In Marx's conception, changes in people's social and material conditions will alter their consciousness. This also holds for Marxism and its historical development. Marxism began as a theory of class struggle based on the specific social relations of capitalist production. But while its analysis of the social contradictions inherent in capitalist production has reference to the general trend of capitalist development, the class struggle is a day-to-day affair and adjusts itself to changing social conditions. These adjustments find their reflection in Marxian ideology. The history of capitalism is thus also the history of Marxism.

The labor movement preceded Marxian theory and provided the actual basis for its development. Marxism became the dominating theory of the socialist movement because it was able convincingly to reveal the exploitative structure of capitalist society and simultaneously to uncover the historical limitations of this particular mode of production. The secret of capitalism's vast development -that is, the constantly increasing exploitation of labor power- was also the secret of the various difficulties that pointed to its eventual demise. Marx's *Capital*, employing the methods of scientific analysis, was able to proffer a theory that synthesized the class struggle and the general contradictions of capitalist production.

Marx's critique of political economy was necessarily as abstract as political economy itself. It could deal only with the general trend of capitalist development, not with its manifold concrete manifestations at any particular time. Because the accumulation of capital is at once the cause of the system's unfolding and the reason for its decline, capitalist production proceeds as a cyclical process of expansion and contraction. These two situations imply different social conditions and therefore different reactions on the part of both labor and capital. To be sure, the general trend of capitalist development implies the increasing difficulty of escaping a period of contraction by a further expansion of capital, and thus a tendency toward the system's collapse. But it is not possible to say at what particular point of its development capital will disintegrate through the objective impossibility of continuing its accumulation process.

Capitalist production, implying the absence of any kind of conscious social regulation of production, finds some kind of blind regulation in the supply and demand mechanism of the market. The latter, in turn, adapts itself to the expansion requirements of capital as determined on the one hand by the changing exploitability of labor power and on the other hand by the alteration of the capital structure due to the accumulation of capital. The particular entities involved in this process are not empirically discernible, so that it is impossible to determine whether a particular crisis of capitalist production will be of longer or shorter duration, be more or less devastating as regards social conditions, or prove to be the final crisis of the capitalist system by provoking a revolutionary resolution through the action of an aroused working class.

In principle, any prolonged and deep-going crisis may release a revolutionary situation that may intensify the class struggle to the point of the overthrow of capitalism-provided, of course, that the objective conditions bring forth a subjective readiness to change the social relations of production. In the early Marxist movement, this was seen as a realistic possibility, due to the fact of a growing socialist movement and the extension of the class struggle within the capitalist system. The development of the latter was thought to be paralleled by the development of proletarian class consciousness, the rise of working-class organizations, and the spreading recognition that there was an alternative to capitalist society.

The theory and practice of the class struggle was seen as a unitary phenomenon, due to the self-expansion and the attendant self-limitation of capitalist development. It was thought that the increasing exploitation of labor and the progressive polarization of society into a small minority of exploiters and a
vast mass of exploited would raise the workers' class consciousness and thus their revolutionary inclination to destroy the capitalist system. Indeed, the social conditions of that time allowed for no other perspective, as the unfolding of industrial capitalism was accompanied by increasing misery of the laboring classes and a noticeable sharpening of the class struggle. Still, this was merely a perspective afforded by these conditions, which did not as yet reveal the possibility of another course of events.

Although interrupted by periods of crisis and depression, capitalism has been able to maintain itself until now by a continuous expansion of capital and its extension into space through the acceleration of the increase in the productivity of labor. It proved possible not only to regain a temporarily lost profitability, but to increase it sufficiently to continue the accumulation process as well as to improve the living standards of the great bulk of the laboring population. The successful expansion of capital and the amelioration of the conditions of the workers led to a spreading doubt regarding the validity of Marx's abstract theory of capitalist development. Empirical reality in fact seemed to contradict Marx's expectations with regard to capitalism's future. Even where his theory was maintained, it was no longer associated with a practice ideologically aimed at the overthrow of capitalism. Revolutionary Marxism turned into an evolutionary theory, expressing the wish to transcend the capitalist system by way of constant reform of its political and economic institutions. Marxist revisionism, in both overt and covert form, led to a kind of synthesis of Marxism and bourgeois ideology, as a theoretical corollary to the practical integration of the labor movement into capitalist society.

Not too much should be made of this, however, for the organized labor movement has at all times comprised only the smaller portion of the laboring class. The great mass of workers acclimatizes itself to the ruling bourgeois ideology and-subject to the objective conditions of capitalism-constitutes a revolutionary class only potentially. It may become revolutionary by force of circumstances that overrule the limitations of its ideological awareness and thus offer its class-conscious part an opportunity to turn potentiality into actuality through its revolutionary example. This function of the class-conscious part of the working class was lost through its integration into the capitalist system. Marxism became an increasingly ambiguous doctrine, serving purposes different from those initially contemplated.

All this is history: specifically, the history of the Second International, which revealed that its apparently Marxist orientation was merely the false ideology of a non-revolutionary practice. This had nothing to do with a "betrayal" of Marxism, but was the result of capitalism's rapid ascendancy and increasing power, which induced the labor movement to adapt itself to the changing conditions of capitalist production. As an overthrow of the system seemed impossible, the modifications of capitalism determined those of the labor movement. As a reform movement, the latter partook of the reforms of capitalism, based on the increasing productivity of labor and the competitive imperialistic expansion of the nationally or organized capitals. The class struggle turned into class collaboration.

Under these changed conditions, Marxism, insofar as it was not altogether rejected or reinterpreted into its opposite, took on a purely ideological form that did not affect the pro-capitalist practice of the labor movement. As such, it could exist side by side with other ideologies competing for allegiance. It no longer represented the consciousness of a workers' movement out to overthrow the existing society, but a world-view supposedly based on the social science of political economy. With this it became a concern of the more critical elements of the middle class, allied with, but not part of, the working class. This was merely the concretization of the already accomplished division between the Marxian theory and the actual practice of the labor movement.

It is of course true that socialist ideas were first and mainly --though not only-- propounded by members of the middle class who had been disturbed by the inhuman social conditions of early capitalism. It was these conditions, not the level of their intelligence, that turned their attention to social change and therewith to the working class. It is therefore not surprising that the capitalist improvements at the turn of the century should mellow their critical acumen, and this all the more as the working class itself had lost most of its oppositional fervour. Marxism became a preoccupation of intellectuals and took on an academic character. It was no longer predominantly approached as a movement of workers but as a scientific problem to be argued about. Yet the disputes around the various issues raised by Marxism served to maintain the illusion of the Marxian nature of the labor movement until it was dispelled by the
realities of World War I.

This war, which represented a gigantic crisis of capitalist production, led to a short-lived revival of radicalism in the labor movement and in the working class at large. To this extent it heralded a return to Marxian theory and practice. But it was only in Russia that the social upheavals led to the overthrow of the back-ward, semifeudal capitalist regime. Nonetheless, this was the first time that a capitalist regime had been ended through the actions of its oppressed population and the determination of a Marxist movement. The dead Marxism of the Second International seemed due for replacement by the living Marxism of the Third International. And because it was the Bolshevik Party, under Lenin's guidance, that turned the Russian into a social revolution, it was Lenin's particular interpretation of Marxism that became Marxism of the new and "highest" stage of capitalism. This Marxism has of particular interpretation of Marxism that became the Marxism quite justly been amended into the "Marxism-Leninism" that has dominated the post-war world.

This is not the place to reiterate the history of the Third International and the type of Marxism it brought forth. This story is well documented in countless publications, which either place the blame for its collapse upon Stalin's shoulders or trace it back to Lenin himself. The facts are that the concept of world revolution could not be realized and that the Russian Revolution remained a national revolution and therefore bound to the realities of its own socioeconomic conditions. In its isolation, it could not be adjudged a socialist revolution in the Marxian sense, for it lacked all the preconditions for a socialist transformation of society-that is, the dominance of the industrial proletariat, and a productive apparatus that, in the hands of the producers, could not only end exploitation but at the same time drive society beyond the confines of the capitalist system. As things were, Marxism could only provide the ideology supporting, even while contradicting, the reality of state-capitalism. In other words, as in the Second International, so also in its successor, subordinated as it was to the special interests of Bolshevik Russia, Marxism could only function as an ideology to cover up a non-revolutionary and finally a counter-revolutionary practice.

In the absence of a revolutionary movement, the Great Depression, affecting the world at large, issued not into revolutionary upheavals but into fascism and World War II. This meant the total eclipse of Marxism. The aftermath of the new war initiated a fresh wave of capitalist expansion on an international scale. Not only did monopoly capital emerge strengthened from the conflict, there also arose new state-capitalistic systems by way of either national liberation or imperialistic conquest. This situation involved not a re-emergence of revolutionary Marxism but a "cold war," that is, the confrontation of differently organized capitalist systems in a continuing struggle for spheres of interest and shares of exploitation. On the side of state capitalism, this confrontation was camouflaged as a Marxist movement against the capitalist monopolization of the world economy, while for its part, private-property capitalism was only too glad to identify its state-capitalist enemies as Marxists, or Communists, bent on destroying with the freedom to amass capital all the liberties of civilization. This attitude served to attach the label "Marxism" firmly to the state-capitalist ideology.

Thus the changes brought about by a series of depressions and wars led not to a confrontation between capitalism and socialism, but to a division of the world into more or less centrally controlled economic systems and to a widening of the gap between capitalistically developed and underdeveloped nations. It is true that this division is generally seen as one between capitalist, socialist, and "third world" countries, but this is a misleading simplification of rather more complex differentiations between these economic and political systems. "Socialism" is commonly understood as meaning a state-controlled economy within the national framework, in which planning replaces competition. Such a system is no longer capitalism in the traditional sense, but neither is it socialism in the Marxian sense of an association of free and equal producers. Functioning in a capitalist and therefore imperialist world, it cannot help partaking in the general competition for economic and political power and, like capitalism, must either expand or contract. It must grow stronger in every respect, in order to limit the expansion of monopoly capital by which it would otherwise be destroyed. The national form of so-called socialist or state-controlled regimes sets them in conflict not only with the traditional capitalist world, or particular capitalist nations, but also with each other; they must give first consideration to national interests, i.e., the interests
of the newly emerging and privileged ruling strata whose existence and security are based on the nation-state. This leads to the spectacle of a "socialist" brand of imperialism and the threat of war between nominally socialist countries.

Such a situation was inconceivable in 1917. Leninism, or (in Stalin's phrase) "the Marxism of the age of imperialism," expected a world revolution on the model of the Russian Revolution. Just as in Russia different classes had combined to overthrow the autocracy, so also on an international scale nations at various stages of development might fight against the common enemy, imperialist monopoly capital. And just as in Russia it was the working class, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, that transformed the bourgeois into a proletarian revolution, so the Communist International would be the instrument to transform the anti-imperialist struggles into socialist revolutions. Under these conditions, it was conceivable that the less-developed nations might bypass an otherwise inevitable capitalist development and be integrated into an emerging socialist world. Based on the presupposition of successful socialist revolutions in the advanced nations, this theory could be proven neither right nor wrong, as the expected revolutions did not materialize.

What is of interest in this context are the revolutionary inclinations of the Bolshevik movement prior to and shortly after its assumption of power in Russia. Its revolution was made in the name of revolutionary Marxism, as the political-military overthrow of the capitalist system and the establishment of a dictatorship to assure the transformation to a classless society. However, even at this stage, and not only because of the particular conditions prevailing in Russia, the Leninist concept of socialist reconstruction deviated from the notions of early Marxism and was based instead on those evolved within the Second International. For the latter, socialism was conceived as the automatic outgrowth of capitalist development itself. The concentration and centralization of capital implied the progressive elimination of capitalist competition and therewith of its private-property nature, until socialist government, emerging from the democratic parliamentary process, would transform monopoly capital into the monopoly of the state and thus initiate socialism by governmental decree. Although to Lenin and the Bolsheviks this seemed an unrealizable utopia as well as a foul excuse for abstaining from any kind of revolutionary activity, they too thought of the institution of socialism as a governmental concern, though to be carried out by way of revolution. They differed with the Social Democrats with regard to the means to reach an otherwise, common goal --nationalization of capital by the state and centralized planning of the economy.

Lenin also agreed with Karl Kautsky's philistine and arrogant assertion that the working class by itself is unable to evolve a revolutionary consciousness, which has to be brought to it from the outside by the middle-class intelligentsia. The organizational form of this idea was the revolutionary party as the vanguard of the workers and as the necessary presupposition for a successful revolution. If, in this view, the working class is incapable of making its own revolution, it will be even less able to build up the new society, an undertaking reserved for the leading party as the possessor of the state apparatus. The dictatorship of the proletariat thus appears as that of the party organized as the state. And because the state has to have control over the whole society, it must also control the actions of the working class, even though this control is supposed to be exercised in its favor. In practice, this turned out to be the totalitarian rule of the Bolshevik government.

The nationalization of the means of production and the authoritarian rule of government certainly differentiated the Bolshevik system from that of Western capitalism. But this did not alter the social relations of production, which in both systems are based on the divorce of the workers from the means of production and the monopolization of political power in the hands of the state. It was no longer private capital but state-controlled capital that now opposed the working class and perpetuated the wage-labor form of productive activity, while allowing for the appropriation of surplus labor through the agency of the state. Though the system expropriated private capital, it did not abolish the capital-labor relationship upon which modern class rule rests. It was thus merely a question of time before the emergence of a new ruling class, whose privileges would depend precisely on the maintenance and reproduction of the state-controlled system of production and distribution as the only "realistic" form of Marxian socialism.

Marxism, however, as the critique of political economy and as the struggle for a non-exploitative classless society, has meaning only within the capitalist relations of production. An end of capitalism
would imply the end of Marxism as well. For a socialist society, Marxism would be a fact of history like everything else in the past. Already the description of "socialism" as a Marxist system denies the self-proclaimed socialist nature of the state-capitalist system. Marxist ideology functions here as no more than an attempt to justify the new class relations as necessary requirements for the construction of socialism and thus to gain the acquiescence of the laboring classes. As in the capitalism of old, the special interests of the ruling class are made to appear as general interests.

But even so, in the beginning Marxism-Leninism was a revolutionary doctrine, for it was deadly serious about realizing its own concept of socialism by direct, practical means. While this concept implied no more than the formation of a state-capitalist system, this was the way in which, at the turn of the century, socialism had been quite generally understood. It is therefore not possible to speak of a Bolshevik "betrayal" of the prevailing Marxist principles; on the contrary, it realized the state-capitalist transformation of private-property capitalism, which had been the declared goal also of Marxist revisionists and reformists. The latter, however, had lost all interest in acting upon their apparent beliefs and preferred to accommodate themselves to the capitalist status quo. What the Bolsheviks did was to actualize the program of the Second International by way of revolution.

Once they were in power, however, the state-capitalist structure of Bolshevik Russia determined its further development, now generally described with the pejorative term "Stalinism." That it took on this particular character was explained by reference to the general backwardness of Russia and by her capitalist encirclement, which demanded the utmost centralization of power and inhuman sacrifices on the part of the working population. Under different conditions, such as prevailed in capitalistically more advanced nations and under politically more favorable international relations, it was said, Bolshevism would not require the particular harshness it had to exercise in the first socialist country. Those less favorably inclined toward this first "experiment in socialism" asserted that the party dictatorship was merely an expression of the still "half-Asiatic" nature of Bolshevism and could not be duplicated in the more advanced Western nations. The Russian example was utilized to justify reformist policies as the only way to improve the conditions of the working class in the West.

Soon, however, the fascist dictatorships in Western Europe demonstrated that one-party control of the state was not restricted to the Russian scene but was applicable in any capitalist system. It could be utilized just as well for the maintenance of existing social relations of production as for their transformation into state-capitalism. Of course, fascism and Bolshevism continued to differ with respect to economic structure, even as they became politically indistinguishable. But the concentration of political control in the totalitarian capitalist nations implied the central coordination of economic activity for the specific ends of fascist policies and therewith a closer approximation to the Russian system. For fascism this was not a goal but temporary measure, analogous to the "war socialism" of World War I. Nonetheless, it was a first indication that Western capitalism was not immune to state-capitalist tendencies.

With the hoped-for but rather unexpected consolidation of the Bolshevik regime and the relatively undisturbed coexistence of the opposing social systems until World War II, Russian interests required the Marxist ideology not only for internal but also for external purposes, to assure the support of the international labor movement in the defense of Russia's national existence. This involved only a part of the labor movement, to be sure, but that part could disrupt the anti-Bolshevik front, which now included the old socialist parties and the reformist trade unions. As these organizations had already jettisoned their Marxian heritage, the supposed Marxian orthodoxy of Bolshevism became practically the whole of Marxist theory as a counter-ideology to all forms of anti-Bolshevism and all attempts to weaken or destroy the Russian state. Simultaneously, however, attempts were made to secure the state of coexistence through various concessions to the capitalist adversary and to demonstrate the mutual advantages that could be gained through international trade and other means of collaboration. This twofaced policy served the single end of preserving the Bolshevik state and securing the national interests of Russia.

In this manner, Marxism was reduced to an ideological weapon exclusively serving the defensive needs of a particular state and a single country. No longer encompassing international revolutionary aspirations, it utilized the Communist International as a limited policy instrument for the special interests of Bolshevik Russia. But these interests now included, in increasing measure, the maintenance of the
international status quo in order to secure that of the Russian system. If at first it had been the failure of world revolution that induced Russia's policy of entrenchment, it was now the stability of world capitalism that became a condition of Russian security, and which the Stalinist regime endeavored to enhance. The spread of fascism and the high probability of new attempts to find imperialist solutions to the world crisis endangered not only the state of coexistence but also Russia's internal conditions, which demanded some degree of international tranquility. Marxist propaganda ceased to concern itself with problems of capitalism and socialism but, in the form of anti-fascism, directed itself against a particular political form of capitalism that threatened to unleash a new world war. This implied, of course, the acceptance of anti-fascist capitalist powers as potential allies and thus the defense of bourgeois democracy against attacks from either the right or the left, as exemplified during the civil war in Spain.

Even prior to this historical juncture, Marxism-Leninism had assumed the same purely ideological function that characterized the Marxism of the Second International. It was no longer associated with a political practice whose final aim was the overthrow of capitalism, if only to bring about state-capitalism masquerading as socialism, but was now content with its existence within the capitalist system in the same sense in which the Social Democratic movement accepted the given conditions of society as inviolable. The sharing of power on an international scale presupposed the same on the national level, and Marxism-Leninism outside of Russia turned into a strictly reformist movement. Thus only the fascists were left as forces actually aspiring to complete control over the state. No serious attempt was made to forestall their rise to power. The labor movement, including its Bolshevik wing, relied exclusively upon traditional democratic processes to meet the fascist threat. This meant its total passivity and progressive demoralization and assured the victory of fascism as the only dynamic force operating within the world crisis.

It was of course not only Russia's political control of the international communist movement, via the Third International, that explains its capitulation to fascism, but also the movement's bureaucratization, which concentrated all decision-making power in the hands of professional politicians who did not share the social conditions of the impoverished proletariat. This bureaucracy found itself in the "ideal" position of being able to express its verbal opposition to the system and yet, at the same time, to partake of the privileges that the bourgeoisie bestows upon its political ideologists. They had no driving reason to oppose the general policies of the Communist International, which coincided with their own immediate needs as recognized leaders of the working class in a bourgeois democracy. Finally, however, it is the general apathy of the workers themselves, their unreadiness to look for their own independent solution of the social question that explains this state of affairs together with its fascist outcome. A half-century of Marxist reformism under the leadership principle, and its accentuation in Marxism-Leninism, produced a labor movement unable to act upon its own interests and therefore incapable of inspiring the working class as a whole to attempt to prevent fascism and war through a proletarian revolution.

As in 1914, internationalism, and with it Marxism, was again drowned in the surging sea of nationalism and imperialism. Policies found their basis in the exigencies of the shifting imperialist power constellations, which led first to the Hitler-Stalin pact and then to the anti-Hitler alliance between the USSR and the democratic powers. The end of even the purely verbal aspirations of Marxism found a belated symbolization in the liquidation of the Third International. The outcome of the war, preordained by its imperialist character, divided the world into two power blocs, which soon resumed competition for world control. The anti-fascist nature of the war implied the restoration of democratic regimes in the defeated nations and thus the re-emergence of political parties, including those with a Marxist connotation. In the East, Russia restored her empire and added to it spheres of interest as so much war booty. The breakdown of colonial rule created the "third world" nations, which adopted either the Russian system or a mixed economy of the Western type. A form of neo-colonialism arose that subjected the "liberated" nations to more indirect but equally effective control by the great powers. But the spread of state-capitalist-oriented nations was commonly seen as the diffusion of Marxism over the globe, and the arrest of this tendency as a struggle against a Marxism that threatened the (undefined) freedoms of the capitalist world. This type of Marxism and anti-Marxism has no connection whatever with the struggle between labor and capital as envisioned by Marx and the early labor movement.
In its current form, Marxism has been more of a regional than an international movement, as may be surmised from its precarious hold in the Anglo-Saxon countries. The post-war revival of Marxist parties affected mainly nations that faced particular economic difficulties, such as France and Italy. The division and occupation of Germany precluded the reorganization of a mass communist party in the Western zone. The socialist parties finally repudiated their own past, still tinged with Marxist ideas, and turned themselves into bourgeois or "people's" parties defending democratic capitalism. Communist parties do continue to exist throughout the world, legally or illegally, but their chances of affecting political events are more or less nil for the present and the foreseeable future. Marxism, as a revolutionary workers' movement, finds itself today at its historically lowest ebb.

All the more astonishing is the unprecedented capitalist response to theoretical Marxism. This new interest in Marxism in general, and in "Marxist economics" in particular, pertains almost exclusively to the academic world, which is essentially the world of the middle class. There is an enormous outpouring of Marxian literature; "Marxology" has become a new profession, and there are Marxist branches of "radical" economics, history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and so forth. All may prove to be no more than an intellectual fad. But even so this phenomenon bears witness to the present twilight state of capitalist society and its loss of confidence in its own future. Whereas in the past the progressive integration of the labor movement into the fabric of capitalism implied the accommodation of socialist theory to the realities of an unfolding capitalism, this process is now seemingly reversed through the many attempts to utilize the findings of Marxism for capitalist purposes. This two-pronged endeavor at reconciliation, at overcoming at least to some extent the antagonism between Marxian and bourgeois theory, reflects a crisis in both Marxism and bourgeois society.

Although Marxism encompasses society in all its aspects, it focuses upon the social relations of production as the foundation of the capitalist totality. In accordance with the materialist conception of history, it concentrates its interests on the economic and therefore the social conditions of capitalist development. Whereas the materialist conception of history has long since been quietly plagiarized by bourgeois social science, until quite recently its application to the capitalist system remained unexplored. It is the development of capitalism itself that has forced bourgeois economic theory to consider the dynamics of the capitalist system and thus to emulate, in some fashion, the Marxian theory of accumulation and its consequences.

Here we must recall that the shift of Marxism from a revolutionary to an evolutionary theory turned with respect to theory around the question as to whether or not Marx's accumulation theory was also a theory of the objective necessity of capitalism's collapse. The reformist wing of the labor movement asserted that there was no objective reason for the system's decline and destruction, while the revolutionary minority wing held on to the conviction that capitalism's immanent contradictions must lead to its inevitable end. Whether this conviction was based on contradictions in the sphere of production or in that of circulation, left-wing Marxism insisted upon the certainty of capitalism's eventual collapse, expressed by ever more devastating crises, which would bring forth a subjective readiness on the part of the proletariat to overthrow the system by revolutionary means.

The reformists' denial of objective limits to capitalism turned their attention from the sphere of production to that of distribution, and so from the social relations of production to market relations, which are the sole concern of bourgeois economic theory. Disturbances of the system were now seen as arising from supply and demand relations, which unnecessarily caused periods of overproduction through a lack of effective demand due to unjustifiably low wages. The economic problem was reduced to the question of a more equitable distribution of the social product, which would overcome the social frictions within the system. For all practical purposes, it was now held, bourgeois economic theory was of greater relevance than Marx's approach, and therefore Marxism should avail itself of the going market and price theory in order to be able to play a more effective role in the framing of social policies.

It was now said that there were economic laws that operated in all societies and were not subject to Marxian criticism. The critique of political economy had as its object merely the institutional forms under which the eternal economic laws assert themselves. Changing the system would not change the laws of economics. While there were differences between the bourgeois and the Marxian approach to the
economy, there were also similarities which both had to recognize. The perpetuation of the capital-labor relation, i.e., the wage system, in the self-styled socialist societies, their accumulation of social capital, and their application of a so-called incentive system that divided the work force into various income categories—all these and more were now held to be unalterable necessities enforced by economic laws. These laws required the application of the analytical tools of bourgeois economics so as to allow for the rational consummation of a planned socialist economy.

This kind of Marxism, "enriched" by bourgeois theory, was soon to find its complement in the attempt to modernize bourgeois economic theory. This theory had been in crisis ever since the Great Depression in the wake of World War I. The theory of market equilibrium could neither explain nor justify the prolonged depression, and thus it lost its ideological value for the bourgeoisie. However, neoclassical theory found a sort of resurrection through its Keynesian modification. Although it had to be admitted that the hitherto assumed equilibrium mechanism of the market and price system was no longer operative, it was now asserted that it could be made to be so with a little governmental help. The disequilibrium of insufficient demand could be straightened out by government-induced production for "public consumption," not only on the assumption of static conditions but also under conditions of economic growth when balanced by appropriate monetary and fiscal means. The market economy, assisted by government planning, would then overcome capitalism's susceptibility to crisis and depression and would allow, in principle, for a steady growth of capitalist production.

The appeal to government and its conscious intervention in the economy, as well as the attention paid to the dynamics of the system, diminished the sharp opposition between the ideology of laissez-faire and that of the planned economies. This corresponded to a visible convergence of the two systems, one influencing the other, in a process leading perhaps to a combination of the favorable elements of both in a future synthesis able to overcome the difficulties of capitalist production. In fact, the long economic swing after World War II seemed to substantiate these expectations. However, despite the continuing availability of governmental interventions, a new crisis has followed this period of capitalist expansion, as it always had in the past. The clever "fine tuning" of the economy and the "trade-off" between inflation and unemployment did not prevent a new economic decline. The crisis and the means designed to cope with it have proved to be equally detrimental to capital. The current crisis is thus accompanied by the bankruptcy of neo-Keynesianism, just as the Great Depression spelled the end of neoclassical theory.

Apart from the fact that the actual crisis conditions brought the dilemma of bourgeois economic theory to a head, its long-standing impoverishment through its increasing formalization raised many doubts in the heads of academic economists. The current questioning of almost all the assumptions of neoclassical theory and its Keynesian offspring has led some economists--most forcefully represented by the so-called neo-Ricardians--to a half-hearted return to classical economics. Marx himself is looked upon as a Ricardian economist and as such finds increasing favor among bourgeois economists intent on integrating his "pioneer work" into their own specialty, the science of economics.

Marxism, however, signifies neither more nor less than the destruction of capitalism. Even as a scientific discipline it offers nothing to the bourgeoisie. And yet, as an alternative to the discredited bourgeois social theory, it may serve the latter by providing it with some ideas useful for its rejuvenation. After all, one learns from the opposition. Moreover, in its apparently "realized" form in the "socialist countries," Marxism points to practical solutions that may also be useful in the mixed economies, such as a further increase of stabilizing governmental regulations. An income and wage policy, for instance, comes quite close to the analogous arrangements in centrally controlled economic systems. Finally, in view of the absence of revolutionary movements, the academic type of Marxian inquiry is risk-free, inasmuch as it is restricted to the world of ideas. Strange as it may seem, it is the lack of such movements in a period of social turmoil that turns Marxism into a marketable commodity and a cultural phenomenon attesting to the tolerance and democratic fairness of bourgeois society.

The sudden popularity of Marxian theory nonetheless reflects an ideological as well as an economic crisis of capitalism. Above all it affects those responsible for the manufacture and distribution of ideologies—that is, middleclass intellectuals specializing in social theory. Their class as a whole may feel itself endangered by the course of capitalist development, with its visible social decay, and thus genuinely
seek for alternatives to the social dilemma that is also their own. They may do so for motives that, however opportunistic, are necessarily bound up with a critical attitude toward the prevailing system. In this sense, the current "Marxian renaissance" may foreshadow a return of Marxism as a social movement of both theoretical and practical import.

Nonetheless, at present there is little evidence of a revolutionary reaction to the capitalist crisis. If one distinguishes between the "objective left" in society, that is, the proletariat as such, and the organized left, which is not strictly proletarian, then it is only in France and Italy that one can speak of organized forces that could conceivably challenge capitalist rule, provided they had such intentions. But the communist parties and trade unions of these countries have long since transformed themselves into purely reformist parties, at home within the capitalist system and ready to defend it. The very fact of their large working-class following indicates the workers' own unreadiness, or unwillingness, to overthrow the capitalist system, and indeed their immediate desire to find accommodation within it. Their illusions concerning the reformability of capitalism support the political opportunism of the communist parties.

With the aid of the self-contradictory term "Euro-communism," these parties try to differentiate their present attitudes from past policies—that is, to make it clear that their traditional, albeit long forgotten, state-capitalist goal has been definitively given up in favor of the mixed economy and bourgeois democracy. This is the natural counterpart to the integration of the "socialist countries" into the capitalist world market. It is also a quest for the assumption of larger responsibilities within the capitalist countries and their governments and a promise not to disrupt that limited degree of cooperation reached by the European powers. It does not imply a radical break with the state-capitalist part of the world, but merely the recognition that this part too is presently not interested in further extension of the state-capitalist system by revolutionary means, but rather in its own security in an increasingly unstable world.

While socialist revolutions at this stage of development are more than just doubtful, all working-class activities in defense of the workers' own interests possess a potentially revolutionary character. In periods of relative economic stability the workers' struggle itself hastens the accumulation of capital, by forcing the bourgeoisie to adopt more efficient ways to increase the productivity of labor. Wages and profits may, as mentioned, rise together without disturbing the expansion of capital. A depression, however, brings the simultaneous (though unequal) rise of profits and wages to an end. The profitability of capital must be restored be-fore the accumulation process can be resumed. The struggle between labor and capital now involves the system's very existence, bound up as it is with its continuous expansion. Objectively, ordinary economic struggles for higher wages take on revolutionary implications, and thus political forms, as one class can succeed only at the expense of the other.

Of course, the workers might be prepared to accept, within limits, a decreasing share of the social product, if only to avoid the miseries of drawn-out confrontations with the bourgeoisie and its state. Because of previous experiences, the ruling class expects revolutionary activities and has armed itself accordingly. But the political support of the large labor organizations is equally necessary to prevent large-scale social upheavals. As a prolonged depression threatens the capitalist system, it is essential for the communist parties as well as other reformist organizations to help the bourgeoisie to overcome its crisis conditions. They must try to prevent working-class activities that might delay a capitalist recovery. Their opportunistic policies take on an openly counter-revolutionary character as soon as the system finds itself endangered by working-class demands that cannot be satisfied within a crisis-ridden capitalism.

Although the mixed economies will not transform themselves into state-capitalist systems on their own accord, and though the left-wing parties have, for the time being, discarded their state capitalist goals, this may not prevent social upheavals on a scale large enough to override the political controls of both the bourgeoisie and their allies in the labor movement. If such a situation should occur, the current identification of socialism with state-capitalism, and a forced rededication of communist parties to the early tactics of Bolshevism, could very well sidetrack any spontaneous rising of the workers into state-capitalist channels. Just as the traditions of Social Democracy in the Central European countries prevented the political revolutions of 1918 from becoming social revolutions, so the traditions of Leninism may prevent the realization of socialism in favor of state capitalism.

The introduction of state capitalism in capitalistically advanced countries as a result of World War II
demonstrates that this system is not restricted to capitalistically undeveloped nations but may be applicable universally. Such a possibility was not envisioned by Marx. For him, capitalism would be replaced by socialism, not by a hybrid system containing elements of both within capitalist relations of production. The end of the competitive market economy is not necessarily the end of capitalist exploitation, which can also be realized within the state-planning system. This is a historically novel situation indicating the possibility of a development characterized generally by state monopoly over the means of production, not as a period of transition to socialism but as a new form of capitalist production.

Revolutionary actions presuppose a general disruption of society that escapes the control of the ruling class. Thus far such actions have occurred only in connection with social catastrophes, such as lost wars and the associated economic dislocations. This does not mean that such situations are an absolute precondition for revolution, but it points to the extent of social disintegration necessary to lead to social upheavals. Revolution must involve the rebellion of a majority of the active population, something that is not brought about by ideological indoctrination but is the result of sheer necessity. The resulting activities produce their own revolutionary consciousness, namely an understanding of what has to be done so as not to be destroyed by the capitalist enemy. But at present, the political and military power of the bourgeoisie is not threatened by internal dissension and the mechanisms for manipulatory economic actions are not as yet exhausted. And despite increasing international competition for the shrinking profits of the world economy, the ruling classes of the various nations will still support one another in the suppression of revolutionary movements.

The enormous difficulties in the way of social revolution and a communist reconstruction of society were frightfully underestimated by the early Marxist movement. Of course, capitalism's resiliency and adaptability to changing conditions could not be discovered short of trying to put an end to it. It should be clear by now, however, that the forms taken by the class struggle during the rise of capitalism are not adequate for its period of decline, which alone allows for its revolutionary overthrow. The existence of state-capitalist systems also demonstrates that socialism cannot be reached by means deemed sufficient in the past. Yet this proves not the failure of Marxism but merely the illusory character of many of its manifestations, as reflexes of illusions created by the development of capitalism itself.

Now as before, the Marxian analysis of capitalist production and its peculiar and contradictory evolution by way of accumulation is the only theory that has been empirically confirmed by capitalist development. To speak of the latter we must speak in Marxian terms or not at all. This is why Marxism cannot die but will last as long as capitalism exists. Although largely modified, the contradictions of capitalist production persist in the state-capitalist systems. As all economic relations are social relations, the continuing class relations in these systems imply the constancy of the class struggle, even if, at first, only in the one-sided form of authoritarian rule. The unavoidable and growing integration of the world economy affects all nations regardless of their particular socioeconomic structure and tends to internationalize the class struggle and thereby to undermine attempts to find national solutions for social problems. So long, then, as class exploitation prevails, it will bring forth a Marxist opposition, even if all Marxist theory should be suppressed or used as a false ideology in support of an anti-Marxian practice.

History, of course, has to be made by people, by way of the class struggle. The decline of capitalism-made visible on the one hand by the continual concentration of capital and centralization of political power, and on the other hand by the increasing anarchy of the system, despite, and because of, all attempts at more efficient social organization-may well be a long drawn-out affair. It will be so, unless cut short by revolutionary actions on the part of the working class and all those unable to secure their existence within the deteriorating social conditions. But at this point the future of Marxism remains extremely vague. The advantages of the ruling classes and their instruments of repression have to be matched by a power greater than that which the laboring classes have thus far been able to generate. It is not inconceivable that this situation will endure and thus condemn the proletariat to pay ever heavier penalties for its inability to act upon its own class interest. Further, it is not excluded that the perseverance of capitalism will lead to the destruction of society itself. Because capitalism remains susceptible to catastrophic crises, nations will tend, as they have in the past, to resort to war, to extricate themselves from difficulties at the expense of other capitalist powers. This tendency includes the possibility of
nuclear war, and as matters stand today, war seems even more likely than an international socialist revolution. Although the ruling classes are fully aware of the consequences of nuclear warfare, they can only try to prevent it by mutual terror, that is, by the competitive expansion of the nuclear arsenal. As they have only very limited control over their economies, they also have no real control over their political affairs, and whatever intentions they may harbor to avoid mutual destruction do not greatly affect the probability of its occurrence. It is this terrible situation that precludes the confidence of an earlier period in the certainty and success of socialist revolution.

As the future remains open, even if determined by the past and the immediately given conditions, Marxists must proceed on the assumption that the road to socialism is not yet closed and that there is still a chance to overcome capitalism prior to its self-destruction. Socialism now appears not only as the goal of the revolutionary labor movement but as the only alternative to the partial or total destruction of the world. This requires, of course, the emergence of socialist movements that recognize the capitalist relations of production as the source of increasing social miseries and the threatening descent into a state of barbarism. However, after more than a hundred years of socialist agitation, this seems to be a forlorn hope. What one generation learns, another forgets, driven by forces beyond its control and therefore comprehension. The contradictions of capitalism, as a system of private interests determined by social necessities, are reflected not only in the capitalist mind but also in the consciousness of the proletariat. Both classes react to the results of their own activities as if they were due to unalterable natural laws. Subjected to the fetishism of commodity production they perceive the historically limited capitalist mode of production as an everlasting condition to which each and everyone has to adjust. Since this erroneous perception secures the exploitation of labor by capital, it is of course fostered by the capitalist as the ideology of bourgeois society and indoctrinated into the proletariat.

The capitalist conditions of social production force the working class to accept its exploitation as the only way to secure its livelihood. The immediate needs of the worker can only be satisfied by submitting to these conditions and their reflection in the ruling ideology. Generally, he will accept one with the other, as representative of the real world, which cannot be defied except by suicide. An escape from bourgeois ideology will not alter his actual position in society and is at best a luxury within the conditions of his dependence. No matter how much he may emancipate himself ideologically, for all practical purposes he must proceed as if he were still under the sway of bourgeois ideology. His thoughts and actions are of necessity discrepant. He may realize that his individual needs can only be assured by collective class actions, but he will still be forced to attend to his immediate needs as an individual. The twofold nature of capitalism as social production for private gain reappears in the ambiguity of the worker's position as both an individual and a member of a social class.

It is this situation, rather than some conditioned inability to transcend capitalist ideology, that makes the workers reluctant to express and to act upon their anti-capitalist attitudes, which complement their social position as wage workers. They are fully aware of their class status, even when they ignore or deny it, but they also recognize the enormous powers arrayed against them, which threaten their destruction should they dare to challenge the capitalist class relations. It is for this reason too that they choose a reformist rather than revolutionary mode of action when they attempt to wring concessions from the bourgeoisie. Their lack of revolutionary consciousness expresses no more than the actual social power relations, which indeed cannot be changed at will. A cautious "realism" --that is, recognition of the limited range of activities open to them-- determines their thoughts and actions and finds its justification in the power of capital.

Unless accompanied by revolutionary action on the part of the working class, Marxism, as the theoretical comprehension of capitalism, remains just that. It is not the theory of an actual social practice, intent and able to change the world, but functions as an ideology in anticipation of such a practice. Its interpretation of reality, however correct, does not affect the immediately given conditions to any important extent. It merely describes the actual conditions in which the proletariat finds itself, leaving their change to the future actions of the workers themselves. But the very conditions in which the workers find themselves subject them to the rule of capital and to an impotent, namely ideological, opposition at best. Their class struggle within ascending capitalism strengthens their adversary and weakens their own
oppositional inclinations. Revolutionary Marxism is thus not a theory of class struggle as such, but a theory of class struggle under the specific conditions of capitalism's decline. It cannot operate effectively under "normal" conditions of capitalist production but has to await their break-down. Only when the cautious "realism" of the workers turns into unrealism, and reformism into utopianism --that is, when the bourgeoisie is no longer able to maintain itself except through the continuous worsening of the living conditions of the proletariat-- may spontaneous rebellions issue into revolutionary actions powerful enough to overthrow the capitalist regime.

Until now the history of revolutionary Marxism has been the history of its defeats, which include the apparent successes that culminated in the emergence of state-capitalist systems. It is clear that early Marxism not only underestimated the resiliency of capitalism, but in doing so also overestimated the power of Marxian ideology to affect the consciousness of the proletariat. The process of historical change, even if speeded up by the dynamics of capitalism, is exceedingly slow, particularly when measured against the lifespan of an individual. But the history of failure is also one of illusions shed and experience gained, if not for the individual, at least for the class. There is no reason to assume that the proletariat cannot learn from experience. Quite apart from such considerations, it will at any rate be forced by circumstances to find a way to secure its existence outside of capitalism, when this is no longer possible within it. Although the particularities of such a situation cannot be established in advance, one thing is clear: namely, that the liberation of the working class from capitalist domination can only be achieved through the workers' own initiative, and that socialism can be realized only through the abolition of class society through the ending of the capitalist relations of production. The realization of this goal will be at once the verification of Marxian theory and the end of Marxism.