

"THE HOPE AND DESPAIR OF MARCUSE"

Bronx, N. Y.

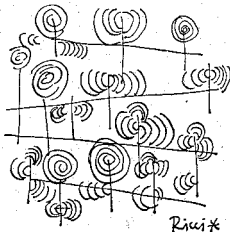
Dear Sir: In his article "The Hope and Despair of Marcuse" (*worldview*, June), Bernard Murchland misconstrued Marcuse's conception of critical thought. According to Murchland, Marcuse has found that his Hegelian and Marxist dialectical criticism is insufficient to bring about the revolution and thus he has turned to a more adequate biological basis for his socialist society; Marcuse has moved from the dialectical criticism of *One Dimensional Man* to the "biological humanism" of *Essay on Liberation*. But Marcuse has never claimed that critical thought would bring about the revolution. The revolution is made by men who must make it to survive. They are the "Historical Subject." Not critical thought but, rather, the proletariat has failed to make the revolution according to the classic Marxist model.

Contemporary critical thought, according to Marcuse, has two functions: to criticize contemporary society and, in the light of this criticism and contemporary events, to define the nature of the new Historical Subject who can make the revolution. Thus, there are always two sides to the movement of Marcuse's thought—the dialectical criticism of contemporary society, as primarily in *One Dimensional Man*, and the definition of the new Historical Subject, as in *Essay on Liberation*. The *Essay* is therefore not an "about face," away from Hegelian and Marxist dialectical criticism, as Murchland states, but simply Marcuse's ongoing effort to redefine the Historical Subject in the light of his social criticism and present events. This redefinition does not mean a rejection of dialectical social criticism; rather it presupposes it. The whole idea of the revolutionary Historical Subject would be meaningless without this criticism.

The twofold function of Marcuse's critical thought is illustrated by his life-long concern with both Marx and Hegel, on the one hand, and with Freud, on the other. Thus, *Reason and Revolution*, dealing with Hegel and Marx, and *Eros and Civilization*, concerning Freud, are the two great source works for Marcuse's thought. Marx and Hegel are the primary sources of his dialectical social criticism, and Freudian instinctual theory has been the primary source for his definitions of the new Historical Subject. He also uses aesthetics, particularly of Kant, Schiller and surrealism, for the same purpose. It is this effort to define the nature of the Historical Subject in terms of instinctual and aesthetic theory, instead of class analysis or economics, which is the most challenging problem for Marcuse. To me, the uniqueness of the *Essay* is its heavy reliance on aesthetics and its consequent de-emphasis of Freudian instinctual theory. There Marcuse sees the emergence, especially in

the young, of a "new sensibility," which is primarily an aesthetic morality contradicting the whole established culture. He wants to analyze this new sensibility and "... project its implications for the possible construction of a free society." This reliance on aesthetics, however, is no "about face" either, but simply a development of ideas present in *Eros and Civilization* in the shadow of the French "revolution" of May, 1968. Like everything else in Marcuse, this aesthetic presupposes the dialectical social criticism. Marcuse has never rejected Hegel and Marx as primary sources for his social thought, and he has always been concerned with the "biological" foundations of the revolution.

John Jentz



"STILWELL & THE VIETNAM EXPERIENCE"

Minneapolis, Minn.

Dear Sir: William Pfaff concludes his book review in your July/August issue ("Stilwell & the Vietnam Experience") by stating that America "is corrupted by power." This is not an unfamiliar type of criticism of the United States. If it is true, the situation should be corrected. What is to be done to free ourselves from this corruption? I can think of two alternatives. One is to use our power more wisely and less strenuously. Since Pfaff uses the present tense I assume he is not satisfied with President Nixon's low profile policy which involves a significant withdrawal of military force from the Pacific area and accepts military parity rather than superiority vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Certainly it is a far less ambitious policy than that of the man who defeated him for President in 1960. The second alternative is to divest ourselves of our power as a nation. How does a nation go about achieving this goal? There is unilateral disarmament, of course. Another approach has been suggested in a book called *The Greening of America* and a zero population policy might help.

I do not wish to live in a corrupt country. Perhaps Mr. Pfaff can tell us how we can be saved.

William C. Rogers

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