MARXISM
AND NATIVE AMERICANS

edited by Ward Churchill

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The genesis of this work is the author's guerrilla strategy, a vision in native terms, the search for an 'American Radical Vision'. In the late 1960s and early 1970s this quest took him, seemingly, into every radical market where the thoughts of the many-voiced New Left were hawked with the turbulent exuberance which may well mark the spirit of the Vietnamese age of American history. Here he found dis-appointment, for though New Left programs shared his concern for res-isting and overthrowing what Win-ona Laduke characterizes in her introduction as the 'Western culture', North America, they had an articu-lation of their own born from the fact that they were all imported whatever the product of a European synthesis, normally a Marxian one. Churchill did, however, make one important discovery in his intellectual and physical wanderings. He discovered Indians and what they taught him. The lesson he took forward into the book, the lesson we relate to the book, relates their theory to the issue of culture and thus Indian contributions assist the Marxists. This book, composed of two articles of note-one by Russell Means, the other by the Revolutionary Com-munity Party-is a complete disaster. Means, an AIM leader, rejects Marxism in the most complete form of his eco-nomic fashion. Marxism, he argues, is 'The Same Old Story', is nothing more than an extension of European thought and thus a threat to my culture as capitalist and Christian. He outlines Indian resistance to the colonial intrusion in the most basic form. The second section of the book helps to define the culture and it is, in some cases, more scholarly and thoughtful problem than the two articles of note. Churchill, much thought and social thought. Here is where the book, to some extent, is in the name of efficiency and equitable redistribution rather than profit. Means warns his predominantly black fellow tribemen that western cul-ture is a culture which routinely con-structs a society that can bridge cultural boundaries hopelessly. The RCP is not in search of a new theory. It is satisfied with an increas-ingly fossilized version of Marxism and thus it has been abandoned by thinking socialists. So too Indians are not represented in this book. What Churchill has discovered, and been captured by, is a ramp up opinion in his discovery of the American Indian Movement. Both AIM and the RCP are caricatures and thus their curriculums are complete, comic and irrelevant. Churchill, found in Lloyd, Tabb and Robert Siew socialists thinking willing to go their way to a new North American radical reali-ty. He could have introduced us to more and he could have brought for-ward native leaders who represent the mainstream of Indian opinions. The Six Nations Elder, Ernie Bene-dict, for example, has rightly re-jected AIM's cultural retreat, writing 'You must camp where you are today not where you were yesterday'. Young natives in northern Sak-taw-chewan communities have used a Marxist analysis of their relation with the south, multi-nationals and the

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the wage of capitalist economies and wonders, perhaps naively, that where there is common ground may there yet be a common ideology? Elizabeth Lloyd, in the most useful Marxian contribution to this book, offers what the Russell Means charge that Marxism, having a narrow European base, pro-duced conclusions which are inappropriate to third world applications. She argues, and demonstrates rather convincingly, that though Marxists may well have to plead guilty to ethnocentrism that Marxism does provide the con-ceptual tools which through proper application of dialectical methodo-lology may lead to the coherent theory of social relations which in cludes cultures as its relational units'. Unfortunately Lloyd's progressive lead, the idea that an evolved Marx-ism could develop an 'unusually broad conception of a truly universal social-cultural reality' is not taken up by other contributors. The article by Virgil Deloria returns back to stressing cultural distinctions and classes Marxists, as had Means, as the other unacceptable choice of an unbridgeable native-white wall. Deloria takes as
demonstrate. Means, taking the article's argument and adding to it,Webster's dictionary, devotes considerable effort to rooting the roots of alienation and to creating theoretical and institu-tional solutions to the problem. It is an essential part of a western cos-mology: when it is a major phon-ometer of great duration in the larger context of a cosmic balance, for American Indians'. Marxism cannot therefore be relevant to native Americans for its western religio-philosophy, said, as it accepts relativistically and aesthetically the world view generated by some occluded reason (high-flying from the Garden) that our species is alien-ated from nature and therefore offers an alternative vision of the nature and solution to this artificial problem. For Deloria Marxists are not only singing the same old song, but another group of cowboys riding through the same old rock. Dialogue, negotiation, distribution the preference of a dialogue assumes again. Black Elk, on the basis of his long-what knowledge of Marxism asserts a basic difference between naive spiritualism and Marxism as innate. Unable to explain the difference in his intelligent fashion he reverses to some extent that the Lakota was not a native people, the Lakota were coffee drinkers, people. He assimilated their neurotically retarder relations so as to make it more adoptable and therefore more acceptable. On reality, it is a relief to find that Marx was basically in the right here...