

Political commitment and us

Nick Beech

But with respect and service I also promise this: a politics that treads a little lighter on all of our lives. Because that's the thing about populism, or nationalism, any politics fuelled by division. It needs your full attention. It needs you constantly focusing on this week's common enemy. And that's exhausting, isn't it?

Keir Starmer, New Year Speech, 4 January 2024

To take office in the name of structural change and reform without any accompanying consciousness and a popular mandate is to become the prisoner of the system.

Stuart Hall, 'Political Commitment', 1966

Stuart Hall's essay 'Political Commitment' was originally presented as a paper at the Seventh Downside Symposium, on 'The Committed Church', in April 1965. The event was held in the Chancellor's Hall at the University of Birmingham, the first organised by the 'London committee' which included, among others, Adrian Cunningham, Terry Eagleton, Brian Wicker, Laurence Bright OP and Simon Clements. The symposium had its origin at Downside Abbey, Somerset where, from 1952, meetings had been held between lay, clerical and monastic Roman Catholics concerned with expanding Christian intellectual life, education and teaching. These meetings and their associated symposia were deeply moral, theologically inquisitive, and (to use anachronistic terms) interdisciplinary and progressive. All of this was evident in the seventh symposium, when papers discussed family structures and community formation and change; the social consequences of New Towns, mass media, mass education and changes in industrial labour; the experience of migrants racialised as 'black'; and youth delinquency.

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Alongside theologians, most speakers spoke from humanistic disciplines and the social sciences. Why was Stuart Hall speaking there, and why was he speaking about the Labour Party?

As a group, the London committee were more open to direct engagement with socialist and Marxist intellectual traditions, and countered the irenic programme of Downside with polemical argumentation. They were close to the New Left in two important respects: on the one hand, affinity with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and on the other hand a commitment to philosophical enquiry through serious moral engagement with literature.¹ As a leading intellectual figure of the New Left, who had made significant contributions to CND throughout the early 1960s, Stuart Hall was therefore an unsurprising choice of speaker. Hall had joined Richard Hoggart at the University of Birmingham, founding the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies only six months earlier, in the summer of 1964, and was intent on continuing to expand the field of the political beyond the narrow confines of party-political dogma and doxa.

The critical target of the symposium was the ‘position of uncommitted liberalism’, as the default position of English Christians.² In this it represents a broader critical impulse, responding to transformations taking place in Britain in the mid-1960s. The social and cultural changes registered at the symposium would soon cohere in new social formations with political demands of their own - though these would not be widely recognised until ‘1968’. Teaching and research in the disciplines of the social sciences and humanities were also rapidly expanding in this period, and as a result old paradigms and sureties were put under immense pressure.³

The editors of the symposium publication, Bright and Clements, identified Hall’s paper as providing a keynote for the symposium - despite the fact that Hall makes no mention of the Church, nor the relationship of the sacred to the secular - because, though his target throughout is the institution of the Labour Party and the consequences of Labourism, he clarifies the problems created when social institutions are conceptualised and practised as discrete, functional, serialised and apolitical organisations. Hall also argues that, before addressing the meaning of political commitment, a broader, deeper understanding of political consciousness is needed, as that emerges within and relates to the cultural sensibility of a given time. This connection of a narrow set of questions (whether of Church or state) to a wider

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context and framing is typical of Hall's analytical approach.

Reading political commitment today: is history repeating itself?

Reading that analysis today is an uncanny experience - Hall's criticisms of Wilson's government in 1965 seem to be precisely targeted at Keir Starmer sixty years later. Starmer has often sought just that comparison; however, the portrait of Wilson Hall draws is distinctly unflattering. The myopic commitment to undefined economic growth, to be achieved through abstract 'modernisation' or 'technology'. The avoidance and denial of deep social and political conflicts. The campaign language of 'radical change' immediately abandoned in favour of service to the status quo. The identification of the Labour Party not with socialism versus capitalism, but with 'service' and 'competence' versus mismanagement and venality. The serialising of interests in place of a recognition of conflict. The failure to engage in political consciousness raising when out of power (particularly in relation to the question of immigration), resulting in a collapse into reactionary policy making when in power. The dire consequences of replacing politics with psephology.

Even Hall's forewarning to the wider New Left prior to Wilson's election as leader of the Labour Party - Hall dubbed Wilson 'Mr-Facing-Both-Ways' - seems designed for our contemporary master of the U-Turn.⁴ Starmer presented himself as a continuity candidate following the fall of Jeremy Corbyn - the infamous 'pledges' to maintain the core programme of the Corbynite manifesto during his leadership campaign - and has gone on to steadfastly and ruthlessly pursue a rightward course, burning out all but the weakest elements of even the 'soft' left.

But we must be as careful in drawing parallels in the negative as Starmer should be in attempting parallels in the positive. Though both Wilson and Starmer presented themselves as 'from the left' of the party, only compromising to the right in power, the former was moored within social-democratic politics and debate, and used his considerable political talents to 'square the compromise', securing authority within the movement, party and cabinet with rhetorical power, canny balancing of interests, and a complex of allegiances. Starmer's political talents are too hidden, his political history too shallow, and his reliance on authoritarian and bureaucratic control too great for any comparison of personality to stick. Wilson had both an oratorical and a televisual charisma, appearing to draw the lens (and viewer) to himself, comfortably occupying the centre of the screen (and our attention).

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Starmer has the, possibly far more natural quality, of sounding banal, and sliding off the frame and out of view. Where Wilson sought to construct a future oriented and progressive narrative about his administration, by contrast, every compromise, every 'U-turn', every charge of hypocrisy is defended by Starmer on the grounds of pragmatic realism - 'the grown-ups are in charge' (and they are freaking out), he 'does not dream' (and he's having a nightmare), he reads no books (and it shows).

On the other hand, the contemporary reader of 'Political commitment' is also struck by Hall's account of the political sensibilities of the 1960s. Hall acknowledges the palpable sense of apathy, disillusionment and exhaustion amongst members of the left. He recognises the significance, but also the limits, of the two political movements of which he had been a part - the New Left (erupting in the wake of 1956, Suez, Hungary and Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech'), and CND. 'Political commitment' contains critical reflections on the New Left, and presents deep reservations about its efficacy.

For those who have been involved in, or found themselves in the waves of, any number of political, social, environmental, anti-colonial and peace movement in the past two decades, and who have experienced the vicious, rapid and violent counters from the right ... well it all seems as if history is repeating itself (and no farce this time either). Are we not in a similar period as the mid-1960s? The emergent politics of climate catastrophe, #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, trans-rights, Gazan solidarity, in all their febrile contradictions, crushed, dissipated and in search of political programme and purchase?

But again, the contrast between now and then are as sharp as the apparent similarities. The New Left project was a direct assault on the 'deep freeze' of cold-war politics - a means to open a fissure, a gap, some kind of space between the Scylla and Charybdis of reformism and revolutionary vanguardism, and for a radical politics that demanded material economic and political change, and a moral realignment. As Hall would say, in a retrospective account of the 1950s:

The space where Stalinism ends and reformism begins. There is a space there. [It has] a very loose and ambiguous and constantly shifting boundary. And yet I think in some ways it's really quite precise. I think you all know exactly what I mean. Those people who have never been tempted to really subscribe to the hard doctrines of the Stalinist left, and who are persuaded that there must be some other

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form of socialism other than that represented by social democracy, are instinctive members of the new left, whether you've ever paid up a subscription or not.⁵

It cannot be said that we are, today, in a period of ideological 'deep freeze' - far from it. The 'neoliberal revolution' may still be playing itself out, but its grip on political discourse is exhausted. Starmer's government may, indeed, remain locked in the imagination-free 'there is no alternative', but that stance is so lacking in any moral suasion that the wider Labour Party (PLP, unions, CLPs and membership) is open to every kind of debate, revision and contestation imaginable.

At the same time, there simply is no political project today that shares the peculiar features of Stalinism in the 1950s. Even if one recognises the contemporary proliferation of Stalinist and Maoist avatars as continuous with the communist parties of the mid-twentieth century (and I don't think anyone seriously does); even if one acknowledged the tiny fractions of devout Marxist-Leninists - who do continue to contribute to historical materialist forums - and afforded them an influence magnitudes above their actual hold; one is still left with the stark reality that they are *not a determinate of the left's political discourse or imagination*. Certainly not in the way that the communism of the CPGB, or their principle antagonists, the Fourth International, dominated the political imagination of the left in the 1950s and 1960s. This does not mean that *economism* and *voluntarism* of various kinds are not ever-present in the politics of the left. It does not mean that the PRC and CCP do not act as a 'strange attractor' within the imaginations of those seeking 'something and anything' to offer optimism. But to suggest that these are organised into any kind of party forms is to engage in the same construction of 'spectres' as is indulged by the radical right and its conspiracies of 'cultural marxism'.

The experience of most who attend and contribute to progressive political projects is not of the frozen, but of the fissile. Existential threat is no longer on the horizon: it is present - climate catastrophe, genocide, ethno-nationalism, gender erasure. With these existential threats come political projects that are immediate, sharply delineated, vigorous. At the same time, though the threats are real and present, they have differential effects: we do not sink at the same pace, the wall is never universal, doors lock out some and not others. And though there is a widespread sense (reinforced by a discourse of 'freedom of speech') that people are being silenced for not holding 'the right views', it remains surprising just how many

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views are indeed held and freely expressed. Far from feeling locked in (or locked out) of monolithic discursive space, one feels pushed and pulled through *many* fragmented discursive spaces, often simultaneously.

Nevertheless, if the 'surface' project of the New Left - to break apart consolidated socialist blocks - is far from what is required today, its 'deeper' project - to hold a space in which a *shared, solidaristic* and *transformative* political programme might emerge - is needed more than ever. It may not be necessary to 'break apart' in order to form a shared space, but rather to 'hold together' to form a shared space: but shared space all the same. As a result, the critical reflection in a period of political defeat that Hall presents in 'Political commitment' remains valuable - especially for those who have sought, and continue to seek, a strategy that does not entirely abandon the Labour Party to its Labourism.

Hall recognised the substantial defeats suffered by CND and the New Left (how could he not? Many of those defeats were deeply personal). Those within the campaign who had promoted the strategy of achieving unilateral disarmament through the Labour Party appeared at first to have been vindicated when the policy was adopted at the Labour conference in 1960. But this was a chimerical success. Hugh Gaitskell (who had held on to his leadership of the party, despite a heavy election defeat in 1959) was fiercely opposed to unilateralism, and Gaitskell's challenger, Harold Wilson, was openly equivocal - having adopted the policy because he felt 'bound by conference', not out of any personal conviction (quite the opposite). The policy was soon reversed.

CND continued to pursue a range of strategies in its attempt to win over the labour movement - including through fielding candidates in by-elections, attempting co-operation with the Tribune group of Labour MPs, and using public pressure to sway trade union members. However, by the time of the general election of 1964, it had lost any power to affect Labour Party policy. Peggy Duff recalled Hall speaking at 'a rather dreary pre-election CND meeting at St Pancras Town Hall', where he described the general election as 'a choice between black and dark grey'.⁶

Despite those immediate political defeats, Hall sought to validate what had been achieved: CND had confronted a pressing, immediate and existential threat (the bomb), which within the political climate of the 1950s and 1960s had appeared to be 'fixed': disarmament had been widely treated with disdain, as unrealistic, unwanted. At the same time, geopolitical conflict continued to generate crises that

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could destroy the conditions for human, indeed all, life on Earth. The specific intellectual contribution of the New Left (and Hall in particular) was to demonstrate the relationship of the central issue of CND - 'ban the bomb' - to a wider set of political problems - the geo-politics of the Cold War, British late imperialism and the structure of the British state; and to a deeper analysis of the British economy.

At the same time, the New Left sought to show how the CND might *navigate* those deeper, broader conditions without surrendering entirely: making 'hope possible' as Raymond Williams would put it; 'pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will' as Hall would say, drawing on Antonio Gramsci (drawing on Romain Rolland).

'Moment' and 'conjuncture'

And what of Antonio Gramsci? Readers familiar with Hall's later political writing, and particularly his later political theorising, will be struck by his reliance on the classical Marxist concept of 'false consciousness'; and by the tendency towards a 'base and superstructure' model of crisis formation. 'Political commitment' appears predicated on an analysis of British industrial decline, geopolitical and economic subordination, and a changing composition of the working class (including the emergence of a professional middle class) - a period of 'transition', as Hall puts it, in which the contradictions manifest a 'false consciousness' (myths of 'affluence, equality, classlessness'). In that formulation, one only awaits the 'moment' of political or external 'stress' that can heighten the contradictions and so dissolve the myths. And in the essay such 'moments' are identified - above all '1956' - in which a 'not-false' consciousness appears.

Yet the reader is also struck by a more sophisticated analytic, a Gramscian political intervention *sans* Gramsci: drawing on the internal debates of the New Left (particularly between Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn on the one side, and E.P. Thompson on the other), Hall mobilises some of the concepts of humanist and existential Marxism that were circulating at that time, in order to radically expand the domain of the 'political' - an expansion into culture, culture as that which *constitutes* political subjectivities.⁷

He also sets out, in the teeth of defeat, a programme and strategy for political research and organising ('theory and praxis'), and offers an advanced appreciation of the analytical and strategic problem:

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We are dealing not with a set of abstract economic relations but with a whole social and cultural system. And the only political strategy which has the least hope of transforming such a system is that which makes a totalising confrontation with its every feature and part. (insert page re)

We know that in the summer of 1965 Hall had met with Lidia Curti, who arrived from the University 'Orientale', Naples, carrying with her the recently published volume of Gramsci's 'letters from prison'.⁸ We know, too, that he was engaged, with Richard Hoggart and the students and visiting Research Fellows of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), in a voracious programme of study, engaging a vast range of anthropological, linguistic and semiological, psychological and sociological literatures. We know, then, that the political research programme he describes in the essay was not speculative: it was happening, under the sign of 'cultural studies'.

That research included an engagement with other theorists then grappling with the inadequacy of the base-superstructure model, and the ideas associated with historicism, mostly notably through a confrontation with the work of Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas.⁹ Much hinged on Althusser's mobilisation of the conception (taken from Gaston Bachelard) of scientific thought being non-continuous/non-developmental, achieved through 'epistemological breaks', whereby a radical 'cut' with previous structures of thought are evident - resulting in a tortuous reconstruction of Marx and Engels's works, attempting to sift out the 'early' Marx (still historicist, still Hegelian), and 'late' Marx (structural, scientific). Building on Althusser's critique of the 'historicism' of Gramsci, Poulantzas offered a sharp, clarifying critique of the concept of the 'moment' and a structuralist reconstruction of Gramsci's concept of the 'conjuncture'.¹⁰ In his hard structuralist account, the 'moment' is identified as a Hegelian concept - one saturated with idealist, linear, 'totality': 'a type of simple and circular totality, composed of equivalent elements ... a linear type of historicity, whose evolution is here and now contained in the origin of the concept'.¹¹ Everything becomes political, politics is the class struggle, the class struggle is the motor of history, history is politics. Though Poulantzas acknowledged his indebtedness to Gramsci, and acknowledged the distance travelled by Gramsci from either the 'young Marx', or from Györgyi Lukács's 'class consciousness', he was nevertheless led by the blunt instrument of the Althusserian 'break', and charged Gramsci with 'historicism'. Hall himself, as evident in his reading of Marx's 1857

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Introduction, appears to have been much more comfortable with an historical epistemology (if not with historicism).¹² Nevertheless, following his 'wrestling with the angels' of structuralist Marxism, Hall did drop the terminology of praxis, 'moment' and 'totality' that he had embraced in the mid-1960s. But was Hall's *terminological* shift not simply a strategic one? Hall's use of 'moment' was already pregnant with what would later become 'conjuncture'. Compare Poulantzas on 'conjuncture' with Hall on the 'moment':

What is the specificity of political practice ...? Its *specific object* is the 'present moment' (as Lenin said), i.e. the *nodal point where the contradictions* of the various levels of a formation *are condensed* in the complex relations governed by over-determination and by their dislocation and uneven development. This present moment is therefore a *conjuncture*, the strategic point where the various contradictions fuse in so far as they reflect the articulation specifying a structure in dominance ...¹³

I have tried to show that the [neo-capitalist] system has intellectual, cultural, technical and ideological 'sub-systems', as well as economic and social and organisational ones, and that it is the *connexion of these parts, rather than the predominance of any determining one*, which has displaced and emasculated progressive developments in the post-war period.¹⁴

Hall's engagement with Althusser, Poulantzas and Gramsci did not result in a 'falling in' on one side or another of the humanist/structuralist debate: he identified gains and losses throughout, though I think it obvious that he remained - if not an historicist, certainly within an historical epistemology. The result of Hall's research with colleagues at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was a profound transformation of the political analytic, and over the coming decade, distinct formulations of concepts of 'ideology', 'conjuncture' and 'articulation'. Those concepts continued to be redefined, rethought, their structure and mobilisation transformed, according to the demands of later conjunctures - the crises of the 1970s, the emergence of the new right and Thatcherism, the neoliberal revolution, globalisation. So, as much as 'Political Commitment' *will* excite the reader to exclaim 'Yes! Yes! And the Labour Party is *still making the same mistake now!* This all still rings true!', we must hope that it also energises the reader to consider what *different* political programme of theory and praxis is necessary

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today, what a *different* concept of ‘moment’ or ‘conjuncture’ might be forged that is adequate to the present.

The New Left and Labour in the later 1960s

Hall delivered his paper on political commitment half-way through Wilson’s first government (October 1964 to March 1966). It can be partly understood as a thinking through of what theory and praxis was necessary for understanding the specific moment within that context.

In another reminder that analogies across time cannot hold - unlike in 2024, in 1964 Labour had been elected with a tiny majority (just 4 seats). But when Wilson called another general election for March 1966, he too secured a landslide (a 96-seat majority). Crucially, both the first slender and second landslide majorities were secured by a solid voting base, in a political landscape still dominated by two main parties. Labour won the election with a high turn-out (77 per cent of eligible voters), against a vigorous Tory voting block (43 per cent of the popular vote). Combined, the Tory and Labour vote share in 1964 was 87.5 per cent. Compare that with 2024: lower turn-out (60 per cent of eligible voters), the Tories collapsing to 24 per cent, the combined Labour/Tory vote 57.4 per cent. Where 1964 was exemplary of a two-party, ‘nation-wide’ (UK) contest, 2024 represents a (possibly final) fragmentation: Labour’s ‘loveless landslide’ marked the nadir of both of the dominant parties of the twentieth century, and marks the emergence of a fractured polity and nation - fulfilling Tom Nairn’s prediction.¹⁵

In both the first and second of Wilson’s Labour governments, the British economy experienced a succession of crises, the result of international market pressures and anaemic response to economic policy and planning (here we *are* returned to analogous territory). By the summer of 1966, Hall had agreed, with George Clark, Sean Gervasi and Michael Rustin, to make an attempt to renew the British New Left - calling in the first instance on a short-list of leading intellectual figures (including Malcolm Caldwell, Terry Eagleton, Alasdair MacIntyre, Ralph Miliband, John Rex, John Saville, Alan Sillitoe, E.P. Thompson, John Westergaard, Raymond Williams, Peter Worsley and Iris Murdoch).¹⁶ These were to identify and disseminate to an even wider group, to contribute to a ‘programme of activities’ in the autumn, beginning with a planning conference on the 10 September. In the end, this project resulted in the brief resurgence of the New Left project, the

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publication of the 'May Day Manifesto' - in 1967 and then in revised form in 1968 - and subsequently the 'May Day Manifesto Bulletin' (which began to register the new social movements - particularly the Women's Liberation Movement).¹⁷

The May Day Manifesto forum and programme was both more concrete in its criticisms of the Labour government and less ambitious than Hall's conception of the cultural studies project. The analysis was informed by Hall's argument as set out in 'Political commitment'. An early first draft outline of the Manifesto suggests that Hall contributed to the original opening sections on the 'Condition of Britain' and 'Modernism and Socialism'.¹⁸ But the guiding premise of the Manifesto was to critique the succession of economic, social and political compromises of the Wilson administration, as products of 'Britain's role in the Anglo-American alliance ... East of Suez [and in] Vietnam'.¹⁹ As well as analysis, the Manifesto set out distinct policy positions for a social-democratic party.

Invariably, such a programmatic statement lacks the deeper, 'full-spectrum' cultural ambition that Hall was seeking. *That* goal, as Hall put it in a memo to students at the Centre as late as 1971, was to reconstitute social consciousness itself, through:

critical intellectual work, which strikes to the foundations of our prevailing modes of knowledge and understanding, which roots itself in the promise and expectation of social change, and which exposes to ruthless examination the hidden sources of alienation and mystification.²⁰

This was to be achieved through *collective* (theoretical and programmatic) praxis - the only means by which the assumptions, unconscious practices and results of 'liberal-individualism' could be challenged:

not the subordination to a hierarchy, bureaucracy, apparatchik, central committee etc, but ... the free and self-critical undertaking of the discipline of collective work.²¹

The target, then, was not political or economic policy, but the very condition of *being in the world*, against which, as Hall would remark in 1968, any given policy choice was 'small beer'.

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The meaning of political commitment for Hall

I want to end this introduction with a brief note on the central purpose of the original essay - which is, after all, to consider the meaning of political *commitment*. Hall goes to some lengths to 'duck' that question. Or, more accurately, to address the question from the side. It's clear that if the political theory Hall proposes in the essay is concrete, and in-hand, the political strategy and programme (praxis) remains speculative, or only lightly sketched. Following his wider exploration of the political context of the times, he argues:

It is now possible to speak directly of political commitment. The commitment of the socialist in this period is to the making of socialist consciousness, rather than the accession to political power. The weakness of the Labour government in office is a clear demonstration that the 'practical, pragmatic imperatives' which have dominated official party thinking and strategy, in both the Gaitskell and Wilson eras, were the wrong priorities. (insert p no)

The tasks Hall sees as necessary for the politically committed begin with an understanding of the current moment from the standpoint of socialist consciousness.

Drawing on the experience of the New Left he identifies a form of commitment that seeks to build the grounds for a 'house of theory';²² he saw CND, on the other hand, as offering the grounds for political praxis:

[CND] threw up, in a maelstrom of conflicting ideas and policies, some crucial lessons for us in terms of the character of movements of dissent, especially in the area of democratic participation, and of the connexions between war, morality and social change in the modern world.

In both cases - whether New Left or CND, theory or praxis - political commitment is afforded to the politics of popular social formation. Hall's commitment remained, to the end of his life, a commitment to a resolutely democratic, emergent and *non-vanguardist* politics. As he put it in an interview with David Scott in the mid-1990s:

For a much wider kind of frontierless exchange and dialogue ... to reconstitute a public sphere, which was, after all, insofar as it existed, the product of a very specific set of historical and political

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circumstances. And was very narrow. And I think that a very different public sphere which is less grounded in a traditional conception of the disciplines and the professions and the institutions; which is more open to a kind of porous notion of civil society, more open to the organic intellectual function; which is responsive to a kind of Lloyd Best call for nondisciplinary, extradisciplinary thinking ... to constitute a new space of dialogue in which, of course, people would harangue one another till the cows come home.²³

It is equally clear that the 'parallelism' of the early New Left - the strategy of 'one foot in, one foot out' in relation to the Labour Party - constituted, for Hall, a calculated *wager*.²⁴ As the only viable social-democratic electoral vehicle, Hall treated the Labour Party as a terrain of struggle: whether one was 'inside' (as a member), or outside (as an interlocutor) was contingent on the needs of the wider social movement.

Everyone will be forced, in the coming months, to work their dreary abacus, aware that the choice before them may be very much blacker, and very much darker grey, than the options described by Hall in St Pancras in 1964. For the first time in a century, the question of whether the Labour Party is the principle electoral vehicle for social democracy in Britain, is *real*. The collapse of the two parties within a first-past-the-post electoral system makes everyone's wager riskier. The rise of a radical rightist project in the shape of Reform - and the terrible outcomes of electoral politics in the United States - means any local calculation is made under extraordinary pressure. Nevertheless, our commitment must remain - no matter how fragmentary, ephemeral, vulnerable, if not impossible - with the praxis of the emergent social formations, in all their contradictions (and maelstrom).

Nick Beech is Associate Professor in the School of Social Policy and Society, University of Birmingham, and Research Lead on the Stuart Hall Archive Project.

Notes

1. The New Left, which formed in the late 1950s, was attracted to CND (founded in 1957) because they saw it as a movement of a new kind - and one that could not be understood in terms of old left positions. The case for unilateral disarmament made by the New Left - and by Hall in particular - had always been part of a wider

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critique of British foreign policy, international relations, imperialism and processes of decolonisation.

2. Lawrence Bright and Simon Clements, Introduction, in Lawrence Bright and Simon Clements (eds), *The Committed Church*, Darton Longman and Todd, 1966, pxii.

3. Indicative of the period - J.H. Plumb (ed), *Crisis in the Humanities*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1964; Raymond Williams, *Britain in the Sixties: Communications*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1962. Providing a retrospective view, see Stuart Hall, 'The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis of the Humanities', *October*, Vol 53, Summer 1990, pp11-23.

4. Stuart Hall, 'The "First" New Left: Life and times (1990)', in Stuart Hall, *Selected Political Writings: The Great Moving Right Show and Other Essays*, edited by Sally Davison, David Featherstone, Michael Rustin and Bill Schwarz, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 2017, pp117-41 (p132).

5. Stuart Hall, 'London History Workshop Seminar', 1985, audio-cassette x 3, Cassette 1, Side A, 00:04:18-00:05:30, University of Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library (CRL), 'Stuart Hall Papers', US121.

6. Peggy Duff, *Left, Left, Left: A personal account of six protest campaigns, 1945-1965*, Nottingham, Spokesman Books, 2019, p197.

7. See, Perry Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis', *New Left Review*, I, No 23 (Jan/Feb 1964), pp26-53; Tom Nairn, 'The Nature of the Labour Party (Part 1)', *New Left Review*, I, No 27 (Sep/Oct 1964), pp38-65; Tom Nairn, 'The Nature of the Labour Party (Part 2)', *New Left Review*, I, No 28 (Nov/Dec 1964), pp33-62; and, E.P. Thompson, 'Peculiarities of the English', *Socialist Register*, Vol 2, 1965, pp311-62. In this period Hall was closely following the readings of Jean-Paul Sartre presented by David Cooper and R.D. Laing, as well as a wide range of existentialist and psychoanalytic literatures. See in particular, R.D. Laing, 'Series and Nexus in the Family', *New Left Review*, I, No 15 (May/June 1962), pp7-14; and R.D. Laing and David Cooper, *Reason and Violence: A decade of Sartre's philosophy, 1950-1960*, London, Tavistock, 1964.

8. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), *Third Annual Report, 1965-1966*, CRL, UB/CCCS/A/3/3; Lidia Curti, 'By the Volcano', *OpenDemocracy*, 18 February 2014; Antonio Gramsci, *Lettre dal carcere*, edited by Sergio Caprioglio and Elsa Fubini, Turin, Einaudi, 1965.

9. For a summary statement see Stuart Hall, 'Rethinking the "Base and Superstructure" Metaphor' [1977], in *Selected Writings on Marxism*, edited, introduced and with commentary by Greg McLennan, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2021, pp62-90.

10. Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, translated by Timothy O'Hagan and others, London, NLB/Sheed and Ward, 1973, pp37-44.

11. Poulantzas, *Political Power*, p38.

12. Stuart Hall, 'Marx's Notes on Method: A "Reading" of the "1857 Introduction"' [1974], in *Selected Writings on Marxism*, pp19-61 (p41).

13. Poulantzas, *Political Power*, p41 (emphasis in original).

14. Stuart Hall, 'Political Commitment', p102 (my emphasis).

15. Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and neo-nationalism*, with a new

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introduction by Anthony Barnett, London, Verso, 2021, first published in 1977.

16. George Clark, Sean Gervasi, Stuart Hall and Michael Rustin, 'Letter' 12 August 1966, 'Stuart Hall Archive—1954-2018', University of Birmingham Staff Papers, Cadbury Research Library (CRL), US121/B/6/3/1.

17. *May Day Manifesto*, edited by Stuart Hall, E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams, London 1967; Raymond Williams (ed), *May Day Manifesto*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1968; Raymond Williams (ed), *May Day Manifesto 1967-1968*, with an Introduction by Michael Rustin, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 2013: free to view at: <https://lwbooks.co.uk/product/mayday-manifesto-1967-68>; and Raymond Williams (ed), *May Day Manifesto*, with an Introduction by Owen Jones, London, Verso 2018. It is disappointing that, despite the appetite to keep the Manifesto in circulation, no attempt has been made to edit together the May Day Manifesto Bulletins - which in many respects registered the emergent social formations of 1968 better than the Manifesto itself.

18. Michael Rustin, 'Letter to Edward Thompson and Stuart Hall', 10 October 1966, CRL, US121/B/6/3/1. The letter includes a Draft Outline from Raymond Williams.

19. 'Britain's Political Crisis: An autumn programme', n.d., CRL, US121/B/6/3/1.

20. Stuart Hall, 'Internal CCCS Memo: Think Small But Hard', March 1971. CRL, US121/A/1/14/1.

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