Herbert Marcuse

I should like to submit for discussion a theoretical analysis of the situation in which the radical movement finds itself today. I want to say from the beginning that I still consider the radical student movement and the Black and Brown militants as the only real opposition we have in this country. There is no other. Or, if there is, at least it remains concealed to me. I hope that the analysis I try to give you is indeed a Marxist analysis, if Marxism means more than regurgitating concepts that were elaborated a hundred years ago.

It is difficult for me to engage in such a theoretical analysis when the things that are happening all around us seem to cry for action--no matter what action--so that we don't suffocate, so that we don't bust up. It is very difficult to engage in a theoretical analysis when the Orwellian language has become the normal medium of communication between the government and the people, and even to a great extent among the people themselves. However, the Orwellian language is not only a blatant lying contradiction, it is also expressive of the facts. We terminate the war in Indo-China by extending it. We withdraw while invading. We dismiss charges against alleged massacres in Vietnam "in the best interests of justice". And so on, and so on. It seems to me that here we have, strange as it may seem, the linguistic expression of the real contradictions of capitalism today: it is simply correct that this society can have peace only by preparing for war or even by waging war. is simply correct that it can mitigate or temporarily resolve conflicts only by expanding and creating conflicts somewhere else.

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The analysis I want to submit to you starts with two theses. First, the close of the twentieth century may well mean the advent of the first world historical revolution. Second, the progress of this revolution is counteracted by a preventive counterrevolution organized on a global scale and centered in the United States. say preventive counterrevolution because there was no revolution preceding it. The coming revolution (if it comes -- and you will see this is by no means certain) will be a world historical revolution because for the first time in history society controls the resources for abolishing poverty and exploitation the world over. It will be a world historical revolution because of the emergence of the powerful revolutionary potential in the Third World, affecting the main proponents of capitalism themselves in the ranks of the oppressed minorities. It will be a world historical revolution because we have in China the development of a new form of socialism that does not follow the authoritarian, bureaucratic model: and we still have the very existence of the Soviet Union and the Soviet orbit, perhaps, as potentially objective anti-capitalist powers.

Now against these prospects (truly threatening for the system) we have the organization of counterinsurgency on an unprecedented scale at home and abroad. Counterinsurgency is not only to prevent the revolution, it is also to counteract the aggravating contradictions of the capitalist system today. Most generally, the blatant conflict between the vast productive forces and their private control and utilization, demands the increasing restriction, perversion, and distortion of the productive forces. It demands constantly renewed planned obsolescence and waste. However, I think we see already today that even the most rigorously organized capitalist restraint and destruction of productive forces cannot for any length of time halt the decline in the rate of profit, inflation, and so-called technological unemployment.

This picture I have so briefly sketched seems to corroborate one of the central theses of Marxian theory, which apparently was refuted by the actual developments in the twentieth century up to now; namely, the thesis that a totally socialist society is possible only on a world wide scale, and that such a revolution would start in the most highly developed industrial country. In other words, the capitalist chain must be broken, not at its weakest but at its strongest link. Why is this so? I think we can see the answer today very clearly. Just consider for one moment what a radical change in the imperialist metropole would do on a global scale. It would mean the collapse of the lackey regimes in the Third World and not only in the Third World. It would remove a major obstacle to the development of the European revolutions; it would allow an independent development of the Chinese and Cuban

revolutions; and perhaps it would mean a political upheaval in the Soviet Union itself. Moreover, this new quantitative scope of the potential revolution also suggests a qualitative difference between it and preceding revolutions. This revolution, the first to be based on the achievements of industrial society, could assume a total character from the beginning. The abolition of man's subordination to the instruments of his labor and the productive and progressive reduction of alienated labor would in turn make for an economic, political, and cultural revolution, all three in one, and, by virtue of this scope, far outdo the preceding revolutions. It would for the first time in history make the construction of integral socialism possible from the beginning, and not postpone it indefinitely to a second phase which may never arrive.

This novel historical situation calls for a reexamination of the preconditions and of the productive strategy of the radical opposition working under the preventive counterrevolution. I would like to take, as a point of departure, the structural changes which have taken place within the capitalist system since the Second World War. I will mention only the main tendencies. To the degree to which the international concentration of economic power progresses, individual capitalists are increasingly subjected to the interests of capital as a whole. Capital is ever more directly and immediately fused with the state, with the government. dependence of capital on the political and military power structure and the interference of government in the economy, have increased to such an extent that even in this country "nationalization" is no longer a dirty word; one even considers the nationalization of certain large enterprises. In other words, what we witness is that monopoly capitalism tends toward state capitalism.

What does this mean for social stratification? It means that ever more strata of the middle class depend on monopoly capital. They are occupied in the realization, if not in the creation, of surplus value. Thus, with this transformation of capitalism, we witness the extension of exploitation beyond the class of industrial and agricultural labor, and we witness the emergence of what has been called a new working class of educated labor necessitated by the increasingly technological and scientific character of the process of production. At the same time, owing to the technical progress in the productivity of labor, this type of capitalism can indeed bring an increased standard of living to a large part of the population. In consequence, although the integration of a large majority (including organized labor) into the system takes place, the class struggle does not disappear. cannot possibly disappear before the abolition of class society itself, but it proceeds in the well-known classical forms of an

economic contest on trade union terms.

This transformation now brings us to the decisive question. Is the traditional working class, the blue-collar working class, still the social base of the potential revolution? Or, is the transformation of capitalism creating a new, not smaller, but larger base? There is a widespread but rather insufficient and un-Marxist answer to this question on the part of those who maintain that just as before, industrial labor and mainly blue-collar labor provides the base for the revolution. Thus it is maintained that if the laboring masses today in the most advanced industrial countries (I stress once and for all that this refers only to the most advanced industrial countries) are not revolutionary (and perhaps are even anti-revolutionary) then it is because their consciousness lags behind their social existence. Thus, we have the well known conflict between the subjective and objective factors. I consider this answer not only inadequate but also totally un-Marxist. If we know anything of Marx, we ought to know that he believes that it must be social existence which determines consciousness. And the answer must therefore be sought in the social existence, in the objective conditions of the working class today, and only in a secondary way in their consciousness. Or, to put it in a shorter form, if indeed the consciousness of the working classes has changed, it is because the objective conditions of the working classes have changed.

What has happened to bring about such a change in the objective conditions of the working class? I propose that what we have witnessed is a new stabilization of capitalism on two levels; first, global economic, political, and military expansion abroad, and second and closely related to it, internal and external neo-colonization. What has this stabilization of capitalism achieved? Competitive, scientific, and technical progress has created whole new branches of industry and has enlarged the internal and external markets, while at the same time, the growing productivity of labor counteracted the decline in the rate of profit and made possible a relatively high standard of living for the working classes.

This transformation is accompanied by, and this I think is decisive for a Marxist analysis, a growth in what is called the tertiary sector of the economy: the publicity industry, services, entertainment, and so on. This growth of the tertiary sector (in which the production of services is the main activity) means in Marxian terms that an increasing part of the working population today is employed in unproductive labor. That is to say, labor which does not produce material commodities, which does not produce capital, as Marx says, and which is therefore not

proletarian. This is Marx speaking (in <u>Capital</u>, Modern Library Edition, p. 673), not I. But Marx says even more disagreeable things. The assimilation of a large part of the working classes to the middle classes, that is to say, to those middle classes that do not belong to the ruling classes, is therefore not merely ideological, nor a surface phenomenon, but originates in the productive process itself. Let me again refer to Marx, <u>Theories of Surplus Value</u>, (German Edition, Vol. 1, 324ff). He says, and it is one of the most amazing anticipations, that with the growing productivity of labor, an ever larger part of the population is employed in nonmaterial production. This part includes intellectual producers. They form an ever more essential base of capitalist reproduction in the realization, and we can add today, even in the creation of surplus value.

This certainly means a decisive change in the composition of the working class. Does it mean that the working class is no longer the revolutionary subject? Certainly not. As long as labor remains the human base of the productive process, the working class will remain its political base. But it will be a very different and very extended working class. We have terrible difficulties in finding the revolutionary subject today because we look for it as if the revolutionary subject were a thing that exists somewhere ready made or at least partially made, and just has to be found. We have to get rid of this fetishism of labor, and also of this mystification of the class concept. We must realize that the revolutionary subject emerges in the struggle itself. Only in the struggle itself can it become a revolutionary subject.

A class changes with the changes in the productive process. These changes suggest first that the revolutionary subject would be an extended and transformed working class in which labor in the traditional sense, blue-collar labor, would only be one (and at present, the least active) element. These changes suggest, secondly, that the subject, the motives, the mainsprings of revolution would be in nonmaterial needs. This is a qualitative difference between this revolution and the preceding one. In other words, if and when material needs are satisfied, this revolution would, for the first time, put the self-determination of man in all spheres and dimensions of his life, and not only at work, on the agenda. At the present stage, capitalism operates on the back of the vast majority of the population. Separated from control over the means of production, this majority spends its life in alienated work. Yet, it is not a proletariat in the classical sense; it is not living in abject poverty like the former. Large parts of it are rather bourgeois in outlook, values, and aspirations, though they are very different from the small class that rules this

society. Beneath this vast majority lives the large number of the underprivileged racial and national minorities, unemployed and unemployable, at the margin of the regular process of production. This, I think, is a new technostructure of exploitation: the growing productivity of labor constantly augmenting the wealth of commodities and services; the intensified meaningless work and performances required for producing, buying, and selling these goods and services; and the scientific control of consciousness and instincts, that is to say, domination through steered satisfaction and steered aggression.

Who is in control of this technostructure of exploitation? Charles Reich has written a fiction best seller, The Greening of America (it should be a fiction best seller but unfortunately it is not listed under fiction) in which he maintains frequently and in a literal sense that nobody is in control. Since nobody is in control, nothing can possibly be easier than the revolution, and, therefore, it is understood that the revolution will be without any violence on either side. Now I think you all agree with me that we wish that this were the case. It is not our fault that it is not. And I think that it is clear who is in control. However, there is one decisive difference. Those who are in control, those small groups of military men, of politicians, of those holding economic power, are no longer, and I think this is important, a ruling class which develops the productive forces. Rather this ruling class does just the opposite, perverting and destroying the productive forces in the service of an increasingly desperate offensive system. The system is offensive to such an extent that even its activities abroad are no longer primarily economically founded but driven by the all out struggle against Communism in the interests of prolonging the status quo. As long as this power structure of exploitation is sustained by an intrinsically conservative majority, the political class struggle is indeed transformed into an international struggle with the national liberation movements and their counterparts in the metropoles as the objectively anti-capitalist forces.

But this is not the basic tendency, because we remember that without the internal weakening of the heartland of global capitalism, these external forces will not be able to assert themselves for any length of time. These inner contradictions of the capitalist system appear today in a new historical form, in the so-called consumer society, which is the highest stage of capitalism. The contradictions appear first in the so-called consumer society in a seemingly ideological, even a psychological way. They assert themselves in the increasing dysfunctioning of the operational values which are essential for the reproduction of the system.

The contradictions also manifest themselves in the increasing loosening of the moral fiber and cohesion of the society, the weakening of work discipline, responsibility and efficiency, the complete denial of that spirit of inner worldly asceticism which was, until recently, the mainspring of capitalism. The contradictions assert themselves in the form of drop outs, withdrawals, dissociations not only among the rebellious middle class but also the ruling class itself. In short, in this so-called consumer society we see a largely unpolitical, diffused, non-directed and yet profound non-identification with the system. This, I propose, is the reverse, the soil beneath the noisy, hysterical, and wellpropagandized identification with the system. It is ground which is still shifting, still weak, but bound to get larger and stronger because, and this I think is decisive, this rebellion against the behavior patterns and values required by the capitalist system is not only generated by the system, but is also constantly promoted and aggravated by it.

How does the consumer society manage to drive the internal contradictions to an ever greater intensity? Alongside the world of alienated labor, misery and repression, capitalism, at the present stage, creates a world of ease, gadgets, enjoyment, and surpluses, in which increasing numbers of people participate, although largely in a precarious way. The wealth of capitalist societies is still, as Marx defined it, an immense accumulation of commodities, but these commodities require an increasingly smaller quantity of labor power for their production. That is to say, they provide an increasingly smaller source of surplus value. capitalist wealth is made up of an increasing mass of services, products of unproductive labor, we see the near starvation of the investment and commodity markets. In other words, the consumer society demonstrates in a very tangible form the internal limits of capitalist production. Or could it be that the consumer society is the gravedigger of capitalism? In the French paper, Le Monde, M. Troute has written a nontechnical description of this internal development. I will paraphrase his argument, relating it to our discussion. The development of the tertiary sector henceforth takes place at an accelerated rate. It absorbs growing demands and calls for ever increasing unproductive investments, that is to say, investments that no longer yield the necessary rate of profit. The growth of this sector creates a disequilibrium in the balance of forces which, up to now, has entirely turned on the multiplication of goods and the profitability of production. It is not a paradox that the producer recedes more and more before the consumer, nor that the will to produce weakens before the impatience of a consumption for which the

acquisition of the things produced is less important than the enjoyment of things living. The revolt of the young generation against the consumer society is nothing else than an intellectual manifestation of the will to go beyond the industrial (that is to say, capitalist) era, nothing else than the search for a new profile of society beyond a society of producers. This is the sense in which the consumer society may well become the gravedigger of capitalism. You have seen from my paraphrase of M. Troute how the rebellion of the young can be understood, far better than it understands itself in most cases, as an expression and outflow of tendencies that go on in the production sector of the society itself. That is to say, the rebellion of the young is expressive of basic tendencies, and not only of ideological tendencies of the consumer society.

I will now do what I promised to do, try to give a very brief sketch of how I see the situation of the radical movement today. And I will be perfectly frank. In spite of its apparently elitist character, the movement expresses an objective radical potential in the society at large the more it articulates (though often unconsciously) the new internal contradictions at this historical stage. Thus the ruling class today, far more intelligent than we give it credit for, knows perfectly well where the enemy in its own country is. The full weight of repression is directed against the Black and Brown militants and against the schools, colleges and universities. It is not directed against organized labor. It does not have to be directed against organized labor. This is the preventive counterrevolution -- not yet American fascism. We are far from a fascist form of government, but some of the possible preconditions are emerging. They are well known and I will just give you a list: the courts, used more and more as political tribunals; the reduction of education and welfare in the richest country in the world; anti-democratic legislation, such as preventive detention and the no-knock laws; economic sanctions if you are politically and otherwise suspect; the intimidation and self censorship of the mass media. These are very frightening signs. You cannot say history repeats itself; it never repeats itself in the same form. The fact that we cannot point to any charismatic leader, the fact that we cannot point to any SS or SA here, simply means that they are not necessary in this country. If necessary other organizations can perform the job, possibly even more efficiently. I do not have to tell you which organizations I have in mind.

This counterrevolution has seriously deprived the movement of action which previously was effective. What was right only a year ago can no longer be done today. Now the movement is divided in

itself, in search of a new strategy. I suggest that what is at stake today is the self-preservation of the movement as a political force. This means one step backward in order to be able to take two steps forward. In these terms I would like to discuss very briefly five points: first, the divisions within the movement; second, the problem of alliances and the extension of the base; third, the question of organization versus spontaneity; fourth, personal and social liberation; fifth, self-destruction and anti-intellectualism. I am afraid, as I said earlier, that I can make only a few remarks; it would be delightful if you would take them as material for discussion.

The Division in the Movement

Let me start by saying that division in the movement itself is not necessarily detrimental. We have seen this in Russia, where the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks certainly did not prevent the Russian revolution; we have also seen such divisions in China. Division makes sense if it is a question of a realistic mass strategy, of testing, of consciousness, of strengths, of readiness, and so on. Ideological differences and divisions become utterly irrelevant and ridiculous when such a mass base has yet to be created. In such cases the conflicts become merely ideological, and usually terminate in ritualized discussion, in a rhetoric which lives and moves in a fantasy world with no relation to reality. This is apt, from the beginning, to antagonize possible sympathisers. The use of terms and concepts, such as imperialism, exploitation, and capitalism may and should make very good sense among ourselves, but it makes no sense whatsoever in persuading and convincing what we may call outsiders. Until and unless you can translate these concepts into ordinary language, and it should be possible to translate them in this way, they should be avoided. This is one of the very rare cases where I am in favor of ordinary language.

By and large, I suggest that whatever ideological differences may exist in the movement can and should be safely bracketed-suspended for better times when they are more realistic. They should be suspended in favor of united action on common issues: action which, precisely because it is organized around concrete and transparent issues, can extend the base of the movement. The so-called battle for the streets does not require ideological puritanism. On the contrary, such puritanism in this situation can be fatal to the progress of the movement.

The Problem of Alliances and the Extension of the Base

I am sorry (it took me a long time to admit it and I am still willing to be convinced or persuaded of the opposite) but I believe that in the face of the counterrevolution there is indeed such a thing as a lesser evil. It has been said that a true revolutionary knows when to make compromises and what compromises to make. We are in a very bad and a very serious situation, one in which even such things as a fight for the recovery and restoration of civil rights is and should be on the agenda. It is such a bad situation that, it is almost horrible to say it, even some temporary alliances and compromises with certain liberals seem to be appropriate. These may be good for many things. First, they may be very good and helpful (and let's be vulgar materialists for awhile) for overcoming one of the gravest deficiencies in the left today, namely the total lack of funds. You can't get money if you go to them with terms like "capitalism", "imperialism" and "exploitation", but you may perfectly well be able to persuade them when you keep these concepts for those who know what they mean. Second, and most importantly, we must look carefully at the relationship of the movement and the working class. I have already said that it is nonsense to claim that a revolution is imaginable without the working class. I immediately added that we are confronted with structural changes within the working class. Can we say anything, then, about a possible alliance between the student movement and the working classes? Let me say from the beginning, I believe that it is not a question of alliances, but a question of a junction between two political and social forces. And this junction depends on the progress of capitalist destabilization in which both forces, the student movement on the one hand and labor on the other, operate on their own base and in their own ranks. Students today are not, by any stretch of the imagination, a Leninist avant garde because you cannot have an avant garde where there is no mass movement behind. What does this mean in practice? If we see a junction as a process, a point which is approached by the two political and social forces, each on their own side, it means above all that the slogan, "Go to the workers" is utterly insufficient, quite apart from its ridiculously patronizing character. This junction is not achieved by visiting a factory or by leafleting at the factory gates. Either you become a worker and continue to build in the factory, or there must be a division of functions of which I will give you an example. This example was tested with success in Italy, which has some experience in these things. The Proletarian Left (the name of the organization of which I speak) has decided to change its strategy and to arrive

at a complete division of functions. The students prepare their information and propaganda material and give it to the base committees in the factories (which consist exclusively of workers) to use as it fits their own situation. This is only one example of cooperation with division of functions, cooperation which does not try to obliterate the obvious gap between these two forces today.

Organization Versus Spontaneity: Personal and Social Liberation

I believe I have said that the traditional mass parties of the past are outdated. First, there are no revolutionary masses yet. You cannot have a mass party if you do not have any masses. Second, these centralized mass parties were part and parcel of the system of parliamentary democracy, and parliamentary democracy is no longer a vehicle of radical change. These centralized mass parties can easily be rendered ineffective by the removal of the leadership. Instead, what seems to be shaping up, what was tested in France and in Italy, is the centering of the movement on local and regional organizations of a united front with bracketed and suspended ideological differences; local and regional committees capable of organizing popular rather than radical actions on common issues (of which there are many). Today it is a question of organization and coordination.

I want to stress here and it somehow hurts to stress it, but I believe that the heroic period of beautiful spontaneity, of personal anti-authoritarianism, of hippie rock and shock, is over. Not because the movement has become weaker, but because it is growing and is becoming more serious. The heroic period is over because the establishment in organizing the counterrevolution has become conscious of the danger to its power. The establishment has become immune to shock, completely immune to ego trips styled as political actions.

In response to the growing difficulties of the capitalist system, the movement is now faced with the task of establishing its authority in its own ranks and with its own members. Let us have no premature anarchism. Anarchism may be good: I believe that I have said that a strong element of anarchism should be incorporated into Marxism. To do it now in the face of a deadly powerful enemy is premature. What remains is the fact that there can be no social liberation without personal liberation, but also no individual liberation without a political struggle on a social scale against the prevailing unfreedom.

What about the framework of action? What strategy is left under the counterrevolution? I can think of no better a character-

ization of a strategy than the one given by my young friend Rudi Deutschke when he speaks of the long march through the institutions. This is not, does not, and never was supposed to mean the deadly game of parliamentary democracy. Today all radical opposition is necessarily extra-parliamentary opposition. You cannot compete in the pseudo-democratic process. You are not millionaires and you are not able to buy the machinery required to be successful and influential in this process. Yet I think we can still be relatively sure of what is meant by this strategy. Such a strategy does include demonstrations, extended and well-organized demonstrations, for clearly identified issues. This strategy includes the organization of radical caucuses, counter meetings, counter associations, in short, the development of what have been called counter institutions, such as radio, television, press, workshops, anything and everything that promises to break the information monopoly of the establishment. Above all, the long march through the institutions means going into the institutions, learning how to do the jobs, educating yourself and others on the job, and preparing for the time when the jobs have to be done for a new and free society.

Against this not very attractive, and certainly not very spectacular strategy, we have a handout to the establishment, one of the fifth columns of the establishment in the new left, what I now call the pest that infects the new left, namely the widespread anti-intellectualism that has infested the movement. If you want to hate yourselves, if you are ashamed of what you happen to be, if you are masochistic to the degree of self-destruction, in other words if you really want to be effectively anti-intellectual, take a job in the office of the vice-president of the United States, or of the governor of California, or jobs they might choose for you. For they certainly know how to use anti-intellectualism more effectively than you do. Marx' famous thesis has been interpreted today as meaning that it is no longer necessary to understand and interpret the world; we can simply go ahead and change it. This is an idiotic interpretation because never has theory, never has the effort of thinking, of knowing what is going on and what can be done about it, been needed more than it is today. Today, more than ever before, there cannot possibly be any revolutionary practice without the theory guiding such practice. The Marxian thesis means we have to understand and interpret the world in order to change it, but it does not give a productive alternative to the necessity of understanding and interpreting it.

I want to look at the power of false consciousness. Today this material force of ideology is even sweeping the new left, with its rhetoric, its withdrawal, its confusion of private with social and political liberation, and even more with its attitudes

towards those institutions which can still be used for better purposes than they now are. I know perfectly well (and my relationship to the university has been lengthy enough) your criticisms of education; I know very well how many of them are justified. what is not justified under any circumstances is the slogan, "Destroy the university because it is a pillar of the establishment." The university is a pillar of the establishment; it is up to you to make it something different. However, you do not cut off the branch on which you are sitting; it is in the university where you become radical. In other words, radical reconstruction, not destruction, of the university should be the task. The demand today, especially for radicals, should be for more, not less, education. We need infinitely more education than we now have in order to cope with the things that will come and will come very soon. if you want to destroy the universities, leave it to the power structure. That is exactly what the power structure is doing and you only have to look at your own budget to see how effectively they are able to do it. Do not compete with people who can do it infinitely better than you.

It occurs to me, perhaps it is only because I quit the university that I now have praise for it. However, I think somehow it is a little more sincere than that. I cannot take back one word because I still believe that it is in the schools and universities that there are, more or less hidden, all the facts, all the fields, all the possibilities we need. It is up to us to get this material. If you do not get this material, if you have courses and seminars where you know something is wrong, where you know vital facts are not discussed or treated, then criticize this course without any compromises. There is one problem: if you really want to do that effectively, you must know the facts better than the teacher. I would like to add immediately that I think this is perfectly possible and not even very difficult.

Now let me conclude by repeating what I think is really one of the main points: that neither the sexual revolution, if there ever was such a thing, nor any other personal or individual or group liberation will be a vehicle for social liberation unless these private and particular liberation movements transcend individual and group gratifications, unless they are subjected to a new rationality and become part of the theory and practice of social change. I started by saying how strong the desire, the need, is for action. There is, however, a distinction between activism and action. All revolutionary action is based on popular support. In this country such popular support is shaping up in the ghettos. It does not yet exist for the student movement. Violence is institutionalized in the establishment. The movement

can only defend itself against violence. It is not and it cannot be on the offensive. There have been enough martyrs and enough victims. As I said at the beginning, you have to preserve your strength as a political force. You have to become those who prepare the soil, the minds, and the bodies for a new society. If you do not do it, who will? And you have to do all this while you are still alive, while you are still young, while you are still capable of thinking, of talking, of loving, of resisting and fighting.

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