A Critical Re-Examination of Herbert Marcuse's Works

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THE FOLLOWING ESSAY WAS ORIGINALLY PREPARED for a student conference on Herbert Marcuse's thought organized by Students for a Democratic Society and projected for the Spring of 1968. The idea of such a conference had a double importance for me. First, it seemed to symbolize a quest for philosophy and a break from traditional American pragmatism on the part of the largest and most vital New Left organization. I have long believed that the prime need of our movement is not a "revolutionary vanguard party" (God knows we have been plagued with plenty of those!) but a genuine revolutionary philosophy—the prerequisite for the total transformation of society. The critical examination of Marcuse, who poses the most fundamental and practical questions precisely because he is a dialectical philosopher, seemed an ideal first step in that direction.

Moreover, in discussing Marcuse, S.D.S. was moving toward an examination of Marxism as it is in itself—not as the stultifying, rigid ideology it has become in the hands of today's Communists, who use and abuse it only to mask their own brand of class rule behind "revolutionary" rhetoric, nor in the debilitating context of our own "free" academia where the deliberate fragmentation of knowledge and the rigid separation of theory from practice prevent Marxism from being studied in its true light: as a total philosophy aiming at total human self-liberation.

My own contribution aimed at revealing the ambiguities of Marcuse's thought on two essential questions: that of the masses as Reason —the proletariat as the basic negative force for social transformation— and that of Humanism, its positive content. On both of these questions, a study of Marcuse's development over the years reveals a gradual retreat from the magnificent affirmations of his early *Reason and Revolution* to the point where, most recently, a question mark is placed over both concepts.

The S.D.S. conference did not take place this Spring. What did take place was a world-wide youth revolt of which Marcuse, somewhat ironically, has been branded as the instigator by the unanimous vote of *Pravda, L'Humanité,* and the *N.Y. Times.* The establishment press, whether bourgeois or "Communist," fears nothing more than spontaneous rebellion and is always ready to point to an "outside agitator." It is equally incapable of comprehending the profound relationship between the aspirations of revolutionary youth and the philosophical critique of the

pervasive alienation and unfreedom of modern technological society as formulated by a Marcuse. Yet, significantly, the very two concepts Marcuse had called into question in his more recent works were central to the rebellions of Spring '68. In Eastern Europe, rebels young and old have translated Humanism into the demand for true communism and genuine political freedom in opposition to the official usurpers of the Marxist banner. In France, the students discovered in the proletariat the social force capable of realizing their revolutionary aspirations. Our own Columbia rebels are taking the first hesitant steps toward a worker-student alliance while, in National S.D.S., the question of the American working class dominated the Convention held this June in Michigan.

It thus appears that these two concepts have emerged out of revolutionary practice just when Marcuse was calling them into question in theory. A critical re-examination of Marcuse's thought is more than ever timely.

MARCUSE'S WORKS COVER THREE DISTINCT PERIODS. The first, and to this writer, the greatest, was symbolized by *Reason and Revolution,* which was published in 1941 and subtitled "Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory."[1] The uniqueness of this seminal work lay in the manner in which philosophy and history were dealt with as a single unit—both in Hegel, the bourgeois philosopher, and in Marx, the proletarian revolutionary. As a consequence, the relationship of Marx to Hegel, the dialectician, and Marx to labor, the human force for the reconstruction of society, was seen as grounded in an historically new "social theory"—dialectical materialism—that at no time separated itself from the reality of the day and yet saw the future inherent in the present. Marcuse showed, at one and the same time, how Hegel, writing under the impact of the French Revolution, "drew history into philosophy" (p. 6), thereby making Reason and Freedom historic as well as philosophic categories, and how Marx the humanist, writing under the impact of the class struggles of his day, developed the Hegelian dialectic into the Marxian. Marcuse demonstrated how both the young and the mature Marx drew upon Hegel's theory of alienation to develop the pluri-dimensional theory of liberation which was Marxism. In so doing, he separated Marxian economics from the theory of present-day Communists who equate positive communism with statified property. "It is of the utmost importance," he wrote, "that Marx views the abolition of private property entirely as a means for the abolition of alienated labor, and not as an end in itself." (p. 282) Rather than a change in property form, a new human dimension was at stake.

Moreover, Marcuse analyzed the labor process as the key to all social relations and pointed to the working class as the incarnation of historical

1. Page numbers are quoted from the 1960 Beacon paperback edition.

Reason both *before* the revolution, as the negation of capitalist society from within, and *after* as the self-creating subject of the new society: "There can be no blind necessity in tendencies that terminate in a free and self-conscious society. The negation of capitalism begins within capitalism itself, but even in the phases that precede revolution there is active the rational spontaneity that will animate the post-revolutionary phases." (p. 318)

The Marxian dialectic was seen as emerging out of the self-activity of the proletariat, shaping their own history as "freely associated individuals." "According to Marx," Marcuse concluded, "the correct theory is the consciousness of a practice that aims at changing the world." (p. 321) Marcuse correctly insisted that "the historical heritage of Hegel's philosophy," its *critical* tendencies, did not pass to the Hegelians but "were taken over by, and continued in, the Marxian social theory, while, in all other aspects, the history of Hegelianism became the history of a struggle *against* Hegel . . ." (p. 252) In becoming both inheritor of the Hegelian dialectic and the historical agent of the transformation of the world through proletarian revolution, the proletariat, in Marx's view, made it possible for Reason and Revolution to be merged.

In contrast to what I would call the revolutionary optimism of Marcuse during the 1940's, his writings in the 1950's undergo a fundamental transformation away from Marx's concept of the proletariat as the revolutionary class. The dividing line in Marcuse's thought can first be seen in the July 1957 preface he wrote for the book, *Marxism and Freedom,* by Raya Dunayevskaya.[2] Although he states there that "a re-examination of Marxian theory" is "one of the most urgent tasks for comprehending the contemporary situation," (p. 15) he nonetheless maintains that, while "no other theory seems to have accurately anticipated the basic tendencies" in capitalist society, "none apparently had drawn such incorrect conclusions from its analysis." According to Marcuse, "The key for the understanding of the development of Marxism since about the turn of the century is the transformation of 'free' into organized capitalism on an international scale, its economic and political stabilization, and the ensuing increase in the standard of living." (p. 19) This, plus the labor bureaucracy, has fundamentally changed "the situation of a major part of these (laboring) classes from one of 'absolute negation' to one of affirmation of the established system." (p. 20) Marcuse concludes his preface by stating that, while he still agrees with Dunayevskaya in "all essentials with the theoretical interpretation of the Marxian *oeuvre* . . . he disagrees with some decisive parts of the analysis of post-Marxian developments, . . . and, perhaps most important, with the analysis of the contemporary position, structure, and consciousness of the laboring classes." In a word,

2. Page numbers quoted from the 1964 paperback edition by Twayne Publishers.

"Marx's concept of the proletariat as 'revolutionary class in-itself (an sich)' . . . seems to be applicable neither to the majority of the laboring classes in the West nor to that in the communist orbit." (p. 20)

Marcuse has indeed gone to the root of the change in his outlook. It is clear enough that he is taking issue, not so much with other Marxists, but with Marx himself. Moreover, none is better aware than he that to question what has always been the warp and woof of Marxism is a challenge one must be prepared to back up in fact and in theory, in history and philosophy. And if one is to question the historic agent of revolutionary transformation—the working class—the challenger must, if he still considers himself a revolutionary, as Marcuse most certainly does, present a "substitute."

WE HAVE TO WAIT NEARLY A DECADE before Marcuse elaborates his view comprehensively. However, between the challenge in 1957 and the publication of *One-Dimensional Man* in 1964, we do get two important indications of the direction of his thinking. One is the book, *Soviet Marxism,* published in 1958.[3] The other is the course he gave at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in 1958-59, the ideas of which he summarized in an article in *Arguments* (Paris) entitled "From Ontology to Technology: Tendencies in Industrial Society." Both writings are concerned with ideology rather than with reality which, in these instances, serves merely as "background." In the second the point of concentration is the "West;" in the first it is Russia.

In analyzing what he calls *Soviet Marxism,* Marcuse has moved so far from the philosophical and historical sweep of *Reason and Revolution* that he is able to call the Russian revisions of the dialectic "orthodox!" It is true he puts the word, "orthodox," in quotation marks, but so is the word "revision"; the irony must take second place to this fantastic conclusion: "Since Soviet Marxists maintain that Soviet society is a socialist society, they consistently invest it with the corresponding characteristics. What is involved is not so much a revision of the dialectic as the claim of socialism for a non-socialist society." (p. 154) In a word, all that is wrong are the facts, the exploitative reality! There are, indeed, no limits to the magical qualities of revisions that can pass themselves as the "truth" (sic!) of Marxism by virtue of the substitution of ideology (that is to say "false consciousness" in the strict Marxian usage) for reality.

The magic which enables Marcuse to perform this feat is what he

3. Columbia University Press. I will quote from this original hardcover edition, rather than the more recent paperback, because the latter, without explanation, leaves out the all-important Introduction on "immanent critique." I am skipping over Marcuse's important *Eros & Civilization* (1955) only because the questions it raises are to a great extent not those at issue here.

calls "immanent critique," a method by which the dynamic of Soviet society is supposedly analyzed in terms of its own "Marxist" (my quotes) ideology. But since Marcuse, in his initial hypothesis, equates Marxism with the words and deeds of the Russian (especially Stalinist and post-Stalinist leadership), the critical content of this "immanent critique" is immediately vitiated. Thus: "the question as to whether or not the Soviet leadership is guided by Marxist principles is without relevance." (p. 9) It is irrelevant because the Russian Communist claim to incarnate the Marxist project in reality is never questioned: "There is a theoretical continuity from early Marxian notion of the Proletariat as objectified truth of capitalist society to the Soviet Marxist concept *Partinost* (par tisanship)."[4] Translated into more familiar political terms, the monolithic Party of Stalin is accepted as the historical substitute for Marx's self-acting workers.

In a word, "immanent critique" turns out to be what Hegel called that "barbarous method" which consists in assuming what is to be proved. The reader is thus deprived of even the possibility of an independent theoretical criterion for analyzing Russian Communism: "Under these circumstances, a critique which merely applies the traditional criteria of philosophical truth to Soviet Marxism does not, in a strict sense, reach its objective. Such a critique, no matter how strong and well founded it may be, is easily blunted by the argument that its conceptual foundations have been undermined by the Marxist transition into a different area of historical and theoretical verification." (pp. 9-10) For Marcuse, theory appears to have been "absorbed" into reality to the extent that the essentially negative and critical content of dialectical reason simply vanishes.

Contrast this revision in methodology with the highest moment in *Reason and Revolution* where Marcuse concluded: "Theory will preserve the truth even if revolutionary practice deviates from its proper path. Practice follows the truth, not vice versa. This absolutism of truth completes the philosophical heritage of the Marxian theory and once for all separates dialectical theory from subsequent forms of positivism and relativism." (p. 322)

Since in *Soviet Marxism* the focal point is Russia, it is never quite clear whether Marcuse's views on the proletariat are also aimed at the proletariat in the "West." Also what keeps shifting all the time is the point at which the Marxian concept of the proletariat is supposed to have "exploded." (p. 13) Though it seems sometimes to be designated as "the point of transition from capitalism to socialism" which occurred in 1917 in the backward East rather than the technologically advanced West, at other times there is a reiteration of what had been stated in the

4. Better rendered as "the Party spirit" i.e., the unquestioning belief that the Party is always right.

preface to *Marxism and Freedom,* i.e., the turn of the century when "free" capitalism became "organized capitalism." In either case, Marcuse goes right to the amazing conclusions that 1) "the new form of Marxian theory corresponds to the new historical agent," i.e., a "backward population," and 2) that "the ruled tend not only to submit to the rulers but also to reproduce in themselves their subordination." (p. 191)[5]

This, we must bear in mind, was written more than four years after the East German revolt of June 22, 1953, where workers rose up against totalitarian controls on the production line (the raising of "norms" or speed-up) thereby putting an end at one blow to the myth of Communist invulnerability to rebellion from within.[6] Moreover, Marcuse drew these conclusions hardly a year after the revolts throughout Eastern Europe culminated in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 which wrote a new page in the history of freedom not only by its opposition to Communist totalitarianism in the name of the humanism of Marxism, but above all because it developed a new form of *workers' rule* at the point of production in the Workers' Councils which even a Kadar had to reckon with.

Obviously, nothing is permitted to interfere with the new dogmatics.

As for the article in *Arguments,* it gives us a sort of preview of what Marcuse will contend in *One-Dimensional Man.*[7] There he ends the second period of his own intellectual development of writing: "It is more than a word game if I say: Technology has replaced ontology." And, we might add, his questions are already phrased in the form of answers when he asks whether "technique-ism has transformed capitalism and socialism." However it is better to follow the answer where he has the opportunity to develop them in full, in book-length form in *One-Dimensional Man* which has the three following sub-divisions: "One-Dimensional Society," "One-Dimensional Thought," and "The Chances for Alternatives."

Here, Marcuse does attempt to go beyond the study of the "Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society" to a probing of the automated productive process itself. There, he finds no signs of revolt or even of alienation ("the concept . . . seems to become questionable when the individuals identify themselves with the existence which is imposed upon them." p. 11) but only "integration" into an increasingly "totalitarian productive apparatus." So depressing is his vision of "one-dimensional society" that the grand philosopher of historical necessity and possibility is reduced to

5. As we shall see below, the same method applied to the pretentions of "technological rationality" in the West leads, as it must, to the same conclusions about the "backwardness" and "passivity" of the ruled.

6. The East German revolt in turn inspired a revolt in the forced labor camps in Vorkuta in Russia itself. See especially the report by a German Communist inmate, Joseph Scholmer, *Vorkuta,* Henry Holt, Inc., New York, 1955.

7. Beacon, Boston, 1964.

the despairing cry: "Perhaps an accident may alter the situation . . ." (p. xv.)

Knowing, as Marcuse the dialectician must, that an "accident" is no substitute for a new historical "Subject," when he comes to the section on the "Chances for Alternatives" to the *status quo* he looks hopefully toward "the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colors, the unemployed and the unemployable." The fact that this "Subject" does not develop itself within the system where it might acquire the social force to explode it does not seem to worry him. On the contrary, he maintains that precisely because it is "from without" it is "therefore not deflected by the system." (p. 257)

On the whole, however, he has nothing much to hold out against the deadening conformity, the very nearly built-in pre-supposition on page one about the "comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom" except "the Great Refusal." (p. 257) Indeed, so overwhelmed is he by the phenomenon of one-dimensionality that he takes it to be the whole, actually referring to the workers as well as the capitalists as "the two former antagonists" (p. xii), insisting all over again that there are "no demonstrable agents of social change," that "the second period of barbarism may well be the continued empire of civilization itself." (p. 257)

The reason for pessimism is, of course, not "psychological." Rather, as Raya Dunayevskaya pointed out in her review of the book (*The Activist,* Fall 1964), it is that "Marcuse's studies were developed outside of the range of workers' voices opposing the one-dimensional condition for automated labor." He shows this in the very reference he chose to make to a pamphlet by a black auto worker where he alludes only to a statement on the stupefying nature of automated work without once pointing to the pamphlet's central thesis: the *big divide* between the rank-and-file and the labor bureaucracy and the constant resistance of the former to automated production conditions.[8] On this question, Marcuse prefers to quote bourgeois analysts whose findings allow him to conclude that "The technical community seems to integrate the human atoms at work" (p. 25), further embellishing this statement with a quotation from Jean-Paul Sartre, who wrote that technology "joins sexuality and labor into one unconscious rhythmic automatism!" Since Marcuse has also chosen to quote Professor Charles R. Walkers's contention about "the eagerness of workers to share in the solution of production problems" as if that were the truth of the situation in the factories, mines, and mills, it becomes necessary to quote at least one passage from the above mentioned *Workers Battle Automation:*

> As against the brainwashing the union bureaucracy got both at the war-time conferences with the Government and at the post-war Automa-

8. The pamphlet in question is *Workers Battle Automation* by Charles Denby.

tion conferences with Government and Industry, the workers came up with *their* wartime invention: *THE WILDCAT*. Just as there was no other way for workers to act during the war when the bureaucracy had us shackled to the no-strike pledge, so there is no other way for the workers to act as the bureaucracy keeps shackling us with union contracts that do the boss's production for him . . .

The point is: we are not talking about what Automation *could* do if we lived under a different system, but what Automation *is* right here and now . . . The workers are doing their own thinking . . . Thinking and doing are not really as far apart as appears to those who are out 'to lead.' The workers need no leaders to tell them what Automation is. They know what it is, and because they know what it is, *they want to change it*. The time for change is now . . .

Marcuse was out of earshot of these workers, not because he himself is not on the production line, much less that he didn't "read" similar statements, but because he was moving away from *Marx's concept of the proletariat as the revolutionary,* historic agent of social transformation. This concept is not a question of "belief." Nor is it only one of "listening" to the workers (though that helps). Rather it is a question of never separating the ideal from the real, a dialectic method of—if I may use Marcuse's phrase—being "two-dimensional" and, as Marx expressed it, never failing to see that the more degraded the worker, the greater is his "quest for universality." Who doesn't know Marx's famous passage in *Capital*?

All means for the development of production transform themselves into means of domination over, and exploitation of, the producers; they mutilate the laborer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine . . . ; they estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labor process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power . . . Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital. (pp. 708-9)

Marx was clearly not unaware of the totalitarian character of the productive apparatus. Now what this has been described epiphenomenally as well, and one-dimensionality is so popular a description of the men under what Marcuse calls "technological rationality," it appears to me to be all the more necessary to remember the *Marxian* corollary to that description of toil and degradation: "the new forces and passions that spring up in the bosom of society" to see that the system is "annihilated." (*Capital*) This "unity of opposites," *within the productive process itself,* is the one that Marcuse refuses to analyze.

I trust this does not sound like "mere repetition of the old" in the

face of all the new that Marcuse has labored to bring forth since the time of Marx that even a Marx could not have possibly foreseen. Being young, I naturally incline more to "the new" than "the old." But while I cannot claim to have made an independent study of the new changes either in that production which Marcuse calls "organized capitalism" or in automation, I have seen and read enough to conclude that it is not easy to answer what is truly new in the process of production itself and not only in the phenomenal appearance. What *is* clear is that every new stage in production and social organization has been matched by a new stage in workers' revolts, e.g. the absorption of the trade union bureaucracy into the establishment and the introduction of automation engendering a new form of struggle in the wildcat.[9]

NOWHERE IS MARCUSE'S DEPARTURE FROM MARXISM more clearly seen than in his latest essay, "Socialist Humanism?" whose question mark relegates the value of Marx's humanism to the past.[10] Marcuse begins with a quotation from a work by Merleau-Ponty, written some 20 years ago, and which later was repudiated by the author. Yet Marcuse considers it so valid for our day that his own essay hangs on the main tenets of Merleau-Ponty's repudiated book, *Humanisme et Terreur*.[11] These are: 1) that one cannot counterpose theory to "contingency" which shows that there are two types of violence, "capitalist and socialist," between which one *must* chose and 2) that to "oppose to Marxism" (he means existing Communism) some abstract "morality first" is to "bypass the real problem."

The reason for Merleau-Ponty's repudiation of his views, of which Marcuse does not inform us, is that the "real problem" was not the abstraction quoted, but the forced labor camps in Russia which, in 1947, Merleau-Ponty had evidently accepted as some sort of necessary "socialist" violence. Whether or not Merleau-Ponty, in breaking from Jean-Paul Sartre, had seen that Marxism and Communism, far from being "synony-

9. My own contention is that the theory of state-capitalism, as developed within various Marxist tendencies around the time of World War II, is the only theory which has even attempted to grapple with this new *world* stage in fundamental terms. This theory is most fully developed in Dunayevskaya's 1957 *Marxism and Freedom*, which Marcuse himself, although he did not accept its conclusions, hailed as going "beyond the previous interpretations" because its author attempted "to recapture the integral unity of the Marxian theory at is very foundations: in the humanistic philosophy."

Dunayevskaya has compiled a wealth of data to prove the necessity of filling the theoretic void in the Marxist movement, not by departing from Marx's method, but by developing it for our day. See especially her latest restatement of the theory, *State-Capitalism and Marxist-Humanism*, in the December 1966 issue of *News & Letters*.

10. It appears in an international symposium of the same name (but without the question-mark) edited by Erich Fromm: *Socialist Humanism*, Doubleday-Anchor, N. Y., 1966.

11. Gallimard-NRF, Paris, 1947. Subtitle: "Essai sur le problème communiste."

mous," or at least the only Marxism which "exists" (Sartre), are actual opposites is not the question. For it is certainly true that Marcuse himself, in those years, did *not* side with Merleau-Ponty and did write the remarkable *Reason and Revolution* which re-established the humanism of the young Marx as being identical with the "scientific economics" of the mature Marx. Whether or not he also saw that behind the talk of two different opposed kinds of violence lurked an apologia of the *same class violence* which sends its own workers to forced labor camps is not half as important for our discussion as is Marcuse's seeming departure from what he himself, and not Merleau-Ponty, wrote not only in 1941 but even in 1957 when he stated that Marx "accepts 'humanism' not as a philosophy among others but as a historical fact or rather historical possibility." In 1965, on the other hand, he writes that the humanism (bourgeois!) of the 18th and 19th centuries which "still guides Marx's early writings" has been "surpassed by the development of society." (p. 112)

Again, as against his previous position of acceptance of Marx's notion of the proletariat as revolutionary, he now writes: "For the laboring classes are no longer those to whom the revolution once appealed and their initiative is not likely to lead to revolutionary socialist solidarity." He also now thinks that Marx "did not foresee the great achievement of technical society," and it is a fact that Marx would have vehemently rejected the "assimilation of freedom and necessity" which is Marcuse's definition of it. From this Marcuse concludes that "socialist humanism can no longer be defined in terms of the individual, the all-round personality, and self-determination." It appears, finally, that advanced industrial society has an apparatus for managing "all dimensions of life, free time as well as working time, negative as well as positive thinking." (p. 115) The conclusion reveals the author's intellectualist approach for it appears that we are not yet ready for a new "Subject," that what we need *presently* is "not 'humanization' of labor, but its mechanization and planned production," that is to say *more* elitist totalitarian technocracy, but directed in a "benevolent" direction, e.g. urban renewal, air pollution control, *etc.*

Suddenly, however, there does finally appear a reaffirmation of the "historical truth of the Marxian conception." Even if it does not flow logically from the essay, it is to be welcomed, with a sort of warning, however, that it seems to be put for the far distant future. And Marcuse hastens to remind us that "the question here is not that of future possibilities; it is the present reality which is at stake." In a word, we are back to his refusal to accept the proletariat—or for that matter the black revolutionary or any other rebels—as the revolutionary force. Instead, the whole question is left open: "Socialist theory, no matter how true, can neither prescribe nor predict the future agents of a historical transforma-

tion which is more than ever before the specter that haunts the established societies."

Significantly, this latest essay by Marcuse appeared in the first symposium on *Socialist Humanism* to include writers from the "third world," the "West," and the "East." Since its publication, some of the latter have proven the seriousness of their philosophical principles by going to jail in Poland or carrying on political struggles in Czechoslovakia.[12] Moreover, today's open-ended events in Eastern Europe are not taking place in a vacuum, as was the case in 1956, since they have been matched by a pre-revolutionary crisis in capitalist France and a general renaissance of youth revolts throughout the world.

This new stage of world militancy has taken on an entirely new significance since the adherence of over 10 million workers to the general strike initiated by the students in France. For Marcuse, however, this movement must be labeled "not for home consumption." He was less than enthusiastic about the Columbia revolt (see *Ramparts,* June 20) and in a recent spech on France (*L.A. Free Press,* June 28) went out of his way to insist that the idea of such things happening in the U.S. is "utterly fantastic." Naturally, as a Marxist, Marcuse hailed the French movement. But, in order to prove that "it can't happen here" he distorted his analysis of its causes, insisting that the French workers were less affluent than ours and possessed a revolutionary tradition which "is still alive to a considerable degree" (quoted by Staughton Lynd, *Guardian,* July 13).

Evidently, their revolt was a mere reflex left over from an earlier stage (1848? 1871?) and Marcuse conveniently forgets that his own theory of "technology absorbing ontology" was developed precisely in France at a time when the Gaullist five-year-plan was rationalizing and modernizing French industry and the left was universally bemoaning the fact that the workers were only interested in automobiles and T.V. sets. Leaving aside the fact that "affluence" was hardly the issue in France (the workers pushed aside the wage hike as irrelevant), Marcuse must understand that if "technological rationality" pervades modern industrial society, surely this must include a country as highly developed as France. As to France's revolutionary tradition, it is indeed great, but one wishes that more intellectuals would look at our own. More important, the central character-

12. Ivan Svitak, the Czech author of the essay on "The Sources of Socialist Humanism," spelled out the content of his philosophy quite clearly when, under direct attack from the apparatus, he established direct contact with the miners and told them: "Workers and intellectuals have a common enemy—the bureaucratic dictatorship of the apparatus . . . And it is for this reason that in the interest of socialist democracy we have to strengthen the unity of those working with their hands and those working with their brains against the apparatuses of the power elite which has been, is, and remains the main obstacle in the unique experiment of our nation with socialist democracy."

istic of the French strike was as Marcuse himself pointed out the spontaneous self-mobilization of the rank-and-file workers, especially those under 30, *in opposition* to the traditional Left (the openly *counter*-revolutionary CP and CGT), which initially branded the strikers as "adventurists" and then joined the movement only to co-opt it into parliamentary channels.

IT IS NEITHER FAIR NOR RELEVANT, however, to judge Marcuse on the basis of this or that political pronouncement of the moment. It is as a philosopher—a philosopher of revolution—that his evolution must be evaluated. Marcuse is significant because, as early as 1941, he brought to this American citadel of pragmatic empiricism a great treasure, implicit in the works of Marx and Hegel, but ignored by us: "the power of negative thinking . . . the driving force of dialectical thought, used as a tool for analyzing the world of facts in terms of its internal inadequacy" (Preface to *Reason and Revolution*). He taught us to shed our prejudices about the historic reality of "things as they are" and to hold fast to what Hegel called the "labor, patience, seriousness, and suffering of the negative" in order to see the new world taking shape within the old.

If Marcuse, in his recent works, has become so depressed by the apparent tyranny of "things as they are" over men's minds, i.e., a "technological rationality" supposedly capable of programming our very needs and desires, that he has lost patience with the negative, this should not prevent *us* from recognizing and giving voice to "the new passions and new forces" for the reconstruction of society that are everywhere the human counterpart to an increasingly automated world.

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Rebellion or Revolution?

David Sanders

"THE DUTY OF THE REVOLUTIONARY IS TO MAKE THE REVOLUTION," says Castro, and while one cannot but identify with the author of the motto against its targets, the bureaucratic Communist parties of Latin America, one cannot but render judgment on it as either a hollow truism ("the duty of the writer is to write," "the duty of the bricklayer is to lay bricks") or as an utterly false conception of the nature of revolution.

One does not "make" a revolution in the sense that one makes a cigarette or an automobile. One does not even plant its seeds; one can only tend them and await the harvest. History is replete with the bones of revolutionary heroes—the latest, Che Guevara—who came to a grievous end trying to force the revolution's birth before conception. Their tragedy is often a double one, not only their own and their followers', but the tragedy of revolution aborted by haste and false consciousness. All too often, revolution's false start, with its consequent decimation of the movement's vanguard, leaves the main body helpless before an onslaught of reaction whose appetite has been whetted by the blood of the revolutionary.

Revolution is a process, not an apocalyptic event. The violent and sudden dissolution of prevailing political, economic and social relations are the result of the underlying social convulsion. This convulsion can no more be generated by the actions of individuals than a tidal wave can be generated by splashing the water. Revolutions have been marked by armed battle with police, defiance of all ruling authority and the seizure of public buildings. But neither armed battle with police, nor defiance of authority, nor even the seizure of public buildings constitutes a revolution. These actions become revolutionary only when a majority of the population—or at the very least a majority of the politically concerned population—engages in or stands behind them.

Neither can the population be brought to this revolutionary pitch by exhortation, much less by the "electrifying" effect of example. These play their role only when the mass reaches a critical temperature and the saturation point reached when one additional molecule transforms the entire solution. The idiom of physics and chemistry is useful here, for while consciousness operates in the social realm, it does so only in the closest conjunction with the elementary movement of the mass. It may—and must—run as far as you please in theory but consciousness separates itself in action only at its imminent peril.

The "objective conditions" for revolution have been present in the Western world for at least half a century. Capitalism and statism have lingered on past their "normal" life span and, fused in the monstrosity