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THE SPREAD OF A REPELLENT DOCTRINE

Recently a woman Labour M.P. described in a broadcast the state of poverty, squalor and misery which she found in the home of a long-unemployed man and his family, between the wars, and its effect on her. "That night," she dramatically informed her audience, "I became a Socialist!"

Similar public confessions have been made not infrequently. In each case the assumption is made that Marxian doctrine, translated into practice, affords the remedy for the poverty and misery of the labouring classes of the industrial era, and which is commonly attributed to their exploitation by the capitalists.

Is this assumption true or untrue? Does socialism contain that correct thought which must precede correct action? Or is it, in truth, an erroneous statement of what gives rise to the social malady, a building-up from false premises to fantastic conclusions which prescribe modes of political action opposed to unchanging ethical, psychological and economic laws which point the only way whereby men can adjust their mutual relationships, and find freedom and happiness?

What *is* socialism as offered by Karl Marx and his constant disciple, Friedrich Engels? It is derived by them from others, from Proudhon, Ruge, Louis Blanc, Moses Hess, and many more of their own contemporaries, who in turn drew their ideas from earlier advocates of some form or other of collectivist society. What was new to socialist thinking in the Marxian doctrine was the dogma of inevitability. This novelty was borrowed by Marx from another quarter, and elaborated by him in the system of what he called "dialectical materialism"—a system which provides a rigid framework of absolute necessity to socialism, under which it is bound to come to pass. The system states that human societies are irresistibly propelled by an all-powerful "IT" which pushes them, willy-nilly, ceaselessly upward, the path of ascent being in an eternal, immutable zig-zag, or "dialectic," from one completed stage of development to its negation, and thence to the negation of the negation, and so on. This is the notion of the German philosopher, Hegel, in explanation of the meandering course of human history. The conception is derived by him, apparently, from the Greeks, who, however, applied it not to history, but to the development of ideas—the progressive steps of human thought: first thesis, then antithesis and finally synthesis, or a building-up from elements of the first two.

Marx, however, added something of his very own to the Hegelian notion. After long months of fruitless

thought as to how the hypothesis could be proved to be true, there suddenly flashed upon him the wild idea that the all-driving force, the mysterious "IT" (vaguely identified by Hegel in such terms as "the World-Spirit," etc.) was nothing else but *Economics itself!*—or, more precisely as later affirmed by him, a kind of engine within economics which he calls "the forces of production," meaning "the tools, machines and technical processes which man has at his disposal."

The Wishful Thinking of Karl Marx

According to this Marxian theory it is these, *and these alone*, which dictate the whole destiny of man, compelling the zig-zag course of history, and driving the whole show along it. In addition, Marx held that any definite stage of development in the tools and processes of production inevitably shapes the form of a society and its economic relationships. Thus as Marx informs us, "With the hand-grinding of grain between two stones, arises the feudal princeling; with the steam mill, the capitalist" and capitalist society. Nothing but this one cause has any influence on, or makes any contribution whatever to the historical trend. And so the "forces of production"—that is the particular kinds of tools used in particular ways by manual workers to produce wealth, produce something else as well. Though in themselves dead things, they have, when so used, intangible by-products. They fashion social and economic systems, write laws, manufacture religions and morals, and carve the curious course of history. At any rate, such is the amazing assertion of "dialectical materialism," invented by Marx in 1844, at a time when he was completely ignorant of economics, and adhered to by him for the rest of his life.

Inspired by this astounding result of wishful thinking, Marx realized that he must write a book; but first it was necessary to work out the details and perfect the theory, and, above all, to find the proof of it. With this in view, he commenced to study economics—Adam Smith, Ricardo and others—but, failing to find anything to support his conclusions, he grew to have a strong disgust and weariness for the subject. "Economic muck" is said to have been his word for it. It was not until some 23 years later (1867) that the book *Capital* was finished in England and published in Germany. It is, in itself, a fragment, being the first of three projected volumes. On it, however, practically the whole socialistic gospel as expounded by the followers of Marx is rested, and although a second and third volume were subsequently published, these remain largely unknown and; no doubt deliberately, neglected; for Volume III (brought out by Engels eleven years after Marx's death) is said to have filled devout Marxists with horror, since it suggests, by implication, an entirely new trend, and contains important modifications in theory, contradictory to what is authoritatively laid down in the famous first tome, which had become and remains the true bible of the movement.

Only by Violent Revolution

Almost half of Volume I is devoted to descriptions of miseries inflicted on the proletariat (that is, manual workers) by the capitalist class (styled by Marx, the bourgeoisie). The remedy for this state of affairs is the expropriation of private property by the State, and its utilization through government agents. This change is to be brought about (unavoidably) through the armed revolution of the manual workers, and the subsequent setting-up of a "dictatorship of the proletariat."

In the book appears Marx's famous proposition of "surplus value." It is simplicity itself. For a full day's work, it appears, the capitalist pays wages for only part of a day, taking the produce of the remaining time worked as profit himself. Thus, a labourer working 10 hours a day receives wages for, say, 6 hours only, and nothing at all for the remaining 4 hours, during which he is producing entirely for the capitalist's benefit. And thus Marx's "surplus value" is "profit," accruing to the capitalist, and acquired by the expropriation of the wages due to the workers.

Value Marx defines as "work-hours" of manual labourers. Or, to put it differently: All value equals manual labour-time, congealed, as it were, in the product. Anyone can see at once that this definition is unsatisfactory and inadequate, since many things have value which is not due to the impressment upon them of manual labour. Marx, however, dismissed all such apparent values as do not come within the terms of his definition as "fictitious," "unreal," "imaginary." On this, economists, for the most part, remained disdainfully silent.

Seeds of Destruction

In Marx's original theory, the downfall of capitalism is accomplished through two agencies—one acting from without, and the other from within. First, by the increasing hours of toil and ever-increasing exploitation of the workers inflicting so intolerable a degree of misery upon them that they rise in successful revolt. This increasing misery is impelled by an iron necessity; for, as more and more machines and more and more efficient processes are introduced, and, consequently, fewer and fewer workers than formerly are required to secure the same volume of produce, and as, according to Marx's definition, there is no value created by the machines, all value deriving solely from manual labour and equating with the number of hours worked, it follows that, in order to keep up the "surplus value" taken by capitalists, this dwindling number of workers must work longer and longer hours and be paid wages for a lessening proportion of the time worked. Thus, by this inevitable process culminating in revolution, is accomplished the predestined downfall of capitalism from *without*.

The second causative agency is destructive of the capitalist system from *within*. The increasing introduction of new tools, machines and processes brings about a concentration of capital into fewer and fewer hands, until the owners become only a small fraction of the population, the rest of the community lapsing to proletarian level. Now this alteration in the implements and distribution of capital—this change in the so-called forces of production—requires a different economic, legal, political and religious order of society from the one currently obtaining. This dislocation or disharmony of relationship, which, according to Marx, cannot possibly be adjusted or healed, causes the foreordained disruption of the capitalist system from within. It "explodes," "bursts asunder," "disintegrates," thus vindicating the truth of the dictum that the system carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction.

Predictions and Plain Facts

But in his book, *Capital*, Marx refers only briefly to this second agency working from within, and advances the first (that of progressively increasing misery culminating in revolution) with the greatest emphasis. His real argument is the increasing misery.

As already mentioned, a large part of his book consists of an eloquent recital of the miseries of manual workers.

He goes back to the eighteenth century. But it is not the miseries of the workers in 1790, 1800 or 1820 that is important to his argument. What it was essential for him to show was that the misery had increased, was increasing and would continue to increase until it became unendurable and revolt ensued. But this he could not do. Reading his descriptions of the earlier miseries of the workers, many people in 1868 may well have marvelled to think how greatly things had improved. Since that time, instead of Marx's "ever-increasing toil" and "ever-decreasing wages" under capitalism, the reverse has happened: hours of work in capitalist countries have progressively shortened and wages have risen. The lot of the workers, *measured, not as a proportion, but as a positive quantity*, has steadily improved.

So much for the disparity between the pronouncements of Marx's dialectical materialism and plain facts.

Basis of the Capitalist System

One flash of real illumination he had, as it were of lightning in the night, revealing, if only for a fleeting moment, the real nigger in the historical woodpile. It is in his remark that the basis of the capitalist system is the expropriation of the workers from the soil.

The Regimentation of Society

"Our theory," so-called by Marx and Engels between themselves, was presented, not as a mere tentative hypothesis, but as an unassailable system of logical, scientific truth.

But what is to happen after the revolution? What will be the particular concrete features of the socialist land of promise? Where exactly, for instance, is the line to be drawn between the claims of the State and the liberties (if any) of the individual? One might have thought that Marx would be loud and eloquent in describing in detail the blissful conditions to which the workers might look forward after their tribulations, if only to encourage them in the meantime. But no. Except for a very few brief hints he let slip, he remained obstinately silent as to this. No doubt it was best to leave the whole thing blank, and for the rest of his life he gave the subject a wide berth.

He did, however, make one alarming remark about the "establishment of industrial armies" (four fateful words), and another as to the recruitment of "regiments of workers." These hints would seem to indicate that there is to be a system of regimented factory workers, office workers, miners and farm labourers, all, perhaps, completely efficient and disciplined, and of unparalleled productivity. All they will have to do is exactly what they are told, and keep their mouths shut—or else! For, unlike the private capitalist, the political despotism which is foreshadowed will have behind it and at immediate call military forces equipped with the tremendous engines of modern science. For the rest, Marx makes the general statement that in the "classless society" to come men will be "free, equal and happy."

Views of those who knew Marx

That such a condition would ensue was hotly disputed by contemporary socialists. Ruge, his first "father-confessor," pointed out to Marx that the allegedly better state of things would inevitably become a "police and slave state," from which, if they once saw it, people would run in horror—a judgment which many others have repeated since. But Marx made no reply. He did not

care. What he wanted was something for himself: dominance and power over his fellows. Indeed, he seems to have been a born hater of men, seeking treacherously to destroy the reputation of any who usurped a part of the limelight which, he considered, should be wholly concentrated upon himself.

Bakunin called him: "Spiteful, morose, vain and treacherous."

"Baring his teeth and grinning, Marx will slaughter everyone who blocks his path," said Ruge.

In 1844, during his stay in Paris, he became generally known as the "calf-biter."

The Proletariat Despised

"I am convinced," wrote Techow, "that personal ambition in its most dangerous form has eaten away anything that was good in him. I took away the impression that everything he does is aimed at the acquisition of personal power." He noted that Marx had no capacity for love, but only for hate, and continued, strangely, "The only people Marx really respects are aristocrats, the genuine ones, who are conscious of their aristocracy." Techow was amazed to hear the apostle of the proletariat rave about the aristocracy—the genuine full-blooded feudal lords who knew how to subject the miserable plebeians and keep them under control. What Marx really dreamed of was to replace the old aristocracy with a new one. "In order to supplant the aristocracy, he needs the strength that can be found only among the proletariat. So he has built his system around them. But he laughs at the fools who join in his litany of the proletariat"—for whom he has only contempt and hatred—those "stupid asses," "the red communist mob," "the rabble," as he called them (in private).

"An untrustworthy egoist and lying intriguer, swayed almost more by his envy of others' achievements than his own ambition," was the opinion of the socialist Heinzen.

Such were some of his contemporaries' impressions of the personality and character of the nineteenth-century prophet of socialism, of whom it has lately been written that had he never lived to point the way to ruthless State despotism, Lenin, Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini could hardly have arisen in history.

Envy, Hatred and Ignorance

What is the secret of the success of so questionable a teaching as this of Marxian socialism-cum-communism, with its fantastic philosophy of history, its inaccurate definitions and analyses, its borrowed slogans, its fomenting of misdirected hatred among the ignorant, its atheism, its banishment from politics of all ethical principles as being no more than "demoralizing sentimentalities"? Is it in its rousing calls to warlike action, in its belligerence—with a near-by target, well in sight, at which to strike? Working men can well understand what "scientific" socialism now shews to be the case. It is their immediate employers who are robbing them of the wealth created by their labour. Never mind anything else. Here are the real villains of the piece, as they have always supposed—the employers, the capitalists.

Of what use to shew working men that if the total wealth currently produced in the community were equally divided their condition would be very little bettered; and that only for a very short time? After all, when socialism comes they will have the satisfaction of bringing the bosses down. Surely, apart from this, the secret of the

success of the Marxian doctrine does not come from the pleasant prospect of the "dictatorship of the proletariat"—that phrase of sinister ambiguity! There is no press of emigration from Western to Eastern Europe and beyond.

Perhaps the explanation lies in the attraction the Marxian gospel has for many aspiring politicians, to whom a programme of true reform does not offer the same inducements. Gifted with platform fluency which lends them ability in inflammatory propaganda, and not overburdened with too great a knowledge of fundamental economic laws—any more than are the voters to whom they make their appeal—these see in socialism a way to attaining for themselves power and prestige in the community as members of a governing body with vastly enlarged functions in ordering the lives of the people. And this is not to say that they are necessarily insincere and cynical. Not at all. No doubt the thought of the prizes and rewards to which they can look forward spurs them on, but they may be quite convinced they know what is best for the nation at large. It is only that, in this, they are mistaken.

Spreading Like a Canker

However it be, there is no denying the spread of communism throughout the world. We see it enthroned in full panoply in Soviet Russia and China—surely of all great countries the least oppressed, in the first instance, by capitalist systems, and yet the first to take the way of revolution, though not in the manner predicted by Marx. It is paramount in the countries of Eastern Europe. It threatens France and Italy, and has gained more than a foothold among the Scandinavian nations. It arises in Australia and New Zealand and in the countries of the South American continent.

The facts cited in the foregoing examination are derived, in large measure, from M. Wing's translation of L. Schwarzschild's brilliantly critical biography of Karl Marx*, the portrait of a man whose defective nature warped and perverted his mental outlook, and inflicted upon the world the strange hotch-potch of dogma, odd subjective notion, class-hatred and erroneous economics, that, pieced on to the central idea of State absolutism, makes up the Marxian "philosophy," which, in that multitudes have come to believe in it, constitutes a tragic circumstance of our time. For, like the hireling shepherd, the egregious Marx "careth not for the sheep," leading his flocks towards no green pastures where they shall not want, but from where they are assailed by dogs into a place of tigers.

It is a far different teaching that men must turn to if civilization is to be preserved and raised to higher levels—levels never yet attained. Civilization cannot live nor grow except in a world where men are free. It is in the writings of Henry George that we may see what should and could so easily and quickly be done to liberate men from the durance of poverty, and to transform society.

J. H. EASTWOOD.

* *The Red Prussian*, Hamish Hamilton, London. 1948.

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