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Rays " Supplement, March, 1947

MARXIAN COMMUNISM RE-EXAMINED

BY
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[Eighty years ago, in 1867 there appeared at Hamburg **Das Kapital** (1st part) the famous book on Capitalism by a German Jew, Karl Marx, the founder of modern communism. He called this "**scientific socialism**", as opposed to the utopian theories which had preceded it. He could have called it 'socialist metaphysics' using a dialectic process borrowed from Hegel's philosophy. As this form of communism is still looked upon as chaotic and designed to bring about the perfect or ideal social state, a paradise on earth, it is good to examine it more closely.—EDITOR]

I.—Life of Karl Marx (1818-1893)

Marx was a highly educated bourgeois. Born in May 1818 at Treves of a lawyer father and Dutch mother. His ancestors had been rabbis, but in 1824 changed into Protestants for political reasons. After a year at Bonn University he moved to Berlin where the Hegelian philosophy reigned: Bauer developed it into atheism and persuaded Marx to write as a thesis for his doctorate at Jena a comparison between the philosophies of Theocritus and Epicurus.

Feuerbach, a pupil of Hegel's, later, became materialist and wrote "**The Essence of Christianity**" which Marx hailed with

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1842—Marx became editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, a liberal paper: in a controversy in its columns his attention was drawn to socialist ideas of the Utopian Socialists—in England the atheist Robert Owen and leaders of the Chartists, in France Saint-Simon—and as a result he studied Socialism. His paper was suppressed by the Government and he himself married the daughter of a baron of Westphalen who was related to the Argylls.

1843—He moved to Paris where he wrote in the single issue of the Franco-German Year Book, to which Bakunin the Anarchist—as opposed to Communist, one who does not believe in central government but in separate communes and municipalities—also contributed. Anarchy is at the root of Marxism. He read Ricardo, the Jewish banker in England, and McCulloch. In this article he first used the phrase "Religion is the opium of the people" and concluded that all the government of a country is rooted in the material life.

1844—He met Frederic Engels—a German clerk in Manchester—for the second time, and from now on developed the extraordinary friendship which started Marxism. Engels who was two years junior to Marx, was a Calvinist turned Atheist. He was able to help financially the chronically impecunious Marx: and without doubt also mentally.

1845—Marx was expelled from France for his attacks on Germany. He moved to Brussels as a Socialist. There he attacked Prudhon's "Philosophy of Poverty" in the "*Poverty of Philosophy*," in which he sets forth and defends the Materialist Conception of History (the MCH). He joined the Communist League and drew up the

MARCH, 1947

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"Communist Manifesto"—from which comes "Workers of the world, unite."

1849—He edited in Cologne the "*Neue Rheinische Zeitung*" which was suppressed, Marx being expelled.

For the rest of his life he lived in London at Camberwell. By 1850 he gave up hope of revolution because of the discovery of gold in California. He quarrelled with the Communist League, who wanted an immediate Revolution. He declared that there could be no "Revolution without civil and international war over a long period, in order to change social conditions and to make the proletariat fit for social domination. He introduced the new idea that the Revolution was bound to come by the inevitable laws of history. As a Scientific Socialist he sneers at the Utopian Socialists.

1848—He wrote two books on Scientific Socialism: "*Class Struggles in France*" and "*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*." He had at the time a family of six or seven, living in poverty in two rooms. Engels helped him by writing articles for him in the New York Tribune. He moved to a Leicester Street Hotel, and worked in the British Museum Reading Room.

1852-7—Two of his children died, and as his mother-in-law left him a little money, he was able to move to Grafton Terrace.

1859—He published in German "*The Critique of Political Economy*," in which he outlined the MCH.

1867—The first volume of "*Das Kapital*" appeared in Hamburg and attracted little attention.

1868—Engels retired, paid Marx's debts and allowed him £350 a year.

Between now and his death in 1883 Marx's health compelled him to German spas. His wife died two years before him, and he himself was buried in Highgate.

1885—Engels published the second volume of "*Das Kapital*".

1886—He published the third.

Kantsky between 1905-1910 published the fourth volume in four parts in German. The first volume is the most important. The Everyman edition is not approved by the Communist Party; the best is edited by Engels and published by Allen and Unwin at 8/6). Marx's character was proud, irritable and overbearing, but he was devoted to his wife and to Engels.

II.—How Marx got His Ideas.

Several influences turned the mind of Marx towards his materialist idea of the world. These influences were:

(a) *Philosophical*: After his doctorate Marx went to Bonn as an unofficial tutor. There he was a Hegelian: holding that the ultimate reality is spirit, the absolute idea of reality which underlies the phenomenal universe and which in its constant evolution is the manifestation of the absolute spirit. This constant evolution takes the form of the Hegelian triad-thesis, antithesis, synthesis and so *ad infinitum*. It is an elevated relativism in which there are no unchangeable principles except mathematics and eternal theory. There is a constant state of "*becoming*" Hegel's theory was therefore anti-materialist in the extreme.

On the other hand Feuerbach was materialist—"Spirit is only the highest product of matter." Marx came to accept Feuerbach, but wanted to amalgamate it with the "*becoming*" of Hegel, as evolution plus materialism.

(b) *Economic*: From Adam Smith and Ricardo Marx took the idea that "all value depends on labour" William Thompson had pressed the theory to the Socialist conclusion in his "Enquiry into the Principle of the Distribution of Wealth" in which form Marx cast it. (Cf. "The Right to the Whole Produce of Labour" by Anton Menger).

The post-Smithian economists made much of economic laws which they equated with scientific laws—against which it is useless to struggle. Smith's doctrine was of the "invisible hand" (?) which adjusted the egotistic activities of man for the good of all: these were the economic laws governing the production and exchange and distribution of products of industry among producers, and were unalterable. "*Laissez-faire*," the "Hands off" principle was proclaimed so that the State would not interfere with the unalterable laws. With certain modifications that is the impression left by the classical economists. Marx's theory said that all was governed by ineluctable laws, and that we could not stop the evolution of the absolute.

(c) *Historical and Social.*

Medievalism: In the Middle Ages the population was small; there was government by a King of the land-owning nobility. The classes were well marked into nobles, clergy, merchants, craftsmen, serfs. The religion was nominally Catholicism; the philosophy was "*Scholasticism*." There

was no tense interest in Science, the art was purely religious—there was no nature painting. The architectural ideas were simple—castles for defence, and cathedrals for worship. There was universal baptism, feudalism; no divorce and no machinery: wool was the stable export and thus sheep-farming a great trade at home; the centres of production were isolated by bad roads.

Victorianism: The growth of the factory system had brought many abuses, long hours, low wages, sweated labour of women and children. Marx read the Royal Commission's Reports; he saw the development of power production, factories, the drift of labour from country to towns (assisted by the Enclosure Acts) the machines destroying home industry; the workers combining and the Combination Acts striking at them; and he saw a voteless proletariat. There were small middle-class, social reformers, the utilitarians and Jeremy Bentham, working for legislative protection through the Factory Laws. In 1832 the middle classes got the vote, in 1867 the town workers, in 1885 the country workers. The middle class was the governing class, of merchants and manufacturers, giving low wages and receiving high profits; nominal Low Churchmen or Nonconformists with the emphasis on human industry. The prevailing philosophy was utilitarian—only later did John Stuart Mill undermine it. We know what their architecture was like. Among their artists the type was probably Landseer, imbued with a deep sense of the right to private property, among their poets Tennyson, imbued with the same sense, as in such a work as the *Yorkshire Horse*. These phenomena are all connected; the same people were all involved in these activities.

Georgianism: The population is forty millions; agriculture is comparatively decadent; government is nominally by Cabinet, but often by a minority of bankers and industrialists; religion has decayed and superstitions like spiritualism have taken its place; there is no predominant philosophy, but a great growth of Science; art and music are of all sorts and cannot be reduced to a formula. Communications have united the country; transport and wireless have levelled men in various districts by imposing the same ideas. Of social institutions there is now divorce and birth control; primogeniture has been abolished. Power production is in force; trusts and cartels and the power of finance have increased tremendously, and their arrival has caused new legislation to be introduced over the whole country.

Medievalism, Victorianism, Georgianism—during these periods there has been great change in all branches of life, an evolution. Is each period of change independent of the others, or is there a common denominator? The same people were involved in each change. Is there one factor which is the motive force behind this process of change? Marx declared there was, the economic factor; his system will be economic and political socialism based on materialism.

III.—Dialectical Materialism

Dialectical Materialism first conceived by Marx, was elaborated by Engels in his "*Feuerbach*" (1886) and "*Anti-Duehring*" (Lawrence and Wishart, 1877) and "*Origin of the Family*" (1884) and lastly "*The Condition of the Working Classes in England*" (1845).

A word on the Hegelian system may help us to understand better Marxism, since it borrowed its philosophical framework and its dynamic

principle from Hegelianism. For Hegel Spirit or Idea is the *Primitive Being*, and it is the *whole* and the *only* reality. The Spirit is all things only *potentially*, that is to say, the Spirit is capable of becoming all things, and actually becomes all things through its own evolution. The dynamic principle of its evolution is the *conflict* of the opposite tendencies which produce progress. We have *being* and *non-being*. The being is the *thesis* and the non-being is the *antithesis*. Now the interaction of the thesis (*being*) and the antithesis (*non-being*) produces what we call synthesis, the *becoming*. These principles which Hegel applied to the Spirit, were applied by Marx to Matter. Marx reacted against Hegel's idealism, but not against his view of evolution taking place by the Triad—thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. He accused the old-fashioned materialism of being mechanist, of trying to apply mechanics to chemistry and organism and of ignoring the fact of natural evolution. He argued that the ultimate reality is matter, that motion is the mode of existence of matter. Both motion and matter are indestructible and uncreatable. Mind is only the highest product of matter. Life is a form of matter in motion. In the "*Feuerbach*" Engels states that the world developed from unicellular germs which came from the protoplasm and albumen; "which came into existence by chemical means."

That is the basis of their Materialism or Dialecticism. The evolutionary process in the universe takes place by the method of contradictions. Thus motion involves the contradiction of being at the same time something and also something else. Life and Thought are something and at the same time something else.

One could say, "Call anything capable of evolution *thesis*, and its non-evolutioned side *antithesis*, then the interaction of both will produce the *synthesis* or progress." "But the synthesis is also the thesis for subsequent stages. In the "*Anti-Duehring*" on page 154 Engels compares the evolution to grains of barley on a stalk being the seeds of their own evolution, dropping into contact with the fertile soil, only to grow again tenfold; but it is a bad simile, as there is no evolution: the new barley is just the same as the old; it has increased in quantity but not in quality. According to theory the synthesis should combine the thesis and the antithesis, and be different from both. But the barley is not different from its predecessors.

He further held that Truth is relative, because of the imperfection of human knowledge, except for some truths of mathematics and inanimate nature; thus the historical and natural sciences need only truths like "all men are mortal" (which is not necessarily true) or "men cannot live without labour", or "Napoleon died on May the Fifth." Freedom is *the recognition of necessity*: it consists in the knowledge of the laws of nature and the possibility of using them, and it can be achieved only after Society has seized the means of production. Lastly, Religion is a fantastic conception of external forces controlling the lives of men.

Comments on Dialectical Materialism.

1. Since Marx admits the laws of Nature, he must admit the principle of causality. But Dialectical Materialism violates that principle by holding that an effect can contain more than its cause;

that Life can be an effect proceeding from inanimate matter. Something extra has cropped up. And what is the cause of the uniformities which we call the laws of Nature?

2. The whole assumption of Dialectical Materialism is that there is evolution from the lower to the higher, from the nonrational to the rational, from the lifeless to life, from Capitalism to Socialism. This is a mere assertion, and if really evolution exists, why does it exist? How to explain it? The only justification is that there is an intelligence which wills progress and directs change in the right direction. But that, Marx will not admit.

3. He says Truth is only relative. But how, without an absolute standard of values, can you decide what is progress?

4. Mental activity is utterly different from the material changes in the brain which accompany it.

5. How do men get the very idea of right and wrong, (the idea that right and wrong exist,) as apart from what actually is right and wrong?

6. The idea of freedom as "the knowledge of necessity" is a *lusus verborum*. The freedom of the will, the power to choose between motives, is opposed to all materialism.

7. The addition of the Hegelian triad adds no strength at all to Materialism. What is the cause of the Triad? Why should the Triad lead to progress? Why should it not be like the barley and not actually evolve at all? It is useless as an aid to prophecy, for you can fix arbitrarily on the *contrary* of a particular state without doing so on the *contradictory*. Thus, is the opposite of

private ownership, public ownership or no ownership at all? We do not require this Triad to explain change: this can be done by potency and act: a puppy growing into a dog had in it always the power to grow up; the power given to it in the moment of Creation. The Triad endeavours only to show how evolution can work without the Idea of Hegel or the God of the theists. It tried to explain evolution on materialist grounds. If Marx and Engels believed the principle of causality, they did not explain the cause of the Triad. But if they doubted the principle of causality, there can be no natural laws of cause and effect. Hegel was not quite so weak in logic, for, on the basis of the Idea, the Triad is conceivable. At least the spirit is active, whereas matter is inert. Yet if the Idea is absolute, the absolute cannot evolve. The being evolves into what it has in potency, from potential to actual. The explanation by potency was worked out long ago by Aristotle, and is supported by every fact of experience.

IV.-The Materialist Conception of History.

(Cf. The Communist Manifesto. The Critique of Political Economy, both by Marx; and the Anti-Duehring of Engels).

The Materialist Conception of History claims to be a philosophy of history, to explain past and future history; and therefore it has to disclose laws that are at work in historical evolution: Marx calls them "tendencies working with iron necessity towards inevitable results" in the first German edition of *Kapital*. He disowns the accusation against individual capitalists for conditions for which they were not responsible; for they are the blind tool of inevitable forces. That is why Marx calls himself a scientific socialist and not an

Utopian socialist; he endeavours to discover laws in matter; and the more laws discovered, the more sciences progress. He seeks the laws which govern human society, but passes no moral judgments; for you cannot blame plants for the way they grow. Each historical stage contains the seeds of its own negation. Each stage has its own contradictions. Marx believes that there is historical progress, (he assumes it and does not prove it.) As a materialist he repudiates Hegel's explanation of progress, where a Catholic would repudiate it as a realist.

Before proceeding, we ought to note here that the *Manifesto* is a revolutionary pamphlet which emphasises the class struggle, whereas the *Critique* emphasises the overriding influence of natural forces, the forces of economic production. It is difficult for modern Marxists to keep those two in balance, for if you over-emphasise the class-war, that may deviate into a weakening of materialism—Debhorin's heresy. But if you emphasise the forces of production, you fall into mechanism which weakens the revolutionary urge—Bukharin's heresy.

To continue, according to Marx we can perceive in society an economic structure and an ideological superstructure. The economic structure consists of "the conditions of production" or in some translations "the relations of production"—the Handbook of Marxism reads "relations"—prevailing at any time. And this is the same juridically as the existing property system, such as the guild system, the factory system, the local market of the middle ages, the world market under capitalism, the indigenous raw materials of the middle ages, the world sources of raw materials to-day, the rural civilisations

and the urban agglomerations. This economic structure is determined necessarily and independently of human will by the stage of development of the forces of production, that is, whether man like it or not. Marx would be thinking in those days of the coming of steam; now-a-days we would include electricity and oil, as well as the old coal and soil-fertility, and at any rate the physical forces of men. On the real basis of this economic structure rises a legal and political superstructure—constitutions, law, government, administration, forms of social consciousness like religion, philosophy, morals, art, science, poetry and the rest. That is the ideological superstructure.

With regard to the connection between the two structures, Marx says that the economic structure determines the superstructure. All the mental activities of men are determined by the mode of production prevailing. He believed that ideas could affect or modify economy, but that on the final analysis material conditions did determine the superstructure. (Cf. the Letters of Engels).

Historical Evolution and the MCH.

Marx says that productive forces develop, and that at each stage of production they are fettered by the existing conditions of production. For instance, as large scale agriculture develops, it clashes with the old feudalism; and then a period of social revolution ensues. With this change—for the conditions inevitably adapt themselves to the new forms of production—the whole ideological superstructure changes too. This conflict really causes the revolution.

The stages through which evolution passes, "the progressive economic forms of society",

Marx classifies as follows—the Asiatic, the ancient or antique, the feudal and the modern capitalist; this last being the closing period of the prehistorical era.

In the *Manifesto* Marx says that all the history of society is the history of class struggles, an idea first suggested to him by the class struggles of 1841-2. From the serfs of the middle ages sprang the burghers, from them the first element of the bourgeoisie. Under capitalism the two classes are set one against the other, the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, which is not, incidentally, the lowest class of all—which Marx calls the scum—but the manual workers receiving a subsistence wage and enough to bring up a successor in the labour market. They are those who live literally from hand to mouth in constant insecurity. Marx looks back to history with economic eyes only and closes his eyes to everything that is not economic. No one can deny that economy is one of the main factors of history, but it is *not the only* factor.

Marx admits the good progress the bourgeoisie has achieved, in constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and therefore the "relations" or "conditions" of production. Engels says that under capitalism production is social, that it is by co-operation of many people in factories especially, where production is planned, that these improvements take place; unlike the lack of co-operation among the few of the middle ages. But, he complains, first of all the output is not socialised, the means of production are not social but are private property. Secondly, the planning is confined to each factory or enterprise and outside that there is competition and

anarchy of production. Those are the contradictions of capitalism which lead to a propertyless proletariat, to exploiting of workers, to technological unemployment, fall in the rate of profits, the growth of combines and trusts, economic crises (attributed to overproduction), and finally the steadily growing poverty of the proletariat. As a result of these faults of capitalism, class-war is engendered between bourgeoisie and proletariat.

In the future the proletariat, growing still more poor, will rise in armed revolution, will seize the State machinery—already the concentrations of industry into the hands of a few will simplify the process of nationalisation—and they will establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. This will be the first stage of Communism, generally known as Socialism. (Marx uses only the word *Communism* because he does not want his theory to be compared with the Utopian Socialists). In the Socialist State, distribution will be according to the work done—to each according to his work. Classes will disappear gradually, above all the exploiting class, but the intelligentsia will remain. The State will "wither away" (Engels) because it has always been an organ of class domination, and without classes there can be no state. That will be the final stage of Communism, when all will work to the best of their ability, and none will have more than they require.

Comments on the MCH and the Evolution to Communism.

(N. B. Some near-communists merely say that evolution is affected by the economic change. We are prepared to admit that, but Marx certainly did not. He said that the change is determined; that it is the prime and sole cause.)

1. The notion that the economic structure was determined by the development of the forces of production was invented to refute Hegel's theory that it was the Idea that was evolving. Marx wished to substitute materialism, the development of productive forces. But why do the productive forces develop? Development is due to the inventions and discoveries made by the human intellect. To Marx these are all part of the superstructure; yet these productive forces develop thanks to human mental activity. The productive forces themselves are purely passive potential. The Radio did not develop itself, but had to be developed. Marx's very materialist basis must include the activity of the intellect, human technical skill and capital and some private property to stimulate inventions. The productive forces cannot be the sole cause of the conditions of production. With reference to Hegel, reaction is constant cause and effect, and does not exclude causality. In the word "development" is concealed mental activity, the basis of social evolution.

2. Marx says that the economic structure determines the superstructure. Economic conditions affect laws, certainly,—factory and company laws are an example—and they influence economics and sociology and religion; and certainly "*primum est vivere deinde philosophari*, first we must live and then philosophize;" we do not need Marx to tell us that. Admittedly he did us a service by drawing attention to the economic factor in history; but he holds that economic conditions determine and are the complete cause of the ideological superstructure. But there is no proof, merely his own affirmation, *ipse dixit*. There is no chain of cause and effect between the ideologi-

cal superstructure and economic conditions; and Marx never shows us how economic conditions are transformed into ideas. Ideas to him just mirror forth the things around him. (Engels in the *Anti-Duehring* never alludes to economic conditions as being the origin of religion; it is "a reflection in men's minds of the external forces which control their daily lives", a definition which he uses with reference to sun-worship and totemism—which is very different from saying that religion is determined by the methods of production, and the economic structure). How far does history show that the superstructure is determined by the conditions of production? The Greek culture and art—their superstructure—was unique, but their forms of production were not. Sparta and Athens produced necessities in exactly the same way, but their culture was vastly different. Christianity was diffused throughout Europe from the middle of the first century to the end of the twelfth. Communists say that it rose through economic misery; but the population of the Roman Empire was best off at the beginning of that time. The decay began only at the end of the second century. Christianity, therefore, began before the decay and continued after the decay, and expanded equally in tribes with a natural economy of barter—as in those without. Thus the superstructure changes into a Christian way of life without a corresponding change in the economic structure. The heresies of the third and fourth centuries spread in all sections of the population, but all lived under the same conditions of production. The Protestant so-called Reformation (cf. Feddern pp. 84-7) divided nations between themselves, but did not divide classes. As regards Science, the established truths of the natural sciences are not affected by the conditions of production, yet they have influence

on other parts of the ideological superstructure, for instance philosophy and religion. The theory that a clash must take place before any social revolution is not borne out by facts. In the downfall of the Roman Empire social conditions played a part, but there was no change in the conditions of production to explain that great social revolution. Marx was especially concerned with the French Revolution, but no new productive forces had been developed to account for it. What did produce it was rationalism and liberalism (in the Continental sense) especially among the nobility. The ideological superstructure produced the revolution which produced the new constitution and the new system of production by factories—exactly the opposite of what Marx states. The economic reforms were demanded by the revolutionaries, who had no illusions as to what they wanted. As regards the clash between the medieval guilds and the wholesale manufacturer, Marx said that neither side knew what they were fighting for. But in the France of the eighteenth century, the final fight before the Revolution took the purely economic line that the guild was unsuited to the economy of the day; there is not a shred of evidence that the people did not know what they were fighting for.

3. Marx's four "progressive economic forms" must now be dealt with. The *first*, Asiatic, is meaningless: there is no distinctive Asiatic form; there is a vast difference between India, China and Mesopotamia. The *second*, ancient or antique, is also difficult to settle upon: there were any amount of ancient economic forms, and in any case, the term is a cross-division with the Asiatic. Marx's use of the word "progressive" is also inaccurate, for with the fall of the ancient world,

what ensued was not progress but regress. The *third* form, feudalism, was not an economic organisation at all but a military one, in which men swore allegiance to lords who swore allegiance to the King. In Europe it was confined to France and Germany, and in the military sense was never known in the Byzantine Empire, nor in the Slav countries; but there was a similar system in Japan and among the Aztecs. In the sense of a system of landed nobles it existed in only a few countries in the middle ages, but it had done so in Persia long before the so-called feudal period. In the middle ages and in the ancient world the general character of production was by the natural economy of barter; this existed under feudalism, and for many ages and in many places without any feudalism arising at all. The words Asiatic, antique, feudal are mere high-sounding bluff. Lenin, quoted in the Labour Monthly for January 1935, writes that it is "non-dialectical and non-scientific to imagine world history to move smoothly forward without occasional regress." But why should we assume that progress prevails, though interrupted by periods of regress? Why not vice-versa? And how are we to judge progress when Marxism rejects absolute values? How much progress has there been since the middle ages: has Art progressed, has Music, has philosophy? Have only the sciences based on observation and experiment progressed? If you exclude observation and experiment, is there progress at all? Men felt as comfortable then as we do now, because they had never experienced our refinements: but if we have softer armchairs, is that Progress? If you once admit that there has been regress, as Lenin does, you must prove that progress prevails over regress. The *fourth* and last "progressive economic form" which Marx gives us is that of

Capitalism. Assuming this to be an improvement on earlier forms, why should it be the final form before communism? Why should there not be something between? Like a dictatorship after nineteenth century liberalism? In "*The State and Revolution*" p. 126, (C. P. G. B. second edition), Lenin himself says: "*It has never entered the head of any Socialist to 'promise' that the highest phase of communism will actually arrive.*" How many Communists will agree to that? If the laws of historical evolution are as sure as those of the sciences, as Marx professed, he ought to be able to say for certain whether that phase of communism would arrive or not. And he certainly thought it would. What is to guarantee that communism will be the final stage? Why should the triad, with its synthesis, antithesis and thesis, cease to operate? Why should stones no longer fall to the ground? Rudas in his "*Dialectical Materialism*" says there will still be evolutions through contradictions under Communism, but they will not overthrow Communism. But how does he know? Is it just wishful thinking? If the laws of history produced private property from general ownership before, why should they not do so again? The well known American anthropologist Robert Lowie speaking of the Primitive Tribes says: "Those who set out with the evolutionary dogma that every social condition now found in civilization must be developed from some condition far removed from it through a series of transitional stages will consistently embrace the hypothesis that the property sense, so highly developed with us, was wholly or largely wanting in primitive society, that it must have evolved from its direct antithesis Communism in goods of every kind. This assumption is demonstrably false" ("*Primitive Society*," p. 205.)

Meanwhile in the world's only Communist state there are no signs of the State withering away, as Engels said it would. Stalin has officially announced that the first stage of Socialism has been attained, yet far from withering, the State now exercises more control than ever. Trotsky, of course, says that Stalin is holding up the ineluctable laws of history. Stalin has lately interpreted Engels' withering away as true only on the supposition that the majority of the world is Communist. But Engels never introduced that qualification.

4. The class-war, says Marx, is the conclusion to each progressive economic form and the beginning of the next. There have been plenty in the past, in the sense that there is an opposition between property owners and the propertyless. It arises more from snobbery among the upper classes, than humility among the lower: the gentry are the more class conscious. But class war is not necessary for evolution, nor is it a good thing to abolish all classes. There is good reason for harmony. Feddern says that there have been class wars, but that wars between nations have been at least as important in evolution. In the last war the proletariat was united with the bourgeoisie in England and Germany alike. In the *Manifesto* we read that in past epochs the exploited class constantly progressed, from serfs to burghers and to bourgeoisie, but in the capitalist epoch the proletariat is sinking lower and is to triumph by getting poorer and poorer and finally overthrowing the bourgeoisie. But then the laws of history seem to have changed. In the pre-capitalist era the revolutions were by the minority, in capitalism by the majority.

Marx prophesied that the misery of the workers would increase, but it has not; they have improved, if anything. Marx also described the concentration of wealth as continuing to breaking point, but in spite of it, the small producers are maintaining their position and are not being eliminated.

On the other hand Catholic social doctrine realises that under individualist capitalism there is a real danger of class hostility because of the labour market and the struggle for good conditions; and that the maldistribution of wealth—especially in some countries—is unjust and a real source of social revolution. Hence we desire to abolish the proletariat by enabling them to hold some amount of property to defend themselves against insecurity. We deny that the MCH is a sound philosophy of history, and that any sound philosophy of history can be materialist.

V.—The Exploitation of the Workers

Marx wants to prove that under Capitalism the employed worker cannot get the true value of his labour power, that he is necessarily exploited and that therefore there must be class war.

All the profit of the *entrepreneurs*, the Capitalist employers, comes out of the pockets of the workers. It is the surplus value which the worker and the worker alone produces.

£ x.... { Raw Materials
Means of Production } ...Product.....£ x plus y
Labour

The extra profit that has accrued cannot come from the Raw Material or from the Means of Production, because the capitalist has to pay the full market price for both, for their owners must sell at the full market value to make their own

profits. Therefore this surplus "plus y" must come from the labour, which is a commodity very different from the Raw Materials and the Means of Production. Let *value in exchange* stand for price, and *value in use* for a thing's usefulness to the person using it. "Moneybags"—Marx's elephantine humour for the "capitalist"—uses labour power of the workers; and so the value in use of the labour power to Moneybags is what it will produce for him in the making of a commodity; but the value in exchange is less than that. In the Means of Production and the Raw Materials it is exactly the same; the value in use equates with the value in exchange. But in labour it is less, that is, the value in exchange is less, and the difference is called surplus value, the capitalist's profit. Marx calls Moneybags' original cash, i.e., the pre-profit capital for expenditure on the Raw Materials and the Means of Production "*constant capital*", and that for expenditure on Labour "*variable capital*". The value of the labour power in use is its value to the capitalist in producing goods sold on the market. The value in exchange must be less than that, or he would not pay the hire of labour—which hire includes enough for the subsistence of the worker, in order to replace the energy which the worker has expended, plus sustenance for children to replace him on the labour market, plus the cost of technical education. How does Marx know this is the value in exchange? It is really an assertion of Ricardo.

Marx declares it of value in general. He represents to himself two commodities exchanging with one another, say, a hundredweight of coal for a barrel of beer. You sell the coal first and then buy the beer, but in reality you have really exchanged. Marx says that, when two such

commodities equate, there must be something common to both. What is it? Of course, the physical qualities are not common, nor their utility. The only common thing is the labour which has produced them. They are both the product of labour power. Labour, he says, is crystallised in a commodity produced by labour power. It is something objective put into the thing made, and it is this something objective which is really sold. Why do they exchange in these quantities and no other? Because the same amount of labour is in both. You measure labour by time, by the time spent in working. Marx notes that the first difficulty is that the slow worker takes more time than the quick worker, but answers that you have to consider the time spent by the average worker with normal tools in use at the time. The second difficulty, if two workers' labour power is not of uniform quality and they both work for the same time, he answers by stating that the labour which is the standard of value is simple or homogeneous labour power, viz. unskilled labour. Skilled labour, he says, counts as a multiple of unskilled labour, and the multiple appears to be fixed by custom. This is why the value in exchange of labour power is the family subsistence wage. In the Handbook page 454 we read, "The labour time necessary for production of labour power reduces itself to that necessary for the production of the means of subsistence."

Comments on the Marxist Theory of the Exploitation of Workers.

1. Marx has rejected utility as a source of value, because the commodities served different purposes: yet he holds that labour is common to them, and the fact that the labour is of at

different kind does not seem to prevent labour being the common element. Why should not utility be just as common? If commodities are things produced by labour, how do prices get fixed for those things which are not produced by labour: the pearl you find by chance in your oyster, the virgin-land you can buy and sell? Even in commodities produced by labour surely utility is more fundamental than labour. Labour of itself has no value: man can waste labour by carrying coals to Newcastle. Is it or is it not useful? The more fundamental common element is utility.

2. With regard to the slow worker, Marx asks us to consider socially necessary labour. Whatever is in a commodity is the labour of the worker who made it, and has nothing whatever to do with "socially necessary labour". Marx says the source of value is the labour in the commodity; but this is the concrete labour in it, and not the socially necessary.

3. Skilled labour is not merely a multiple of unskilled labour. They differ qualitatively, not only quantitatively. It is the difference between the stonebreaker and the sculptor. It cannot be a multiple of unskilled labour, therefore. To say that the value is fixed by custom is a contradiction of his labour theory of value.

4. "All profits come from labour and not from constant capital" — why should the employer, then, ever discard his workers and instal machinery: producing what is known as technological unemployment? This would be an odd act if all the employer's profits came from his workmen. Then also the prices and profits should vary according to the proportion between constant capital and variable capital, between the number

of workers and the amount of machinery. The profits of those with workers should be higher than those with machinery. But under the free competition which Marx is considering profits seem to be the same, in all industries. Market prices are the same, no matter what amount of capital you have behind you. There is the same price for hand-produced wheat as machine-produced. Marx admits that fact, but says that competition levels out prices and profits. Therefore at the very least he admits that the labour theory cannot be proved by the experience of the market.

* * *

VI.—General Conclusion

What precedes will suffice to show how Marx, the materialist, tried to explain the social order by inevitable laws that govern the course of history with iron necessity. One way out of the permanent proletarian misery is to "dispossess the dispossessers." "In the highest phase of communist society," wrote Marx in his *Criticism*, "after the disappearance of the enslavement of man caused by his subjection to the principle of the division of labour...only then will society be able to inscribe on its banner: *From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs.*"

Marx promised men an earthly paradise. In reality, as history has proved, his prophetic dream has cost many millions of human lives and we have not yet seen the end of the communist catastrophe.

On the contrary, instead of class-warfare and the murder mania—which are the logical outcome of atheistic communism—what is needed is the infusion into the economic order of social justice

and charity. There are two ways of righting wrongs in the world, the wrong way by means of bloody revolution—a remedy worse than the evil—and there is the right way, propounded by Leo XIII, Pius XI and all the men most competent to guide and stimulate useful reforms. Active leaders of Catholic Action will be the apostles to lead their fellow workmen; but all men of good will—individuals, organisations and states—must co-operate in establishing everywhere the reign of social justice and charity.

Communism has rightly been called a disease that has its roots in economic evils. Once these evils are removed, communism will die of itself.

But the removal of these economic evils requires the establishment of social justice. Multitudes of men suffer from grim poverty; therefore legislation must prevent the accumulation of all wealth in the hands of a few. Multitudes are without any security against unemployment, sickness and old age; therefore the public order requires the multiplication of property owners. And again, at present capitalism has an almost exclusive control of the productions of labour; therefore we must vindicate the right of workmen to organize themselves so as to obtain a fair wage for their work. To conclude, communism spreads not by mere enthusiasm but by ideas and doctrines—most of them false, as we have seen—therefore the right social order must be brought about also by the spread of sound social doctrines.

Nihil obstat: J. C. HOUPERT, S.J., *Censor deput.*

15^a Februarii 1947

Imprimatur: J. ANTONI SAMIDORAI,
Vic. Gen. Trichinopoly.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. Life of Karl Marx (1818-93)	... 1
2. How Marx got his Ideas	... 4
3. Dialectical Materialism	... 7
<i>Comments</i>	... 9
4. The Materialist-Conception of History	... 11
<i>Historical Evolution</i>	... 13
<i>Comments</i>	... 15
5. Exploitation of the Workers	... 22
<i>Comments</i>	... 24
6. General Conclusion	... 26

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