

magazine and requesting copies of "John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World*, Nearing's *Dollar Diplomacy*, or whatever you think most necessary for my education."¹⁷

The relationship Pound maintained with Gold and the *New Masses* was to continue, precariously, for a number of years. It can be traced, in much of its fascination and resistance, in the Pound *Letters* and elsewhere. Pound probably first recognized the importance of Marx and of the Bolshevik revolution when he attended a lecture by the muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens sometime in 1924. He was moved by the talk.¹⁸ Steffens appears in Canto 19, published in 1925, as does the first mention of Marx in the poem. But the relationship was, in a certain sense, doomed from the start. As strong as the poet's enthusiasm for Gold's personal blend of revolution and individuality might have been, he was constrained from traveling very far left with him. And Gold, for his part, obviously could have no taste for Pound's later venture into hero-worship.

The relationship finally unraveled in the pages of the *New Masses* in 1930, when Gold came down hard on Pound: "Do not be misled by ideology, Ezra. When J. P. Morgan tells you that he is an art-lover, and has lived only for Art and Antiques, you know he is only trying to shield something; piracy, for instance. Mussolini's original program was to kill Workers and destroy their organizations. The Fascist philosophy came years later. . . . Search to the roots. The roots are in economics, as ever. Capitalism is still enthroned in Italy."¹⁹ The connection between Pound and the American left had been made, nonetheless, and is now part of the record. The poet was by his own acknowledgment a revolutionary. Indeed, as our evidence here has shown, he had felt in his early years as artist and aesthetic campaigner that revolution was what art was all about. Vorticism, *Blast*, his whirlwind fundraising plans for fellow writers, his unremitting injunction to "make it new"—all issued from his belief that art and ceaseless

¹⁷ "Pound Joins the Revolution!" *New Masses*, 2 (Dec. 1926): 3.

¹⁸ Stock, *The Life of Ezra Pound*, p. 256.

¹⁹ "Notes of the Month," *New Masses*, 6 (Oct. 1930): 4.

change were inseparable, indeed that the one was continually creating the other.

But Pound's implicit understanding of the kind of dialectic involved in such change and causation could hardly be hammered into anything resembling a Marxist dialectic. The fundamental Marxist proposition in the Preface to *The Critique of Political Economy* could never be his: "The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness."²⁰ Believing in his own fervent and oracular way that consciousness does determine being, he simply carried to an extreme, as he was to carry many other things, a notion implicit in the thinking of most artists whose cultures place a premium on individual enterprise. Those artists want to see history as a collection of isolated biographies (Carlyle), and they pooh-pooh the very existence of general forces, social and political, more powerful than individual men themselves. Pound's Promethean expressions of self-confidence ("Artists are the antennae of the race") must be seen as kindred, for instance, to Emerson's description of poets in general: "They are free, and they make free." Revolution is generated, idealistically, within the mind, particularly within the mind of the avant-garde artist, and is not the result, the inevitable product, of divisions deep within society.

If this were all to be said of Pound's politics at this moment in his life, there would be little to distinguish him from a great many other artists whose celebration of their own powers is rapturous and whose relationship to large social and historical forces is, by their own choice, either haughtily dismissive or proudly anarchistic. But Pound's strong anarchistic tendencies, endemic among artists who are convinced that they are "above politics," conflicted sharply with other urges, equally strong, compelling him to be political and to develop theories that made sense of the reality he knew lay behind events. Ergo Douglas.

Douglas agrees with Marx in several interesting and essential

²⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow, 1968), p. 182.

or workshops on voter education.

2.3. Shop stewards should be consulted on the voter education programme. This should cover the content of what is taught and how it is taught.

2.4. There should be joint planning with management and the agency on how the voter education should take place.

2.5. There should be no hidden agenda e.g. party political messages as part of the voter education programme.

2.6. The voter education programme must accommodate the needs of illiterate and semi-illiterate workers and should be conducted in the language that workers are most familiar with.

2.7. The programmes should be gender sensitive.

2.8. Shop stewards should evaluate the programme and decide whether it was satisfactory or further voter education is needed.

2.9 All workers (union and non-union) should be urged to participate in the voter education programmes.

At present, some employers are conducting voter education seminars for workers without consulting shop stewards or unions. This should not happen. All voter education must be negotiated with shop stewards.

COSATU TO LAUNCH A VOTER EDUCATION AND ELECTION CAMPAIGN

JOHANNESBURG July 27 Sapa

The Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu) is to launch a voter education and election campaign in the run-up to the first democratic election on April 27 next year, vice-president Chris Dlamini said on Tuesday.

The Cosatu campaign would involve mobilising workers behind the union's programme and educating workers to participate in the election, regardless of who they support, he said.

However, Cosatu had decided to put its weight behind the African National Congress as the federation believed the organisation was the only one capable of implementing a programme of reconstruction and advancing the interests of working people and the poor.

"We are convinced that workers can act as mid-wives to the new baby of democracy, to ensure that it is born healthy and timeously."

However, if workers were to receive voter education, it was essential that trade unions had the cooperation of employers.

Initial discussions had already been held with South African Consultative Conference on Labour Affairs and the Consultative Business Movement. The guidelines proposed so far had met with a positive response, Mr Dlamini said.

The estimated 30000 shop stewards countrywide should receive paid time off to

ways. Both men stressed the degree to which the "substructure" of organized life, the commercial, financial, and trading affairs of men who are members of antagonistic or exploitative groups, determines the well-being or malaise of their respective societies—in other words the degree to which economic developments condition all the rest of life. Pound, agreeing with Douglas, expressed the idea most clearly some ten years after this postwar period of cultural rethinking on his part in his classic formulation, Canto 45:

with usura the line grows thick
 with usura is no clear demarcation
 and no man can find site for his dwelling.
 Stone cutter is kept from his stone
 weaver is kept from his loom
 WITH USURA
 wool comes not to market
 sheep bringeth no gain with usura

A second point of agreement is rooted in the belief that one part of society fattens itself on the labor of another. Marx had demonstrated quite clearly how surplus value is generated and how its generation depends on an exploitative process. He had pointed out that the value of a commodity is always more than the value of a worker's labor power and the constant capital used up in production; that "more" is surplus value. Douglas (solely concerned, let us remember, with monetary rather than larger economic issues) had shown, as I have said, how a gap is created between the purchasing power of the people and the selling price of a commodity, and how that gap widens in time as the difference between purchasing power and selling price is drained off into bank vaults, unspent dividends, savings, etc.

The equivalent of surplus value in Douglas's system is the resulting "clog" that benefits the controllers of wealth. There are, of course, essential differences between the two thinkers. Marx would have considered Douglas's monetary reforms mere tinkering with machinery that was about to collapse. And they differ in their proposed solutions to what they saw as the economic crisis of their day, a crisis characterized by commercial paralysis, im-

mobilization of goods, competition between nations desperately looking for new markets, and centralization of power in a few hands. For Marx the solution would come, by a process of dialectical change, with the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Douglas, who thought capitalism the best of all systems, proposed (as did J. M. Keynes) governmental control of credit in order that the gap between selling and purchasing power be closed. Marx was convinced that the entire capitalistic system was soon utterly to be transformed through class struggle and that only in the eventually classless society to follow would exploitative relationships end. Douglas, on the other hand, was concerned not with classes, in whose reality he seemed hardly to believe, but with individuals, predominantly monopolistic financiers, whose private activities were an infection within the system.

Herein at last lies the crucial difference, for our purposes, between the two versions of economic reality. Pound was intuitively drawn to Douglas's version, and at last repelled by Marx's. In his search for the mainsprings of war and international conflict, he settled upon an analysis that allowed him to blame specific people—Mayer Amschel Rothschild, Edward Vickers, Sir Basil Zaharoff, J. P. Morgan, and the other great financiers of the period—for the bloodshed and horror he had seen, and people of their ilk for comparable horrors throughout history. He confined himself, then, to pointed attacks on such people, and ignored the question of class conflict. Marx saw the problem as pandemic and fatal; Pound (and Douglas) saw it as endemic and curable. Pound, an "Imagist of politics," eschewed the generalities that Marx's mind embraced. To the poet, all generalities were vague and useless. The task was once again, and now with greater fervor, to search for and isolate the particular.

Why was Pound so reluctant to extend his critical analysis beyond the confines of particular culprits: money-men, politicians supporting the bankers, newspapers supporting the status quo, and that bugbear of early-twentieth-century pacifists and Shavians, the munitions-makers? The reason, I think, is that such an extended analysis would have propelled him directly into an ir-

programmes are being launched. The first such campaign is being launched by COSATU's Western Cape Region on 28th July at UWC, where 500 shop stewards will be discussing how to popularise the programmes.

COSATU is finalising a voter education manual, explaining the importance of the upcoming elections, and popularising the need for workplace voter education. While the actual voter education will not be done by COSATU, but by accredited agencies, we will be encouraging workers to popularise the need for voter education, on an "Each one Reach one" basis.

Certain forces want to prevent a democratic election from taking place in our country. The violence sweeping our country at the moment is precisely designed to terrorise people, to prevent them from exercising their democratic right. The campaign to mobilise the people for elections thus also becomes a campaign in defence of democracy and peace. All democrats in South Africa, regardless of political affiliation, now need to stand together to ensure that those wanting to drown our new democracy in blood are not allowed to succeed. Workers organised under COSATU will certainly do everything in our power to defend the process.

GUIDELINES FOR SHOP STEWARDS

1. Prepare for elections

On April 27th 1994, we are going to have elections for a Constituent Assembly. For the majority of people in South Africa, this is the first time that they will have voted in their lives.

We need to make sure that by April next year, everybody knows how to vote and also the importance of voting. In many other countries who have moved to democracy, they have found that many people do not know how to vote or don't see a need for voting.

It is the democratic right of all workers to vote and this it is important to explain this to workers as well as teach them how to vote.

2. COSATU's voter education campaign

COSATU can make a big contribution by teaching all workers why and how to vote. The COSATU CEC has said that COSATU should embark on a factory floor voter education campaign.

COSATU is saying that at each and every factory, mine, shop and farm workers should be explained the significance of voting and how to vote.

Below are some guidelines on how voter education should be conducted at work places:

2.1. Shop stewards should approach employers about conducting voter education in work places and during working hours.

2.2. Shop stewards should demand from employers:

- * Paid time off for appointed shop stewards to receive training on voter education. This should happen during working hours.

The training can be given by other shop stewards, COSATU educators and officials or approved voter-education agencies (see below).

- * Facilities and time off for workers to attend seminars

reconcilable contradiction with some of his own preconceptions. In other words, Pound was in no way prepared in the mid-1920's to launch an attack on capitalism. He was prepared to attack only its misuse, because capitalism was the system most congenial to his sense of himself as a free individual whose entrepreneurial literary energies could help transform the consciousness of his nation. It was the "free" and adventure-questing man he had always praised. No greater hero than Odysseus existed for him. Nor could he attack social hierarchy, for he had already found it proper and fitting to praise such hierarchy ("It takes about 600 people to make a civilization"; "No use waiting for masses to develop a finer taste, they aren't moving that way"). Since the contradictions were irreconcilable—stemming as they did from what it means to participate in the making of culture within a class structure—it must have seemed better to avoid them. Becoming the kind of poet he became and the kind of social reformer he became allowed him to do just that.

In sum, Pound was subjected both then and later, as we will see, to two great and conflicting pressures. The prevailing literary standards, which had much to say about the way a poet might feel about himself and his position within society, exerted one pressure. The material demands of Pound's society, issuing from war, economic confusion, and maldistribution, exerted another. As a man of extraordinary energy but rather limited powers of formal thought, he responded as fully as he could to both. Intuitively accepting Douglas, Pound established a *modus vivendi* between the pressures. Had he gone beyond Douglas into a more radical economics, he would have lost his vision of himself as one who changes the mental life of his countrymen. Thus his ultimate rejection of what he conceived of as violent ideological revolution:

As to our "joining revolutions" etc. It is unlikely. The artist is concerned with producing something that will be enjoyable even after a successful revolution. So far as we know even the most violent bolchevik has never abolished electric light globes merely because they were invented under another regime, and by a man intent rather on his own job than on particular propaganda.²¹

²¹ "The Exile [I]," *Exile*, 1 (Spring 1927): 88-92; repr. in *Impact*, pp. 219-20.

To see art thus, as a residual force outlasting all political and social change, might be thought oddly contradictory in a man who had for some years been consumed in revolutionary campaigns, among them one to "Make it New." These campaigns had aimed to change society in the most profound of ways: to give it "new eyes," new ways of creating forms by which to live. The same inconsistency, we may go on to say, lies at the heart of Pound's greatest achievement, the *Cantos*. In that poem, he urges upon us with one gesture the idea that forms of art are important in altering the shape and direction of civilization to come; with another gesture, pointing to the futility of any such alterations, he suggests that works of art are mere artifacts prevailing amid the collapse of civilization. The contradiction is nicely shown by two statements from 1928:

Quite simply: I want a new civilization.

As briefly as possible. I am not a revolutionist, if by that term one means a man who believes a complete smash of the existing order is necessary before one can get improvement.²²

Very much an advocate of change, he could nevertheless endorse no united or mass efforts. Such efforts were vulgar. Poetry and other artistic expression were not vulgar, but they might be weak. Weak as they might be, however, they alone were certain good. Thus, each of his buoyant apostrophes to the salutary influences of art was eventually dragged down by the dark suspicions he harbored about those who were to be influenced. The baser inclinations of such people, the depressing spectacle they created *en masse*, their propensity to do the stupid thing preyed on Pound's mind. In coming to terms with them, he found himself in almost complete agreement with his friend Eliot: the general run of people is bad; grossness retains the upper hand in history; Gresham's Law influences ethical and intellectual qualities as well as everything else.

Hence his social crusades did not issue from any truly egalitarian sympathies for the common lot of mankind. Rather, they

²² "The Exile [III]," *Exile*, 3 (Spring 1928): 102-7, reprinted in *Impact*, p. 222; "The Damn Fool Bureaucrats," *New Masses*, 4 (June 1928): 15.

Our campaign to involve all workers in the elections is twofold. Firstly, to ensure that workers put their muscle behind a programme and organisation which will, while taking forward the interests of our whole country, will also advance and protect the interests of working people. Secondly, to ensure that all workers, regardless of who they vote for, are fully educated and empowered to participate in the elections process.

In relation to the first issue, COSATU is in the process of discussing a programme for reconstruction and development. Our position on this will be finalised at the COSATU Special Congress from 10-12 September 1993. Our allies have supported the idea of the reconstruction programme, and COSATU will mobilise workers' support on the basis of this programme. COSATU has decided to put its full weight behind a decisive ANC election victory, because we believe that the ANC is the only organisation capable of implementing a programme of reconstruction, and advancing the interests of working people and the poor.

However, COSATU believes that regardless of who workers ultimately vote for, ourselves and employers have a duty to ensure that all workers have access to impartial voter education and information, empowering them to participate fully in the elections, and to make an informed choice. Particularly in view of the history of exclusion, repression and violence which most workers have experienced, it is essential and sufficient preparation is done to make workers confident to fully and freely participate in the process, without fear from any quarter.

To this end, COSATU is embarking, from today, on a massive drive of worker voter education. We aim to ensure that a programme of non-partisan voter education is extended to all workers, not only COSATU members. This is particularly important for workers who have been isolated and denied basic worker rights, including farm workers, domestic workers, and workers in the bantustans. Failure to extend voter education to these workers and their families will mean that over half the electorate will go to the polls unprepared and uninformed - if they go at all.

If workers are to be empowered in this way, it is essential that trade unions have the co-operation of employers. To this end, we have had initial discussions with Saccola and CBM, and will follow up with further discussions. The guidelines we have proposed for voter education of workers has, on the whole met with a positive response.

The active participation of trade unions and employers in this joint venture will be an important confidence-building exercise, which will send out a clear signal against those wanting to use coercion in the elections, and play an important role in creating a climate for free and fair elections. We believe that the relationship which exists between us and employer bodies is sufficiently mature to create the basis for this co-operative effort to succeed.

Our approach to joint employer/trade union voter education is laid out in the attached guidelines adopted by our Executive, which are being distributed to over 30 000 COSATU shop stewards. In summary the guidelines aim to ensure that credible, non-partisan organisations undertake the voter education, in consultation with trade unions and employers. We don't want fly-by-night organisations with hidden agendas being imposed on workers. Secondly, we are proposing an approach to training, time-off and facilities for shop stewards and workers to ensure that the process is credible and fully involves workers. Thirdly, there should be no hidden agenda in the programmes. Fourthly, the programmes should accommodate the needs of illiterate and semi-literate workers. Fifthly, the programme should take into account the concerns of women workers. Finally all workers should be encouraged to participate in voter education, not only union members.

COSATU's approach to voter education has been widely discussed and endorsed by our members in COSATU Regional and Affiliate Congresses held in the last few weeks. Some affiliates have begun to negotiate with employers. Further, mass-based campaigns to popularise the need for workplace voter education

issued from a belief that if only the correct ministrations were applied, all would be well and society could be left in peace forevermore, the better for art to prosper, the better for unruly men to be taught the pleasures of art. And what better ministrations to offer than, first, Social Credit and, later, fascism?

It has been said of Douglas in retrospect that he gives the impression of being more of a skillful politician than a humanitarian or an earnest truth-seeker or a man truly concerned with righting the injustices of society. Pound sometimes seems separated in the same way from his announced social concerns. True, he praises Henry James's struggles against petty social injustices; true, he dooms many to a hell of his own imagining for enriching themselves at the expense of their fellowmen. He is passionately against war and deeply wary of Marx. But Ezra Pound, on the eve both of his most active years as a political spokesman and of a great economic depression, was still toying with being a politician of the arts, not of society at large. Not yet quite ready to take on all of society on its own terms, he had a parochial message: society must maintain order so that the arts may be sustained.

CHAPTER THREE

The Components of Order

The single greatest difficulty in Pound's work is one of order, not of allusion. The reader who falters in reading the *Cantos* or the prose does so either because what is before his eyes is ordered by a principle inaccessible to him or because it possesses no real order at all. This difficulty has not been completely solved, though it has been mitigated, by the explications Kenner, Davie, Dekker, Pearlman, Schneidau, and others have provided. Even most of these critics have admitted that Pound's work possesses nothing like perfect coherence. (The *Annotated Index* is of some help in reading the *Cantos*, to be sure, but often it provides only an immense vista of uselessly scattered information.) Pound himself has not been entirely helpful about this situation. He seems to have been of two minds about the logical order, or lack of it, discoverable in his writings. At times he assured everyone that all was in good order or, in the case of the *Cantos*, soon would be. At other times, he spoke contemptuously of efforts to discern coherence where coherence was of minor importance.

Schneidau provides, I think, the most convincing analysis of the poetics of the *Cantos*, and his conclusion is far from consoling for those who seek order. By emphasizing the degree to which "real" poetry consists of precisely shaped "gists" and "piths," and by relying so strongly on Imagistic methods, Pound indirectly deprived himself of a unifying principle that might have framed his crystalline fragments. As Schneidau puts it, "If the texture is made smooth, the details cannot stand out sharply."¹ Since throughout

¹ Herbert Schneidau, *Ezra Pound, The Image and the Real* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), p. 140.

COSATU PRESS STATEMENT ON THE ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN

Today, exactly nine months before the April 27 elections, COSATU is launching a campaign to ensure that all workers participate fully in the first democratic election our country has ever held. We are convinced that workers can act as midwives to the new baby of democracy, to ensure that it is born healthy and timeously. Working people have the greatest stake in ensuring that a new democracy is delivered and grows strong.