

## CHAPTER I

# IDEOLOGY AS MATERIAL POWER

### 1. THE DIVERGENCE OF IDEOLOGY AND ECONOMIC SITUATION

The German revolutionary movement before Hitler was based on the economic and social theory of Karl Marx; an understanding of German fascism, therefore, presupposes an understanding of Marxism.

Shortly after National Socialism came to power in Germany, doubts about the correctness of the Marxist concepts of the social process were voiced even by people who for many years had actively proved their revolutionary convictions. These doubts were caused by a fact which, though at first unintelligible, was nonetheless beyond doubt: fascism, the most extreme exponent of political and economic reaction, had become an international phenomenon and in many countries had clearly gained the upper-hand over the socialist revolutionary movement. The problem was accentuated by the fact that this phenomenon was most pronounced in the highly industrialized countries. The international growth of nationalism was accompanied by a failure of the workers' movement; this during a phase of modern history which the Marxists called "economically ready for an overthrow of the capitalist mode of production." In addition to this failure, there was the burning memory of the failure of the Workers' International at the beginning of the first world war and of the revolutionary movement outside of Russia between 1918 and 1923. Thus the doubts about the correctness of the Marxian theories seemed to be supported by weighty facts. Now, if the basic Marxian concepts were indeed erroneous, then the workers' movement needed a thorough reorientation. If, on the other hand, these doubts were unfounded, if the *basic* Marxian concepts of sociology were correct, then, a thorough analysis of the continuous failures of the

workers' movement was needed, and, even more than that, an elucidation of the new mass movement of fascism. Only this could lead to a new revolutionary policy.

Certainly, no change for the better could be expected unless this were done. It was perfectly clear that neither appeals to a "revolutionary class consciousness" nor the then fashionable method of denying failures and of camouflaging important facts with illusions could lead anywhere. One could not be content with the fact that the workers' movement also "progressed" here and there. For the decisive factor is not that progress is being made, but how much progress is being made in relation to the international progress of political reaction.

The young movement of work-democratic sex-economy is interested in a thorough clarification of these questions not only because it is a part of the fight for social freedom in general, but chiefly because the attainment of its goals is inextricably linked with the attainment of the economic goal of natural work democracy. We shall, therefore, use the workers' movement as an illustration of the interlacing of the special sex-economic problems with the general social problems.

In many German meetings around 1930 revolutionaries, such as Otto Strasser, who were intelligent and honest though their thinking was somewhat nationalistic and mystical, would say to the Marxists: "You Marxists always point to the theories of Marx. Marx taught that theory is confirmed only in practice. But you always come up with explanations for the defeats of the Workers' International. Your Marxism has failed. The defeat in 1914 you explain with the 'defection of the Social Democrats,' that of 1918 with their 'politics of betrayal.' And now you have new 'explanations' for the fact that in the present world crisis the masses turn to the right instead of the left. But your explanations do not alter the fact of these defeats! Where, in the past eighty years, has there been any confirmation of the social revolution by practical action? Your basic error is that you deny or ridicule the mind which moves everything, instead of comprehending it." These were the arguments of many revolutionaries, and the Marxists

had no answer to them. It became increasingly clear that their political mass propaganda did not reach anybody except those who already belonged to the left front, simply because this propaganda referred to nothing but the *objective* socio-economic processes (capitalist production, economic anarchy, etc.). The elaboration of material needs, of hunger alone, was not sufficient, for that was done by *every* political party, even the church. Thus, when the economic crisis was most acute, the mysticism of National Socialism defeated the economic theories of Socialism. It was evident that there was a wide gap in the propaganda and in the total conception of socialism, a gap which was responsible for its "political mistakes." It was a defect in the Marxist comprehension of political reality. True, the method of dialectic materialism had provided the means for correcting this defect, but they had not been utilized. In brief, *Marxist politics had not included in its political practice the character structure of the masses and the social significance of mysticism.*

If one followed and actually experienced the theory and practice of Marxism on the revolutionary left front between 1917 and 1933, one found that it was limited to the *objective* economic processes and to state politics. The so-called "subjective factor" in history, the ideology of the masses, its development and contradictions, were not even considered, let alone understood. The Marxists failed to apply their own method of dialectic materialism, to keep it alive, and to use it to comprehend every *new* social phenomenon.

That is, the method of dialectic materialism was not applied to *new* historical phenomena. But fascism was such a phenomenon, a phenomenon which was still completely unknown to Marx and Engels and of which Lenin was aware only in its very beginning. The reactionary comprehension of reality by-passes its contradictions and actual conditions; reactionary politics automatically makes use of those social forces which are against development; it can do that only as long as science does not uncover *all* the revolutionary forces which *of necessity* must overcome the reactionary forces. As we shall see later, the mass basis of

fascism, the rebelling lower middle classes, contained not only reactionary but also powerful progressive social forces. This contradiction was overlooked; more than that, the role of the lower middle classes, up to the time of Hitler's coming into power, remained entirely in the background.

Revolutionary practice in any field of human existence develops by itself if one comprehends the contradictions in every new process; it consists in siding with those forces which act in the direction of *progressive* development. To be radical, according to Marx, means "going to the root of things." If one goes to the root of things, if one understands their contradictory character, the means of mastering the reaction become plain. If one does not understand them, one lands inevitably in mechanism, economism or metaphysics. Any criticism, therefore, is justified and of practical value only if it can demonstrate what contradictions in social reality are *overlooked*. The revolutionary achievement of Marx did not consist in writing proclamations or pointing to revolutionary goals, but in recognizing the industrial productive powers as the progressive social force, and in realistically describing the contradictions in capitalist economy. The failure of the workers' movement can mean only that those forces which hinder social development are still incompletely comprehended.

Like the works of many great thinkers, Marx's ideas were debased to empty slogans; they lost, in the hands of the Marxist politicians, their scientific revolutionary content. The politicians were so engrossed in everyday political struggles that they were unable to develop the principles of a live concept of social functioning as handed down by Marx and Engels. One has only to compare the books of, say, Sauerland, Salkind or Pieck with any of Marx or Engels to realize that functional methods turned into formulae, scientific research into rigid schemata. The "proletariat" of Marx's time had developed, in the meantime, into a gigantic industrial workers' class, the small tradespeople of the middle classes into masses of industrial and government employees. Scientific Marxism degenerated into "vulgar Marxism." This is the

term which many excellent Marxist politicians applied to economism, that concept which reduced all human existence to the problem of unemployment and wage rates.

This vulgar Marxism contended that an economic crisis of the magnitude of that between 1929 and 1933 must *of necessity* lead to the development of a Leftist ideology in the masses. Even after the defeat in January 1933 its representatives continued to talk of a "revolutionary upsurge." In reality, the economic crisis had—contrary to their expectations—led to an extreme development of a reactionary ideology in the masses. There was a *divergence between the development of the economic base, which was pressing to the Left, and the development of the ideology of the masses, which was to the Right. This divergence was overlooked.* Thus, no one even raised the question of how it was possible that the masses, at a time of pauperization, could become nationalistic. No slogans such as "chauvinism," "psychosis," "result of Versailles" comprehend this tendency of the middle classes to turn reactionary at such times. In addition, it was not only the middle classes, but large numbers of the industrial workers who turned to the Right. The fact was overlooked that the bourgeoisie, warned by the success of the Russian revolution, took new preventive measures (such as the New Deal); measures which were not understood and which the workers were unable to analyze. The further fact was overlooked that early fascism was directed against big business and could not be done away with as "*only* a vanguard of the money magnates"; if for no other reason, because it was a mass movement.

Wherein lay the problem?

Marx comprehended the exploitation of the commodity "working power" and the concentration of capital in a few hands, phenomena which go hand in hand with the increasing misery of the majority of working humanity. From this, Marx inferred the inevitability of the "expropriation of the expropriators." According to this concept, the social forces of production in capitalist society burst asunder the framework of production. The conflict between

*social* production and *private* appropriation of the products by capital can be solved only by an adaptation of the ways of production to the productive powers. *Social production must be supplemented by social appropriation of the products.* The first act of this adaptation is the social revolution; this is the basic economic principle of Marxism. This adaptation, it was said, can take place only through the "dictatorship of the proletariat"; the pauperized majority of the working people has to assume power over the minority of the owners of the means of production which are to be taken away from them.

The *economic* prerequisites of the social revolution were given, as laid down in the theory of Marx: capital was concentrated in the hands of a few. The development of a world economy was sharply contradicted by the tariff system of national states; capitalist economy attained hardly half of production capacity and it had clearly shown its anarchic character. The majority of the working population of highly industrialized countries lived in misery; about fifty million people were unemployed in Europe alone; hundreds of millions of working individuals lived on a starvation level. But the "expropriation of the expropriators" failed to materialize and, contrary to expectations, at the crossroads between "socialism and barbarism," the development was in the direction of barbarism. That is, there was an international growth of fascism and a corresponding weakening of the workers' movement. Those who still hoped that the coming second world war would, with certainty, have a revolutionary outcome, those who, in other words, depended on the masses to turn the weapons they were going to get against the inner enemy, had not followed the development of the new war techniques. It did not seem unlikely that in the next war an arming of the masses would not take place, and that military measures would be taken against the unarmed masses in the large industrial centers, executed by a few selected and dependable war technicians. Therefore, a re-orientation in thinking was a necessary prerequisite for a new revolutionary practice. The second world war confirmed these expectations.

## 2. ECONOMIC AND IDEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF GERMAN SOCIETY BETWEEN 1928 AND 1933

From a rational point of view, one would expect the pauperized masses of workers to develop a sharp consciousness of their social situation, to develop a will to eliminate their social misery. Similarly, one should expect the working individual to rebel against his social misery; one would expect him to say to himself: "I am a responsible worker. It is on me and people like myself that the weal and woe of society depend. I assume myself the responsibility for the work." In that case, the thinking (the "consciousness") of the worker would be consistent with his social situation. The Marxists called this "class consciousness." We shall call it "professional consciousness" or "consciousness of social responsibility." The *divergence* between the social position of the working masses on the one hand and their consciousness of it on the other hand means that the working masses, instead of improving their social situation, worsen it. It was exactly the pauperized masses who carried fascism, the ultimate in political reaction, to power.

The problem here is that of the role of ideology, the emotional attitude of the masses as a historical factor, the "*retroaction of the ideology on the economic base*." If the economic misery of broad masses of people did not lead to revolutionary tendencies in the sense of the social revolution; if, on the contrary, the economic crisis led to ideologies which were contrary to rational revolutionary thinking; then, in Marxist terms, the ideological development of the masses in these critical years inhibited the "unfolding of the forces of production" and blocked the "revolutionary solution of the conflict between the productive forces of monopolistic capitalism and its methods of production."

The class structure in Germany reveals the following picture:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> According to Kunik: "Versuch einer Feststellung der sozialen Gliederung der deutschen Bevölkerung," *Die Internationale* 1928, compiled by Lenz: "Proletarische Politik," Internationaler Arbeiterverlag, 1931.

|                                                                                                                                    | <i>Earning population</i><br><i>(in thousands)</i> | <i>With family members</i><br><i>(in millions)</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Industrial workers <sup>2</sup> . . . . .                                                                                          | 21,789                                             | 40.7                                               |
| Urban middle classes . . . . .                                                                                                     | 6,157                                              | 10.7                                               |
| Small farmers . . . . .                                                                                                            | 6,598                                              | 9.0                                                |
| Bourgeoisie (including land<br>owners and large farm-<br>ers) . . . . .                                                            | 718                                                | 2.0                                                |
|                                                                                                                                    | <u>34,762</u>                                      | <u>62.4</u>                                        |
| <i>Strata of the urban middle classes:</i>                                                                                         |                                                    | <i>in thousands</i>                                |
| Lower strata of persons in small enterprises (home<br>industries, tenant farms, workshops with less than<br>3 employees) . . . . . |                                                    | 1,916                                              |
| Employees in small industries with 3 or more em-<br>ployees . . . . .                                                              |                                                    | 1,403                                              |
| Higher employees and officials . . . . .                                                                                           |                                                    | 1,763                                              |
| Professional people and students . . . . .                                                                                         |                                                    | 431                                                |
| Small investors . . . . .                                                                                                          |                                                    | 644                                                |
|                                                                                                                                    |                                                    | <u>6,157</u>                                       |
| <i>Workers' strata:</i>                                                                                                            |                                                    |                                                    |
| Workers in industry, transportation, business, etc. . . . .                                                                        |                                                    | 11,826                                             |
| Agricultural workers . . . . .                                                                                                     |                                                    | 2,607                                              |
| Home workers . . . . .                                                                                                             |                                                    | 138                                                |
| Domestic servants . . . . .                                                                                                        |                                                    | 1,326                                              |
| Recipients of social security benefits . . . . .                                                                                   |                                                    | 1,717                                              |
| Employees (earning less than 250 marks per month) . . . . .                                                                        |                                                    | 2,775                                              |
| Minor officials (including pensioners) . . . . .                                                                                   |                                                    | 1,400                                              |
|                                                                                                                                    |                                                    | <u>21,789</u>                                      |
| <i>Middle strata in agriculture:</i>                                                                                               |                                                    |                                                    |
| Small farmers and tenants (with less than 12 acres<br>of land) . . . . .                                                           |                                                    | 2,366                                              |
| Farmers with 12 to 120 acres . . . . .                                                                                             |                                                    | 4,232                                              |
|                                                                                                                                    |                                                    | <u>6,598</u>                                       |

These figures are taken from the German census of 1925. It has

<sup>2</sup> Called "Proletarians" by the Marxists.

to be remembered that they reflect the socio-economic and not the ideological strata, which were quite different. *Socio-economically*, then, Germany in 1925 comprised:

|                          | <i>Earning population</i> | <i>With family members</i> |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Workers . . . . .        | 21.789 millions           | 40.7 millions              |
| Middle classes . . . . . | 12.755       "            | 19.7       "               |

The *ideological* structure, however, was, according to a rough calculation, the following:

|                                                                                     |                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Workers</i> (in industry, business, transportation, agriculture, etc.) . . . . . | 14.433 millions |
| <i>Middle classes</i> . . . . .                                                     | 20.111       "  |

Despite middle class votes for Leftist parties and workers' votes for Rightist parties, it is striking that *the election returns of 1932 correspond to the ideological stratification of 1925*: Communists and Social Democrats together had between twelve and thirteen million votes, the NSDAP and the German Nationalists together between nineteen and twenty million. This means that in terms of practical politics, *not the economic but the ideological stratification was the decisive factor*. The political role of the lower middle classes was much more important than had been assumed.

It was during the rapid decline of German economy between 1929 and 1932 that the NSDAP gained by leaps and bounds: from 800,000 votes in 1928 to 6,400,000 in the fall of 1930; 13,000,000 in the summer of 1932; and 17,000,000 in January 1933. According to Jäger (*Roter Aufbau*, October 1930) the 6,400,000 National Socialist votes in 1930 already contained the votes of about 3,000,000 working people; of these, about sixty to seventy per cent were employees and thirty to forty per cent industrial workers.

The problem expressed in this sociological process was, as far as I know, most clearly comprehended by Karl Radek, who wrote after the first upsurge of the NSDAP (*Roter Aufbau*, October 1930):

Nothing like it is known in the history of politics, particularly in a country with age-old political differentiations where every new party

must put up a hard struggle to exist alongside the old established ones. Nothing is more significant than the fact that nothing was said, in the conservative as well as the Socialist literature, about this party which now occupies the next but first place in German political life. It is a party without a history which arises suddenly in German political life as an island suddenly appears in the middle of the ocean due to volcanic forces.

We cannot doubt the fact that this island has its history and inner logic.

The outcome of the Marxist alternative, "Sinking back into barbarism" or "Advance to socialism" is determined by whether the ideological structure of the ruled masses coincides with their economic position or diverges from it; be it in the form of passive submission to exploitation as in the Asiatic societies or in the form of a contrary development of the ideology of the suppressed and their economic position as is the case in the Germany of today.

The basic problem then is, *what causes this divergence between economic position and psychological mass structure?* We have to comprehend the essence of the mass-psychological structure and its relation to the economic base from which it derived. In order to do this, we have to rid ourselves, first of all, of those concepts of vulgar Marxism which bar the way to a comprehension of fascism. They are, essentially, the following:

Vulgar Marxism schematically separates economic existence from social existence as a whole and contends that human "ideology" and "consciousness" are *immediately* and *exclusively* determined by the economic conditions. In doing so, it arrives at a mechanistic antithesis of economy and ideology, of "base" and "superstructure." It considers ideology dependent, schematically and one-sidedly, on economic conditions, and overlooks the dependence of economic development on ideology. For this reason, the problem of the "retroaction of the ideology on the economic base" remains inaccessible to vulgar Marxism. True, it speaks of the "lag of the subjective factor" in the sense of Lenin, but it cannot do anything about it practically, for the following reason: it explains this lag one-sidedly from the standpoint of the

economic situation, without looking to ideology for the explanation of contradictions in the economy, and without comprehending ideology as a historical force.

In fact, vulgar Marxism militates against a comprehension of the structure and the dynamics of ideology, by brushing it aside as "psychology" which is called "non-Marxist." It leaves the problem of the subjective factor in history, the so-called "psychic life," to the metaphysical idealism of political reaction, to a Gentile and a Rosenberg, the people who claim that the "spirit" and the "soul" *alone* make history and who have the greatest success with their claims.

The neglect of *this* aspect of sociology was pointed out by Marx himself in his criticism of 18th century materialism. The vulgar Marxist considers psychology in itself as a metaphysical system. He neglects to separate the metaphysical character of reactionary psychology from its basic elements which were disclosed by a revolutionary psychological search and which have to be developed. Instead of criticising productively, he simply repudiates; he considers himself as a "materialist" when he throws out as "idealistic" such facts as "instinct," "need" or "psychological process." In doing so, he gets himself into the greatest difficulties and achieves only failure, for his political practice forces him constantly to use practical psychology; he cannot avoid talking about "human needs," "revolutionary consciousness," the "will to strike," etc. The more he repudiates psychology, the more he himself practises metaphysical psychologism and worse, empty Couéism: he will explain a historical situation by a "Hitler psychosis" or will tell the masses they should trust in him, that things are going ahead in spite of everything, that the revolution cannot be beaten, etc. Finally he becomes a dispenser of illusory encouragement without even saying anything factual about existing conditions and without comprehending what has happened. He will never understand such facts as that political reaction does not know a hopeless situation or that an economic crisis may lead to barbarism as well as to social freedom. Instead of deriving theory

and action from social reality, he changes reality, in his phantasy, to conform with his wishes.

Our political psychology can be nothing but the investigation of this "subjective factor of history," of the character structure of the people of a given epoch, and of the ideological structure of their society. Unlike reactionary psychology and psychologistic economism, it does not set itself against Marxist sociology but fits into it in a specific place.

The Marxist dictum that economic conditions transform themselves into ideology, and not vice versa, ignores two questions: First, *how* this takes place, what happens in the "human brain" in this process; and second, what is the retroactive effect of this "consciousness" (we shall speak of *psychological structure*) on the economic process? This gap is bridged by character-analytic psychology which uncovers that process in psychic life which is determined by the conditions of economic existence. It comprehends the "subjective factor" which the Marxist does not understand. Political psychology thus has a strictly circumscribed task. It cannot explain, say, the development of class society or the capitalist mode of production. (If it tries, the result is always reactionary nonsense, such as the explanation that capitalism is caused by human greed). But political psychology alone—not social economics—can make us understand the human character structure of a given epoch, how the individual thinks and acts, how he reacts to the conflicts of his existence and how he tries to manage them. True, it investigates the individual only. But if it specializes in the study of those psychological processes which any given groups, classes or professions have in *common* and which are characteristic of them, eliminating the individual differences between them, it becomes *mass psychology*.

In so doing, it takes its starting point from Marx himself:

Our starting point is not arbitrary assumption or dogma, but reality . . . It is the *actual individuals, their actions and their material living conditions*, the pre-existing as well as those brought about by their actions.

(DEUTSCHE IDEOLOGIE, I)

*Man is himself the basis of his material production as well as of any other.* Thus, all conditions which affect man, the subject of production, also modify, more or less, all his functions and activities as the creator of material wealth, of commodities. It can be shown, in fact, *that all human conditions and functions whatsoever influence material production more or less decisively.*<sup>3</sup>

(THEORIEN ÜBER DEN MEHRWERT, 1905, I, p. 388f.)

Thus, we say nothing new, nor are we "revising Marx" as we have been so frequently accused of doing. "All human conditions"—that includes the conditions of the work process as well as the most personal and most private achievements of human thinking and emotional life. That is, it also includes *the sexual life of the women, adolescents and children, the sociological investigation of those conditions and its application to new sociological problems.* Hitler was able to make history with a certain kind of those "human conditions," history which cannot be laughed off. Marx was not able to develop a sexual sociology because at his time there was no sexology. It is a matter now of incorporating not only economic but also sex-economic conditions in the structure of sociology and of destroying the hegemony of the mystics and metaphysicists in this field.

If an ideology has a "retroactive effect on the economic process" it must have become a material force. If an ideology becomes a material force as soon as it takes hold of the masses, then we must ask: how does this take place? The answer to this question must also contain the answer to the question of reactionary mass psychology, of the problem of how to eradicate the "Hitler psychosis."

The ideology of any given society not only reflects the economic process of the society, it also has the function of *anchoring the economic process in the psychological structure of the individual members of the society.* Man is influenced by the conditions of his existence in a twofold manner: directly by the immediate influence of his economic and social position, and indirectly by the ideological structure of his society. For this reason, he de-

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<sup>3</sup> Italics are mine. W.R.

velops, inevitably, a contradiction in his structure, a contradiction which corresponds to the contradiction between the influence of the economic position and that of the ideological structure of society. The worker, for example, is exposed to the influence of his work situation as well as to that of the general social ideology. Since the people in various strata are not only the objects of these influences, but also reproduce them as active individuals, their thinking and their actions must be as contradictory as the society from which they stem. *By molding human psychological structure, social ideology not only reproduces itself in the people. More importantly, it becomes a material force in the form of the altered human structure, with its contradictory thinking and acting.* This and *only* this makes possible the retroaction of social ideology on the economic base from which it stemmed. The "retroaction" loses its seemingly mystical or psychologistic character when one comprehends it as the functioning of the character structure of socially active individuals. As such, it becomes the object of scientific character research. The finding that the "ideology" changes more slowly than the economic basis, that there is a lag between them, becomes now understandable. The character structures which correspond to a certain historical situation are formed in early childhood and are much more conservative than the forces of technical production. It follows that, as time goes on, the *psychological structures lag behind the development of the social conditions from which they stemmed and which progress rapidly. Therefore, they come into conflict with the later forms of living.* This is the fundamental essence of so-called "tradition," that is, the conflict between the old and the new social situation.

### 3. THE PROBLEM OF MASS PSYCHOLOGY

We have seen that the economic and the ideological situations of the masses are not necessarily congruent; more than that, there may be a considerable divergence between the two. The economic situation does not express itself directly and immediately in political consciousness. Otherwise, the social revolution would have occurred long ago. Corresponding to this divergence of social posi-

tion and social consciousness, the examination of society must be of a twofold nature. Notwithstanding the fact that the structure derives from economic conditions, it must be examined by a different method. To the economic situation, we have to apply the method of socio-economic investigation, to the character structure that of biopsychological research. To use a simple example: If workers who are starved because of low wages strike, or steal bread, their actions result directly from their economic situation. The striking or the stealing out of hunger need no further psychological explanation. The ideology and the action are appropriate to the economic pressure. Economic situation and ideology are congruent. In such cases, reactionary psychology attempts to show the allegedly irrational motives of the striking or stealing; such attempts always lead to reactionary explanations.

In social psychology, the question is exactly the reverse: What is to be explained is not why the starving individual steals or why the exploited individual strikes, but why the majority of starving individuals do *not* steal and the majority of exploited individuals do *not* strike. Socio-economics, then, can satisfactorily explain a social phenomenon when human thinking and acting serve a rational purpose, when they serve the satisfaction of needs and directly express the economic situation. It fails, however, when human thinking and acting *contradict* the economic situation, when, in other words, they are *irrational*. Vulgar Marxism and economism, systems which repudiate psychology, are at a loss when confronted with this contradiction. The more mechanistic and economistic the orientation of a sociologist, the less he knows human structure, the more will his mass propaganda take the form of superficial psychologism. Instead of comprehending and trying to eliminate the psychological contradiction in the mass individual, he will engage in Couéism or explain the fascist movement as a "mass psychosis." Since the economistic sociologist neither knows nor acknowledges psychic processes, "mass psychosis," to him, does not mean, as it does to us, a gigantic social fact of historical significance, but nothing but a socially insignificant, negligible item.

The province of mass psychology, then, begins precisely at the point where the *immediate* socio-economic explanation fails. Does this mean an antithesis between mass psychology and socio-economics? No. For the irrational thinking and behavior of the masses which contradicts the existing socio-economic situation is itself the result of an *earlier* socio-economic situation. It has been customary to explain the inhibition of social consciousness by so-called tradition. But thus far nobody has taken the trouble to find out what "tradition" is, what psychological processes it reflects. Economism has hitherto overlooked the fact that the important question is not that the working individual has consciousness of social responsibility; that goes without saying. The question is, *what inhibits the development of the consciousness of responsibility?*

Ignorance of the character structure of the human masses again and again results in sterile explanations. The Communists, for example, explained the rise of fascism by the faults of Social-Democratic politics. Such an explanation led into a blind alley, for it was an essential characteristic of Social Democracy to spread illusions. Such an explanation could not lead to a new policy. Similarly unproductive were such explanations as that political reaction had, in the form of fascism, "misguided" or "hypnotized" the masses. To do that is, and always will be, the function of fascism. Such explanations are unproductive because they do not point a new way. Experience shows that no "disclosures" of this kind will convince the masses, that, in other words, the socio-economic explanation alone is insufficient. Would it not be logical to ask, *what is it in the masses themselves* that made it impossible for them to recognize the function of fascism? The typical formulae, "The workers *must* realize . . ." or "We did not understand . . ." are of no help. Why did the workers fail to realize and why did we not understand? Another sterile explanation formed the basis of the discussion between the Left and the Right wings in the workers' movement: The Right contended that the workers were not willing to fight; the Left countered by saying that it was not so, that the workers were revolutionary and the contention of

the Right was a betrayal of the revolution. Both statements, with their either-or alternatives, were mechanistically rigid. What would have corresponded to reality would have been the finding that the average worker is neither unequivocally revolutionary nor is he unequivocally conservative. Rather, he is in a conflict: on the one hand, his psychological structure derives from his social position, which tends to make him revolutionary, on the other hand, from the total atmosphere of authoritarian society, which tends to make him conservative. Thus, his revolutionary and his conservative tendencies are in conflict with each other.

It is of decisive importance to see this conflict and to find out in what concrete forms the reactionary and the revolutionary elements operate in the worker. The same applies, of course, to the member of the middle classes. That he rebels against the "system" in a crisis, is immediately understandable. What is not understandable socio-economically is the fact that he, although already pauperized, nevertheless is afraid of progress and becomes extremely reactionary. He, too, labors under a conflict between rebellious feelings and reactionary ideology.

A war, for example, is not satisfactorily explained sociologically by the specific economic and political factors which lead to its actual outbreak, factors like the German designs in 1914 on the ores of Briey and Longy, the Belgian industrial areas, and Asiatic colonies, or, in the second world war, the interests of Hitler's imperialism in the oil wells of Baku, the industries of Czechoslovakia, etc. True, the economic interests of German imperialism were the *present-day* factor. But we must also consider the *mass-psychological* basis of world wars and ask ourselves: What produced the *mass-psychological soil* on which an imperialistic ideology could grow and could be put into practice, in strict contradiction to the peace-loving mentality of a German population uninterested in foreign politics? The "betrayal of the leaders of the Second International" is no satisfactory answer. Why, one must ask, did millions of workers, with a liberal and anti-imperialistic attitude, let themselves be betrayed? Fear of the consequences of refusal to take up arms could be the motive

only in a small minority. If one had witnessed the mobilization of 1914, one knew that the working population showed diverse attitudes. There was a conscious rejection on the part of a minority; a peculiar submission to fate or an indolence; and violent enthusiasm not only in the middle classes but also in masses of industrial workers. The indolence of many as well as the enthusiasm of many others was undoubtedly basic in the mass-psychology of the war. This mass-psychological function in both world wars can be comprehended only by understanding that *the imperialist ideology changed the structure of the working masses concretely in the direction of imperialism*. Social catastrophes cannot be simply explained by such terms as "war psychosis" or "mass obfuscation." To hold the masses accessible to simple obfuscation would mean holding them in contempt. The point is that *every social order creates for itself in the masses of its members that structure which it needs for its main purposes*.<sup>4</sup> Without this mass-psychological structure, no war would be possible. There is an important relationship between the economic structure of a society and the mass-psychological structure of its members. It is not merely that the ruling ideology is the ideology of the ruling class. What is more important for the solution of practical problems is the fact that the *contradictions* in the economic structure of a society are also anchored in the mass-psychological structure of its members. Otherwise, the fact could not be understood that the economic laws of a society can have practical effects only through the activity of the masses who are subject to them.

The German freedom movements, it is true, knew about the importance of the so-called "subjective factor in history"<sup>5</sup>; what

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<sup>4</sup> "In any given epoch, the ideals of the ruling class are the ruling ideas. That is, that class which is the ruling material power of society is also the ruling ideological power. That class which has at its disposal the means for material production has, by that very fact, also at its disposal the means of ideological production; therefore it also rules the ideas of those who lack the means of ideological production. The ruling ideas are nothing but the ideological expression of the existing material conditions, the conditions which made that one class the ruling one, the ideas of its ruling."—Marx.

<sup>5</sup> Marx, unlike mechanical materialists, comprehended, in principle, man as the subject of history, and Lenin developed especially this aspect of Marxism.

was lacking, however, was *the comprehension of irrational behavior*, in other words, *of the divergence of economy and ideology*. We must explain how it was possible that mysticism was victorious over scientific sociology. This we cannot do unless we approach the problem in such a fashion that our explanation spontaneously points the way to a new program of action. The discovery of the fact that the working individual is neither unequivocally reactionary nor unequivocally revolutionary but in a conflict between reactionary and revolutionary tendencies, must of necessity lead to a practical program which opposes the reactionary psychological forces with revolutionary forces. Any kind of mysticism is reactionary, and the reactionary individual is a mystic. Trying to laugh off mysticism as "obfuscation" or "psychosis," without explaining it, does not produce any measures against mysticism. If, on the other hand, one comprehends mysticism correctly, an antidote will be automatically found. But to do this, it is first necessary to comprehend, as far as possible, the relationships between social conditions and structure formation, in particular, the ideas which are incapable of a direct socio-economic explanation: the *irrational* ideas.

#### 4. THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF SEXUAL SUPPRESSION

Lenin was struck by a peculiar irrational behavior of the masses before or during revolts. He writes about the soldiers' revolts in 1905 (*Über Religion*, p. 65):

The soldier had the greatest sympathy for the cause of the peasant; his eyes shone at the mere mention of land. Several times, the soldiers had taken over the military power, but never was there any decided utilization of this power. The soldiers became hesitant. A few hours after having killed one of their hated superiors they let the others go free, began negotiations with the authorities and let themselves be shot, lay down again under the rod and let themselves be put in the yoke . . .

The *mystic* will explain such behavior on the basis of the eternal moral nature of man which makes rebellion against the

laws of God, against the "authority of the state" and its representatives impossible.

The *vulgar Marxist* leaves such phenomena out of consideration altogether; he cannot understand or explain them because they cannot be explained in purely socio-economic terms.

*Freud's* concept comes closer to the facts in that it explains such behavior from an infantile guilt feeling toward the father. Yet, it does not explain the social origin and function of the behavior and therefore does not lead to a practical solution either. Also, it overlooks the connection between such behavior and the suppression and distortion of the sexual life of the masses.

The question as to how we can approach such *mass-psychological* irrational phenomena requires a brief review of the research method of sex-economy.

*Sex-economy* is a method of research which developed over many years through the application of functionalism to human sex life and which has arrived at a series of new findings. It starts from the following premises:

*Marx* found that social life is governed by the conditions of economic production and the resulting class struggles. The owners of the social means of production rarely use brute force in their suppression of the ruled classes; their main weapon is their ideological power over the oppressed which also lends powerful support to the state. We have already mentioned the fact that *Marx* considered living man, with his psychological and physical characteristics, the central factor in history and politics. The character structure of acting man, the so-called "subjective factor in history" in the sense of *Marx*, remained unexplored: *Marx* was a sociologist and not a psychologist, and there was, in his day, no scientific psychology. Thus the question remained open as to why people, for thousands of years, have tolerated exploitation and moral degradation, in brief, slavery; *Marx* explored only the economic process in society and the mechanism of economic exploitation.

About a half century later, *Freud*, with a special method which

he called *psychoanalysis*, discovered the processes which govern psychic life. The most important of his discoveries, which had a revolutionary effect on a great many generally accepted concepts and thus brought down the hatred of the world on him, were the following<sup>6</sup>:

Conscious psychic life is only a small part of psychic life. It is governed by psychological processes which are unconscious and therefore not under the control of the conscious. All psychic phenomena, no matter how meaningless they may appear, like dreams, slips of the tongue, forgetting and misplacing things, the absurd utterances of mental patients, they all have a function and a "meaning" and can be understood from the history of the individual. In this way, psychology—which up to that time had led a miserable existence in the form of a kind of physics of the brain ("brain mythology") or as a teaching of a mysterious objective spirit—became part of natural science.

The second great discovery was that even the small child develops a lively sexuality, that, in other words, *sexuality* and *procreation* are not the same thing, and *sexual* and *genital* are not synonymous. The analysis of the psychological processes showed, furthermore, that sexuality, or, rather, its energy, the *libido*, which derives from bodily sources, is the central motor of psychic life. Biological factors and social conditions converge in psychic life.

The third great discovery was the fact that infantile sexuality—which includes the most essential part of the child-parent relationship, the "Oedipus complex"—is usually repressed because of fear of punishment for sexual thoughts and actions (basically, "castration anxiety"). As a result, infantile sexuality becomes excluded from activity and disappears from conscious memory. The repression of infantile sexuality removes it from conscious control. This does not, however, deprive it of its strength; on the contrary, it intensifies it and thus enables it to manifest itself in

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<sup>6</sup> For a more extensive presentation, cf. W. Reich, "Dialektischer Materialismus und Psychoanalyse," *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus*. 1929.

various psychic disturbances. As this repression of infantile sexuality is the rule in "civilized man," Freud could rightly state that all humanity was his patient.

The fourth important discovery was that human morality, far from being of supernatural origin, results from the suppressive measures of early infantile education, particularly those directed against sexuality. The original conflict between infantile desires and parental prohibitions lives on as an *internal* conflict between instinct and morals. The moral forces in the adult, which are themselves unconscious, act against the recognition of the laws of sexuality and of unconscious psychic life; they support sexual repression ("sex resistance") and explain the resistance of the world to the discovery of infantile sexuality.

We have mentioned only those discoveries which are most important for our subject. By their very existence, they were a heavy blow to reactionary moral philosophy and especially to religious metaphysics which proclaims the existence of eternal moral values, that an objective spirit governs the world, and which denies the existence of infantile sexuality and restricts sexuality to procreation. These discoveries, however, did not exert an influence commensurate with their paramount importance because the psychological sociology which developed from them robbed them again of most of their revolutionary elements. This is not the place to demonstrate this fact. Psychoanalytic sociology suffered from the following errors: it attempted to analyze society as if it were an individual; it postulated an absolute antithesis between cultural process and sexual gratification; it considered the destructive drives as biological facts which governed human fate in an inexorable manner; it denied the sociological development of patriarchy from matriarchy and contended that the patriarchal family was a biological fact. As a result of these errors, it ended up in a paralyzing skepticism; it was afraid of the consequences which followed logically from its own discoveries. For a long time now, it has taken an inimical attitude toward attempts at drawing these conclusions, and its representatives consistently fight against such attempts. Nevertheless, we

shall strongly defend Freud's great discoveries against any attack, no matter where it originates.

The methodology of sex-economic sociology which had these discoveries as its starting point is not one of the common attempts to supplement Marx with Freud, or Freud with Marx, or to replace one by the other. Psychoanalysis should fulfil a scientific function which socio-economics cannot fulfil: the comprehension not of the historical soil of the ideology, but of its structure and dynamics. By including the discoveries of psychoanalysis, sociology reaches a higher level and becomes better able to comprehend reality because, finally, it includes the knowledge of human structure. Only a narrow-minded politician would think of reproaching the *character-analytic psychology of structure* for not being able immediately to give easily followed practical advice.

It follows that sex-economic sociology which is based on the *sociological* foundation of Marx and the *psychological* one of Freud, is in its essence mass-psychological and sexual-sociological at *one and the same time*. It begins, with its refutation of Freud's cultural philosophy,<sup>7</sup> where the clinical-psychological exploration of psychoanalysis ends.

Psychoanalysis reveals the mechanisms of sexual suppression and repression and their pathological effects in the individual. Sex-economic sociology goes on from here and asks, *For what sociological reason does society suppress sexuality and does the individual repress it?* There have been many answers to this question. The church says, for the sake of the soul in the hereafter. Mystical moral philosophy says, because of the eternal ethical nature of man. Freud's cultural philosophy says, for the sake of "culture." One has reason to doubt such an explanation and to ask how on earth the masturbation of infants or the sexual intercourse of adolescents will interfere with the building of gasoline stations or airplanes. It is not difficult to see that it is not cultural activity as such which requires the suppression

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<sup>7</sup> With regard to Freud's cultural philosophy, one might say that—in spite of all its idealism—it contains more truths about life as it is than all sociologies and a great many Marxist psychologies taken together.

of infantile and adolescent sexuality but only the *present-day* forms of cultural activity. And one would readily sacrifice these forms if that would eliminate the untold misery of children and adolescent youth. The question is not one of culture but of the social order. If one studies the history of sexual suppression one finds that it does not exist in the early stages of culture formation. Therefore, it cannot be the prerequisite of culture. Rather, it appears at a relatively late stage of culture, at the time of the development of authoritarian patriarchy and of class distinctions. At that stage, the sexual interests of all begin to serve the profit interests of a minority. This process has assumed a solid organizational form in the institutions of patriarchal marriage and patriarchal family. With the suppression of sexuality the emotions undergo a change: a sex-negating religion begins to develop which gradually builds up its own sex-political organization, the church in all its forms, which has no other goal than that of eradicating sexual pleasure. This has its sociological reason in the exploitation of human work which sets in at this stage.

In order to understand this, we must study that social institution in which the economic and the sex-economic situation of patriarchal society are interlaced. Without a study of this institution, a comprehension of the sexual economy and of the ideology of patriarchy is impossible. Character-analytic investigation of people of any age, nationality or social stratum, shows that *the interlacing of the socio-economic with the sexual structure, as well as the structural reproduction of society, takes place in the first four or five years of life, and in the authoritarian family*. The church only continues this function later on. In this way the authoritarian state develops its enormous interest in the authoritarian family: *the family is the factory of its structure and ideology*.

We have found the institutions in which the economic and the sexual interests of the authoritarian system meet. We have to ask ourselves *how* this comes about. This question is also answered by character-analysis, provided one does not exclude such questions from character-analytic investigation. Suppression of the

natural sexuality in the child, particularly of its *genital* sexuality, makes the child apprehensive, shy, obedient, afraid of authority, "good" and "adjusted" in the authoritarian sense; it paralyzes the rebellious forces because any rebellion is laden with anxiety; it produces, by inhibiting sexual curiosity and sexual thinking in the child, a general inhibition of thinking and of critical faculties. In brief, the goal of sexual suppression is that of producing an individual who is adjusted to the authoritarian order and who will submit to it in spite of all misery and degradation. At first, the child has to adjust to the structure of the authoritarian miniature state, the family; this makes it capable of later subordination to the general authoritarian system. *The formation of the authoritarian structure takes place through the anchoring of sexual inhibition and sexual anxiety.*

To understand why sex-economy considers the authoritarian family the most important place of reproduction of the authoritarian system, we only have to take the example of a conservative worker's wife. Her economic situation is the same as that of the revolutionary worker's, but she votes fascist. The difference between the sexual ideology of the average revolutionary and the average reactionary woman is decisive: the anti-sexual, moralistic structure of the conservative woman makes it impossible for her to develop a consciousness of her social position, it ties her to the church as much as it makes her afraid of "Sexualbolschewismus." Theoretically, the situation is the following: the mechanistically thinking vulgar Marxist assumes that the consciousness of the social position would be most acute when economic misery is sharpened by the additional sexual misery. If that were so, the masses of women and of adolescents would be far more rebellious than the men. The exact opposite is true, however, which the economist is at a loss to understand. He will not understand why the reactionary woman does not even want to listen to his economic program. The answer is the following: the suppression of the gratification of primitive material needs has a result different from that of the suppression of the gratification of the sexual needs. The former incites rebellion. The latter,

however—by repressing the sexual needs and by becoming anchored as moralistic defense—paralyzes the rebellion against either kind of suppression. More than that, the inhibition of rebellion itself is unconscious. The conscious mind of the average unpolitical individual does not even show a trace of it.

The result of this process is fear of freedom, and a conservative, reactionary mentality. Sexual repression aids political reaction not only through this process which makes the mass individual passive and unpolitical but also by creating in his structure an interest in actively supporting the authoritarian order. The suppression of natural sexual gratification leads to various kinds of substitute gratifications. Natural aggression, for example, becomes brutal sadism which then is an essential mass-psychological factor in imperialistic wars. To take another example: the mass-psychological effect of militarism is essentially libidinous. The sexual effect of a uniform and of rhythmically perfect parades, of military exhibitionism in general, are obvious to the average servant girl, even though they may not be obvious to learned political scientists. Political reaction, however, makes conscious use of these sexual interests. Not only does it create peacock-like uniforms for the men, it uses attractive women in its recruiting campaigns. One only has to remember the recruiting posters with texts like this, "If you want to see the world, join the Royal Navy." The far-away world is represented by exotic women. Why are such posters effective? Because our youth, as a result of sexual suppression, is sex-starved.

Sexual moralism, which inhibits the will for freedom, as well as those forces which tend in the direction of authoritarian interests, derive their energy from repressed sexuality. Now we understand a basic element in the "retroaction of ideology on the economic base." *Sexual inhibition alters the structure of the economically suppressed individual in such a manner that he thinks, feels and acts against his own material interests.*

This is the mass-psychological explanation and confirmation of Lenin's observations in the soldiers' rebellion of 1905. To the unconscious of these soldiers, the officers represented their fathers

who denied their sexuality and whom one was not allowed to kill even though they destroyed one's joy in life. Their hesitation and repentance after having seized power were the expression of their hatred turned into its opposite, into neurotic sympathy; thus, the hatred could not be translated into action.

The practical problem of mass psychology, then, is that of activating the passive majority of the population which always carries political reaction to victory; and the elimination of the inhibitions which counteract the will to freedom as it is generated by the socio-economic position. If the psychic energies of the average mass of people watching a football game or a musical comedy could be diverted into the rational channels of a freedom movement, they would be invincible. This is the standpoint which guides the following sex-economic investigation.