Symposium on Social Development

The Marxist Theory of Social Development

by

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Since this paper is designed for a symposium devoted to various types and aspects of social development it seems advisable to begin with a more precise formulation of its subject matter. The framework provided by the general title, "the theory of social development", is so wide that, without a conscious limitation of the subject, it is only too easy to stray into the blind alley of speculation.

The question that interests us at present can be approached from two different angles: one can examine the problem of social development on the basis of concrete material concerning a certain sphere of social life (e.g., economy, technology, law or morals), or one can analyse the categories of development on the basis of the various theories explaining the mechanism and interdependence of the various aspects of social life. As shown by the title of the paper, I have chosen the latter road, setting myself the task to present the Marxist view of the problem.

The more detailed formulation of this task should consist in a selection of issues to be analysed. In view of the terms of reference of this symposium I intend to dwell on three problems only:

1. the precise meaning of terms occurring in similar analyses, such as "movement", "change", "development", "progress";

2. the meaning of the term "social development", and the mechanism and criteria of this development in the light of Marxist theory;

3. the possibility of a conscious influence on the direction and rate of this development - when the Marxist theory is accepted.

One more point needs clarification before I proceed to the actual analysis: how do I intend to present the Marxist theory of social development? The answer, I believe, is implied in the plan of my paper as formulated above; I am not going to give a full account of a doctrine which surely has by now become one of the classical theories, the general outlines of which are well known to social scientists. My intention is to analyse - on the basis of this theory and its method of research - some of the problems which may be of interest to our symposium. That is how the somewhat general title of this essay is to be understood.
1. The subject matter of our symposium is, among other things, social development as presented by various theories. It is precisely because of the diversity and controversial nature of these theories that any discussion of the subject can only be successful if a maximum of precision is used in terminology. Not that semantic analysis can in itself solve any problems, but because it helps to avoid mental confusion and pure verbalism which can only make these complicated issues even more complicated. That is why we must use full semantic discretion to distinguish the meaning of such terms as "change", "movement", "development" and "progress".

Our point of departure is the term "change". It is the widest term, serving to designate any process characterized by the fact that at the instant $t_1$ there exists a state $X_1$, while at the instant $t_2$.... $t_n$ there occurs a state $X_n$. The change consists in the fact that things which we examine, but the existence of which is independent of the cognizing subjects, are in some respects, different at different instants. When this is not the case there is no change and we speak of the thing as - at least relatively - invariable. On the other hand, a change is brought about when the difference of the state occurs in any respect (e.g., with respect to place, temperature, electric change, chemical properties, social system, mental processes, etc.).

This definition of "change" shows clearly that the term "movement" designates a certain sub-group of phenomena included in the class of changes. What is involved here is change of position in space, so that "movement" is identified with mechanical "motion" and the scope of its meaning is narrower than that of "change".

This terminological distinction is necessary for a precise definition of the term "development". In view of the long-established usage, both in everyday speech and in scientific terminology, we can state that the meaning of development is also narrower in scope than that of "change". Whenever we speak of development we mean some change, but when ascertaining a change we are not always entitled to speak of development - in any case not with regard to regressive change. Thus, for example, when referring to the development of a human organism from childhood to maturity we mean certain biological, psychological and other changes which have occurred in it; but if we speak of a change consisting in the death of this organism as a result of a fatal accident we cannot describe this change as development, for this would be clearly contrary to the meaning of the words we use. The position is similar in the sphere of social phenomena. Changes occurring in a society which from a system based on slavery went over to feudalism, and then from feudalism to capitalism, will be readily described as development - in spite of the controversial nature of certain problems implied by this process. But we shall not speak of development in the case of the changes consisting in the liquidation of the Roman Empire by the invasion of the barbarians, even though it might be argued that this invasion and the material and spiritual destruction it caused were a condition and a nucleus of future social development.

The term "development" thus serves to designate a certain type of changes: those which, with a given frame of reference and scale of measurement, represent a quantitative growth of a phenomenon considered as positive under a given system of values.

This definition, complicated and full of reservations as it is, shows that - if it is correct - the problem itself is very complex. Let us explain at least some of these complications.
We state that the growth of democracy is a manifestation of social development; here "development" is taken as being synonymous with progress. When accepting this statement we must be aware of two points: that we are not referring to social life in general, but only to one of its aspects, namely, that which concerns the relations between the individual on the one hand and the political and economic power on the other (frame of reference) and that we have a certain method of establishing whether there really is more democracy (scale of measurement). But it is not enough to establish the frame of reference and a way to assess the phenomenon under consideration. It must be also related to a certain system of values, if we are to answer the question whether its quantitative growth means development (in the sense of progress) or not. More democracy means social development, more delinquency means social decline, or regression. It is only on the basis of a socially established system of values that one can answer the always concrete question whether the growth of a given phenomenon means development or regression. Many-sided relating is thus necessary for the functioning of the category of development (I am here in favour of Mannheim's distinction between relationism and relativism, although I deny its correctness in the case of his views on the problem of ideology). It is only on the basis of this approach that one can understand the general description of development as a transition from lower to higher forms (and the problem consists precisely of ascertaining which forms are higher and why) as well as the limited character of the thesis that development means transition from simpler to more complicated forms (in many fields of social life the reverse is the case).

We have dealt with only some of the questions connected with the concept of development. Any more profound analysis of this complex problem would go beyond the scope of our present deliberations which are necessarily of an auxiliary nature. But it is sufficiently clear that, with this treatment of development, the term "development" has the same meaning as the term "progress".

2. What is the importance of this formulation of "development" for the interpretation of the term "social development"?

It consists above all in the realization that problems of social development can only be examined in a concrete manner, only within a certain frame of reference, both in the sense of a socially accepted (i.e., not absolute, but socially determined and variable) system of values, as well as with regard to an aspect of social life, as concretized in the course of research, and to a scale of measurement which has been accepted as binding in the given field. The expression "social life" means very many things because of the great number of manifestations of what we call social life. Its meaning covers the greatly varied patterns of social relations as well as their effects - in their institutional or other objective forms (e.g. in the form of works of art, science, etc.). Taken in this sense the term "social life" covers, among other things, economic, political and other relations between human beings, as well as science, art, morals, religion, etc. It would be therefore a mere commonplace (among other things, in the light of semantic analysis) to say that any question concerning social development "in general", and not specifying a concrete sphere of social life with its specific frame of reference, is either too comprehensive or too narrow, and is a question to which no correct answer can be given. If only because development of the various spheres of social life is not - as is shown by experience - a harmonious whole; it even happens that, at least in certain periods, progress in some spheres is accompanied by regression, or in any case stagnation, in others.
If this is so, asking about social development "in general" without specifying the domain to which the question refers, is reasonable only in one case: when it is accompanied by the assumption that in addition to a connexion and interdependence in development of the various spheres of social life there also exists a certain hierarchy of influences on social life as a whole. If such a hierarchy exists changes in one link of the chain of mutual connexions between various spheres of social life cause, as a consequence of a longer development, corresponding changes also in other links of this chain - which by no means eliminates their mutual dependence and influence. This assumption, based as it is on empirical data, constitutes the basis of the Marxist theory of social development.

For over a century Marxism, and particularly its concept of social development, as well as the practical conclusions based on this concept, have been the object of a struggle which is one of the most fascinating subjects of research for the sociology of knowledge. Here the essential point is not what is most often emphasized by the opponents of Marxism: that a scientific theory has become the ideological bond cementing a mass political movement - a fact which in certain circumstances, can create a tendency towards a dogmatic treatment of theory and an unwillingness to modify it when facts and experience demand it. It is another aspect of the problem that, in my opinion, deserves more attention: the dogmatic treatment of Marxism by the political opponents of the mass movement which is based on this theory. For the sociologist or the psychologist studying cognition processes on the social scale it is really a fascinating experience to see how political prejudice or hostility makes it impossible for some researchers to accept certain scientific truths, and how this social determination of research leads to amusing consequences - when somebody actually accepts the theory he opposes, but is under the impression that he is not doing it. The Marxist theory of social development, so violently combated and so unscrupulously distorted and falsified for more than a century, has, just the same, achieved the greatest success that can be achieved by a scientific theory: it has become so deeply embedded in the social sciences of our time (this is in any case true of its fundamental thesis on the determining role of the relations of production in the whole of social development) that one has long ceased to trace its origins. No serious historian today would neglect the role of the economic factors and the social relations based on these factors in his analysis of historical development. But how many historians remember or deem it necessary to point out that this discovery can be traced back to Marx and that it is from Marxism that they are constantly borrowing? Is this not the case of the class analysis of social phenomena, which is so fervently combated by the majority of sociologists who fall or refuse to see that in fact they also draw their inspiration from Marx and Marxism? Is it not a frequent occurrence today that economic materialism - which has been attacked as one of Marx's greatest sins (and with which, incidentally, he had nothing to do) is most unexpectedly found in the works of historians and other representatives of social sciences who otherwise oppose Marxism? If only for these reasons we ought to recall some of the theses of Marx's theory of social development before we draw conclusions concerning the possibilities and methods of the influence of conscious human activity in this development.

Against the view, prevalent in certain circles, that Marx's interpretation of history and his theory of social development have no connexion with Marx's philosophy - dialectical materialism - an analysis of the history of the problem, as well as of its merits, shows that Lenin was right when he said that the so-called historical materialism is an extension of the tenets of Marx's philosophy to research into social phenomena. It is precisely on the basis of dialectics,
conceived as a science of the most general laws governing the development of reality as a whole (i.e. nature, society and human thought), that Marx clearly sees the mutual connexion and interdependence of all the aspects of social life. Nothing could be more remote from this dialectical concept of social development than a one-sided reduction of this development to only one factor - the economic, than the reduction of historical materialism to the crude form of economic materialism - from which, incidentally, both Marx and Engels clearly dissociated themselves in their criticism of some of their followers. Nevertheless, historical materialism recognizes that the economic factor, interpreted in a certain way, plays a special rôle in the development of social life.

A basic prerequisite of production is the existence of productive forces, that is, of instruments and people who can use them. For the purpose of production people organize themselves in a certain way, they pool their efforts and enter into social relations with one another. These relations are called the relations of production. The productive forces of society and men's relations of production represent the mode of production. It must be pointed out that this is not a combination of heterogeneous elements, but a true unity; the relations of production are inseparably linked with the productive forces, they are their function. Whatever are the productive forces, such are the relations of production; in case of a discrepancy between the two, society goes through a period of crisis and struggle which sooner or later must lead to an adaptation of the relations of production to the actually existing productive forces - or to a catastrophe of the given socio-economic formation. Development in the field of the productive forces causes also an inevitable necessity of change in the relations of production. For the way in which men arrange their relations and organize production, as well as the social relations which they establish for the purpose, depends, in the final analysis, on the instruments they have at their disposal.

This is given in a nutshell in Marx's famous sentence: "The handmill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist."

The state of the productive forces, determining as it does the relations of production, determines also the mode of production which in turn becomes the basis of social development. In a rough outline, this is how the social system is dependent on the economic structure of society. It can be seen that the term "social system" has a wider scope than "economic structure" which, as has been pointed out, plays the rôle of foundation - or the most important element - of society as a whole.

The relations of production are directly reflected in political life and legal norms. The political and legal superstructure is thus closely connected with the economic foundations of social existence.

On the other hand, the connexion between the higher forms of the ideological structure and their economic base is much looser. There is a number of intermediate links between them, but a connection does exist. We can ascertain it empirically, seeing how a change in the economic structure of society is inevitably followed by changes in men's political views, artistic tastes, legislation, philosophy, religion, morals, etc. Thus, for example, the transition from feudalism to capitalism means a change not only in economic structure, but also in all forms and fields of culture. This connexion between the ideological superstructure and the material base cannot be correctly understood unless due consideration is given to the decisive influence of the economic factor on social psychology.

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The history of Marxism has recorded more than one attempt to distort the concept of historical materialism. This mostly consisted of a very primitive treatment of the relationship between the base and the superstructure of social organization, which was often represented in the shape of a one-sided dependence, with a complete elimination of the element of mutual influence.

Such attempts were made by both "advocates" and opponents of Marxism. The former distorted its position because of their inadequate knowledge of the problem. It was to this category of "Marxists" that Marx referred, when he said: "I only know one thing: that I am not Marxist" (see Engels' letter to Conrad Schmidt, 5 August 1890). And actually this position had nothing in common with the attempts to establish a one-sided relationship between culture and the material base of society, as well as to interpret the different aspects of literary work exclusively in the terms of economic factors, the class background of the writers, etc. It is only too obvious that the so-called "economic materialism" prevented any objective analysis of the complex world of ideas, and by no means contributed to their full and correct explanation. "Economic materialism" as was brilliantly proved by Pekhanov in a review of Labriola's work, is alien to the spirit of historical materialism; the only link between them was provided by a certain external similarity in some fragments of the doctrine.

On the other hand a similar distorting of Marxism has been a favourite game of its opponents. For it is much easier to refute the doctrine of historical materialism after it has been interpreted in a special way than to attack it in its original form. Frequently, therefore, the familiar trick was used: the position of the opponent was first distorted and then it was "refuted". I do not intend to discuss the popular method consisting of investing the Marxist term "materialism" with an incorrect and groundlessly simplified meaning, i.e. interpreting it not in the philosophical, but the colloquial, vulgar sense, as if Marxism only represented the crude interests of the belly and the pocket. This "argument" does not require any serious attention. What is more important is criticism of the allegedly one-sided character of historical materialism which is said to disregard the influence of ideology on the development of social existence and fails to see the rôle of ideas in history.

Some extremely interesting evidence in this respect is provided by Engels' letters to a number of Socialist leaders, in which the co-founder of the Marxist doctrine, shortly before his death corrected some errors in the interpretation of the materialist approach to history.

By 1890 the incorrect treatment by some "Marxists" of the relationship between the material base and the superstructure had become quite obvious if Engels deemed it necessary to criticise it.

"Marx and I are ourselves to blame for the fact that young writers sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it", Engels wrote to Bloch in 1890. "We had to emphasize this main principle in opposition to our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to allow the other elements involved in the interaction to come into their rights. But when it was a case of presenting a section of history, that is, of practical application, the thing was different and there no error was possible. Unfortunately, however, it happens only too often that people think they have fully understood a theory and can apply it without more ado from the moment they have mastered its main principles, and those even not always correctly. And I cannot exempt many of the more recent Marxists from this reproach for the most wonderfull rubbish has been produced from this quarter, too."
What is the true Marxist interpretation of the whole problem of the relationship between the ideological superstructure and the economic base of society? A clear and unambiguous answer to this question is found in Engels' letters on historical materialism.

"According to the materialist conception of history", Engels says in the same letter, "the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If, therefore, somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure... also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form."

The fact of the interaction of the elements of the social base and superstructure is even more strongly emphasized in Engels' other statements.

"And it seems to me obvious", he wrote to Schmidt, "that... what we call ideological conception reacts in its turn upon the economic basis and may, within certain limits, modify it."

"If therefore Barth supposes", Engels continues, "that we deny any and every reaction of the political etc., reflexes of the economic movement upon the movement itself, he is simply tilting at windmills. He has only got to look at Marx's 'Eighteenth Brumaire', which deals almost exclusively with the particular part played by political struggles and events, of course, within their general dependence upon economic conditions. Or 'Capital', the section on the working day, for instance, where legislation, which is surely a political act, has such a trenchant effect. Or the section on the history of the bourgeoisie" (Chapter XXIV).

"Hanging together with this too", Engels wrote to Franz Mehring, "is the fatuous notion of the ideologists that because we deny an independent historical development to the various ideological spheres which play a part in history, we also deny them any effect upon history. The basis of this is the common undialectical conception of cause and effect as rigidly opposite poles, the total disregarding of interaction; these gentlemen often almost deliberately forget that once a historic element has been brought into the world by other elements, ultimately by economic facts, it also reacts in its turn and may react on its environment and even on its own causes..."

And one more quotation:

"Political, juridical, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc., development is based on economic development. But all these react upon one another and also upon the economic base. It is not that the economic position is the cause and alone active, while everything else only has a passive effect. There is, rather, interaction on the basis of the economic necessity, which ultimately always asserts itself."

In the light of these excerpts from Engels' letters the relationship between the ideological superstructure and the economic base looks completely different than in the interpretation usually given by the adversaries of Marxism. Their connexion - let me say it again - is by no means one-sided. If changes in the economic base, determined by the development of the productive forces, cause corresponding changes
in the world of ideas, this world, in its turn, acquires - within certain limits - an independent existence and a possibility of reacting in its own way on the functioning of the economic base. Man's creative thought, inventing ever more perfect instruments of production, transforms, gradually and indirectly, the general economic structure, all social relations, and, as a result, the whole of human reality.

The continuators of the theories of Marx and Engels creatively developed their ideas concerning the interaction of the economic base and the ideological superstructure, and particularly the active role of the latter in social development. The greatest contribution in this respect was made by Lenin; but here I would like to draw your attention to the works of the greatest Polish sociologist, Ludwik Krzywicki (1859-1941) who was under a strong influence of Marxist ideas. Another reason why I am doing this is that, because of the language handicap, the works of that eminent scholar, who made many original contributions to the social sciences, are completely unknown in the West.

Taking into account the unity of the material base and the ideological superstructure in social processes, Krzywicki realizes the importance of the spontaneous development of the material base, which takes place with the necessity of natural processes and determines the development of the whole structure of society, and thus also of its ideology. Seeking to satisfy their material needs and to improve their standards of living, men, irrespective of their consciousness, cause small changes in the process of production and when - as Krzywicki puts it - in the course of time these differentials become integrated, the material base of social life changes. This was how the process of transformation of guild-type production into manufactory-type of production took place. Thus the contents of social life (the mode of production) changes, but the politico-legal forms do not keep pace with these changes. This is the result of the interests of the ruling class which defends the relations of production which are convenient for it, as well as the politico-legal forms reflecting these relations. Social dissatisfaction arises, at first unconscious, and then realized by the social classes interested in a change. It is at this stage that the social idea, expressing the desire for a change, is born and the conscious class struggle begins. Thus, the social idea, born as a result of objective and spontaneous social processes, acquires, at the moment of its appearance, tremendous importance and influence on further social development. The idea is, therefore, only a conscious expression of the changes in the material situation of society, which have already occurred, but, at the moment of its appearance it becomes a powerful weapon in their further realization.

The social idea is a reflection in human consciousness of the needs created by the development of the material conditions of social existence. Thus social development is based on its material substratum, but this does not mean that the social idea loses its importance and that social development is characterized by some kind of fatalism. "One must not suspect history of fatalism", Krzywicki says, "in other words, one must not think that the solution can take place without the participation of man who can idly watch the events. For the human being, having created the task in a spontaneous manner, can solve it only through conscious activity".
Naturally, not every idea plays a socially transforming rôle. Such a rôle is played only by those ideas which reflect the actual changes in the material conditions of existence; only these ideas can get hold of the masses and become historical ideas. The fantasies of individuals can become utopias, which Krzywicki calls the "ideological shavings of history", but they will not appeal to the masses if they do not reflect the actual needs of society.

But Krzywicki is not satisfied with the general statement that social being determines social consciousness. The classics of Marxism repeatedly stressed the importance of ideas in social development and emphasized the limited autonomy of the development of social consciousness and its influence on the movements of the material base. It is to these problems that Krzywicki devotes his works concerning ideology, in which, in his theory of the "migration of ideas", he develops the general theses of the classics.

The social idea is a secondary manifestation of changes in the material conditions of social being. This is undoubtedly a true statement, but it requires a certain qualification: it is fully true in that country in which the material base gave birth to the new idea. But when already formulated, ideas migrate to other countries, they travel in space and in time. Such a migratory idea - the product of a certain mode of production in a certain country - can become, in another, less developed country, a factor preceding and stimulating the material processes of social change. The problem of the migration of ideas, which Ludwik Krzywicki put forth and analysed from a Marxist point of view, is one of the aspects of the question of the interaction between the material base and the ideological superstructure.

Even more interesting is the migration of ideas in time: born as a result of certain objective conditions, the idea, having met with the analogous needs of the material base, revives in a new epoch. Appearing in a new epoch, as a perfect expression of newly emerging conditions, the migratory idea becomes a factor preceding and stimulating social development. A classic example of such a migration of ideas in time is the reception of Roman law in medieval cities - against the background of the emergence of a market economy within the framework of the feudal economy.

Krzywicki's analysis of the problem of the idea in social development led him, however, not only to the ascertainment of its rôle as a factor which, in certain conditions, accelerates development, but also to the statement that it can shape, or even check this development. These laws of development were formulated by Krzywicki in his theories of the "historical substratum" and "survivals".

The fact that the idea has a secondary character, and that "social being determines consciousness" explains why certain ideas appear in certain circumstances and why they become popular among the masses as "historical ideas". But it does not explain why they acquire the given shape, why they find a different response in different milieus.

To account for this phenomenon Krzywicki formulates his theory of the "social substratum". Social consciousness reflects the changes occurring in the material conditions of social being, it is derived from them. But when reflecting these changes it makes use of the ideological forms which already exist. Thus the ideology of the past is at the cradle of the new idea and consequently influences its development. The stimuli stemming from the material conditions of social being are, as it were, a seed sown in the soil of the existing social consciousness; the harvest depends not only on the seed, but also on the quality of the soil.
This soil is the so-called ideological superstructure of the given society; in view of the fact that it is a product of historical development Krzywicki calls it the "historical substratum".

"Our customs and prejudices, principles and beliefs, our emotions and temperament; further, our political and legal institutions, our moral and aesthetic views; finally, our philosophical systems - they all, in the course of historical development, form one coherent category: the historical substratum."

"This substratum has been formed during centuries: as in an archive each epoch left something as a legacy. Even the most remote times still exist, as survivals, in the sphere of our customs and prejudices. The past is still met with at every step, it restrains our movements, it hampers our aspirations which are dictated by the present pattern of social relations. We are surrounded and fettered by past centuries. In our own being, in our inner self, the threads are still entangled which were once tied in the souls of our unknown forefathers. If we were better to analyse our everyday actions and impulses, if we were to study our prejudices, thoughts and emotions, or if we had a closer look on our own surroundings and asked about the origin of our customs and principles of action, we should soon understand how much we are governed not by our own minds, but by those of our ancestors. Whatever may be asserted about our independence we are slaves of our fathers and forefathers."

The theory of the "historical substratum" is more than controversial, but it casts interesting light on the rôle which the theory of the active rôle of the idea in social development plays in the minds of the Marxists. Krzywicki combines this conception with what he calls the theory of survivals, in which, against the background of the struggle of reactionary classes, he analyses the hampering rôle of tradition, and drafts a programme of fight against this hampering tradition - a fight which he considers to be one of the foremost tasks of the revolutionary movements.

Krzywicki's views have been quoted only in a rough outline and only to illustrate a wider issue: how the followers of Marxism understand the thesis on the determining role of the changes in the economic base in social development.

It is only the correct interpretation of Marx's conception concerning social development and the driving forces behind it that enables us to understand his theory of social formations and of the class struggle as the driving force of these formations. But, as I have pointed out, it is not my task to expound the whole of Marx's theory which has already become classic. I only wanted to recall those of its principles which refute the views distorting and falsifying the meaning of the Marxist theory of social development.

Naturally, my point was not only to recall or expound these principles, but to draw the conclusions following from this position - above all, practical conclusions in the sphere of human actions consciously transforming social reality. This however will be dealt with in the next section of this paper. Here I wish to say a few words on some other attitudes to the problem of social development.

The Marxist theory of social development, albeit stressing the role of the economic base in the development of society, is opposed to any conceptions which assume the existence of one, homogeneous criterion of development in all fields
of social life. This is true both of Hegel's theory that progress consists of
the growth of freedom and of the type of concepts suggested by Professor M.
Ginsberg, that progress consists of the growth of rationality, that is, the
systematical organization of thought and action. These conceptions are so vague
that they do not yield any practical directives for action - even if we accepted
them without reservations. But they cannot be accepted, if only because - as is
demonstrated by Marxism - the various fields of social life, while interconnected
with each other, have no homogeneous system of values or scale of measurement,
with reference to which we assess the occurrence of progress. But the most serious
objection is of a practical nature: as far as directives for actions are concerned
we learn nothing from such metaphysical conceptions, while the Marxist doctrine
clearly implies directives of a practical character which - as experience has
shown - enable man to transform the world. And this is surely the main point when
we tackle the problem of social development in the light of present social conflicts
and of the tendency to put an end to them.

3. From positivist quarters Marxism has been charged with a tendency to ex-
cessive generalization which allegedly hampers effective social action within the
framework of so-called social engineering. The position of Popper - an exponent
of this view - is a striking example of the situation we have mentioned above,
when political considerations prevent a scholar from understanding theoretical
assertions. For both practice and theory give the lie to Popper's opinion.

Let us begin with practice. The history of mankind surely knows of no other
theoretical system which has played and is playing an equally great rôle as Marxism
as a basis of planned action designed to transform social life. That is why it is
hated so much in certain circles and why the irrational element plays a far more
important rôle in its appraisal than the rational one. In my opinion it is pre-
cisely this factor that any sociologist of science would recognize as determining
the attitudes of many scholars.

Let us now deal with premises of a theoretical nature. Can the directives
of social engineering be opposed to Marxist theory as a theory of social develop-
ment? In my opinion, they cannot - at least for two reasons. First, because the
Marxist theory of social development implies certain directives of action designed
to transform society, and it cannot be denied that they have the character of the
directives of social engineering in the wide sense of the term. Second, because
the directives of narrowly conceived social engineering are impossible without some
more general conception of social development. Whoever accepts such directives
silently assumes some conceptions of social development. If only because he rejects
extreme liberalism which, with its laissez-faire principle, opposes any State in-
terference in social issues and eo ipso rejects any social engineering.

The significance of the Marxist theory of social development consists also
(and perhaps primarily) of the fact that it provides a basis for conscious social
action. Already in his youth Marx saw the sense of his theory in the fact that
it constitutes the "ideological weapon of the proletariat", and the entire history
of Marxism confirms the correctness of this view. Marx's point was not only that
his theory provides an ideological bond for a new, mass social movement, but above
all that it allows scientific anticipation of the great lines of social development,
and, on this basis, conscious social action designed to achieve certain ends. For
Marxism is not a metaphysical historiography speculating on the Spirit of History
or the Spirit of the Nation. Nor is it satisfied with putting forth vague - and

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thus devoid of any practical meaning - assertions, such as the recognition of the
growth of freedom, rationality, etc., as a trend of historical development. Marxism
gives a concrete analysis of a concrete social formation, an analysis from which
concrete directives for action are derived. These are based on the general con-
clusions drawn from a study of historical processes in previous formations. But
these general conclusions are also of a special type: while ascertaining the in-
teraction of the various fields of social life they establish a certain hierarchy among
them, from which flow certain directives for action within the framework of each
social formation. These are: to change a formation one has first of all to change
the relations of production, that is, the property relations. To give concrete
meaning to this general directive one must carry out a concrete analysis of concrete
historical conditions. This was what Marx did, devoting all his life to the analysis
of capitalism. It was on this basis that the directives of the most effective
social engineering in history could have grown. Both in the sense of revolutionary
activity directed against capitalism, and in that of a construction of a new system
- Socialism. It is precisely in this combination of its heuristic values as a
method of research and its practical values in action that lies the tremendous
significance of the Marxist theory of social development. The very fact that more
than one third of mankind is using this theory as a guide for practical activity
proves that it is a phenomenon without precedent in history. Now let us try to
apply these theoretical reflexions to practical contemporary problems. We are
faced with the problem of social development in its full scope, when the question
arises how and in what direction should society develop, and how we, the "dramatis
personae" should act. The more so as contemporary social and ideological conflicts
may present in this regard various, often drastically opposed solutions.

We can overlook the rather common problem which arises when comparing
various societies at various stages of development. We then have always to consider
the whole system of relations and to elucidate it by putting additional questions
like e.g.: in what respect and in relation to whom are we discussing development,
simply because every comparison is a comparison with something and stands in
relation to something, and thus, absolute opinions when dealing with complicated
and heterogeneous elements of a whole of compared objects may easily lead to non-
sensical conclusions. It would seem this point is not even worth mentioning, if
it were not for the widespread opinion that followers of the Marxist theory of
development are unable to see and appreciate the development of countries whose
systems they oppose. This is obviously a misunderstanding. It is manifest that
the United States of America, England or France are on a higher level of general
development than - let us say - in the XVIIth century, and that their development
is progressing in many regards. The main point, however, is to realize how this
development is proceeding, to what restraining influences it is submitted, in
which directions it is really advancing, and in which it is not.

This is but a commonplace problem, without greater practical portent. We
shall therefore concentrate on another question, the significance of which is
rapidly increasing, i.e. the problem of underdeveloped countries and the directives,
which originate from general reflexions regarding practical policy in these
countries.

If we try to answer the question: what is to be understood by the term
"underdeveloped country", we realize quite objectively that the Marxist concept
of social development made a genuine scientific career in due course. There is no
greater career for a scientific theory than to be totally absorbed by social opinion
of a scientific character, so that it pervades the system of the period to such an
extent as to lose all trace of its historical origins, to become a thing which goes
without saying. Whoever thinks today about Marxist roots of the current conception
of underdeveloped countries as of countries with poorly developed industrial bases
and all thence deriving consequences? None the less it is undoubtedly so. What
else but Marxism pointed to the importance of the development of productive forces
in the hierarchy of factors of social development? One could certainly say that
it is a question of pure commonsense, to be solved easily by observation of social
life without the help of any theory. It is all to the credit of Marxism that its
position should be compared with that of commonsense. One certainly may speculate
theoretically on various abstract criteria of social development, but even those
who emit these opinions will have no doubts about the fact that an underdeveloped
country is a country where, from a standpoint of modern standards, industry and,
consequently, the whole of economic life is underdeveloped, though in some respects
such a country may stand culturally higher than societies with highly developed
industry.

Apart from this digression on the rôle played by Marxism in shaping the modern
distinction of countries highly or underdeveloped, it is doubtless that the category
of underdeveloped countries is an economic one in the first place.

Setting the problem of underdeveloped countries and of tending them the aid
they are in need of, we clearly put the question of development of the industrial
basis of these countries. It is done as well by the underdeveloped countries them-

...
That is why, next to the operative directive which tends to create in the shortest possible time an industrial basis in underdeveloped countries, another directive has to be added, which must bring about most acute conflicts and clash of opinions while being realized: namely, the directive for an appropriate development of the mode of production, including human relations in the process of production.

Followers of the conception of "industrial society" - in spite of outward evidence to the contrary - easily fall into common economism, forgetting that the central social problem is Man. For the so-called human condition, material welfare is not the one and only important thing, though it is a basic condition; equally important is the position of Man in relation to other people. The more so, as this matter is only outwardly autonomatic and detached from problems of production and prosperity. It is not only important to develop the industrial basis and to produce more, but also how production proceeds, in a sense of social organization of production (on which depends also how much is produced) - and for whom it is produced (on which depends further what is produced, and how this production is then divided).

We know now from our own practice, how very important these problems can be. But opinions differ vastly as to how these problems have to be interpreted and practically realized. And here is to be found one of the sources of sharp ideological and political conflicts of our times.

The strict connexion of the first directive with the second one should be in favour of realizing the latter, in the practice of underdeveloped countries, according to the spirit of Marxist postulates. Whoever wants today to solve rapidly and consistently the problem of a country's own industrial basis (including heavy industry) and avoid at the same time economic and political dependence upon the capitalistic investor (a position most of the countries interested would like to escape from, which is understandable) has to change accordingly the relations of production, if he likes it or not, and follow the road to nationalization and central planning. All those who, in similar cases, scent communistic plots, simply do not understand the economic and social mechanism of societies which tend to overcome rapidly the status of underdeveloped countries. And who does not grasp such basic problems has finally to lose the fight.

For the same reasons - even if under the guidance of their own anticommmunist bourgeoisie - underdeveloped countries are prone to look for support in the new system of international relations, and to seek help in investments, which do not threaten them with political dependency upon imperialism. The policy of socialist countries is to meet these tendencies half-way, which brings about violent changes on the political chess-board of the world. And here again, those who are unable to stop tracing everything to communistic plots show a deep misunderstanding of the mechanism of implicated forces, which is certainly a handicap in the political struggle going on. The paradoxical and complicated character of the situation is also due to the fact that from the point of view of such people, even if they understood the mechanism and rules of the game and wanted to act accordingly, they would be bound to lose in any case. Tendering really disinterested support to foster the economic independence of underdeveloped countries, helping them in rapid development of their industrial basis, is liable to undermine the present economic and political situation of great capitalistic states.
The analysis of underdeveloped countries' problems and of genuine possibilities of their development not only shows a connexion with the Marxist conception of social development, but brings to light practical implications of economic and social activities of these countries, implications which touch essential problems of political and ideological contention going on in the modern world. These implications are within the range of sight of a policy resting on the premise of a Marxist conception of social development. Like for instance the fact, that to underdeveloped countries who have entered an actual fight for economic and political independence, the truly attractive paragon are becoming not any more the United States or Great Britain but - in spite of all ideological and political impediments - the Soviet Union and People's China. An uncommonly portentous fact, which will help to bring about a radical change of the social and political countenance of the present world.