

## 14 *Marxism*

Different in approach from the social-minded Utopians, the nihilists, the anarchists, and the evolutionary socialists, Marxism propounds a scientific and revolutionary socialism, based mainly upon social and economic planning. The system was developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels during the years between 1844 and 1848. Originally an enthusiastic student of Hegel, Marx outlined his own interpretation of Hegelianism in his work *Hegel's Philosophy of Law* (1844) which contains an almost complete framework of his political creed. Engels wrote his *Critique of Political Economy* in 1845 and, at about the same time, an article on the "Condition of the Working Classes in England." Nearly ready to proclaim his perfected ideology, Marx attacked Proudhon in 1847 in *La misère de la philosophie* (The Poverty of Philosophy); one year later, Marx and Engels published their joint work, *The Communist Manifesto*, which contains a complete exposition of the fundamentals of proletarian socialism. The later works of the two epoch-making writers merely elaborate the theories of the Manifesto, notably *Das Kapital* which Marx did not quite finish, the last part of this work being completed by Engels who survived Marx by twelve years.

The number of books, pamphlets, and articles written on Marxism is as extraordinary as the reaction to this doctrine, ranging all the way from servile admiration to blind hatred. The vigorousness of the reaction shows that Marxism has touched upon vital problems of modern society. It cannot be the task of this volume to offer a detailed analysis of Marxism; however, a brief explanation of its most essential aspects is necessary for the understanding of the Soviet system which has accepted Marxism *in toto* but modified it for its particular use.

## DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

Marx and Engels were deeply affected by Hegel's method of historical dialectics.<sup>1</sup> Hegel conceived of history as a succession of culture periods whose individual *Zeitgeist* (contemporary spirit) would develop a prevailing *Weltanschauung*. Toward the end of a culture period, when the prevailing idea would lose its power, a new opposing idea would emerge and struggle for recognition. In other words, the *thesis* would be confronted by an *antithesis*. These antagonistic principles, being subject to unification, would become a synthesis, until the emergence of a new thesis would cause the resumption of the eternal struggle between opposing ideas.

Of this complex theory, Marx accepted the concept of historic cycles and the method of reasoning. But he rejected Hegel's idealism and replaced it with an economic plan. (One should, however, be careful not to confuse Marxian economic materialism with the scientific term mechanistic materialism.<sup>2</sup>)

Marx himself regarded the principle of dialectical materialism as equal in importance to Darwin's theory of evolution. He reasoned that nothing was established once and for all; that everything had its development up to a climax followed by decay; that it is beyond anyone's power to retard this development. This recognition opens the way for the dialectical process. Dialectics is a branch of logic which uses a certain method of reasoning for the systematic analysis of an idea. It is, in the words of Marx, the "science of the general laws of motion" of human thought processes and of the world of matter. Dialectical materialism is, consequently, a system of reasoning which uses discussion as a basic principle. Instead of being founded on idealistic reasoning, the dialectical process bases its logic upon factual evidence and the material achievements of civilization. According to Marx, these achievements have been made possible by certain working and living conditions and not through the influence of ideas. Dialectical materialism must remain realistic and eliminate idealistic or metaphysical argumentation.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *supra*, pp. 51 ff.

<sup>2</sup> G. D. H. Cole, in his book *What Marx Really Meant*, V. Gollancz, Ltd., London, 1934, suggests the use of the word *realism* rather than *materialism* so as to present a clearer contrast to idealism as a spiritual conception.

If the principle of dialectical materialism is to be the core of a new sociopolitical ideology, then history itself needs a new kind of interpretation. Marx believed he had found it in his doctrine of historical materialism, also known as the economic interpretation of history.

#### THE ECONOMIC INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

Marx wanted to "harmonize the science of society with the materialist basis." The starting point of his sociological deduction was "social production." If social production is the motive power of human development, the stages of history are determined by the type and organization of this production which, in turn, characterize particular civilizations.

If new economic forces have grown up within an established system, Marx reasoned, a conflict arises which initiates the beginning of a social revolution. Should this revolution be successful in destroying the prevailing economic doctrines the whole superstructure of the previous system gives place to a new one. The character of the economic principles underlying the ruling ideology will determine the whole complex of culture and civilization. This does not mean that everything contained in previous cultures is discarded completely. Marx and his greatest disciple, Lenin, were no iconoclasts. Both insisted that a proletarian state could and should use the best creations of culture whether they came from the classic ages, from the aristocratic periods, or from bourgeois times.

Thus seen, the course of history is not guided by the forces of the spirit. It is independent of ideas, driven by material forces. Or, differently expressed, every state is the organization of its ruling class. In the course of history, one ruling class replaces another after first having destroyed its predecessor, only to be destroyed in turn by its successor. Such a view of historical development logically leads to the Marxian principle of the class struggle.

#### THE CLASS STRUGGLE

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles," wrote Marx and Engels in their *Communist Manifesto*. They proceeded to narrate the story of the transformation of hu-

man society from feudalism to bourgeoisie. Against this bourgeoisie stands the proletariat as the only revolutionary class. The bourgeoisie own the means of production and thus the workers are compelled to sell themselves to the bourgeois capitalists. Interestingly, Marx warned the world to be careful of the lower middle class as being inclined toward conservatism and reaction in order that it might remain part of the bourgeoisie instead of sinking into the proletarian class. His warnings are particularly significant in view of the fact that the lower middle class has been the chief support of the Nazi-Fascist revolutions.

What is the final outcome of this class struggle—and the end of the dialectical process? Hegel had merely described a process and thus left a gap at the end of his philosophical road. Marx had some definite ideas to suggest. The end is the classless society, a stateless paradise on earth in which everyone would give all he had to society and in turn would expect no more for himself than he could consume. This is a stage at which, according to Engels, the state, that is, the remnant of the former capitalist class state, would “wither away.”

Since economics is the basis of Marxian philosophy, how then does Marx explain the faults of capitalist economy?

#### THE THEORY OF SURPLUS VALUE

This theory is the heaviest of Marx's economic ammunition against capitalism. We need commodities, he said, to satisfy human needs. These commodities have an established value for use or perhaps for exchange. Since they are the product of human labor, their value depends on the amount of labor invested in their production. Labor is thus the common denominator of all commodities. Since commodities are socially necessary, the labor value invested is a subject of social concern. The concept of value changes, consequently, according to the social conceptions which prevail at any particular time.

Lenin explained that the original formula of commodity circulation was the “sale of one commodity for the purpose of buying another”; the formula of capitalism is the opposite, “purchase for the purpose of selling at a profit.” This profit, or surplus value, is the difference between what the laborer receives (his wages) and

the price for which what he produces is sold. For the wages paid are determined by the living cost for the mere subsistence of the workers and their families, not by the value of the commodities that the workers produce. The capitalist uses the surplus gained to invest in further enterprises which again will produce surplus values. This process can be repeated *ad infinitum* and lead to an unrestricted accumulation of capital.

These, in brief, are the main pillars of the Marxist doctrine, as a result of which Marx envisaged the inevitability of a complete socialization of any capitalist society. The demands set forth in the *Communist Manifesto*, years before the writing of *Das Kapital*, testify to the radical changes he held to be both necessary and inevitable:

1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all right of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly.
6. Centralization of the means of communication and transportation in the hands of the state.
7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state; the bringing into cultivation of waste lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.
8. Equal obligation of all to work. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equal distribution of population over the country.
10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of child factory labor in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE TWO STAGES OF SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

If the proletarians were able to seize power and put the Marxian doctrine into effect by first taking over the means of production, they would put an end to themselves as proletarians.<sup>2</sup> The formerly

<sup>1</sup> Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

<sup>2</sup> As Engels suggested in his *Anti Dühring (Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science)*, International Publishers, New York, 1939.

existing class differences would then disappear because the type of social production would have become socialistic, because there would be no more exploitation by capitalists eager for surplus value, and because the government would no longer act as the representative of the ruling classes. In fact, the class struggle would become a thing of the past and, gradually, so would the state itself. "The state is not abolished, it withers away." This does not mean that a state of anarchy would be established. Lenin warned expressly that such an interpretation would "emasculate" Marxism.<sup>1</sup> Communist theoreticians stress emphatically that the bourgeois state could not wither away; it would have to be liquidated. On the other hand, the proletarian state of the socialistic period of transition would "cease of itself."

However, according to Marx, a classless society cannot come into being immediately after the bourgeoisie and its capitalist economy have been liquidated. The state in the traditional sense will still be needed for a time. "Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of one into the other," wrote Marx. The economic change is accompanied by a corresponding political change. In this time of transition, "the state can be nothing but the *revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*."<sup>2</sup> The main tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat are

1. to break the resistance of the landlords and capitalists overthrown and expropriated by the revolution, and to liquidate every attempt they make to restore the power of capital;
2. to organize construction in such a way as will rally all toilers around the proletariat and to carry on this work in such a way as will prepare for the liquidation, the extinction of classes;
3. to arm the revolution and to organize the army of the revolution for the struggle against the external enemy and for the struggle against imperialism.<sup>3</sup>

The Communist Manifesto states that "the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the ruling class, to win the battle for democracy."<sup>4</sup> What is the relation, then,

<sup>1</sup> See Lenin, *The State and the Revolution*, The United Communist Party of America, 1917, Chap. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Marx, Karl, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, International Publishers Co., Inc., New York, 1933, pp. 44-45.

<sup>3</sup> *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, International Publishers Co., Inc., New York, 1936, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> *The Communist Manifesto*, II. Italics mine.

between the dictatorship of the proletariat and a Marxian "democracy"?

First of all, Marx and Lenin would not regard capitalist democracy as genuine. Even if political democracy exists in every respect, "this democracy is always restricted by the narrow framework of capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remains, in reality, a democracy for the minority, only for the possessing classes, only for the rich. . . ." <sup>1</sup> Therefore it is "hypocritical and false to the core. . . ." <sup>2</sup> From such a state, no direct transition to the classless society or perfect communism is possible. During the transitional period, "democracy for the vast majority of the people and suppression by force . . . of the exploiters and oppressors of the people" <sup>3</sup> would accompany the change from capitalism to communism. <sup>4</sup> If the perfect classless ideal were achieved, even democracy would wither away because then everybody would observe all the elementary rules of higher social life and would not need the supervision of any political system. Democracy, in the definition of Marx and Lenin is, curiously enough, a symptom of the proletarian dictatorship during the socialist transition period. Just as, according to Lenin, the bourgeois class state, be it a democracy or not, suppresses the majority of the people, so the "democracy" of the proletarian dictatorship would frankly admit suppression of the minority of former oppressors.

Socialism, the "lower" phase of communism, does not make any pretensions at being able to produce justice and equality or at eliminating differences in financial status. "Bourgeois right" is not abolished entirely because the system of distribution may still suffer from the evils developed under bourgeois organization. There will be many defects in this phase, one of them being the "division of labor and thereby the antithesis between mental and physical work." <sup>4</sup> Only during the "higher" phase of communism may the state wither away and freedom rule at last. For, according to Marxism, it will then no longer be necessary to say (as Art. 10 of the Stalin Constitution of 1936 still does) "from each according to his ability and to each according to his work"; everyone, in accordance

<sup>1</sup> See Lenin, *op. cit.*, Chap. V.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

with his ability, may then expect reward according to his needs. Money disappears as a means of exchange; every worker receives a voucher from "society" and in return obtains from a cooperative store a quantity of commodities equivalent to what he produces. He would produce about as much as he needs for his living.

However, human beings are not equal mentally and physically, as Marx, Engels, and Lenin all recognized. There may be a single worker who does about as much work as a married man with children. Here unequal individuals would be measured with equal rights. The single man may receive less than the married man although he has done the same quantity and quality of work; the more intelligent man may get the same commodities as a much less intelligent one. Equal rights, in the words of Marx, thus become "unequal right for unequal work." Paradoxical as it may seem, unequal rights alone may prevent the reestablishment of inequalities, for there shall be none richer than any other.

#### IDEOLOGY AND UTOPIA

Marx and Lenin believed that men could be educated during the transitional period to lose their selfish and competitive inclinations and to become so socially minded that there would be no danger of jeopardizing the classless goal of the proletarian revolution. They did not say whether they regarded communism in its final form as the last stage of social evolution. They have, finally, made only vague predictions as to the duration of the proletarian dictatorship: they simply stated that it would last for generations. Less conservative prophets believed, before the outbreak of the Russo-German war, that a classless society might be established about 1970 in the Soviet Union but, on account of the ravages of the war, this goal will have to be put off a good deal further. However that may be, it is only fair to note that the ideal of communism and a classless society is fundamentally humanitarian and optimistic, just as the ideal of the first modern socialists was based on the belief that man is good or can be awakened to goodness if only he receives the necessary education and is placed in a decent environment.

Here is one of the deepest cleavages between the Nazi-Fascist and the Communist conceptions. The Nazis and Fascists are on principle pessimistic about human nature and believe that man



must be regimented and coerced in order to work efficiently; they maintain that society exists for the state and must remain subservient to it. The Soviets believe that man must be driven through a period of dictatorship but only for the ultimate purpose of being freed entirely from the bonds of a dominating state; they claim that man is capable of developing a deep social consciousness which will make him disregard and forget age-old instincts of selfish competition; they predict that man will be capable of living in complete freedom without the supervision of a power state, but on the basis of his new ethical conception of life and communal responsibilities alone.

Whatever we may say of the methods used to achieve this goal, methods which in practice so resemble totalitarian despotism, and however skeptical we may feel in regard to the ideals of a communist Utopia, the fundamental difference between the prospect of perpetual tyranny under Nazi-Fascist domination and the (supposedly) transitory rule of proletarian dictatorship should never be forgotten. Much as we may disagree with many of the Soviet principles and with Marxian doctrines, we shall have to admit that the ends of the Soviets are fundamentally ethical when compared with the antihumanitarian, anticultural designs of totalitarianism in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Japan.

#### *LININISM, TROTZKYISM, STALINISM*

When the Bolshevik victory was achieved in Russia and the wars of intervention had subsided in the nineteen twenties, one question of decisive importance demanded an answer if the young socialist state was to follow a strong and clear-cut policy. Should the Soviet state follow the victory of its own revolution with the attempt to instigate a world revolution, in the belief that no localized revolution could ultimately be successful? Or, should it first try to establish peace and order within its own borders and build up socialism disregarding the rest of the world?

The position of the founders of Marxism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, was unequivocal. In 1847, Engels stated in his draft for the Communist Manifesto: "Can this (proletarian) revolution take place merely in one country? The answer is no. . . . The communist revolution, therefore, will not be merely national, but

will take place simultaneously in all civilized countries; that is, at least, in England, America, France, and Germany. . . . It is a world revolution and will therefore have the whole world as its arena."<sup>1</sup>

Was Lenin's position a similar one? It is difficult to answer this question unequivocally. Lenin was a Marxist of the purest kind but his political genius saved him from blind orthodoxy. While he definitely subscribed to Marx's fundamental principles, he modified Marxism and adapted Marx's and Engels' views to the Russian conditions which Marx had failed to take into account.

Lenin died in 1924. It is quite conceivable that he was in sympathy with the doctrine of world revolution, although the development of the Soviet Union was not advanced enough, during his lifetime, to permit him far-reaching speculation in global terms. The economic retrogression which necessitated the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP), a slight temporary lapse into capitalism, and the distinct necessity of having the peaceful cooperation of outside countries for the industrial reconstruction of Soviet Russia, made it imperative for him to avoid a decision.

The great opponents on this crucial issue were Stalin and Trotsky. However, their antagonism did not stem from a difference of opinion on this basic question of policy alone. In fact, only in 1925, after Lenin's death, did this radical divergence become the focus of the conflict between Stalin and Trotsky. Presumably Lenin's sympathies were with Trotsky rather than with Stalin, but the whole Stalinist literature had been carefully purged of everything uncomplimentary written by Lenin about Stalin. It is well known, however, and documented in Souvarine's reliable biography of Stalin, that on December 25, 1922, Lenin wrote a confidential note for the next Party Congress in which he warned that the split between Stalin and Trotsky might harm the party and expressed his opinion about Stalin rather bluntly "Comrade Stalin, having become General Secretary, has concentrated an enormous power in his hands; and I am not sure that he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution. . . ." Lenin stated. On Janu-

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Engels, *Principles of Communism*, translated and quoted from the Russian edition of the Communist Manifesto, 1923, by M. T. Florinsky, *World Revolution and the U.S.S.R.*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1933, pp. 132-133.

ary 4, 1923, he added: "Stalin is too rude. . . . Therefore I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint to it another man who in all respects differs from Stalin only in superiority—namely more patient, more loyal, more polite, and more attentive to comrades, less capricious, etc."<sup>1</sup>

Stalin himself had not always been a Stalinist. Before 1924 he seemed to doubt that socialism could be successfully established in a single country. In April, 1924, he said: ". . . Overthrowing the power of the bourgeoisie and establishing the power of the proletariat in a single country does not yet guarantee the complete victory of socialism. . . . Does it mean that with the forces of a single country it (the proletariat) can finally consolidate socialism . . . ? Certainly not. That requires victory for the revolution in at least several countries."<sup>2</sup>

However, he reversed his opinion shortly thereafter. Gradually seizing power and eliminating Trotsky within a few years after Lenin's death, he fought tenaciously against the doctrine of "permanent revolution." He explained that Engels, when he wrote his *Principles of Communism*, had not taken into consideration the extent of the resources of Russia, which would make it possible to create a successful Socialist state within her borders despite the opposition of the rest of the world. He quoted numerous pages of Lenin's writings to prove that the first Soviet leader had really adhered to "Stalinist" ideas.

But, on the other hand, Trotsky, too, quoted Lenin for his defense. He found prerevolutionary and postrevolutionary statements of Lenin which seemed to prove that the Soviet leader was a Trotskyite. Lenin's words are capable of a wide enough variety of interpretations to be usable by either faction. Trotsky insisted that the economic recovery of Russia should not be overestimated and that attention ought to be directed mainly toward fostering "permanent" revolution, extending all over the world, as the only way to establish socialism firmly. This doctrine is called "Trotskyism." Trotskyites maintain that socialism may use Russia as a basis from

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Boris Souvarine, *Stalin*, Alliance Book Corporation, New York, 1939, pp. 305, 307.

<sup>2</sup> J. Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism*, International Publishers Co., Inc., New York, 1939, I, pp. 39-41. See also M. R. Werner, ed., *Stalin's Kampf*, Howell, Soskin Publishers, Inc., New York, 1940, p. 282.

which to expand universally. Instead of being content with the dictatorship of the proletariat in one single country, a state of permanent revolution should be established in order to reach first those countries in which the suitable conditions for revolution already exist and later the rest of the world. Consequently, for Trotskyites the consolidation of Russia herself was not the most important factor; it could easily lead to nationalism and to the stagnation of socialism altogether. Stalin, the Trotskyites charge, has betrayed the revolution by crushing revolutionary impetus and establishing a new Soviet nationalism or even imperialism. There was no reconciling these radically antagonistic points of view.

In actual fact, while Russia had survived the attempts to destroy her new regime by armed intervention, she had also failed on her part to bring about the destruction of the capitalist states during the early stages of the revolution. Reconciled to this situation—unorthodox though it was in Marxist theory—Stalinism was willing to soften the aggressiveness of the *Comintern* (Communist International)<sup>1</sup> and, up to the outbreak of the Russo-German war, was ready to face the consequences of isolation amidst the general hostility of the surrounding world. A new nationalism was to be fostered, founded on the principles of Soviet Marxism as the creed of the Russian “socialist fatherland.” In the middle thirties, this new nationalism developed very rapidly; the purges helped to strengthen it further, being presented as revealing the subversive designs of world Fascism. The Red Army, believed by Trotsky to be the instrument of proletarian aggression for the achievement of world socialism, now became an instrument for “national” defense against possible outside aggression.

Stalinism, to be sure, regarded the consolidation of the Soviet people’s economic well-being as a prerequisite to any further extension of socialism. It also did much to foster the national cultures of the various Soviet republics and autonomous regions. It made an attempt to cooperate in the consolidation of an international peace policy and even became willing to make realistic compromises with capitalist governments. In order to carry out the Soviet Union’s social and economic consolidation, it inaugurated the institution of five-year plans.

<sup>1</sup> Dissolved on June 9, 1943. See also p. 289.

According to Stalinism, the Soviet Union, given time for its development, would be able to present a picture of so perfect and abundant a life that the nations of the world, suffering and staggering under the burden of decaying capitalist economy, would be only too glad to adopt the Soviet system of their own accord. World socialism would thus come to be established by gradual evolution, under the guidance and example of the first country ever to adopt socialism as its way of life.

Thus, to the neutral observer, Stalinism appears in its behavior as a combination of unconventional realism and paradoxical contradictions. It opposes bourgeois tendencies but it also fights against "vulgar radicalism" and "leftist diversion." It is far less intellectual than Trotskyism and far more understandable to the Soviet masses. Objectionable as some of its methods appear to have been, to apply ordinary standards of legality to a deep social upheaval as has occurred in Russia, may well lead one astray. From the longer historical standpoint, it is conceivable that some of the more notorious and ruthless deeds of the Stalin regime may come to be regarded as necessary measures for the preservation of the U.S.S.R.

Stalinism is soberly realistic and devoid of sentiment; it is farsighted, unconventional and self-centered. It has, for the time being, thrown overboard the role of would-be liberator of the world's underdogs and, while never rejecting the basic ideas of Marxism, has had the courage to change its methods completely for the achievement of this goal. Giving up an isolationism which, to a large extent was forced upon the Soviet Union, Stalinism is again quite ready to work with its antithesis, the capitalist countries, as it had been during the middle thirties. This does not mean that the Soviets now accept capitalism, nor do any of the changes in method signify a return to semi-capitalism or moderate socialism. Any attempt to arrive at an understanding with the Soviets on the basis of such a hope would be fatal to all concerned.

Through Stalinism, no doubt, the Russian Revolution passed from adolescence into maturity. The unexpected (to most outsiders) performance of the Soviet Union during the war would seem to testify to Stalin's wisdom. It also bears witness to the power of the Soviet-Marxist ideology and refutes those voices which claimed that the Soviet people did not like their system.