in the '60s was like being
anti-Soviet in the '30s, for just as radicalism then-
had been tied to support of the Soviet Union as
the centre of socialist hope, so radicalism now
increasingly defined itself in opposition to the
United States as the major obstacle to the birth of
a better world."

For the New Left intelligentsia, America became
"the moral equivalent of Nazi Germany." Its whole
history was "obscene", said Susan Sontag, based
as it was on genocide. The war in Viet Nam was
not a defence of South Viet Nam against the com-
munist expansionism of Hanoi, but an imperialist
action of America. The respectable sympathisers of
the "Movement" among the "radical rich", the
media, and the political elite—and even many who
did not share such jüne political perspectives—
and little critical, sceptical awareness of the
possible consequences of their attitudes. The "kids"
were chanting

"Hey, hey, hey, LBJ
How many kids you killed today?"

Their elders pooh-poohed any danger of the
doomsday effect following American defeat in Viet
Nam. Warnings that there might be a bloodbath
when the Communists took over (and other unpleasant
consequences for the inhabitants of Indochinese states)
were derided and firmly
rejected as the scaremongering of the "hawks." The
intelligentsia and its leading ladies began to make
their tours to Hanoi. Mary McCarthy and Jane
Fonda symbolised the merger of the '50s and the
60s. Once again a "brave new world" was in the
offing.

Où sont les neiges d'antan? Where are all those
self-righteous expectations and bitterly incompetent
predictions of the "progressives" and the "doves"?
There was not just a bloodbath, there was genocide
in Cambodia. There was an "Oceanic Holocaust" in
Viet Nam. There was an invasion of Cambodia by
Viet Nam. The moment the "boat people"
disappeared from the television screens, the
emaciated bodies of Cambodian children made
their horrific appearance.

AND WHAT HAPPENED to the "progressive"
journalists and singers engaged in the anti-Viet
Nam war movement? Once again, as in the after-
math of the 1930s, some discovered the conse-
quences of their illusions, others persisted in them.

Five days before the Khmer Rouge troops
entered Phnom Penh, the New York Times reporter
there, Sydney H. Schanberg, wrote that "it is
difficult to imagine how the lives of ordinary
people could be anything but better with the
Americans gone." He explained that

"Wars nourish brutality and sadism and some-
times certain people are executed by the victors,
but it would be tendentious to forecast such
abnormal behaviour as a national policy under a
Communist government once the war is over.
Cambodia, being a country blessed with rich
agricultural land and a relatively small popula-
tion, can be revived without any major recon-
struction program. ..."
Shortly after, having witnessed the brutal removal of the whole population from Phnom Penh by the victorious Kmer Rouge, Mr Schanberg became (to his credit) the first reporter to describe the horrors of the “evacuation”, literally the first step on the road to genocide in Cambodia. Four-and-a-half years later (on 12 October 1979), he reported the story of his colleague, a Cambodian journalist, Dith Pran, employed by the New York Times, who reached Bangkok and told him about the “true hell” he had been through: the reduction of his country’s population from seven to four million by massacres and starvation.

None So Blind . . .

During the four-and-a-half years between these two dispatches the world has gradually learned and generally recognised the brutal behaviour of the Kmer Rouge and the magnitude of their crimes. But the “progressive intelligentsia” was at first reluctant to acknowledge them. In America Leo Cherne and his colleagues from the International Rescue Committee and Freedom House were the first who went to Thailand to investigate the case and to produce an authoritative report based on extensive interviews with the Cambodian refugees. It was, however, totally disregarded by the secular “progressives” from The Nation and the “progressive” Catholics from the Commonweal.

Similarly in Britain, it was Bernard Levin, and not John Pilger with his Namist sympathies, who was writing articles attacking the chief apologist of the Pol Pot régime in this country, Dr Malcolm Caldwell. At that time, in the liberal Guardian and the socialist Tribune, Dr Caldwell tried hard to deny or minimise testimony about the catastrophe. He contemptuously rejected Levin’s accusations. He did not feel that “those who did not subscribe to his [Levin’s] fantasy [are] in effect mentally ill and comparable to blind apologists for Hitler and Stalin.” He would not commit himself to any particular figure, but with a great display of moral indignation argued that there were only “scores, or hundreds of thousands” killed and not a million or more. He quoted approvingly an American “delegate” (Tribune, 8 September 1978):

“The new Government, fighting for its survival against all this counter-revolutionary activity, had to deal swiftly and sternly with every instance of sabotage and subversion. Undoubtedly, this was a bloody process that may well have entailed some excesses and mistakes. But without revolutionary violence against the enemy, the revolution itself would have been crushed in its infancy.”

You can’t make an omelette . . .

Dr Caldwell was killed in Phnom Penh while visiting the land of Pol Pot. We do not know who shot him. During his travels he was reported to have paraphrased the remark of Lincoln Steffens about the Soviet Union by saying: “I have seen the past and it works” (International Herald Tribune, 27 December 1978). Tribune (29 December 1978) published an obituary on the “tragic death of Cambodia’s friend”, a warm tribute to Malcolm Caldwell by his CND friend, Peggy Duff. An obituary note by John Gittings in that once distinguished bastion of humane liberalism, The Guardian (27 December 1978) said:

“Caldwell attempted (notably in an article in the Guardian on May 8) to understand the stories (often exaggerated) of mass executions and an enforced return to the land in Cambodia after the revolutionary victory of April 1975. And in a reply to a harsh attack on him by Bernard Levin in the Times, he argued that a contribution against collaboration with the US-backed Lon Nol régime of 1970–75 was understandable, and secondly that the new policy of ‘taking agriculture to the base’ made good economic sense . . . Caldwell was an irreplaceable teacher and comrade whose work will undoubtedly suffer the customary fate of being better appreciated after his death.”

Christopher Hitchins was rather more critical in the New Statesman (5 January 1979), arguing that “the access to power of the Kmer Rouge has been the excuse for a truly epoch-making bloodbath” and that “Caldwell, in some of his saliaries into print, was reduced to haggling over the exact number of those killed.” But he almost found an exonerating circumstance in the fact that “the more he was attacked by the Bernard Levin of this world, the more certain he became that he was right (a dangerous logic, as students of the 1930s will know).” And there was the inevitable rationalisation, which anticipated the “documentary proof” later to be provided by William Shawcross: “The genocidal American bombing was also, it need hardly be added, a midwife to the Cambodian régime.” When Tribune also came out against the Pol Pot régime on this “controversial” problem, Dr Caldwell’s sister, Isabel Colquhoun, protested vigorously (Tribune, 19 January 1979):

“I was deeply shocked when I read both your editorial and Chris Mullin’s article on Cambodia (Tribune, January 12). They were both written as though my brother, Malcolm Caldwell, had never existed. The same well-worn cliché themes (that the Kmer Rouge Government was dominated by terror, that there were large-scale government directed massacres and that there were no desperate reasons for evacuating Phnom Penh) were trowled out with no reference
Confusing a yoker with an underdog has been a perennial tendency among “the progressives.” One is reminded not only how many of them—supported Stalin’s “legitimate” ambitions, but also how others, in spite of ideological antipathy, tended to feel that one should not be beastly to Hitler, because of his “legitimate” concerns with the “wicked” Versailles Treaty. Before World War II, Tribune (under William Melior and H. J. Hartshorn) and the New Statesman (under Kingsley Martin) supported the Stalin regime, endorsing the Moscow Trials and the Soviet-Nazi Pact. Later, they at least had the excuse (also used by repentant Nazis) that they simply “did not know about” genocide. (The repentant French Stalinists, like Claude Morgan, just could not believe in the existence of the Soviet concentration camps.) But this time the genocide was not unprecedented, therefore there were no similar barriers to the imagination.

For the pro-Vietnamese Communists truth-telling became expedient only when the Vietnamese began their propaganda offensive against the Pol Pot regime. The veteran Stalinist propagandist, Wilfred Burchett—who had concocted the stories about US “germ warfare” in Korea—described Cambodian atrocities (in The Guardian, 11 May 1979) and estimated the genocide’s victims at 2–3 million. Even the French Communists, never strong on veracity, began to publish true stories: for instance, the account by Lola Sivath, cousin of Prince Sihanouk, describing how she lost her husband and three daughters:

> “Seeing her father standing beneath the mango tree, my daughter began running. One of the Pol Pot soldiers fired from his rifle and shot her in the head. She fell on the ground. Then they shot my husband before my eyes… What wanton cruelty! Had I not been a witness and a victim I would not have believed it was possible. Barher, when I saw films about the Nazi concentration camps, they had seemed incredible to me…”

This appeared in L’Humanité on 15 September 1979. A few days later it carried the reply of Aimé Wurmer to Claude Morgan about Kravchanko having “deformed the truth.” The Party-line can change; but some lines stay hard and fast.

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2 Commenting in a letter (of 22 January 1935) to Robert Vane-Cross about the plagiarisms to Hitler of the British Labour “progressives” like George Lansbury and Clifford Allen, the British ambassador in Berlin,Sir Eric Phibbs, wrote:

> “One of the very odd features of a very odd situation is the anxiety of Hitler’s political opponents in all countries to interview and negotiate with him… The more German parachuts he throws into his concentration camps the more of that ilk arrives from abroad to see him.”

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THE SOVIET-UNION has not for a long time shown any concern about what was happening in Cambodia. Until well into 1978 (i.e. for three years) there was not a squeak in the Soviet press on Cambodian atrocities. On the contrary, as long as Moscow hoped that it could regain some influence with the Khmer Rouge regime to counter that of Peking, it was perfectly ready to disregard such trifles.

In 1976, when Pol Pot became a prime minister of “democratic Kampuchea”, Koggin sent a congratulatory telegram (published in Pravda). In October 1977, the Soviet foreign-affairs weekly, New Times, acclaimed Pol Pot’s ”progressive social and economic reforms” in an approving article. In 1978 the Central Committee of the CPSU welcomed the formal announcement of the existence of the Communist Party of Kampuchea. Only later in that year did the Soviet press begin to attack the “monstros regime” of Pol Pot and to discover its genocidal character. So it is not surprising that the Soviet book on the subject, called Kampuchea: From Tragedy to Revival (Politizdat, 1979) contains Soviet press material from 1978 and 1979 only.

Related “indignation” about Khmer Rouge massacres is a purely political function of Soviet foreign policy interests. It would not have been expressed if “Democratic Kampuchea” had chosen neutrality or a pro-Soviet position in the Sino-Soviet conflict. When it comes to genocide, the
Soviet Union must first confront its own past, before it can have any title to condemn the imitators of its own paradigmatic original.

Under Western Eyes

...suitcases containing clothes I took to North Viet Nam..."

Let's hope that Miss McCarthy will in future have less embarrassment with her Left luggage. The dress rehearsals of the 1930s and the 1960s should be of some help.

Faced with the moral problem presented by the sequel to their own past, the members and sympathisers of the anti-Viet Nam war movement in the USA began to adopt different positions. One of its leading bands, Pete Seeger, an enthusiastic Stalinist in the past, has "found Jesus" (without apparently losing Stalin). Joan Baez, another singer who played an important part in opposing the Viet Nam war, condemned Hanoi for its violations of human rights and invited many prominent participants in the "movement" to sign her letter of protest, 84 "celebrities" signed, but others refused. William Alexander, wrote in The Village Voice that he "would never join in a public demonstration of a socialist country"; and John F. Kennedy refused to associate himself with the protest, saying that the charges against Hanoi were "inaccurate" and "not substantiated." She wrote to Joan Baez:

"Your action only slights you with the most narrow and negative elements in our country who continue to believe that Communism is worse than death..."

The ensuing "battle of advertisements" between the two show-biz political gurus would have been comic if the subject was not so tragic.

Shortly before, there was a "battle of posters" in Italy in which the terrorist organisation, La Prima Linea, accused the official Italian Communist Party of supporting the genocide attempt of the Vietnamese invading Cambodia, while the PCI of course made the reverse—better substantiated—charge. It was, I believe, the very first time in history that Communists had accused each other of genocide.

Both proved right. After the genocidal outrages of Po Pot, the Vietnamese "liberators" of Cambodia contributed to the calamity of mass starvation by confiscating seed grains and damaging agriculture. Later, they faced the hunger catastrophe quite cynically, making acceptance of Western aid conditional on their control of its distribution. They also began to settle tens of thousands of Vietnamese in the depopulated Cambodia.

One celebrity who travelled to Hanoi in the past, Mary McCarthy, said that she "might have signed the Joan Baez protest about the boat people but I was not asked" (The Observer, 14 October 1979). However, she did offer some regrets about her trip to Hanoi:

"I'm ashamed to say; for instance, how many
military sanctuaries established there and tolerated by the "neutral" Prince Sihanouk. The general conclusion of the book is not based on the specific documentary material which is paraded as establishing it, but only illustrates it a priori character. As Charles Fairbanks Jr. demonstrated in The Wall Street Journal of 2 November 1979, Shawcross applied for the Pentagon documents under the Freedom of Information Act not earlier than March 1977. But already in December 1976: "He had published in the Sunday Times of London a long piece (Cambodia: the Blame) in which he makes exactly the same argument about American guilt that appears later in the book... Thus he could not have developed his thesis in response to the newly obtained documents...."

Dr Kissinger’s assistant, Peter Rodman, has found that Shawcross used these documents very selectively. For instance, he omitted many references to the detailed descriptions of Khmer Rouge totalitarian practices in areas controlled by them in 1971, i.e. well before US action in Cambodia could have affected it.

In fact the starting-point of Shawcross’s reasoning is wrong. If he had a more experienced understanding of totalitarian mentality, he would have put the blame for genocide where it belongs: on the ideological fanaticism of the Khmer Rouge, whose leaders learned their revolutionary theory in Paris and applied it ruthlessly and primitively by "wiping the slate clean" and starting a whole new society from scratch. In his book Utopia and Revolution, Melvin J. Lasky provides a variety of historical examples of this revolutionary utopianism. This time the lunacy has gone even further than ever before. As François Ponchaud put it in his Cambodia, Year Zero (Penguin, 1978, pp.18, 214):

"Their ideology has led them to invent a radically new kind of man in a radically new society. It was a perfect application of an ideology pushed to the furthest limit of its own internal logic."

They were not "brutalised", they were brutal. They had to make a brand-new omelette. So, once again, what matter if a few million eggs get broken in the process?

...there is no need for rationalisation, just as previously there was no reason for false expectations. It is only "the cuckolds of history" who are always surprised when their expectations of a new utopia end in a new catastrophe, their permanent hopes leading to repeated genocides. Le Nouvel Observateur (5 November 1979) reflected:

"One would have liked to believe that this striking abandonment of the critical spirit is only an exceptional momentary aberration. But it is nothing of the sort. On the contrary, it is a structural trait, a constant in the behaviour of intellectuals...."

A melancholy thought. Some of our "best and brightest" minds tried to love Stalin (even, like Anthony Blunt, becoming NKVD agents in "good conscience") and then were confounded by the Gulag. And when they tried to reverse Uncle Ho (shouting his name in praise in Western capitals), they were surprised by millions of dead and dying refugees in an Indo-China that was supposed to have been "liberated" at long last from the injustices of American "imperialism."

It was an uncanny repetition of the self-induced blindness of earlier Communists and fellow-travellers. The same mentality, "born again", manifested itself among "progressives" in the new period. Just as in the past they denied the existence of Stalin’s Gulag, so now they denied Pol Pot’s genocide. No argument was too thin to be used, no regime too obnoxious to be defended, if it was anti-Western. Again, the best available evidence was rejected on the same spurious grounds that victims’ testimonies are "unreliable." Like those who refused to listen to the reports from Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany, Noam Chomsky now argued that the refugees from Cambodia were not to be given credence, that they "tend to report what they believe their interlocutors wish to hear" (The Nation, 25 June 1977). Quoting profusely from odd and misleading sources, he presented a "scholarly" conclusion that "highly qualified specialists who have studied the full range of evidence available... concluded that executions in Cambodia have numbered at most in thousands." The same line was taken by George C. Hildebrand and Gareth Porter in their book Cambodia, Starns and Revolution (Monthly Review Press, 1976) and many others in the USA. The parallel with the 1930s and 40s is striking: the "progressives", while rejecting the attitude to Stalin of their pre-decessors, the Prits and the Webbs, displayed the same credulosity. In this historical encore, a "true believer’s" faith once more replaced critical intelligence. As François Ponchaud pointed out in his book, "Their only sources of evaluation of the situation in Cambodia are deliberately chosen official statements...."

Why was there no instinctive resonance among "progressives" to the horrors of genocide? Was it just a general reluctance to face appalling realities? No, the blinkers were in their ideological prejudices. Their ideologies inhibited them, stopped them from recognising the horrors, prevented a humane concern with the skeletal figures who could only remind one painfully of the haggard KZ-tilts and Zeks of the Nazi and Soviet concentration camps.
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What a miserable irony of closed minds joined to hardened hearts—that those who were so often branded "bleeding hearts" were so cold-bloodedly inclined to disregard the crimes of genocide.

All the post hoc explanations and rationalisations cannot disguise this failure in the supreme test of professed humanitarianism. The elementary rules of intellectual hygiene require that this should be remembered in the 1980s.

A final word about the pitfalls of myths and horrors in our day. In his Column (ENCOUNTER, October 1979) R wrote: "Dr Kissinger can murder a few million Cambodians on the Machiavellian principle that the end justifies the means..."

I was never very well disposed to Dr Kissinger's policies, but I find this allegation monstrosous. It is of the type which naturally finds its way to the New Statesman rather than ENCOUNTER. It echoes, of course, William Shawcross who in Sideshow attributes moral responsibility for the genocide in Cambodia under 'Pol Pot to Dr Kissinger. Shawcross' emotions about Cambodia are understandable, but his moral judgment is confused. His is a familiar kind of reasoning which manages to shift the blame for the crimes of totalitarian regimes on to their victims or their opponents. It was not surprising that in the USA (where it appeared first) his book was eagerly seized by the ideological orphans of the Viet Nam war. As I have said above, it was a time when some of them began having second thoughts about their "Vietnik" expectations and their own role during this war.

Blunt Aside

W hat are the reasons for the duration in the links of the representatives of what Allais-Cooke called "the generation on trial"—variously referred to as "doubtsbink", "controlled schizophrenia", treasonable clerics, or "the climate of treason"—surely the rationalisation offered by Anthony Blunt is the most unconvincing. When he was busy spying for Stalin at the time of the Soviet pact with Hitler, he also published a book on Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450-1500. In the Introduction (dated 1940), he thanked "Mr. Guy Burgess [for the stimulus of constant discussion and suggestions on all the more basic points at issue]." For a scholar with a reputation for subtlety, his interpretation of the period is based on black-and-white Marxian simplifications:

"By about 1530 the attempts of the Papacy to form a powerful secular State in Italy had failed... Instead of a sense of security men felt the general disturbance of events, which seemed to threaten the existence of the Catholic Church and, with it, of the whole Italian society... After 1530 the Papacy was still the most powerful single State in Italy, but it was a changed Papacy... [It] moved from a leading place among the progressive States of Italy to one of reaction."

One can perhaps detect here, retrospectively, some thoughts of a more contemporary relevance. But, whatever the case, after Blunt's unmasking, a surprising new rationalisation has emerged from the implied aesthetio-historical parallels. As The Sunday Times (18 November) reported, Professor Blunt, who was until recently the official art adviser to the Queen, said to a friend:

"The Florentine Army was fighting the Papal Army and Benvenuto Cellini was on the Florentine side. During a ball in the battle a voice came from the Papal lines: 'Benvenuto, the Pope wants you to work for him.' Cellini threw away his weapons, went over to the Papal Army and became a silversmith for the Pope. When he had finished his work, he returned to Florence where he was received with honour and rejoicing because he was a great artist."

The Marxian dialectic is a marvellous instrument. As every leftish schoolboy knows, the British bourgeoisie was the first very progressive—it started the Industrial Revolution, and all that—but then it became very reactionary. It tried to preserve a powerful state but it failed: and "men felt the general disturbance of events." Then Blunt heard the voice from what he considered the "progressive" side: "Anthony, Stalin wants you to work for him." So he became the secret silversmith for the Vein in the Kremlin.

But the dramaturgy was confused, and the analogies wild. Soon Blunt was left with a threadbare rationalisation. Did he really expect the turncoat prodigal son also to be greeted with 'honour and rejoicing' because, after all, he was a great artist? A host of letter-writers to The Times—one of his own London students and colleagues—rushed into print in his defence to make the same point: art is long and reason's only for a season...
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Joan Baez and Jane Fonda were locked in fierce polemic about the behaviour of Hanoi after the "liberation," and so were their "progressive" followers. They had been neither impressed nor distressed by earlier Viet Cong atrocities. After all, terrible things do happen during a war (such as the cold-blooded Hue murders—but there were no "excuses" for "My Lai"). Yet now, the sheer size of the horror—the millions liquidated in Communist Cambodia, the fleeing mass of Vietnamese "boat people"—has made them distinctly uneasy. Even Noam Chomsky, as his letter in the same issue of ENCOUNTER testifies, finds it necessary to deconstruct his own position on the matter.7 His comment about the exact number of the victims of genocide in Cambodia reminds one of the Nazi apologists, like Rassinier, who argue that Hitler killed "only" 1.2 million Jews, not 6 million.

For this type of mentality Shawcross' book was a godsend. It was enthusiastically received in the USA by the "liberal" Nation, and excerpts from it were reproduced in our own New Statesman. It provided a Freudian "defence mechanism" for the troubled simplicities on the Left. The blame for the whole Cambodian nightmare could now be put where it belonged: on Dr Kissinger! He was presented as a butchir, with axe and hands dripping with blood (in his best Prada or Krookostil style) on the cover cartoon of the New Statesman. After that, all good and true progressives had their doubts assuaged—as if the specific wartime US bombings of the "Ho Chi Minh trail" were somehow part-and-parcel of a Communist régime's peace-time genocidal purge of its own population—and they could now proceed on their usual ideological course with lily-white consciences.

Such scapegoating and such reversals are not exactly new. In answer to Mr James Fenton who had argued in the New Statesman of 6 January 1978 that "it was America that set the process going in Cambodia," a writer in ENCOUNTER (May 1978), put the matter forcefully:

"So the Americans are guilty! And who is guilty of the Gulag Archipelago? Presumably Winston Churchill and the Allied intervention that set the process going. And who was guilty of the Hitlerian Holocaust? Presumably the vindictive Men of Versailles with their harsh anti-German peace that set the process going. And who is guilty of Idi Amin's massacres in East Africa? Who but the white British Imperialists, the men of the Black Hole of Calcutta and Amritsar and the Hola camps who 'set the process going.'"

How 'crass' to think, with typical anti-communist McCarthyite hysteria, that the Communists are, truly and deeply down, really responsible for the inhumaneitites committed! How deceptively 'attractive' it is to think that the politicians who commit a specific crime are not the actual criminals!"

In a long letter to The Economist (8 September 1979), in his TV talk with David Frost, and in his Memoirs, Dr Kissinger tried to refine this type of reasoning, in which William Shawcross confounds front-line military action with non-combative atrocities, and attributes the latter to the former. But will such protestations stop the slurs? "Progressive" rationalisations give one the best idea of infinity. The making of ideological myths is, alas, endless.

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7In the "Introduction" to his interview with Chomsky (Men of Ideas, BBC Publications, 1979, p.204), Bryan Magee wrote:

"Noam Chomsky has made two international reputations in apparently unrelated fields. The widest is as a theorist of linguistic competence in the Vietnam war. The deepest is as a Professor of Linguistics who, before he was 40 years old, had transformed the nature of his subject."

Whether his "wider reputation" will survive him is doubtful.

Even since the genocide in Cambodia, he has tried hard to refuse to acknowledge the facts and to minimize the extent of their horror in a series of polemics with François Ponchaud, Jean Lacouture, and Dennis Dunham. I find something indecent in somebody whose own people have been a target of genocide belittling the tragedy of others who have undergone it too. He makes heavy weather of "scholarship" and "scientific doubt" about the number of victims of the Pol Pot régime; but as Jean Lacouture pointed out in Le Nouvel Observateur (20 November 1978):

"Is it necessary in order to condemn Nazism to prove that it has killed millions (1945) or tens of thousands (1933)?... Must Chomsky know about one concentration camp or a hundred camps in order to denounce Stalinism?"

Chomsky's sophistries are increasingly shrill and incomprehensible. He now claims that his writings "contain harsh criticisms of Marxist-Leninist ideology and practice" (International Affairs, October 1979, p.593). But here is what he said in an interview which he gave to the New Left Review (September-October 1969):

"It would be a grotesque error to say that Stalin was simply the realization of Leninist principles... There are different strands in Lenin's theories. On the one hand, there is State and Revolution, which is basically fine, and on the other hand, there is effective disbanding of the Soviets, there is Kronstadt and the suppression of the Workers' Opposition, which was under Lenin's sign at least."

The "harsh criticism of Marxist-Leninist ideology and practice" happened to be a naive fundamentalist dissent from a few aspects of Leninism. This is hardly what his readers might infer from his letter to International Affairs. They may also be less than clear about his real position on the Cambodian genocide.

All in all, the "Empire of linguistics": the author of Language and Responsibility, converts linguistic energy into a mass of caustic irresponsibilities.