

MARXISM AND MARCUSE

A GREAT DEAL OF PUBLICITY HAS been given to the so-called new philosophy for the new age propounded by Herbert Marcuse. It has been claimed that this new philosophy mirrors the new reality of advanced industrial societies, which are themselves the future of humanity in the age of the scientific-technical revolution. The publicity, however, is not on account of these claims to new profundities. It is due, above all, to the fact that the ideas of Marcuse are supposed to be a crushing refutation of Marx. Marcuse is the latest in a long line of claimants to the title 'supplanters of Marx'. And the Marcusean refutation is said to be all the more crushing as it is said to be done on the basis of dialectics, the very heart and core of the Marxist philosophy.

Who is Herbert Marcuse? He is an old man. Seventy-one years old in fact. He was born in Berlin in 1898, studied at the University of Berlin and received his Ph.D. from the University of Freiburg. After teaching a year at Geneva, he was from 1934 to 1940 at the Institute of Social Research Columbia University in the USA, being one of the earliest intellectual refugees from Hitlerite terror. He spent nearly ten years with the office of Intelligence Research, Department of State, Washington, after which he returned to Columbia as a research fellow in the Russian Institute. He was also associated with the Russian Research Centre at Harvard University and with Paris University, spending most of his time since 1954, however, with the Brandeis University in the USA. There is a recent report that his professorship has now not been renewed. There are other reports claiming that there is documentary evidence that he is associated with the CIA.

These biographical details, true or false, are irrelevant to a

consideration of his ideas. But the totality of his biography is, however, relevant. Marcuse has been only an academic man, as have been so many others. He has not participated to any significant extent in any one of the more powerful social movements which have convulsed our earth, certainly since the 1930s. A strange procedure for a man who is said to be the new messiah for the resurgent youth of our days. For a man who claims to base his refutation of Marx on dialectics itself, it is more than odd that he claims to know the world without participating in the transforming of it! A tremendous difference with the life of Marx himself and those of so very many lesser personalities who either espoused Marxism or who even hoped to refute it by projecting a new philosophy for revolutionary practice, Sartre for example.

It can be said that the life of Herbert Marcuse can certainly offer little inspiration to the young rebels and revolutionaries of our times, especially in our country at this moment of crisis. A man who confines himself exclusively to academic work may, indeed, produce work and ideas which enlarge the boundaries of human knowledge. He may also provide an example of integrity and intellectual depth which would be of inspiration in our times when rank careerism and dreadful shallowness are all too prevalent. But it is not such a life that can enthuse those who wish to overthrow social tyranny and establish the justice of socialism. Nor is it likely that such a life of largely contemplative activity will produce a new revolutionary credo. As we shall see later on, the life of Marcuse has certainly influenced his attempt to return socialism from a science to speculation, to change the Marxian historical concept of contradiction into Hegelian mystification. If Marx stood Hegel on his feet, Marcuse tries to stand Marx on his head. If revolutionary practice was the central theme of Marx and his thought, rather empty play with notions is the chief activity of Marcuse.

The intellectual evolution of Marcuse goes through two clearly demarcated phases. The earlier phase can be studied in

his *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, first published in 1941 as well as in certain essays written in the 1930s and brought together in *Negations* (published in 1968). The next phase begins with the publication of *Soviet Marxism* (first published in 1958) and culminates in the now notorious *One Dimensional Man: The Ideology of Industrial Society* (1968)—the basic theme of this book is repeated in essays published in two symposiums, *Socialist Humanism* and the *Dialectics of Liberation*.

II

Marcuse is absolutely outstandingly illuminating and perceptive in his study of Hegel. Indeed, it can be said that there is hardly another book on this great philosopher which catches so consummately the daring of his method as well as the tragedy of his system. There is scarcely another work on Hegel which brings out so clearly the revolutionary implications of the dialectic and which proves so conclusively how near Hegel was to Marx and how the latter carried him forward to the new level of actual revolutionising social practice.

Marcuse correctly places the contribution of Hegelian idealism against the historical background of the degeneration of empiricism into positivism. Empiricism had begun as a revolt against the metaphysical dogmatism of medieval scholasticism. It correctly stated that one had to begin from reality outside of thought, the image of which had to be received through sensation. But this reality itself was conceived in an absolute and mechanistic manner and soon became a mere worship of the fact as such, soon became an idealisation of appearance. It was against this that Hegel protested, carrying forward the work of Kant. Hegel emphasised that what appears as real is not always so and that the essence of reality being movement, the existence of reality is negation, selfengendered negation. He pointed out that there was no immediate identity between essence and existence and that between the knowing subject and the object there is both opposition as well as unity, the

mediation being reason or selfconsciousness. Hegel, therefore, stresses that proper abstraction, superficially furthest removed from reality, gives us greater truth about reality than mere sensation, connected as the latter is with appearance alone. But one cannot arrive at the truth of abstraction unless one has a consciousness that is permeated with negativity.

“The dialectic is the true method of philosophy. It shows that the object with which it deals exists in a state of “negativity”, which the object through the pressures of its own existence throws off in the process of regaining its truth” (*Reason and Revolution*, p. 101). ‘Dialectic in its entirety is linked to the conception that all forms of being are permeated by an essential negativity, and that this negativity determines their content and movement. The dialectic represents the counterthrust to any form of positivism... Everything that is given has to be justified before reason, which is but the totality of nature’s and man’s capacities’ (*Ibid.*, p. 27). ‘Being (for Hegel) must be conceived as becoming... paradox is the receptacle of the hidden truth... absurdity contains the latent truth’ (*Ibid.*, pp. 130 and 131). ‘Reflection is not primarily the process of thinking but the process of being itself. Correspondingly, the transition from being to essence is not primarily a procedure of philosophical cognition, but a process in reality’ (*Ibid.*, p. 143). ‘Necessity is the process in which contingent reality attains its adequate form. Hegel calls this process the process of actuality... Hegel did not declare that reality is rational (or reasonable), but reserved this attribute for a definite form of reality, namely, actuality... Actuality thus is the title for the final unity of being that is no longer subject to change, because it exercises autonomous power over all change—not simple identity but “selfidentity”. Such selfidentity can be obtained only through the medium of selfconsciousness and cognition... True reality presupposes freedom, and freedom presupposes knowledge of the truth. The true reality, therefore, must be understood as the realisation of a knowing subject’ (*Ibid.*, p. 153-54). ‘Selfconscious practice becomes part

of the very content of the laws (of development of reality—M.S.), so that the latter operate as laws only in so far as they are taken into the subject’s will and influence his acts. The universal law of history is, in Hegel’s formulation, not simply progress to freedom, but progress in the selfconsciousness of freedom’ (*Ibid.*, p. 231).

Stretching Hegelianism to the point where Marx starts, Marcuse is well aware of the limitations of the former as well as of the true leap in philosophy made by the latter. He states that ‘Hegel’s system is the last great expression of this cultural idealism, the last great attempt to render thought a refuge for reason and liberty’ (*Ibid.*, p. 15). ‘Hegel tends to dissolve the element of historical practice and replace it with the independent reality of thought’ (*Ibid.*, p. 161). For Marx ‘the existence of the proletariat contradicts the alleged reality of reasons, for it sets before us an entire class that gives proof of the very negation of reason... The existence of the proletariat thus gives living witness to the fact that the truth has not been realised. History and social reality themselves thus “negate” philosophy. The critique of society cannot be carried through by philosophical doctrine but becomes the task of socio-historical practice’ (*Ibid.*, p. 261). He criticises Feuerbach because ‘by omitting the labour process from his philosophy of freedom... Feuerbach omitted the decisive factor through which nature might become the medium for freedom’ (*Ibid.*, p. 272). ‘Marx’s dialectical conception was originally motivated by the same datum as Hegel’s, namely, by the negative character of reality’ but there is a ‘decisive difference’ between the two. ‘For Hegel the totality was the totality of reason, a closed ontological system, finally identical with the rational system of history... Marx, on the other hand, detached dialectics from this ontological base. In his work, the negativity of reality becomes a historical condition which cannot be hypostatized as a metaphysical state of affairs... The dialectical method has thus of its very nature become a historical method’ (*Ibid.*, pp. 312-14).

It is interesting to note that in the concluding sections of this illuminating study, Marcuse hits out at Bernstein and the revisionists for throwing overboard the dialectical concept of contradiction. He singles out Plekhanov and Lenin for praise as having grasped the central significance of this concept for truly revolutionising practice. It is gratifying to note that as far as Lenin is concerned, Marcuse makes explicit mention of the former's magnificent elucidation of dialectics in the course of his polemics against Trotsky and Bukharin on the question of trade unions and their role under socialism.

Marcuse not only was able to understand materialist dialectics but apply it as well. In the essay 'Concept of Essence' published in *Negations* he says 'as long as philosophy does not adopt the idea of a real transformation, the critique of reason stops at the *status quo* and becomes a critique of pure thought' (p. 50). 'In the epoch of monopoly capitalism, reason is replaced by the acquiescent acknowledgement of "essential" givens, in whose verification reason only plays a derivative role, and subsequently none at all' (*Ibid.*, p. 64). 'Materialist theory thus transcends the given state of fact and moves towards a different potentiality, proceeding from immediate appearance to the essence that appears in it. But here appearance and essence become members of a real antithesis arising from the particular historical structure of the social process of life. . . . When orientation toward historical practice replaces orientation toward the absolute certainty and universal validity of knowledge that prevailed in the traditional doctrine of essence, . . . then the concept of essence ceases to be one of pure theory. . . . The materialist concept of essence is a historical concept. Essence is conceivable only as the essence of a particular "appearance", whose factual form is viewed with regard to what it is in itself and what it could be (but is not in fact)' (*Ibid.*, p. 74).

In another essay 'Philosophy and Critical Theory' (1937) he states: 'There are two basic elements linking materialism to correct social theory: concern with human happiness, and the

conviction that it can be attained only through a transformation of the material conditions of existence. The actual course of the transformation and the fundamental measures to be taken in order to arrive at a rational organisation of society are prescribed by analysis of economic and political conditions in the given historical situation. . . . The materialist protest and materialist critique originated in the struggle of oppressed groups for better living conditions and remain permanently associated with the actual process of this struggle. . . . If reason means shaping life according to men's free decision on the basis of their knowledge, then the demand for reason henceforth means the creation of a social organisation in which individuals can collectively regulate their lives in accordance with their needs. . . . the philosophical construction of reason is replaced by the creation of a rational society' (*Ibid.*, p. 135 and pp. 141-42).

In *On Hedonism* (1938), Marcuse writes: 'the wants of liberated men and the enjoyment of their satisfaction will have a different form from wants and satisfaction in a state of unfreedom, even if they are physiologically the same. . . . The development of the productive forces, the growing domination of nature, the extension and refinement of the production of commodities, money, and universal reification have created, along with new needs, new possibilities of enjoyment. But these given possibilities for enjoyment confront men who objectively due to their economic status, as well as subjectively, due to their education and disciplining are largely incapable of enjoyment. . . . even enjoyment has a class character' (*Ibid.*, pp. 182-83). 'In so far as unfreedom is already present in wants and not just in their gratification, they must be the first to be liberated—not through an act of education or of the moral renewal of man but through an economic and political process encompassing the disposal over the means of production by the community, the shortening of the working day, and the active participation of individuals in the administration of the whole' (*Ibid.*, p. 193).

In yet another essay 'Industrialisation and Capitalism in the Work of Max Weber' (1964-65), Marcuse declares: 'In the unfolding of capitalist rationality, *irrationality* becomes *reason*: reason as frantic development of productivity, conquest of nature, enlargement of the mass of goods and their accessibility for the broad strata of the population; irrational because higher productivity, domination of nature and social wealth become destructive forces' (*Ibid.*, p. 207). 'Industrialisation is a phase in the development of man's capacities and needs, a phase in their struggle with nature and themselves. This development can proceed in very different forms and with very different aims; not only the forms of control but also those of technology and hence of needs and their satisfactions are in no way "fatal", but rather *become* such only when they are socially sanctioned, that is, as the result of material, economic and psychological coercion' (*Ibid.*, p. 214). 'Technology is always a historical-social *project*: in it is projected what a society and its ruling interests intend to do with men and things... as "congealed spirit", the machine is *not neutral*; technical reason is the social reason ruling a given society and can be changed in its very structure. As technical reason it can become the technique of liberation' (*Ibid.*, p. 225).

Anybody reasonably acquainted with the work of Marx and his followers will find himself in sympathy with these views of Marcuse. Indeed, the only complaint would be their lack of originality and the only query would be: why, then, all this fuss about this man and his ideas? But the whole point is that these are not the views about which all the fuss is made nor are these the views which Marcuse himself now cares to spread. But in any critical analysis these views should be kept in mind and the question should be raised—which Marcuse?

III

The 'popular' Marcusean system is assembled together in *One Dimensional Man: The Ideology of Industrial Society*. A few minor additions are made to the wearisomely repeated

central theme in two essays mentioned at the outset. The reader must be indulgent as quite a few more quotations are in the offing. This procedure seems to be necessary since one cannot always assume actual knowledge of systems which the ruling interests decree should be currently fashionable.

'Our society distinguishes itself by conquering the centrifugal social forces with Technology rather than Terror, on the dual basis of an overwhelming efficiency and an increasing standard of living' (p. 9). '*One Dimensional Man* will vacillate throughout between two contradictory hypotheses: (1) that the advanced industrial society is capable of containing qualitative change for the foreseeable future; that forces and tendencies exist which may break this containment and explode the society. I do not think that a clear answer can be given. Both tendencies are there, side by side—and even one in the other. The first tendency is dominant, and whatever preconditions for a reversal may exist are being used to prevent it. Perhaps an accident may alter the situation, but unless the recognition of what is being done and what is being prevented subverts the consciousness and behaviour of man, not even a catastrophe will bring about the change' (*Ibid.*, p. 13).

'Independence of thought, autonomy and the right to political opposition are being deprived of their critical function in a society which seems increasingly capable of satisfying the needs of individuals through the way in which it is organised... Free choice among a wide variety of goods and services does not signify freedom if these goods and services sustain social controls over a life of toil and fear—that is if they sustain alienation... the inner dimension of the mind in which opposition to the status quo can take root is whittled down. The loss of this dimension, in which the power of negative thinking—the critical power of Reason—is at home, is the ideological counterpart to the very material process in which advanced industrial society silences and reconciles the opposition... Thus emerges a pattern of *one-dimensional thought and behaviour* in which ideas, aspirations and objectives that,

by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe. They are redefined by the rationality of the given system and its quantitative extension' (*Ibid.*, pp. 19, 23, 26, 27).

There takes place in such a one-dimensional society the 'decisive transformation of the labouring classes', especially since Marcuse holds that 'to Marx, the proletariat is primarily the manual labour' (*Ibid.*, p. 35). Intolerable impoverishment of the working class is ended, technological change seems to cancel the notion of the organic composition of capital and with it the theory of the creation of surplus value (*Ibid.*, p. 38). There is a change in the consciousness of the working class which is now eager to take part in the solution of production problems. On the one side the working class 'no longer appears to be the living contradiction to the established society' and on the other side for the capitalists 'domination is transfigured into administration'. 'The slaves of developed industrial civilisation are sublimated slaves' (*Ibid.*, p. 41). 'The declining proportion of human labour power in the productive process means a decline in political power of the opposition. In view of the increasing weight of the white-collar element in this process, political radicalisation would have to be accompanied by the emergence of an independent political consciousness and action among the white-collar group—a rather unlikely development in advanced industrial society' (*Ibid.*, p. 48). 'Communist parties are either powerless or where they are powerful they have become variants of social-democracy', condemned to be nonradical (*Ibid.*, p. 33). Nor is this of much importance since the transition from capitalism to socialism is a mere quantitative change (*Ibid.*, p. 48).

This whole sorry state of affairs where the *status quo* can perpetuate itself, where its negation is by definition excluded, is due to the basic fact that 'the liberating force of technology—the instrumentalisation of things—turns into a fetter of liberation, the instrumentalisation of man' (*Ibid.*, p. 131). It is

the scientific-technical revolution itself that has halted the social emancipation of man to the exact degree that it has advanced the conquest and control of the forces of nature. It has given to the Establishment—Marcuse makes no distinction between the USA and the USSR—the powers of manipulation, of satisfying the needs of society, of creating needs which it satisfies and into which it diverts attention which might otherwise have turned to thoughts of total change. Even solitude and privacy are finished. Modes of thought flourish which are precise to the point where they extinguish clarity. The conclusion is that 'the rational society subverts the idea of Reason' (*Ibid.*, p. 136). Marx is out of date since the continuous tempestuous growth of the productive forces no longer conflicts with the established, capitalist relations of production or patterns of ownership. Even materialism is finished since the totality of experience is controlled, explicated and transformed into some sort of sedative. The 'real empirical world today is still that of the gas chambers and concentration camps, of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, of American Cadillacs and German Mercedes, of the Pentagon and the Kremlin, of the nuclear cities and the Chinese communes, of Cuba, of brainwashing and massacres. But the real empirical world is also that in which all these things are taken for granted or forgotten or repressed or unknown, in which people are free. It is a world in which the bloom in the corner or the taste of something like pineapple are quite important, in which the daily toil and the daily comforts are perhaps the only items that make up all experience. And this second, restricted empirical universe is part of the first; the powers that rule the first also shape the restricted experience' (*Ibid.*, p. 146).

Marcuse comes to the melancholy conclusion that 'dialectical theory is not refuted, but it cannot offer the remedy. It cannot be positive. . . it defines the historical possibilities, even necessities; but their realisation can only be in the practice which responds to the theory, and at present, the practice gives no such response' (p. 198). He feels that the impotent

but only revolutionary attitude is one of absolute refusal, of absolute cutting off of all contact with the advanced industrial society. The only hope is to raise as utopian demands as possible, to put forward here and now the total vision of a complete communist society as the only programme for immediate action.

But to whom is the appeal to be made since the working class has already become 'integrated' with advanced industrial society and lost its revolutionary potential? Marcuse places his hopes on those whom he calls the New Barbarians referring to the barbarian invasions which broke up the Roman empire. These New Barbarians are the nonintegrated ones: 'the substratum of outcastes and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colours, the unemployed and the unemployable. . . their opposition is revolutionary even if their consciousness is not. . . the chance is that, in this period, the historical extremes may meet again: the most advanced consciousness of humanity, and its most exploited force. It is nothing but a chance. The critical theory of society possesses no concept which could bridge the gap between the present, and its future; holding no promise and showing no success, it remains negative. Thus it wants to remain loyal to those who, without hope, have given and give their life to the Great Refusal' (*Ibid.*, p. 200-1).

In his essay 'Socialist Humanism?' in the symposium *Socialist Humanism*, edited by Eric Fromm, he is even more explicit: 'the developed Marxian theory retains an idea of man which now appears as too optimistic and idealistic. Marx underrated the extent of the conquest of nature and of man, of the technological management of freedom and selfrealisation. He did not foresee the great achievement of technological society: the assimilation of freedom and necessity, of satisfaction and repression, of the aspirations of politics, business and the individual' (p. 112). 'Socialism appears again as an abstract idea; loyalty to this idea excludes the fostering of illusions. Its new abstractness does not signify falsification. The proletariat

which was to validate the equation of socialism and humanism pertained to a past stage in the development of industrial society. Socialist theory, no matter how true, can neither prescribe nor predict the future agents of a historical transformation which is more than ever before the spectre that haunts the established societies. But socialist theory can show that this spectre is the image of a vital need' (*Ibid.*, p. 117).

In yet another essay 'Liberation from the Affluent Society' published in the symposium *Dialectics of Liberation*, Marcuse adds a new factor to his scheme. He is now of the view that hope must be placed on the intelligentsia. He writes: 'We are facing liberation from a society where liberation is apparently without a mass basis. . . The fact that today we cannot identify any specific class or any specific group as a revolutionary force, this fact is no excuse for not using any and every possibility and method to arrest the engines of repression in the individual. The diffusion of potential opposition among the entire underlying population corresponds precisely to the total character of our advanced capitalist society. . . The sensitivity and awareness of the new transcending antagonistic values—they are there. And they are there, and they are here, precisely among the still nonintegrated social groups and among those who, by virtue of their privileged position, can pierce the ideological and material veil of mass communication and indoctrination—namely, the intelligentsia' (pp. 176 and 187). He agrees that the intelligentsia is not a revolutionary class nor is he willing to call it the new working class but he holds that it has 'a decisive, preparatory function' (*Ibid.*, p. 188).

These are the notorious Marcusean views. The development of the productive forces has produced a new totalitarian society of abundance and manipulation. All are partners in this society, especially the working class which has become totally integrated and incapable of revolutionary action. This new society is the reality both in the USA and USSR. There is no real hope now of social transformation in any fundamental sense. But chance and catastrophe may somehow do the trick,

aided by all the lumpen elements in society, enlightened by the intelligentsia. What is revolutionary in all this is hard to discover. One is driven to the conclusion that Marcuse lives on reputation. He will not survive reading. This is also, perhaps, the secret of the unnecessarily involved and recondite style which he maintains.

IV

What are the flaws in the Marcusean scheme? The first and fatal flaw is the postulation of a phenomenon that is (in this case, the so-called industrial society) without internal contradictions. Marcuse is quite as bad here as the final, perfect Hegelian system which was so totally opposed to the dialectical method which also Hegel had formulated in rough outline. According to Hegel the dialectical working of the Absolute Idea had reached finality in the Prussian junker state. According to Marcuse the dialectical working of the productive forces has reached finality in the establishment of state monopoly capitalism. Marcuse tries to cover up. He tries to make himself out to be the most radical and revolutionary critic of modern capitalism, more 'revolutionary' by far than the communists who stick to their Marx. But for liberation from his 'one-dimensional society' he places reliance on chance, catastrophe and the denizens of the dunghoops of that society. For him this society has reconciled and contained all its opposites, it has achieved the feat of transcending its own negation. It has made permanent its own unity of opposites and rendered obsolete the struggle of opposites. Marcuse, the so-called supreme 'revolutionary', has made the 'revolutionary' discovery of a phenomenon which grows for ever without change, transformation and sublation. Not to speak of Marx, he has betrayed his own study of Hegel. He has joined the company of the revisionists, of that very Bernstein whom he criticised in 1941 for giving up the Hegelian concept of contradiction. This is a real case of a transformation of opposites, of meeting of extremes! The revisionists and reformists are

overawed by the 'splendour' of state-monopoly capitalism and believe and preach that it has solved all the contradictions of capitalism analysed by Marx and, therefore, hold that revolution is not necessary, a little reform would suffice. The Marcusean ultra-'revolutionary' affects to be horrified by the same phenomenon but is equally awed by what he considers is its omnipotence, its capacity to absorb all attempts at change and gives up the prospect of revolution as a futile, lost cause. The revisionists pin their hopes on reforms, the Marcuseans on catastrophe. Both, wittingly or unwittingly, sap the revolutionary urges and will of the new, inexperienced generation.

This fatal flaw of Marcuse is due to his abandonment of the dialectical-materialist method of analysis and to his taking up of the positivist position of mistaking appearance for essence, of making a fetish and a deity of appearance, of so-called unadorned, brute, empirical fact. Here, again, we find a betrayal. Marcuse had in his earlier writings (noted previously) rightly shown the degeneration of early empiricism into apologetic positivism. The so-called fact was taken at its own face value. Its genesis, its connections and its inherent negation were not looked for and, therefore, not discovered. When capitalism was in its heyday many laughed at Marx who already saw the skull beneath all the glossy skin. When imperialism was carrying all before it, many smirked when Lenin termed it as moribund capitalism and the eve of social revolution. Those who laughed and those who smirked pointed to the facts, to the unprecedented progress being achieved and the unimaginable prosperity being realised. The 'facts' seemed to be all on their side. But there was the fact behind the facts, the negation within the undoubted progress, the death behind the frenzied movement. It needed the cold eye of a Marx and a Lenin to see the truth behind and within the facts. Within fifty years of the publication of *Das Kapital* and barely a year after the publication of *Imperialism* the knell of capitalist private property was sounded and the expropriators were expropriated over one-sixth of the earth's surface. Positivism was

routed by the vindication of dialectical materialism. So, will it be again.

Is it true that state-monopoly capitalism, relying on the escalating scientific-technical revolution, has no contradictions or that it has somehow acquired the capacity of absorbing and containing its inherent contradictions? What was the basic contradiction of capitalism discovered by Marx? The basic contradiction, it will be recalled, was between the centralisation and socialisation of production and the private appropriation of the result of production. Has this basic contradiction disappeared? Enormous quantities of evidence exist pointing to its existence and accentuation. One has only to bear in mind the sweeping merger movement throughout the capitalist world where now giant corporations merge with other giant corporations giving rise to the new phenomenon of conglomerate mammoths. To cite only one recent despatch appearing in the *Indian Express* (18 March) from its Washington correspondent: Deploring recent trends which have blown up the myth of 'people's capitalism', the correspondent cites recent official US findings which disclose that 58.7 per cent of all manufacturing assets in that country are controlled by only 200 multibillion dollar corporations. The comparative figure in 1955 was 48.6 per cent and in the seventies this figure is expected to rise to 70 per cent. The findings quoted also point out that even now actual control by these corporations is far greater since many so-called independent proprietors, particularly in the retail sale sphere, are completely dependent on them. The ever-closer merger of these enormous combines with the state (giving rise to state-monopoly capitalism) has given rise to the 'industrial-military complex' of which even Eisenhower spoke a decade ago.

Is the 'advanced industrial society' able to contain this basic contradiction, which Marcuse fails to mention? There are no signs of it having acquired such capacity. The cyclical pattern of capitalist development has altered its form and tempo but not its content. The 1957-58 downturn and the general reces-

sion in 1967-68 are pointers to this fact. So also is the fact noted by Sweezy and Baran with regard to the built-in under-utilisation of capacity, the capacity for surplus accumulation to continuously outstrip investment outlets, despite the staggering amount of conscious and systematic waste, for instance, advertisement. Uneven development leading to convulsive competition alongside mergers and alliances continues full blast. Financial crises are the order of the day. Inflation saps the very foundations of what seemed to be thoroughly stable economies. Unemployment of the labour force fluctuates between five to seven per cent and automated unemployment is already discernible on the horizon. The absence of a revolutionary situation at any particular moment does not necessarily denote the absence of objective conditions and contradictions of an antagonistic and basic nature. Indeed, if Marx is wrong now because there is no sign of revolutionary action in the US and the UK, then he must have been all the more wrong in 1867 since for decades since that date there has been no revolutionary action in these two countries. Marcuse cannot have it both ways. He cannot say that there is no evidence to prove Marx right in 1968 and claim that Marx was right in 1867 since similar lack of 'evidence' can be charged (with hindsight as well) against him then—and was so charged.

Is it true that the scientific-technical revolution has given such powers to the establishment that it can now do what it likes and eternally perpetuate itself? Quite the contrary. As with all phenomena the scientific-technical revolution has its connections and inherent contradictions. The scientific-technical revolution did give increased power to the capitalist system to start with. Renewal of fixed capital, a whole new range of durable consumer goods, synthetics, cheapening of the elements of constant capital, enormously extended possibilities of information and control, new mass-media with great power—all this and more became available. But so did this revolution enormously accentuate all the contradictions of capitalism. It

led to further concentration and centralisation of capital. It pushed forward intermonopolistic and interstate-monopoly competition, giving impetus to the law of uneven development. It further tore apart production-capacity and market-absorption or widened the gap between production potential and effective demand. It increased unemployment and heightened alienation. It made the so-called affluent society into a totally sick society, an insane society. What is more, this revolution was connected with the social revolution—the further strengthening of the socialist states (despite all the rifts), the collapse of colonialism and the retreat of imperialism on a global scale. The days of the scientific-technical revolution are also the days of Vietnam. When has imperialism ever suffered such defeat and humiliation? And when has such sweeping protest been witnessed in the USA giving rise to the start of a crisis of policy? Johnson slinks into oblivion while Ho Chi Minh continues in resplendent glory. This also is due to the scientific-technical revolution, its contradiction and connections.

What Marcuse completely overlooks is that the scientific-technical revolution transforms man. In what way? In a capitalist society in a contradictory way. It gives him new dimensions of power, of being at once riddled with unprecedented wants and capacities. It also cripples him and threatens him with annihilation. It heightens the sense of outrage, the gulf between fact and potential, between existence and essence. And all this against the background of the continuing momentum of the social revolution. It is this that gives rise to the veritable earthquake in the sensibilities and aspirations of the younger generation, the 'revolt of the youth' as it is called. Alienation also produces revolution against alienation. Alienation carried to the extreme explodes into revolutionary consciousness and action.

In such a situation it is not necessary for those who want revolutionary transformation to devise meaningless utopias. Life itself provides a programme of action which is born out

of it and further develops revolutionary upheavals. Indeed, at such a time prophets of despair and counsellors of absurd gestures can only help the establishment which is more than willing to give them all the publicity they want and which utilises them also as part of the gigantic effort at manipulation and diversion.

Even if one grants the objective possibility of revolutionary transformation, what about the subjective factor, the agent and leader of the revolutionary process? What, in the final analysis, has happened to the working class?

Marcuse does not put forward the postulate that the working class is diminishing in numbers, as some other sorry sociologists do. He claims that the revolutionary possibilities of the working class have not only diminished but been extinguished. He bases his thesis on the further thesis that the working class is now 'integrated' with the system. On what is the second thesis based? On the fact that the real wages and living standards of employed workers have risen in the metropolitan capitalist countries during the past two decades. Here, again, we have economism in reverse. If those who uphold economist positions emphasise that economic struggles are the be-all and end-all of everything, the Marcusians and others feel that economic gains destroy the revolutionary potential of the working class.

On what factors did Marx base his thesis that in the next historical step forward, that is, in the socialist revolution, it would be the working class that would be the leading and most consistently revolutionary class? It was certainly not on the basis that the working class was the poorest class or that it was the class which would go on getting poorer with each passing day. One has only to remember Marx's polemic against west on who advocated the iron law of wages and the futility of trade-union action. One has only to recall that Marx formulated his law of absolute impoverishment with specific mention of countervailing forces and that he categorically stated:

that in the calculation of the value of labour-power, that is, wages, certain social and moral factors have their part to play.

Marx based his thesis about the specially revolutionary role of the working class on the fact that it was the inevitable product of capitalism, that its position was bound up with the most developed forms of production, that it was organised by its very productive function, that it owned no means of production and exploited nobody. The working class in its everyday struggle came face-to-face with the capitalists and its emancipation could only be accomplished by the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production. The working class was, according to Marx, to be the gravediggers of capitalism as a result of the combination of all these factors. And, a point fully developed by Lenin, it would be headed in its struggle by its most clear-sighted and internationalist vanguard, the communist parties.

Now, if we examine the working class in the developed capitalist countries (leaving aside for the moment the poverty-stricken workers of the 'third world') we find that while it may be materially better off than some twenty years ago, it has lost none of the characteristics which Marx felt gave it a specially revolutionary character. And again if the working class of the USA or UK is not yet conscious of its revolutionary calling, it was also not conscious before either, that is, in the days prior to Marcuse's so-called one-dimensional society. Evidently, historical peculiarities play an important role here. How else is one to explain the great difference in consciousness, say, of the French and Italian working class and that of West Germany, let alone the USA and the UK? To attempt to denigrate the working class, to play upon the prejudices and vanity of the intelligentsia and build a wall between the two is precisely to play the game of the monopolists at a time when objective conditions for their unity are brighter than ever. It is also to fall a prey to pessimism since nobody will take seriously the possibility of a revolution led by the 'non-

integrated', that is, the lumpen elements and some frenzied students.

The developments in the recent decade certainly necessitate the most rapid creative development and application of Marxism. Simply repeating old formulas and stereotyped solutions will only damage the cause of revolution and have damaged it. The revolutionary appeal of Marxism has always to be made contemporary and there have been serious lags in this sphere. New social strata are being drawn into the ranks of revolution and each generation of workers has its own specific characteristics. This means very strenuous intellectual work has to be undertaken by the Marxists and very skilful working out of the strategy and tactics of revolution has to be constantly done afresh.

But for this work Marcuse of the present day, Marcuse of the days of fame and publicity, not only offers no help but proves a positive hindrance. Those who have been fascinated by him will either soon lose this fascination or lose themselves. The power of negative thinking either leads on to revolutionising practice or ends up as sterile intellectual playing with revolutionary phrases. One must choose and acquire the stamina to fulfil one's choice.

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