



Marxmanship

Socialist Humanism:

An International Symposium
edited by Erich Fromm.
Doubleday, 264 pp., \$5.95

Marxism In The Modern World
edited by Milorad M. Drachkovitch.
Stanford (for the Hoover Institution),
293 pp., \$5.95

George Lichtheim

What happens to an idea when it takes on flesh and becomes a way of life? One may also ask: what happens to a movement with utopian aims when it comes to power and finds itself confronted with the ancient conundrums that have baffled political philosophers since the time of Aristotle? Does it renounce its ultimate goals, reformulate them, admit the necessity of compromise, or pretend that nothing has happened? The history of the great world religions supplies one answer, that of Western liberalism since the Renaissance another. We have all grown used to the notion that civilizations are founded upon utopian or messianic promises which are never fulfilled, but without which there would have been no progress. This is Hegelian skepticism, suitable to a post-revolutionary age. We have seen through every illusion, including the latest and most potent of all: that of communism.

The odd thing is that the founder of "scientific socialism" started from a similar conviction. In the 1840s—half a century after the French Revolution had proclaimed the advent of a new age—all the clever young men in Europe were busy explaining why the enterprise had failed. The cleverest of them were the Berlin Hegelians, who had been taught by the Master to perceive the Cunning of Reason: the process whereby History (the rationality of the Whole) triumphs at the expense of its own agents. And the outstanding intellect among them was the youthful Karl Marx, then briefly editor of the bourgeois-liberal *Rheinische Zeitung*. His editorial office (he complained in 1842) was infested with utopian contributors who even tried to smuggle communist propaganda into music criticism. It was downright immoral, he said! Even after he had in the following year removed to Paris and become a revolutionary democrat, he still distrusted the French communists he met. Their crude egalitarianism, he said sharply, amounted to no more than a generalized envy, and moreover they seemed to be aiming at the destruction of marriage!

Of all the paradoxes which have accompanied the history of Marxism, the greatest is that of Marx himself: the ruthless critic of utopianism posthumously become the prophet of a "total" revolution. Some two-thirds of the three dozen essays assembled by Dr. Erich Fromm under the title *Socialist Humanism* deal with various aspects of this transformation. Four are outstanding:

those by Herbert Marcuse, Eugene Kamenka, Iring Fetscher, and Maximilien Rubel. Most of the others can be read with profit, notably those contributed by neo-Marxist philosophers from Poland, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. Only one (by Professor Abendroth of Marburg) deals specifically with Marxian economics. This seems a pity, especially since Abendroth's real forte is po-

saints have to be childish? In that case, why bother to print their effusions? To balance this descent into the nursery there is a highly technical piece of economic analysis by Professor Paul Meadow of Rutgers: interesting in itself, only very tenuously linked to the general theme and not connected at all with the discussion of Marxism. Making up a symposium can never be easy; this one

there being no accredited Soviet writers who can hold their own in this sort of international forum—the debate is conducted without the customary polemical overtones. The real interest thus lies in comparing the attitudes of the Eastern "revisionists" with those of their Western counterparts. Not surprisingly the latter turn out to be both more critical of traditional Marxism and more pessimistic about the general march of events: for them, not only Communism but the entire Socialist tradition has become questionable, whereas the East Europeans, having got rid of Stalin (and of Lenin too, though they are too discreet to admit it) are currently in the process of rediscovering the "real" Marx: a phase corresponding to the West European and American debate of the 1950s. This lag accounts for the enthusiasm with which Warsaw, Prague, and Belgrade now celebrate their newly won freedom to contrast "what Marx really meant" with what the Stalinists have made of it. In the Eastern context these seemingly academic debates still have explosive possibilities, though the authorities (outside the USSR, where such heresies are strictly verboten, at any rate in print) have by now learned how to cope with revisionist philosophers. They are shunted aside into academic journals and allowed some restricted freedom, on the tacit understanding that politics (i.e., the exercise of power) is not to be touched: an unplanned retreat to a fairly traditional type of East European authoritarianism, familiar already under the Habsburgs.

The reverse side of this medal is the greater concreteness of the East European debate where despite all precautions, it touches upon the legitimation of the new order. Marxism (or Marxism-Leninism) being the official creed, every human and social problem has to be discussed in relation to the classic texts. The scholasticism which is the bane of this procedure is part of the price paid for the relative freedom won by the revisionists: not to mention the orthodox like Schaff (there is no contribution from his heretical rival and critic, Kolakowski). In his rather apologetic manner Schaff puts the case well enough when he remarks that in a country like Poland Marxian socialism now has to answer all the questions which people normally put to those in authority:

The problem of the individual will sooner or later make itself felt—even if it was overlooked for some time. Whatever we call it, and in whatever form it presents itself to us, the "philosophy of man" will force its way through, since with stabilization, when the enemy has been subdued and life is going on, the central problem—how to make people happy—will be of ever greater importance.

In less orthodox language this is also the message of the other Polish Czechoslovak and Yugoslav contributors (there are no Hungarians).



litical philosophy, on which he is very good indeed. The non-Marxian Socialists included in this volume are a curious lot: Bertrand Russell (represented by an amiable piece of nonsense); Norman Thomas (very good and topical); Professor Titmuss, the theorist of British welfare socialism; a couple of Catholic philosophers; a well-meaning disciple of Gandhi; and the apostle to the Sicilians, Danilo Dolci. I must confess I found his meanderings difficult to take. Do

could have done with greater ruthlessness on the part of the Editor.

Since most of the participants are Marxists of one kind or another, it is inevitable that the East-West conflict should overflow into their pages. It does so, however, only in so far as some of the East European contributors (notably Professor Adam Schaff of Warsaw) cannot quite repress an urge to put in a plug for coexistence. As the Russians are not represented—understandably,



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Not surprisingly, the Westerners are less complacent. Their problem after all arises from the circumstance that advanced Western society has not undergone the kind of transformation to which the Marxian categories might have been relevant: though the Fabian contributors to this volume—notably Professor Titmuss and Mr. T.B. Bottomore—are reasonably hopeful about gradual socialization along democratic lines. What is left of Marxism in a Western milieu, once it is conceded that a socialist revolution has to be ruled out? For M. Rubel (himself of Rumanian origin, but long settled in Paris) the failure of Marxism is due to its original "Jacobin" commitment to a type of political upheaval which experience has shown to be irrelevant so far as the actual labor movement is concerned. This might be described as a Social-Democratic standpoint, though M. Rubel's sympathies appear to be with the Syndicalists: the socialist utopia must be willed. He is not ashamed to be called a utopian—more power to his elbow. At the philosophical level we have Professors Ernst Bloch and Herbert Marcuse: both representatives of Weimar Germany's Hegelianized Marxism, and neither of them exactly hopeful about the future. A note of skepticism also runs through the perceptive philosophical studies contributed by Professors Iring Fetscher of Tuebingen and Eugene Kamenka of Canberra, while the Editor puts in a characteristically hopeful plea for a synthesis of Marx and Freud. Whatever the attractions of such an intellectual fusion, it clearly has little political relevance.

What then is one to make of the prospects of a humanist Socialism based upon, or derived from, Marx? On the positive side, the dissociation of Marxism from Leninism has now reached the point where virtually all the contributors to this volume (including those from Warsaw and Prague) feel free to ignore the Leninist vision of a global conflict resulting in the triumph of Communism. Conversely this retreat from Lenin to Marx tends to reproduce some of the unsolved problems of the older Socialist movement, from which the Communists broke away after 1917 because they thought they had found a shortcut. The most one can say at the moment is that the more critical among them now seem to find it possible to see Leninism as a specifically Russian phenomenon. This of course is still considered heresy in the USSR, but it is beginning to make headway. Some day perhaps the Russians too will begin to see the point, and then it may become possible for them to cut loose from their Chinese allies and get back into Europe, where they belong. Meanwhile we are left with a "Marxist humanism" which is really not much more than an alembicated extract from the writings of Marx and a handful of his followers: very impressive in its way, but more suited to the academy than to the organization of a mass movement.

Marxism in the Modern World is a different kettle of fish altogether. The title is a misnomer. Except for M. Raymond Aron, who skims rapidly over the surface of the subject, none of the contributors has anything to say about Marxism—past, present, or future. They are concerned with the Cold War, the lessons of Stalinism, and the dissolution of the Sino-Soviet bloc. Bertram Wolfe provides a sketch of Lenin, Boris Souvarine deals briefly with the Stalinist

terror, Professor Fainsod presents a chapter on "Khrushchevism" (alas, out of date now), Adam Ulam explains Tito, Theodore Draper analyzes Castro, and Richard Lowenthal—in the most substantial essay of the lot—goes at some length into the prospects of "pluralistic Communism." Since these papers were originally read at a Stanford conference organized by the Hoover Institution in early October 1964, they are distinguished by a certain unity of tone and (needless perhaps to say) by professional expertise. For the rest, they may be described as variations on a single theme: the East-West conflict and what to do about it. This kind of writing is becoming a mass-production industry. It is also becoming a bore. There is nothing new to be said about Lenin, Stalin, Mao, or Tito, and precious little that one had not heard about the prospects of coexistence or Communist "polycentrism." The time has come to proclaim a moratorium upon these mental exercises. This is not to say that the papers collected in this volume are without value. With one or two exceptions they are both scholarly and readable. The trouble is that one has heard it all before. Now that this collection is out, it should be issued in paperback for the use of undergraduates, and thereafter all the participants should take a solemn vow never to do it again.

There is, unfortunately, a graver fault. The Conference organizers had built their program around the theme "One Hundred Years of Revolutionary Internationals"—reckoning back to September 1864, when the First International was founded in London. In other words, they made the explicit assumption that Stalin and Mao were and are the legitimate heirs of the European labor movement, and of democratic socialism in general. This of course is what the Communists would like everyone to believe, though in point of fact it is nonsense. It is also the doctrine of those American right-wingers who for some reason go under the label of "conservatives." Is this the reason why the Hoover Institution sponsored this particular program? The Conference itself gathered at Stanford a few months after Senator Goldwater had swept California, and there is a distinctly Goldwaterish ring to Mr. Drachkovitch's introduction, though he begins by explaining rather lamely that "the generic term 'Marxism' is only inferentially connected with the doctrine and movement that Marx and Engels developed and originally led in the nineteenth century." Then why place a misleading title on the cover? I think I know the answer and it does no great credit either to the Hoover Institution or to the planners of this particular enterprise.

Mental aberrations of this sort help to legitimize the rather excessive tolerance displayed by Dr. Fromm in the compilation of his symposium. After all, if the Right persists in treating Marxism and Communism as synonymous, why should not the Left pretend that they have little to do with each other? The reality was and is more complex. Marxism has served both as the ideology of the European labor movement, and as the fighting creed of a totalitarian intelligentsia which never had (and never will have) the least interest in the genuine concerns of the working class. The First and Second Internationals were democratic Socialist movements, the Third was a radically new departure,

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