

MARK AND THE WESTERN WORLD, Edited by Nicholas Kobkovic
(University of Notre Dame, Indiana, 1967)

This is a very interesting collection of Papers from an International Symposium held in April, 1966 between independent Marxists, Communists, Catholics and what-not, especially A. James Gregor "exposing" Karel Kosik, and including the usual spets like Maximilian Rubel. The three unusual pieces are: Marxism and the Moslem World: The Middle East by Helene Carreno d'Encausse, Centre d'Etudes des Relations Internationales, Paris; Louis Dupre's Comment on the fantastic article by George L. Kline, who claims Marx wasn't even "original"; and The Obsolescence of Marxism, by Herbert Marcuse, which happens to be the only one at this particular moment that concerns me.

HM begins by objecting to the title given to his Paper because it had left out the question mark: "For me, this question mark is the most condensed symbol of the dialectic in Marxian theory, but specifically, it is symbolic of the fact that it is obsolete precisely to the degree to which this obsolescence validates the basic concepts of the theory" (p. 409).

He then proceeds to present the usual theory that "the laboring classes are in no sense a revolutionary potential" (p. 410) and further stresses this deviation by saying that this is especially true in the technologically advanced countries, afterwards, however, he goes, not into the process of production but on the question of the truly epiphenomenal: "this scientific management, which operates most forcefully in the publicity and entertainment industry, has long since ceased to be merely a part of the super-structure; it has become part of the basic productive process and of the necessary costs of production." (p. 410)

To develop the claim that the super-structure has suddenly become the basic under-structure he develops what Marx had meant by the proletariat as in their key role in revolution:

"In Herelian terminology, this class is the definite negation of the capitalist system and the established needs and satisfaction. But the emergence of such an internal negative force whose existence and action would demonstrate to the historical necessity of the transition from capitalism to socialism is blocked in advanced industrial countries -- not by violent suppression or by terroristic modes of government but by a rather comfortable and scientific coordination and administration." (p. 411)

Now where does HM use the expression "one dimensional man" but obviously he is explaining his thesis all over again. Moreover, he now relates it directly to some other Marxian ideas he considers "outdated", such as Lenin's concept of the aristocracy of labor: "the integration is by no means confined to the small minority of the labor bureaucracy but extends to the rank and file. The underprivileged groups that bear the brunt of exploitation remain outside organized labor." (p. 411)

HM then both laughs at the idea of "relative impoverishment" (the laughing consists of his definition of this relative impoverishment as of the worker who has only one automobile instead of two, one television instead of three) and trots out all over again that quotation from the Grundrisse, which he had been using all along on the question of the end of labor time as the measure of things, only this time he has a new twist which appears deliberate, though I cannot imagine him not knowing the opposite. In any case, here he is how he introduces this passage this time: 14619