**ONE DIMENSIONAL MAN, ONE DIMENSIONAL SOCIETY**

(an abstract)

Stephan E. Nikolov,

PhD, Assoc. Prof.,

Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge,

Sofia, Bulgaria

Nearly half a century after appearance of H. Marcuse’s *One Dimensional Man* this book still instigate debates and inspiration. This is an occasion to reiterate whether modern 21st century individual has turned out to be even more one-dimensional, or, on the contrary – multidimensional.

Ostensibly, there are much more grounds that point at the former, Marcusian, perspective: consumerism is prevailing, cultural dimension is restricted to a leisure option like tourists visiting attractions, mass media dominates private lives and cast doubt on the very chance for privacy, while introduction of brand new gadgets such as mobile phones, tablets, new and faster means of transportation, global internet has fundamentally altered lives of greater part of human beings. Moreover, ideological boundaries between left and right, liberal and conservative has faded, while gap between rich and poor – strata, countries, regions – has deepened, government is today even more far-off the people, and environmental damage reaches the point of irreversibility.

However, if we take another angle, things appear very different. Each sociology undergraduate would say that there is no one-dimensional man existing in natural world. Each person, with the exemption probably of the few utmost ignorant, illiterate, heavy mentally retarded, or grown up in animal herd Well, it is a metaphor, abstraction, assumption. But when a theory leaves aside too much, like the mathematician downgrades complex equation to single or series of simple ones, then it becomes meager and poor. H. Marcuse focuses on the mid-20th century capitalism, and laments for the 19th century clear-cut early capitalist society, but isn’t this an oversimplification, since the 20th century brought many new, modified forms of industrial and governmental relations? He is completely silent about the existing and spreading then so called socialist/communist society – even if some authors categorize it as an extreme form of state capitalism. Isn't it just the ideal form where exists the one-dimensional man – obedient to the party-state directives, with prescribed way of life, uniformity, and compulsory single ‘choice’? Especially in its most extreme shapes, such as Mao’s China, E. Hoxha’s Albania, Red Khmers Kampuchea, and Kim’s North Korea, it even fulfills the prerequisites for a genuine one-dimensional society – which may be furthermore accomplished only in a dreadful robots-ruled society from an anti-utopia. As for consumerism, paradoxically, self proclaimed ‘socialist’ society of Soviet type with the chronic deficits nurtures even more excessive consumerism – where a glossy old issue of an Italian magazine, Tobleron chocolate, or regular Japanese transistor radio might be a source of pride and envy…

Marcuse maintains that“totalitarianism can be imposed without terror”, it is far easier such way. But the most totalitarian, i.e., ultimate one-dimensional forms of society and individual are possible only with terror, omnipresent control and restrictions on free speech, free movement, and assembly. Those poured with hypocrisy and double-thinking – where people need to be happy and keep smiling, while Party is cheating, depriving and loading with even more work – such as ‘voluntary’ unpaid assistance in the agriculture, or when voting 99% “Yes” in the mockery called elections. Nevertheless, seemingly eternal communist regimes proved to be rather unfeasible.