

WHY MARXISM?: THE CONTINUING SUCCESS OF A FAILED THEORY.

By *Robert G. Wesson*. New York: Basic Books, 1976. vi, 281 pp. \$12.95.

The title of the book is far more promising than its content. In this elegant long essay Professor Wesson (University of California at Santa Barbara) treats Marxism not as a successful political force, which he admits it is, but only as a "serious kind of political poetry." His inquiry is not why Marxism continues to be politically successful in spite of its theoretical failures but, to quote the preface, "why so many books have been written about it."

Within such a narrow scope, the book offers an interesting and far-ranging, if not original, tour of literature about Marxism. Wesson freely borrows ideas from and cites opinions of well-established writers, both critics and advocates of various Marxist trends. His preferred explanation is that Marxism, in all its "multiple agglomeration," owes its popularity to the crudeness of its ideas which portray society as divided between two hostile forces: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This oversimplified image easily lends itself to the expression of mass discontent resulting from industrial development and has been widely adapted and used under different circumstances by the poor against the rich, nationally and internationally. In conclusion, Wesson argues that Marxism is no more than a feeling of hatred dressed up as a "scientific" theory. The wave of Marxist popularity, he notes, is already beginning to recede and, eventually, it will pass away as the initial negative aspects of industrialization give way to its beneficial aspects and the postindustrial society.

Unfortunately, such a view of Marxism is almost as reductionist as Marxism itself. The success of Marxism is due to more than just its suitability as a vehicle for expression of dissatisfactions, anger, and hatred, and Wesson himself alludes to this by recognizing that the longevity of the Marxist revolution in Russia cannot be attributed to the persisting hatred of the rich. His explanation is that the Soviet success is due to Lenin's "crucial amendment," which assigned the prime role in the making of the revolution to the revolutionary party instead of the proletarian class. In fact, the concept of a revolutionary avant-garde party, monolithic and authoritarian, is Marx's own brainchild, as amply proved by the Statutes of the Communist League written by Marx himself in December 1847. Marx failed in explaining the world theoretically, but he succeeded in introducing to the modern world the principles of political organization and practice which became an acknowledged or unacknowledged foundation of all totalitarian movements in our tragic century. These are the roots of Marxist success in spite of its theoretical failures.

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SOVIET SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, DESIGN: INTERACTION AND CON-

VERGENCE. By *Raymond Hutchings*. London: Oxford University Press, 1976. xiv, 320 pp. + 8 pp. plates. Tables. \$27.50.

Science, technology, and design are the essential components of the general pattern of industrial production and, for that matter, of modern civilization. Science supplies the ideas which, in Baconian terminology, help man to control nature by obeying its laws. Technology translates scientific ideas—not without adding some common sense—into the processes of manufacture. Design controls the province of the layout and the external appearance of manufactured objects. Hutchings's book supplies a competent, original, and fascinating analysis of these three categories as applied to the scientific-industrial complex in the Soviet Union. In addition to a detailed discussion of the anatomy and dynamics of each category as a separate unit, it analyzes the multiple