

On Paul Baran

Fredy Perlman

March 1965

This is the reaction to the news of Paul Baran's death of an American pursuing graduate studies in economics at the University of Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

The MONTHLY REVIEW with the news that Paul Baran is dead arrived in Belgrade yesterday (May 15th).

To those of us who were young enough to consider Baran a teacher and not a colleague, he was what Thomas Mann called an "archetype." Offered the narrow experience of the "well defined scientific project," we are able to resist only because of the force of Baran's profound experience. His esteem for the critical intellect, his demonstration that the field of this intellect is not an academic discipline but the world of suffering and struggle, his proof that today as well as in the time of Vico, Hegel, and Marx, man can grasp and change what man constructed, are the instruments with which we evaluate all other "methodologies."

Baran taught us how to use our "critical techniques"; he shatteringly demonstrated that techniques are toys if they are not addressed to the essential, if they do not unmask the forces of exploitation, physical and psychological.

Perhaps above all, he tried to teach us that there is no "intellectual compromise," that between the critical and the servile intellect there are no shades. This is the hardest lesson of all. It means that as soon as we get an inkling of exploitation, our task is to explode it-even if we find it accidentally and where we weren't looking for it, even if it means losing the post at the institute or the support of our party. In this we had counted on the support of Baran.

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