

Escalope de Veau With a Side-Order of Marx

By ARAM BAKSHIAN JR.

Unfortunately for French intellectuals, they have a way with words. Their eloquence often overreaches their judgment and huris them headlong in pursuit of dangerous or unseemly fads and philosophies. The Gallic tongue, with its academic symmetry and precision, is all too admirably suited to the splitting of metaphysical hairs, the drawing of frivolous distinctions and the construction of elaborate Potemkin Villages of the mind.

Thus the Marquis de Sade used to expound with clarity and sweet reasonableness on the virtues of infanticide, bestiality and assorted lesser abominations. Charles de Gaulle, despite his brilliance, talked himself into an ardent love affair with the long-cold corpse of French *grandeur*. And Jean-Paul Sartre and a legion of lesser French artists and thinkers continue to pay elegant but irrational homage to a Marxist vision, dismissing as "deviationist" the horrors and repression that have followed every real-life application of it.

In France, it took the humiliating and at times ridiculous failure of the student rebellion of 1968 to awaken a substantial number of French intellectuals—especially young ones who had actually gone to the barricades at the risk of bruised shins and egos.

The failure of proletarian workers to rally to the student cause, and the fact that the official French Communist Party found it expedient to side with the cops rather than the rioters, led to considerable youthful disillusionment on the left. And the subsequent appearance of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's devastating "Gulag Archipelago" turned the mood for many from apathetic disillusionment to one of engaged anti-communism and rejection of the whole revolutionary ethos.

"Apply Marxism in any country you want," concludes young ex-leftist Bernard-Henri Levy in "Barbarism With a Human Face," "you will always find Gulag in the end . . . the Gulag is not a blunder or an accident, not a simple wound or aftereffect of Stalinism; but the necessary corollary of a socialism which can only actualize homogeneity by driving the forces of heterogeneity back to its fringes, which can aim for the universal only by confining its rebels, its irreducible individualists, in the outer darkness of a nonsociety. . . . No socialism without camps, *no classless society without its terrorist truth.*" ("Barbarism

With a Human Face," by Bernard-Henri Levy (Harper & Row, 210 pages, \$10.)

At 33, Levy is perhaps the best known of France's "New Philosophers," the rising generation of apostates from the left who, if they have not yet come up with a cohesive world view of their own, have at least spoken out on the fallacies of Marxism's pseudo-scientific approach to social, economic and political questions. Levy's book, although weighed down with too many pages of fustian and philosophical posturing, is still an eloquent indictment of the European left and has enjoyed considerable success on the continent, selling 100,000 copies in France alone. Now it is available here in an excellent English translation by George Holloch.

Levy and his fellow (non)believers are also the subject of an upcoming public television documentary this Thursday evening, "Solzhenitsyn's Children . . . Are Making A Lot Of Noise in Paris," (9 p.m. EST, consult listings for local time variations). It is worth watching for its subject matter, though not for the sloppy writing and editing of Australian filmmaker Michael Rubbo, who also needlessly injects himself as a smug, clumsy on-camera presence.

Too many of the film's 60 minutes are spent following Mr. Rubbo as he stumbles about the Left Bank under the tutelage of leftist Canadian journalist Bernard Robitaille who, to his credit, treats his host with thinly veiled contempt and makes no bones about his hostility to the anti-Marxist "New Philosophers" the program is supposed to be about.

There are even a few poignant moments, notably in the interview of a broken-down former Communist functionary from Czechoslovakia who, despite having been a show-trial victim during one of Stalin's purges, still pathetically clings to his belief in Marxism. More positive is the segment with the Broyelles, a husband and wife writing team who, after waxing enthusiastic about Maoism, spent a disillusioning two years in China and then had the courage and integrity to tell the truth in print, thereby helping to de-mythify Chairman Mao, until recently a household god in many radical Parisian salons.

For comic relief there is Daniel Anselme, another former radical leader who, with his blubbery cheeks, tousled hair and 19th Century mustache, bears an eerie resemblance to Honore de Balzac. Anselme agrees to meet Rubbo and Robitaille and even invites them to share a toothsome es-

calope de veau prepared by his own hand but, quickly sensing his guests' ineptitude as documentarists, he refuses to discuss politics with them. There are other interesting though truncated interviews ending with an impressive encounter with Bernard-Henri Levy himself. Levy quickly overwhelms his interrogators with a tour de force refutation of applied Marxism. Exit Messieurs Rubbo and Robitaille in disarray, outgunned both morally and intellectually.

"Solzhenitsyn's Children" is not a first-rate documentary. But as a treatment of the rising anti-Marxist tide among young European intellectuals, it is worth watching in the absence of anything better on the subject. As for Bernard-Henri Levy and the rest of France's "New Philosophers," while it may have taken them longer than it should have, they seem to have learned a valuable lesson—the impossibility of achieving utopia through revolutionary politics.

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