H.D. Forbes, “Hartz-Horowitz at Twenty,” *CJPS* 20 (1987)

**Overview**

Twenty years of debate have revealed many weaknesses in the Hartz-Horowitz interpretation of conservatism, liberalism, and socialism in Canada – yet it continues to be widely taught, as it provides a simple and appealing explanation of the striking differences between Cdn and American politics. The article argues that the interpretation is best understood as a form of neo-Marxism, that its basic weaknesses are most easily seen by examining its treatment of French Canada, and that its explanation of the exceptional strength of socialism in English Canada – linking socialism to toryism – can be strengthened by linking both socialism and toryism to nationalism.

**Background**

* Hartzian analysis flourishes in Canada and languishes in the US – how do we account for this?
* Question of why America was so capitalist and lacked any real thread of socialism was answered by Hartz, not by abandoning the historical paradigm, but rather developing the supplementary hypothesis that the first Americans were a “fragment” of 17th century England, feeling feudal and clerical oppression, and building a new society of the basis of freedom of contract
* Fragment theory occurs in three stages:
  + Process begins with the departure of a group from Europe that represents one phase of its continuing revolution, a fragment of its rich ideological spectrum \*there is a selection bias in who stays and who goes
  + These fragments, detached from the whole of which they were once part, lose ‘the stimulus toward change that the whole provides’
  + A process of contagion and renewal then takes places, but on a much narrower range of materials than in the source population – though this does not mean absolute fixity
* For French Canada – Hartz described it as feudal – though he is vague about the meaning
  + A feudal fragment is essentially fixed at its point of origin
  + Kenneth McRae argues this is a poor characterization of French Cdn case
* Horowitz objected to tendency of Hartzian analysts to treat English Canada and US as the same – insisting Canada is unique
* Horowitz “plainly wanted to stress what Hartz and McRae implicitly denied – the legitimacy of socialism as an element of Cdn political culture derived from Canada’s Tory past”
  + Horowitz was looking for a political-culture, rather than a more strictly ‘Hartzian’ explanation for the “differing weights of Cdn and American socialism”
  + He rejected Hartz-McRae contention that English Canada’s tory touch is so delicate, minor, subtle, and generally unimportant that one can say of Canada, as of the US, “no toryism in the past; therefore no socialism in the future”
  + Thus Horowitz agrees with McRae and Hartz about the ideological climate in which socialism grows, but wrong about the Cdn climate
* Rod Preece denies the presence in the Dcn political culture the kind of toryism required by the Hartz-Horowitz theory = rather presenting modern English-speaking conservatism as an outgrowth of the British Whig, rather than tory thinking, in effect denying the connection Horowitz makes between Cdn Toryism (of loyalism) and corporate-organic-collectivist thinking (or toryism)
* The more closely the phenomena of Cdn and American politics are examined, the less impressive is the explanatory power of the Hartz-Horowitz theory – this is partly a matter of perspective, but not entirely so. Hartzians pride themselves on painting big pictures, but there is a big difference between a big picture made up of fine details and a big picture that dissolves into a mess of blobs and streaks upon closer inspection
* The great strength of H-H theory is the simple and appealing explanation it provides for the “hard fact” that organized socialism is stronger in Canada than in the US. The explanation rests on the simple law: if toryism yesterday, then socialism today – and the incontestable fact: toryism yesterday
  + However, common content does not always establish a firm bond between different ideologies. Hartz no doubt had this in mind when he coupled nationalism with *liberalism* in the US, contrasting both with socialism. But was apparently not troubled when making this contrast, but he common corporate-organic-collectivist content of nationalism and socialism
  + When applied to Canada, however, by Horowitz, nationalism is now the friendly ally of socialism

**Conclusions**

Forbes suggests that a more fruitful explanatory technique is to examine the interaction between Hartzianism and nationalism in English Canada and the US. He argues that with only slight modification, Hartzian analysis harmonizes almost perfectly with the most common kind of English-Cdn nationalism, and puts the “psychic magic of national emotion” on the side of socialism, popular among Cdn academics.