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Marxist Ideology in the Contemporary World– Its Appeals and Paradoxes

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Preface

The seven essays in this volume represent edited versions of original papers, expanded comments, and one public address presented on the third day of the international conference organized by the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University on October 5, 6, and 7, 1964, entitled "One Hundred Years of Revolutionary Internationals."

The material which follows complements two independently published books * which contain papers offered at the various sessions of the first two days of this conference. In the first book, eight prominent experts from the United States and Europe analyze the impact of Marxism in the twentieth century, or more precisely the fundamental historical characteristics of Communist "isms"—from Leninism to Maoism—in their relationship with the original Marxism and explore their mutual connections, continuity, and contradictions. Whereas in the second, another team of recognized experts from both continents survey the general nature and the historical destinies of each of the three internationals which, despite differences, acted in the name of Marx.

The current volume serves to complete the cycle since it deals with Marxist ideology in the contemporary world. An attempt is made here to cast light on the appeals of Marxism in the non-Communist world and on the role of Marxism-Leninism in the Communist-ruled countries. The three separately published compilations combined offer a panoramic view of the three fundamental aspects of Marxism during

* (1) *Marxism in the Modern World*. Edited by Milorad M. Drachkovitch. Published for the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace by Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1965. (Hoover Institution Publications, 38); (2) *The Revolutionary Internationals, 1864–1943*. Edited by Milorad M. Drachkovitch. Published for the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace by Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1966. (Hoover Institution Publications, 45).

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the last one hundred years: the protean nature of its ideological message; the historical developments of the movements fighting in its name; and the characteristics of the political regimes which tried to put Marxist ideas in practice.

Mr. James McSherry has been most helpful in the editing of this book and I wish to express my sincere thanks for his cooperation.

January 1, 1966 M.M.D.

Contributors

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Milorad M. Drachkovitch

Introduction

Karl Loewith's saying that Marx's creed was a "story of salvation in the language of economics" may serve as an epigraph to this symposium. Five of the seven essays reproduced here discuss the appeals of Marxism in the Western, the Communist, and the "third" world; but in none of these essays is the political economy—in Marx's own "scientific" acceptation—suggested as an explanation for the contemporary attractiveness of Marxism. The remaining two essays, written by economists analyzing Marxist economics, also conclude that the non-economic aspects of Marxism explain its continued appeal after its scientific inadequacies have been revealed by the further development of society and theoretical analysis.

Such a paradox explains also the choice of a key word in the title of the book: Marxist *ideology*. It is used in the sense which Marx himself employed in his criticism of intellectual formulations and pretensions which either mystify the given social realities or cover by verbal screens the underlying vested interests. Thus, in the case of this book, its authors practically never speak of the contemporary meaning of Marxism to the proletariat or the working class, but analyze at length the fascination which certain aspects of Marxism exercise on a number of intellectuals in various parts of the world. Furthermore, these studies suggest that the qualitative meaning of political power in the countries ruled in the name of Marx appears as the very foundation of the structure instead of being simply an impersonal reflection of the new forces and relations of production. The significance of the analyses that follow lies in their attempt to go behind the façade of (often mutually exclusive) Marxist official pronouncements, in search of the real forces, social and psychological, that determine commitments to this most dynamic and protean doctrine of our time.

A revolutionary doctrine par excellence, Marxism could not have played the role it played in the past and is playing today if its other fundamental characteristic were not its "multiple ambiguity." The perceptive biographer of Marxism's centennial life, Bertram D. Wolfe, has pointed to the hard core of the problem, to the "ambiguity in the spirit of Marx himself, ambiguity in the heritage he left, and ambiguity in those who claimed to be his heirs." Thus, a part of Marxian thought and action has been absorbed and diluted in the fabric of the Western pluralistic societies: democratic socialism as an emanation of the politically maturing and organized working class was certainly a legitimate heir of the Marx-led First and Engels-blessed Second Internationals. There is also at least a para-Marxist determinism in W. W. Rostow's fundamental thesis that the "stages-of-growth are an economic way of looking at whole societies." One could say, moreover, that the political economy of contemporary Western welfare states has partly negated and partly adopted the views of the founding fathers of "scientific" Socialism, in their mature years, and of the non-Marxist and anti-Marxist labor movements.

On the other hand, as Professor Lewis Feuer indicates in his essay in this book, the "theoretical history [of Marxism] has been a history of syncretisms." In this sense the Leninist merger of the basic postulates of Marxism with the revolutionary and organizational traditions of Russian populism, has resulted in an amalgam, doctrinally barely compatible but politically supremely effective, known as Marxism-Leninism. Furthermore, the recent discovery that the writings of the young, "protohistorical" Marx exhale a spirit congenial to the alienated intellectuals in the contemporary world, has brought together another theoretically uneasy, well-nigh apolitical quasi-union of Marxism and existentialism. We find thus today three sharply distinguishable and mutually hostile "Marxisms": the historical, "robustly materialistic" (in Sidney Hook's words), social-democratic Marxism which belongs to one current of Western thought and political experience, and thus to the common Western cultural heritage; the voluntaristic, militantly anti-Western—and in China even anti-Russian—"bolshevized" Marxism of present-day Communist parties; and the Utopian and anarchistic "neo-orthodox Marxism" (as Lewis Feuer calls it) which is politically a-Communist but which rejects Western civilizational roots. The essays of this book deal with the two latter aspects of Marxist ideology today.

If one passes from these general observations on Marxist polymorphism to its threefold representations in the contemporary world,

the picture becomes even more intricate and paradoxical. Discussing the appeals of Marxism in the Western world today, Professors Hook and Feuer agree that we are witnessing a relatively sudden and totally unpredictable schism in the interpretation of Marxism. It consists in the rejection, by the present generation of Western intellectuals who have plunged into the old master's texts, of the central themes which for decades were considered the alpha and omega of the doctrine, and which are now being superseded by the concept of alienation, sketched briefly by the young Marx and discarded and even mocked at by the maturing and older Marx himself. This "standing of the mature Marx on his head," as Professor Feuer writes, does not mean only a break with "scientific Socialism," and a return to the "millenary, eschatological traditions of primitive socialism" (Hook); it has other significant corollaries. It reflects a dominance of the critical mood among those Western intellectuals who, in their hostility to the established social order and in their predisposition to revolt against or at least reject it, find a much greater satisfaction in the psychological and unmeasurable concept of "alienation" than in the earlier, classical, and much more concrete economic notion of "exploitation." The alienationist trend in Western contemporary Marxism is not centered in the working class or accepted by it, but becomes the doctrine of the intellectuals of middle-class origin who have cut their intellectual and emotional umbilical cord with Western civilization, and are no less hostile to classical liberalism and the reformist social democracy, than to the traditional values of the West. In his analysis of the "generational revolt" of the students at the Berkeley campus against "The System," Professor Feuer notes that it had nothing to do with the older Marxist tradition of class struggle determined by the interplay of the economic forces in society (the students of today being the most affluent in history) but by qualitatively different impulses—"ethical and voluntaristic"—leading to "spontaneous, quickly mounted, guerrilla action against the System." Professor Hook reaches a similar conclusion in the section of his analysis devoted to the "plain Marxism" of the late Professor C. Wright Mills. The latter's claim to be working "in Marx's own tradition" is denied by Professor Hook; instead it is said to be based on a "pre-Marxist, simplistic moralism," whose political counterpart is, under the present circumstances, "an expression of solidarity for 'the new world' extending from China and Russia to Cuba."

This dualism of estrangement from one's own social and cultural milieu and abstract revolutionary solidarity with the Communist ex-

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periments of total social engineering, which possesses philosophical neo-Marxism in the West today, bears a direct relevance to the analysis in the essay of Professor Bauer of the appeals of Marxism on intellectuals in the underdeveloped countries. There again the methodology of the Marxist nineteenth-century "social physics" would have a rather demoralizing effect (Professor Bauer notes that Marx regarded the metropolitan countries as a progressive force in promoting modernization of the colonies), without the ideological and emotional reinterpretation of Marxism in its Leninist variant. A violently anti-Western Marxism-Leninism appears then, in these emerging and not yet diversified societies, at a time of erosion of local traditional values and beliefs, both as an "intellectual structure comprising method, analysis and empirical observation" and a "secular messianic faith or creed which promises salvation here but not now." Moreover, the fact that Marxism-Leninism serves as an official guide in the process of economic transformation of two politically successful empires—the Soviet Russian and the Communist Chinese—is bound to influence those in the underdeveloped countries who are more susceptible to being impressed by the effectiveness of political power than by ideological inconsistencies or economic failures. The guilt feeling of the West, exemplified in the already depicted "neo-orthodox Marxism" of Western intellectuals, enhances the ideological appeals of Marxism-Leninism to the intellectuals of the "third" world. Finally, the Communist concept of economic planning as a precondition for speedy economic growth, in contrast to the alleged inefficiency of capitalism as a model for economic development (Professor Wu scrutinizes in his essay the mystifying and the empirical aspects of both propositions) appeals also to many politicians and intellectuals, since it implies the concentration of power in their governmental hands, in lands in which the gap between the educated elites and the rest of the population is of staggering proportions.

Neo-Marxism in the West, and Marxism-Leninism in the underdeveloped countries thus play different roles. In the former case, neo-Marxism acts as a dissolvent of the existing order; in the latter case, Marxism-Leninism is at least a potential basis and justification for the establishment of varying degrees of despotic and totalitarian regimes. In the other parts of the world, there where the Communist parties are in power, Marxism-Leninism performs still another function, that of a state-building doctrine. The role of the ideology in the Soviet Union (and by inference in other Communist-ruled countries) is examined analytically and conceptually in different ways in the essays

written by Father Bochenski and Professor Bell. The distinguished Catholic philosopher compares Marxism-Leninism to some of the great religions like Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam during certain periods of their histories. He insists with equal force on the adjustments and even partial capitulations of the official doctrine to the necessities of life (such as the flagrantly anti-Marxist recognition of the value of patriotism and the stress laid on family life) and he believes that the principal strength of Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union resides in the fact that it is "the unifying ideology of a great and proud nation." He recognizes, of course, the difficulties which a dogmatic ideology encounters in the changing and diversifying realities of Soviet life, but he urges the reader to ponder the possibility that just this confrontation with reality may bring not the decay but the purification and strengthening of Marxism-Leninism conceived as a moral and metaphysical faith. Professor Bell's approach to the same problem is quite different. As a sociologist he views the ideology of Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union as a "social cement," a creed whose function is both "to justify itself and to meet the challenges of (or to challenge) other creeds." He considers, however, that a chain of international and domestic circumstances has already weakened doctrinal unity and has put Marxism-Leninism increasingly on the defensive. Here is a partial listing of these antidogmatic pressures: the role of science as a powerful challenger of older orthodoxies; the incongruity between doctrinal anticipations and the real life of society; the psychological reverberations, particularly among the intellectuals, of Khrushchev's destalinization campaign; a virtual revolution in Soviet economic theory and practice; the uneven development of Socialism on an international scale, magnified by the split with the Chinese Communists, etc. All these factors exercise an eroding influence on two pillars of Marxist-Leninist ideology: the Soviet "historical mission" to realize "communism," and the legitimacy of the "chosen instrument" —the Party—to lead toward the realization of the historical mission. Professor Bell considers that both of these ideological pillars have already lost their original rigidity and in this sense he applies to the contemporary Soviet society his well-known concept of the "end of ideology": "the abatement of the *dynamism* of a creed and the reduction of the role of ideology as a 'weapon' against external and internal enemies."

There is, moreover, another aspect of ideological erosion which manifests itself in different forms and with varying degrees of intensity in all Communist countries. It is the discovery on the part of

the younger Soviet intellectuals of the concept of alienation in the years after 1956. During his extensive academic stay in the Soviet Union in 1963, Professor Feuer found that concept to be "most provocative and illuminating to young Soviet philosophers"; it helped them "to articulate their own discontent with the Bureaucratic Society." [1]

All the preceding considerations—only remotely suggesting the scope and richness of the essays in the present volume—lead to a final and central question asked by Professor Haberler: "How a theory with such glaring defects could exert such a tremendous and persistent influence." He notes that Marx deliberately refrained from going into the economics of socialism, and that his was a theory of capitalist development. Thus, since Western capitalism evolved in a sense contrary to Marx's predictions, and Eastern socialism could hardly find in Marx's nineteenth-century writings the operative solutions for the qualitatively different problems of the twentieth century, Marxist "scientific" relevance is negligible, both East and West. We have thus to look elsewhere to find the answer to the question of the sources of the appeal of Marxism. They seem to be twofold. One is, especially in the non-Communist countries, that "Marxism" represents today the contemporary version of the old phenomenon of "revolutionary messianism." In the words of Norman Cohn (from his book *The Pursuit of the Millennium*), it is a revolutionary ideology and movement of a peculiar kind, in that its aims and promises are boundless. It is appealing because it is so utterly apart from the ordinary run of political parties; contrary to all of them, it endows "social conflicts and aspirations with a transcendental significance—in fact with all the mystery and majesty of the final, eschatological drama." But if this side of the Marxist message satisfies the perennial activist and quasi-religious craving for Utopia in many individuals, Marxism in this century has undergone another transformation, particularly in the Communist countries. There, according to Albert Camus, "the will to power came to take the place of the will to justice, pretending at first to be identified with it and then relegating it to a place somewhere at the end

[1] While the young Soviet philosophers approach the problem of critique of their own society with understandable restraint, their Yugoslav counterparts proceed with quite a remarkable directness. A group of "angry young professors" of philosophy at the University of Zagreb, who since September 1964 have been editing a review called *Praxis*, wage an open ideological battle against the Yugoslav Communist bureaucracy in the name of the writings of the young Marx. In the words of one of them, the faithfulness to the humanistic spirit of the early Marxian critique requires "a merciless criticism of everything that exists."

of history, waiting until such time as nothing remains on earth to dominate."

Yet if the attractiveness of Utopia and the fascination of Communist power explain to a large extent the appeals of Marxism in the contemporary world, they do not encompass another fundamental aspect of this protean phenomenon. For, if it is paradoxical that a doctrine claiming to be a science assumes in reality the role of a modern mythology, and that a promise of full human liberation transforms itself in practice into its opposite, Marxism performs today another historical function, no less paradoxical. It becomes in the West, in an unexpected form, an intellectual tool of total social critique and total rejection. No less significantly, however, it emerges as a potential dissolvent as well of the very regimes which speak (with discordant voices) in the name of Marxist orthodoxy. The essence of Marxist ideological ambiguity lies in the unpredictability of its historical uses.

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