

A CRITIQUE OF MARXISM



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by
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Forward

This enlarged edition written in response to the growing number of people seeking clarification of the main issues involved in the classic controversy between anarchists and Marxists enlarges and documents additional areas of the critique. It also discusses the views of modern marxist revisionists whose critique takes on a libertarian direction not adequately presented in the first edition. Passages marked in brackets are mine, those marked in parenthesis are the quoted author's.

Economic Determinism

Economic Determinism and related terms--Historical Materialism, Dialectical Materialism, Materialistic Conception of History, Scientific Socialism--constitutes the essence of Marxism. It is defined by Engels in this famous passage from his introduction to Marx's "Critique of Political Economy." "...all past history was the history of class struggles...these warring classes of society are always the products of the conditions of production and exchange, in a word of the economic condition of the time; [Engels' emphasis] therefore the economic structure of society always forms the real basis from which, in the last analysis, is to be explained, the whole superstructure of legal and political institutions [the state] as well as the religious, philosophical, and other conceptions of each historical period...all moral theories are the product, in the last analysis, of the economic stage which society reached at that particular epoch. Now a materialist conception of history has been propounded and the way found to explain man's consciousness by his being, instead of his being by his consciousness...the course of history is governed by inner laws operating IN SPITE OF THE DESIRED AIMS OF INDIVIDUALS..." (Engels, "Ludwig Feurbach", p. 48, my emphasis).

The Critique

Over a century ago Bakunin anticipated much the same arguments against Marx's theory of Economic Determinism as did later writers. He stressed the point that causes and effects are continuously interacting and placing themselves. Causes become effects. Effects, in turn, become causes, for example, "Marx holds that the political conditions of each country is always the faithful expression of its economic situation...he takes no account of other factors in history, such as the ever present reaction of political, judicial and religious institutions on the economic situation. He says poverty produces political slavery, the state,

(but ignores the fact) that political slavery, the state reproduces in its turn and maintains poverty as a condition for its own existence...Marx ignores completely...a multitude of ethnological, climatological and historical causes...which independent of the economic condition of each country exert a considerable influence on its destinies and economic development..." ("Letter to La Liberte", 1972).

The article titled "Dialectics" in the Encyclopedia Britannica (1969) also stresses the often decisive importance of non-economic factors in the shaping of history, grossly underestimated by Marx: "...many economic facts are just as much effects as they are causes...changes in artistic tastes, in political institutions, in social traditions, and even religious doctrines influence consumption of commodities and thereby become determinants of production and law is just as much a determinant as it is a product of economic life...Thus a maze of causal relationships results and with causes and effects indistinguishable in many instances, no social program could be built on this foundation..."

The English economist and historian R.H. Tawney voices much the same criticism of Marx's theory of Economic Determinism: "...that men should have thought as they did is sometimes as significant they acted as they did...there is an evolution of ideas as well as organisms, and the quality of civilization depends less on physical qualities, than on a complex structure of habits, knowledge and beliefs, the destruction of which would be followed in a year by the death of half the human race...there is a moral and religious, as well as material environment which sets its stamp on the individual...and the effects of changes in this environment are no less profound..." ("Religion and the Rise of Capitalism", pp. 18, 19).

The realization that the old 19th century Marxist theories of socialism tested in 20th century practice are not applicable to modern life has spurred modern Marxists to re-evaluate its fundamental tenets. The dogma that science, philosophy, ethics and political institutions are mere reflections (in Marxist jargon,

"superstructures") of the economic mode of production is losing ground to the conviction that these phenomena have an independent share in the shaping of history.

Economic Determinism has long since ceased to be among the leading trends in Marxist ideology in Western Europe and the United States.

A pretty good sampling of this line of thought can be found in the academic Marxist historical quarterly "Radical History Review" (Winter 1978-9). Four articles dealing with the revision of Marxism point out that the Marxists Eric Hobsbawm, Lucks, Gramsci, "New Left" thinkers etc. have been forced to question the validity of the relationship between Marx's theory of economic determinism and the "superstructure"--ideology, culture, political institutions, etc. "How do ideas change and develop? The 'superstructure' is not mechanically determined by the economic base, but from time to time dominates it...some have even gone so far as to question the whole theory..." The Marxist Kollakowski insists that "many factors independent of economics make historical materialism a banal commonplace..."

The Marxist historian E.P. Thompson is quoted in this connection: "...the notion of right, not the unthinking impulse of raw hunger prevailed governed the behavior of the 18th century food rioters... cultural traditions obviously have a crucial bearing on such economic matters as the law, property, accounting methods, state policy and the forms of exchange..." One of the articles by James Cronin concludes that: "...for far too long, Marxists have been content to utter platitudes about 'the forces of history', the 'development of the productive forces', 'the contradiction between the forces and relations of production' and so on, as if these actually meant something in history..."

Economic Determinism: The Role of the Proletariat

Economic Determinism is a doctrine which in practice saps the revolutionary vitality of the masses, conditions them to accept capitalism and to cooperate with their rulers in their own enslavement. To effect social changes,

the workers must, according to Marx, adapt themselves to the slow, progressive evolution of economic structures because "no social formation ever disappears before all the productive forces are developed for which it has room, and new higher relations of production never appear before the necessary material conditions are matured in the womb of the old society." (Critique of Political Economy)

It takes a long time. "We say to the workers and the petty bourgeoisie; 'suffer in bourgeois society which creates, by developing industry, the material means for the formation of the new society which will free all of you.'" [Marx on the lessons of the 1848 revolutions, quoted by Franz Mehring, "Karl Marx", pp. 206-207.] No matter how great the suffering, the workers are promoting progress because "in the evolution of society, ancient, asiatic, feudal and bourgeois modes of production constitute progressive epochs in the economic systems of society..." (Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy).

On the same grounds, Engels goes so far as to defend the institution of slavery: "The introduction of slavery in Greece under the conditions of that time, was a great step forward...it was slavery that first made possible the development of agriculture and industry and with it the flower of the ancient world, Hellenism. Without slavery, no Greek State, no Greek art and science; without slavery no Roman Empire; without Hellenism and the Roman Empire as a basis, no Europe...without the slavery of antiquity no modern socialism..." (Anti-Duhring, p. 203)

The consistent Economic Determinist could just as well argue on the same grounds that since production had developed to a point where there was a shortage of labor power, and since the shortage was made up by converting prisoners-of-war into slaves, therefore, wars were necessary and ultimately beneficial.

In his polemic against Proudhon (The Poverty of Philosophy, 1847, quoted on p. 357 in Handbook of Marxism, International, 1935), Marx maintained that slavery in America was still an economic necessity, arguing that "slavery is an economic category, like any other. Slavery is just as much the pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery or credit...without slavery you have no cotton,

without cotton, you have no modern industry...without slavery, North America, the most progressive of countries would be turned into a primitive country. Abolish slavery and you will have wiped America off the map of nations."

Question: How progressive is a country whose very existence depends on slavery?

Franz Mehring, Marx's official biographer, explains that "Marx not only shows that machinery and large scale industry created greater misery than any mode of production known in history, but that also in their ceaseless revolutionization of capitalist society they are preparing the way for a higher social form...the machine which degrades the worker into its mere appendage, creates at the same time the increasing productive forces of society so that all members of society will enjoy a life worthy of human beings, which could not be done before because pre-capitalist societies were too poor."

Since, according to the Communist Manifesto, the bourgeoisie is the bearer of large-scale industry, it is in the interests of the workers to help the bourgeoisie to seize power as soon as possible and as soon as the bourgeoisie develops industry, to overthrow it. The workers should cooperate gladly because "as long as the rising mode of production furthers the general aims of society, it is enthusiastically welcomed even by those who suffer most from its corresponding mode of distribution. This was the case with the English workers in the beginnings of large scale industry." (Engels, Anti-Duhring, pp. 167-8). A deliberate brazen falsehood if ever there was one and a calculated insult to the valient English workers who fought for freedom with unexampled courage. (See E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class).

Mehring explains that "Marx and Engels aimed at utilizing the Franco-Prussian War as thoroughly as possible in the interests of the proletarian struggle for emancipation...Engels condemned the leaders of the German Socialist Party, William Liebknecht and August Bebel, because they abstained from voting war credits... The situation is: Germany has been forced into a war

to defend its national existence against Bonaparte... Bonaparte's war policy was directed against the national unity Germany and since the establishment of a united German state is necessary for the ultimate emancipation of the workers, the war must be supported. Bismarck [in prosecuting the war and unifying Germany] is doing a share of our work."

Engels wrote that "militarism carries within itself the seed of its own destruction...Military rivalry forces states to spend more and more money on armaments thus hastening financial catastrophe...compulsory military service makes the whole people familiar with the use of arms...the people revolt against the commanding military lords...the armies of the princes become transformed into the armies of the People; the military machine refuses to work and militarism collapses by the dialectic of its own evolution...gunpowder and other inventions not only revolutionized warfare, but in revolutionizing industry, warfare represents an economic advance." (Anti-Duhring, p. 192)

In an 1872 letter to the anarchist Carlo Cafiero, Engels declared that both Bismarck and King Victor Emanuel rendered immense service to the Revolution by creating political centralization in their respective countries. "...just as in economic evolution there is the tendency for capital to concentrate in fewer hands and for the smaller capitalist to be swallowed by the large, so likewise in political evolution it is inevitable that the small states should be absorbed by the great...."

In criticizing Bakunin's Appeal to the Slavs--which called for the independence of the Slavic peoples and the destruction of the Russian Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Prussia, the Neue Rheinische Zeitung (Feb. 14, 1849, edited by Marx) declared that "no Slavic people has a future for the simple reason that they lack the indispensable political and industrial conditions for independence...the stubborn Czechs and the Slovaks should be grateful to the Germans who have taken the trouble to civilize them by introducing them to commerce, industry, agricultural science and education...What would Texas or California have gained

if it would be in the hands of the lazy Mexicans?"

It follows from the above quotation that militants who fight against slavery and for racial equality, people who refuse to help the bourgeoisie bosses, people who are against war and militarism, people who are for the freedom and independence of small nations against imperialist domination, are, according to marxist theory, "dialectically" counter-revolutionists against their oppressors who are unconsciously preparing the road for socialism.

Engels extols parliamentary political action and class collaboration---"*...the two million voters for the German Social Democratic Party plus the young men and women non-voters who stand behind them...form the most compact 'shock troops' of the international Proletarian Army...if this goes on, we shall at the close of the century win over the greater part of the middle social layers, the petty bourgeoisie as well as the small peasants, and we shall come to be the decisive power in the land...The capitalist parties perish because of the legal means set up by themselves...the Social Democratic revolution...is getting on first rate while abiding by the law...*" (pamphlet, "The Revolutionary Act")

This catastrophic policy which led to the emasculation of the socialist movement and its absorption into the capitalist State, rendered the German socialist movement (numerically the strongest in the world) impotent to resist the First World War as well as the rise of Nazi fascism---historical tragedies whose magnitude it is impossible to assess.

Nature of the State

That economic factors to a greater or lesser degree, depending on circumstances, shape events is an indisputable fact. To assert, however, that the ultimate cause of all social changes is to be found only in changes in the mode and relations of production is a gross distortion which cannot be sustained by the facts of history.

The marxist misconception of history stems

primarily from erroneous ideas about the origin and nature of the State and its preponderant role in the shaping of the economic and social life of humanity.

According to the Communist Manifesto, "*the executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.*" Bakunin maintained that the State is not merely an agent of the dominant economic class, but that the State also constitutes a class in itself and is the most powerful of all by virtue of its monopoly of armed force and its sovereignty over all other social institutions. In contrast to Marx, Bakunin argued that the State is not only the product but also the creator and perpetuator of economic, political and social inequality.

Bakunin's critique has in this respect been sustained by modern social thinkers. Sidney Hook states flatly that "*the existence of the Soviet Union refutes the theory of historical materialism...since the basic economic changes were achieved through political action [the State].*" (Marx and the Marxists, p. 124) It was this development which Ted Rudolf Hilferding, a noted Marxist economist, to revise his ideas about the nature of the State: "*...the Marxist sectarian cannot grasp the idea that the present-day State power, having achieved independence, is unfolding its enormous strength according to its own laws, subjecting social forces and compelling them to serve its ends...Therefore, neither the Russian, nor totalitarian systems in general, is determined by the character of the economy. On the contrary, it is the economy that is determined by the policy of the ruling power. An analogy to the totalitarian State may be found in the era of the Roman Empire in the regime of the Praetorians and their emperors....*" (quoted by Hook in Marx and the Marxists, p. 241)

In this connection the political scientist, Michel Collinet, observes that "*for Lenin, the Revolution is not the necessary consequence of the productive forces, but of a militarized party of professional revolutionaries who knew how to use an effective strategy to profit by political occasions....*" (Le Contrat Social, Jan. 1957)

The Marx-Engels notion that in primitive society the

State originally arose to "safeguard the common interests of tribal societies against external enemies and later to protect the economic and political position of the ruling class" is false. The contention that exploitation arose through "purely economic causes...and not at all by the State...that historically, private property by no means makes appearance as the result of robbery and violence" is also false. (Engels, Anti-Duhring, pp. 167, 171, 184)

Evidence to the contrary is overwhelming. All competent historians and anthropologists, among them Edward Jenks, agree that: "...the State, in its origin, was not an economic, but a military institution...formed by conquest and plunder...unwilling themselves to practice the patient arts of husbandry...the invading hosts settled down like a swarm of locusts on their prey...the rich vineyards and fields of Europe...No permanent State was ever built unaided by an invading host...the State itself, though intensely military in character, imposes itself on a solid base of permanent agriculture, which will supply its needs by wealth drawn from the fruitful soil...the primitive State was simply a band of warriors under a military leader--Clovis, Rurik, Norman, William--but as time went on...as the band of warriors settled down as lords and rulers of their fiefs, as hereditary successors to office and title became recognized...the State began to assume in varied forms the character of an institution, a piece of machinery which maintains a perpetual existence, despite the death of kings and barons..." (Edward Jenks, The State and the Nation, 1919, pp. 130, 131)

"...the State is essentially military in character...its methods are mainly non-productive...they do not produce values, but merely preserve or destroy them. From its earliest stages its policy has been annexation or plunder of its own or alien communities...it creates property by handing over the resources of the community to individuals or small groups and this is, in effect, what the State had done by creating individual and private property and protecting it with its overwhelming power...the State received its return from this reckless squandering of the resources of the community..."

(Jenks, p. 237, my emphasis)

"...the Roman Empire rests on force only, a brute force let loose by the lowest appetites...it bound every man to his occupation...chained him and his descendants to the same post [occupation], established a real caste system...the wholesale destruction of wealth created by the subject peoples...Rome's industry in the second and first centuries, B.C. had been war and the spoilation of the vanquished...the fruits of conquest were dissipated in a century..." (Ferdinand Lot, The End of the Ancient World and the Beginnings of the Middle Ages, pp. 8, 65, 84, 85, 82)

We cite a few examples from the anarchist Gaston Leval's excellent analysis of Marxism which awaits translation into English:

"...The Visigoth dynasty did not derive its origin from the institution of private property nor from changes in the mode of production. It was the creation of the 'conquistadores' who institutionalized the domination and economic exploitation of the conquered peoples..."

"...what became France, was founded by Clovis, a bandit who murdered his rivals and with a savage horde of warriors from the north routed the Romans and the Germans. With each victory he and his successors augmented their forces, conquered more territories, and by plunder, rapine and extortion, engineered the economic subjugation of the conquered peoples, dividing property and the spoils of war among themselves. The true creators of the State were the militarists and the politicians, not only in Spain and France, but also in Flanders [Belgium], Germany, Russia and other northern European countries, and in Italy..."

"...the State by its very nature, tends to have a life of its own. It is a parasitic institution living at the expense of society...in Latin America the Spanish and Portuguese 'conquistadores' seized the land of the natives, plundered the urban communities, and by brute force, not by changes in the mode of production, imposed feudal regimes which to this day weigh so heavily on the economic and political institutions of so many nations...to give land to its soldiers and officials, the invaders changed the social structure of the conquered

territories..."

To illustrate the predominance of the State, Leval points out that during the post-war period in the newly established small States "there already appeared Ministers, a repressive apparatus, jails, and executioners...There already appear classes. The new classes do not owe their existence to technological developments or changes in the mode of production. They are brought into being by the newly created State--the insitutionalized political authority controlling or dominating the economic and social life of the people..."

"...the economy of the newly established States... may deteriorate; mass starvation and disease may decimate the population; but the ministries grow. The police and armed forces multiply. The new bureaucracy flourishes. A new powerful class exploits the peasants, levies taxes, and suffocates the people in an avalanche of rules and restrictions..."

"...René Dumont, a renowned agronomist and sociologist, reports from visits to some of the new States that the principal industry of these new countries is governmental administration. In fifteen former French colonies--newly independent--economic production declined, but the production of politicians grew. In Dahomey, the wages of the governmental bureaucracy absorbs 70% of the national income. The situation in Gabon is just as bad or worse, as it is in other countries Dumont visited. As soon as a peasant learns to read and write he goes to the city to become a functionary..." (above quotes from Gaston Leval, La Falacia del Marxismo, Mexico City, 1967, pp. 116, 117, 118)

Bakunin anticipated just such a development: "...in Turkish Serbia...there is only one class in control of the government---the bureaucracy. The one and only function of the State, therefore, is to exploit the Serbian people in order to provide the bureaucrats with all the comforts of life..." (Statism and Anarchy)

The State and Production

Marx and Engels praised the bourgeoisie for advancing the economy by "lumping together...loosely connected provinces...or small independent states into one nation, with one government, one code of laws etc..." (Communist Manifesto) This assumption, that political centralization--the State, facilitates economic development is a dangerous illusion refuted by massive evidence. The fact is that wars between States devastated whole nations. The State wrecked the economy, stifled initiative and held back progress for centuries.

Rudolf Rocker in his classical study "Nationalism and Culture" documents this point: "...there is not the least reason to suppose that the evolution of technical methods of production could not have gone on just as well without the creation of the national state...the foundation of the national absolutist states of Europe was associated with a series of devastating wars by which the economic and cultural development of many lands was for a long time, perhaps centuries completely inhibited..."

"...In Spain the rise of the nationalist state led to a catastrophic decay of once flourishing industries and to a complete disintegration of the whole economic life...in France, the Huguenot wars waged by the monarchy to fortify the unified state, most seriously devastated the whole land and injured French industries... in Germany the Thirty Years War devastated the whole land, decimated the population and inhibited every cultural and economic development...The rise of the nationalist state not only did not further economic evolution in any way whatever, but the endless wars of that epoch and the senseless interference of despotism in the life of industry created that condition of cultural barbarism in which many of the best achievements of industrial technique were wholly or partly lost and had to be rediscovered later on...how great this setback was can be measured by the fact that James Watt, the inventor of the steam engine, was for twenty years unable to make use of his invention because he could not find in all England a mechanic able to bore a true

cylinder for him, though he could have found many such in any of the large medieval cities..." (p. 115, 116)

Peter Kropotkin assessed the situation in his masterful analysis "The State: Its Historic Role":
"The role of the nascent State in the 16th and 17th Centuries was to destroy the independence of the cities; to pillage the rich guilds of the merchants and artisans; to concentrate in its hands the external commerce; to lay hands on the internal administration of the guilds and subject internal commerce and all manufacturing to the last detail to the control of a host of officials and in this way, to kill industry and the arts; taking over the local militias and the whole municipal administration; crushing the weak in the interests of the strong by taxation and ruining countries by wars and the lands were either simply stolen by the rich with the connivance of the State or confiscated by the State directly..."

Economic Determinism and the State

According to the Communist Manifesto, "the executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." Bakunin maintained that the State is not merely an agent of the dominant economic class, but that the State also constitutes a class in itself and is the most powerful of all by virtue of its monopoly of armed force and its sovereignty over all other social institutions. In contrast to Marx, Bakunin argued that the State is not only the product but also the creator and perpetuator of economic, political and social inequality.

Bakunin's critique has in this respect been sustained by modern social thinkers. Sidney Hook states flatly that "the existence of the Soviet Union refutes the theory of historical materialism...since the basic economic changes were achieved through political action [the State]." (quoted by Hook in Marx and the Marxists, p. 241)

It seems that the Marxist revisionists, true to their subconscious loyalties, cannot face up to the fact that their renunciation of Marx's theory of the state and economic determinism actually amounts to the emasculation of Marxism itself.

The Class Struggle

In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels declare that their "*theoretical conclusions are based on the class struggle.*" That class struggles are a factor in social change no one will deny. But the dogma that "*the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles*" (Communist Manifesto) is false.

Gaston Leval demonstrates that "*Wars between migratory hordes and sedentary populations, nations and States, count in history more than class wars---particularly in Europe and Asia...In Spain, recall the six centuries of war against the Arabs. Read the literature of the 10th to the 16th Centuries to realize how little part the class war played as compared to religious and racial factors; how little the class war figured in the conquest of Sicily and almost all of Italy, Flanders and part of France by the Spanish armies; the international religious wars between Christians and Mohammedans; or the conquest of Latin America by Spain...*" (La Falacia del Marxismo, pp. 121-2.

As compared to the catastrophic impact of wars in this century, even the most protracted struggles between workers and employers are of minor significance.

Marx surely underestimated the importance of nationalism in shaping history. He thought that nationalism would be superseded by class struggles because the proletariat would become class conscious in the process of struggle.

In this connection Lewis Mumford disagrees with Marx: "*When Marx wrote in the 1850s, nationalism seemed to him to be a dying movement...it had in fact, taken on a new life...with the massing of the population into national States which continued during the 19th Century, the national struggle for political power cut at right angle to the class struggle...the struggle for political*

power now became a struggle between States for command of exploitable areas...after 1850, nationalism became the drill master of the restless proletariat who identified themselves with the all-powerful State...." (Technics and Civilization, pp. 189, 190, 191)

Marx and Engels believed that "modern industrial labor subjection to capitalism, in England, France, America and Germany, has stripped the proletariat of every trace of national character. Law, morality, religion, are to the proletariat so many bourgeois prejudices." (Communist Manifesto)

The trouble with this argument is that workers still nurse these prejudices and act accordingly. What a worker thinks and feels may determine his or her reaction to events more than what he or she does for a living.

With the coming of World War I (which according to Marxist theory should have signaled the long delayed collapse of capitalism), the proletariat---"the only really revolutionary class" (Communist Manifesto), became rabid nationalists, and even the German Socialist Party deputies in the Reichstag patriotically voted war credits. In opposition to Marx, Bakunin argued that the bourgeois-minded workers in the advanced industrialized countries are not going to make revolutions. History proved Bakunin right and Marx wrong. The most notable revolutions of this century have been those that broke out in Russia and China. Nor did the October Revolution, as Lenin expected, initiate a series of proletarian upheavals in the advanced countries of Western Europe that were deemed ripe for the Social Revolution.

Marx attached slight importance to psychological factors in revolution, but Bakunin insisted that revolution was impossible for people who had "lost the habit of freedom." He left more room for people's will, their aspiration for freedom and equality and "the instinct of revolt" which constitutes the "revolutionary consciousness" of oppressed peoples.

Marx's whole theory of history and economic laws led him to predict both the inevitable collapse of capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But capitalism has not only been able to survive. It has actually become more entrenched by adopting, in various degrees, social-democratic reform measures; thereby absorbing the labor and socialist movements into the structure of the State capitalist economic system (sometimes designated "welfare state" or "welfare capitalism").

The political scientist Michel Collinet points out that *"if the cyclical crises of capitalism are, as Marx predicted, a source of misery and insecurity; it is also a fact that after more than a hundred years, it has not led the working class to make a [PROLETARIAN] Social Revolution. The terrible economic depression of 1929, profoundly divided and demoralized the workers and their political parties who claim to represent them... in Europe the crisis aggravated nationalism and brought on the fascist racist reaction. In America, the 'New Deal' of Roosevelt; in France, the popular front... strengthened capitalism..."* (Le Contract Social, January 1967. I have inserted and emphasized the PROLETARIAN to establish the point that neither the largely agrarian Russian nor the Chinese Revolution were really proletarian.)

The Marxist Max Schachtman, in his introduction to Franz Mehring's biography of Karl Marx, admits the *"incontestable fact that the class struggle has not... led to the rule of the working class that was to be transitional to a classless society--the perspective that Marx himself held to be his unique contribution--cannot be explained away..."* And Max Eastman in his introduction to an anthology of Marx and Engel writings, likewise objects that *"the very first sentence of the Communist Manifesto, 'the History of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles' shows the disposition to read one's own interests into the definition of facts..."*

Marx and most authoritarian socialists did not give much thought to the forms of organization that might translate into reality the ideal of a free, stateless society. The dialectical method which Marx employed in working out his theory of dialectical Materialism

is essentially a philosophy of perpetual conflict between opposing tendencies or forces interrupted by temporary adjustments. There is conflict, but society is also a vast interlocking network of cooperative labor and the very existence of mankind depends on this inner cohesion.

In this connection, Paul Avrich emphasizes that mankind in fact owes its existence to mutual assistance. The theories of Hegel, Marx and Darwin notwithstanding, Kropotkin held that cooperation rather than conflict lies at the root of the historical process..." (Introduction to the 1972 edition of Kropotkin's "Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution")

Early Socialistic Labor Movement

Marx's contention that the proletariat at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution "...directed their attacks on the instruments of production (destruction of machinery)...at this stage the laborers form an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country and broken by mutual competition..." (Communist Manifesto) is false.

The workers were not an incoherent mass, scattered and competing for jobs. the labor MOVEMENT of that period constituted a counter-society. A closely knit network of thousands of living mutual aid, and cultural associations of militants covering the entire country, including the most remote areas.

All the themes stressed by modern socialists were already voiced in the 1790s at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, by thousands of articulate workers. Not only the political institutions, but the social and economic structure of industrial capitalism; law, ownership, power, rent, interest and profit, competition, armed struggle, the class nature of workers struggles, etc. Marx added nothing constructive to the legacy left by the pioneers of the socialist labor movement which was made when Marx was still in his teens.

What is more, as far back as 1833, the radical workers had already formulated the basic principles of revolutionary syndicalism, so viciously opposed by Marx

in his campaign against the libertarian sections of the First International: "...the trade union will not only strike for less work and more wage but will ultimately abolish wages and work for one another... a House of Trades must take the place of the House of Commons and direct the affairs of the country according to the will of the trades which comprise associations of industry...it will begin in our lodges, extend to our general union, embracing the management of trade and finally swallow up the whole political power..."

"...in 1933 [31 years before the founding of the First International, 1864] a 'Manifesto of the Productive Classes of Great Britain and Ireland' was addressed to the 'Men of the Great Family of Mankind' and the question of forming an international alliance of the trade unionists of England, France, and Germany had already come under discussion..." (See E.P. Thompson, "The Making of the English Working Class", pp. 206, 207, 829, 830)

Ignoring the pre-industrial revolutionary traditions of the British labor movement, Marx believed that the factory hands, "...the modern revolutionary working class created by the bourgeoisie itself forged the weapons that brings death to itself [the bourgeoisie]." (Communist Manifesto) Marx was wrong. The factory hands created by the Industrial Revolution were late arrivals. "...they did not form the nucleus of the labor movement at any time before the late 1840s. Radical ideas struck most deeply among artisans. The actual nucleus from which the labor movement derived their ideas, organization, and leadership were made up of such men as shoemakers, weavers, saddlers and harness makers, bookkeepers, printers, building workers, small tradesmen and the like. Between 1815 and 1850 the vast area of radical London drew its strength from no major industries but from the smaller trades and occupations..." (See Thompson, p. 193)

Marx's Economic Determinism obsession which led him to assume that the Industrial Revolution would inevitably create and radicalize the modern proletariat, who would, in turn, make the social revolution reveals a serious contradiction which invalidates his theory.

In view of the fact that the modern proletariat far from becoming revolutionary has integrated itself in the machinery of "democratic" or totalitarian state capitalism; that the revolutions of this century were made by "backward" peasant masses; why were, and are, oppressed peoples revolting against their masters IRRESPECTIVE OF "THE MODE OF PRODUCTION" considered less radical than workers in the mass production industries of the Industrial Revolution or modern industry?

Marx's theory does not explain the important, often decisive, revolutionary role of the idealists whom Bakunin described as "...the intelligent and noble youth, who though belonging by birth to the privileged classes [which included Bakunin and Marx himself] by their generous convictions and ardent sympathies embrace the cause of the people..." (Bakunin On Anarchy", p. 15) The people who in his time, and in our own, left comfortable, even luxurious homes to fight for an all-embracing humanitarian ideal.

Max's deterministic scenario ignores decisive factors in revolutionary history: Man's will, his aspiration to freedom and equality. Not merely the mode of production but THE SPIRIT OF REVOLT constitutes the revolutionary consciousness of both oppressed peoples and rebels belonging to the upper classes. And this is why Bakunin insisted that revolution was impossible for people who "had lost the habit of freedom." It is this factor that goes a long way toward explaining why Fascism came to power and totalitarian regimes survive.

Vilifying the Peasants

The accusation (Communist Manifesto) that the peasants and artisans fighting against the bourgeoisie "to save themselves from extinction" (surely a pardonable offense) are reactionaries trying to "roll back the wheel of history" while extolling the "achievements" of the bourgeoisie is an outrageous falsehood.

From the 14th century on, radical peasants uprisings in France, England, Germany, the low countries, the Hussites, Anabaptists and numberless other revolts

shook medieval Europe. The great historian of medieval times, Henri Pirenne gives a good example of the revolutionary temper of the revolts: "...riots soon changed into open revolts against the established order...the peasants looked upon the rich and the nobles and even The Church itself as their natural enemies...the priests did not escape the class hatred that animated the masses. Communist aspirations filled the minds of the insurgents and gave the revolt the appearance of a movement directed against the social order..." ("Medieval Europe", p. 105, 106)

Dialectical Falsification of History Versus the Free Commune

Marx's notion that the "...bourgeoisie has created more colossal productive forces in scarcely one hundred years than all preceeding generations together..." (Communist Manifesto) is a great distortion. Lewis Mumford's classic "Technics and Civilization", an objective assessment of the relationship of capitalism, corrects Marx on this point: "...although there is a close historical association of modern technics and modern capitalism, there is NO NECESSARY CONNECTION BETWEEN THEM. Capitalism has existed in other civilizations, which had relatively low technical developments, and technic made steady improvements from the 10th to the 15th century almost without special incentives of capitalism...between the 10th and 18th century all the technical preparations for capitalism had already taken place..." (p. 26, 27, 28, emphasis added) which refutes the silly remark that "...no earlier century had even a presentiment that such [capitalist] productive forces [existed]..." (Communist Manifesto)

Kropotkin calls attention to the fact that the "dialectical" Materialists did not even begin to appreciate the: "...communalist movement that existed in the 11th and 12th centuries...society was literally covered with a network of sworn brotherhoods, of guilds for mutual aid...it is even doubtful whether there was single man in that period who did not belong to a brotherhood or some guild, as well as his commune...in

the course of a hundred years the movement spread throughout Europe covering Scotland, England, France, the low countries, Italy, Germany, Poland, Russia...in these cities a whole new civilization grew up and flourished in ways unparalleled to this day..."

Peter Kropotkin--"All modern industry came to us from these free cities [of the middle ages]. In three centuries, industries and the arts attained such perfection that our century has only been able to surpass them in speed of production, but rarely in quality or the intrinsic beauty of the product...in each of its manifestations, our technical progress is only the child of the civilization that grew up within the free communes... All the great discoveries made by modern science; the compass, the clock, the watch, printing, maritime discoveries, gunpowder, the laws of gravitation, atmospheric pressure, of which the steam engine is a development, the rudiments of chemistry, the scientific methods already outlined by Roger Bacon and applied in the Italian universities...Where do all these things originate if not in the free cities? In the civilization which was developed under the protection of communal liberties...in the 16th century Europe was covered with rich cities...their caravans covered the continent, their vessels ploughed the seas and the rivers..." (The State: Its Historic Role, p. 29)

Lewis Mumford further illustrates Kropotkin's point: "...wooded areas in Germany, a wilderness in the 9th century, gave way to plowland, the boggy lowland countries which supported only a handful of hardy fishermen, were transformed into one of the productive soils in Europe...as early as 1150 land reclaimed from marsh or sea by means of dykes were created in Flanders...without the leadership of priest or king, they built high dykes on which whole towns could stand...these feats of free labor served as a prelude to the outburst of individual energy that came to almost an explosive climax in the 17th century..."

"...agricultural irrigation was practiced in Milan as early as 1179...the spread of water mills and wind mills endowed the new urban communities with vast

sources of power...mechanical inventions not merely transformed mining and metallurgy and glass making making it one of the leading arts; they likewise removed the need for servile labor and provided a much greater surplus of power and goods than a slave economy could provide under the lash of starvation...in the course of three centuries, the Europe we know today was opened or reopened for settlement...this feat compares exactly with the opening of the North American Continent between the 17th and 20th centuries..." ("The City in History", p. 258-259)

John U. Nef--"...the most startling progress of the physical and mathematical sciences in the 16th and early 17th centuries occurred in parts of Europe that did not participate directly in the speeding-up of industrial growth in England and Northern Europe..." Nef describes the "boom in mining and metallurgy between the late 15th and early 16th centuries...when much of continental Europe was built or rebuilt in the new Renaissance style of architecture..." Nef also documents the "remarkable industrial development especially striking in Northern Italy, parts of Spain, the southern low countries and southern Germany..." (The Conquest of the Material World, pp. 326, 42)

"...the cities movement from the 10th century on, is a tale of old urban settlements becoming entirely self-governing cities...to live in a corporate town for a year and a half removed obligation to serfdom... free association replaced association by blood and soil, of family and feudal allegiance, freedom from feudal service, from forced payments...guaranteeing mobility of person, the right to coin money, establish weights and measures, citizens to be tried in local courts, the right to bear arms..." (Mumford, p. 263)

Pirenne, the outstanding authority on medieval history declared that medieval communes (or Free Cities): "...created a social legislation more complete than any other period in history, including our own... in doing away with the middlemen between buyer and seller, it assured the burgher of a low cost of living; it ruthlessly pursued fraud, protected the worker from

competition and exploitation, regulated his labor and his wage, watched over his health, provided for apprenticeship, forbade women and child labor..." ("Medieval Cities", p. 148)

Edward Jenk's painstaking research found that: "...the typical village of the middle ages in Western Europe and indeed, of people in a corresponding stage the world over, was not like the typical village of modern France or England, merely a locality in which neighbors who carry on their work independently happen to live, but a community, carrying on its work as a single body of co-partners governed by customary rules, to which all must conform, it was not competitive...the self-governing municipality, or borough, was the highest achievement of the patriarchal principle; and after a dark period of repression, it gallantly took up the struggle against the newer ideas of absolute rule which produced the institution of the State...it was founded on the undying principles of brotherhood, freedom and voluntary cooperation, as opposed to subordination, regimentation or compulsory service..." (The State and the Nation, pp. 94, 116, 118, 137)

R.H. Tawney suggests that "it may do well to remember that the characteristic...of the medieval guild was that if it sprang from economic needs, it claimed at least to subordinate them to social needs...preserve a rough equality among the good men of the mystery [association]; check economic egotism by insisting that every brother shall share his good fortune with another and stand by his neighbor in need, resist the encroachments of a conscienceless money-power, preserve professional standards of training and craftsmanship, and to repress by a strict corporate discipline the natural appetite of each to snatch advantages for himself to the detriment of all...much that is now mechanical was then personal, intimate and direct, and there was little room for organization on a scale too vast for the standards that are applied to individuals, or the doctrine that silences scruples and closes all accounts with the final plea of economic expediency..."

"...the most fundamental difference between medieval and modern economic thought is that while modern

economic thought normally refers to expediency, medieval economic thought starts from the position that there is a moral authority to which considerations of economic expediency must be subordinated...the fact that the socialist doctrine should have been expounded as early as the middle of the 14th century is a reminder that economic thought contained elements much more modern than is sometimes suggested..." (Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, pp. 31, 32 42, 43)

In accordance with the researches of Kropotkin and a growing number of responsible historians, Mumford exposes the "...legal fiction, still piously preserved, that the Medieval commune is a creature of the State... the historic cities of Europe are today ALL OLDER THAN THE STATE... who legally claim these rights..." (Mumford, p. 263, my emphasis)

Mumford goes on to say that capitalism, contrary to Marxist dogma, did not constitute a progressive phase in the evolution of society; "...early capitalism proved a disintegrating rather than an integrating force in the life of the medieval town...precipitating a new trading economy monopolized by a group of privileged merchants engaged in large scale transactions for immense gains [constituting] a new hierarchy...based on money and the power that money can command..." (Ibid., p. 256-257)

"...between the 15th and the 18th century...the political framework of the new mercantile capitalism was the growth of a centralized despotism or oligarchy... embodied in a national state..." (Ibid., P. 345)

All the evidence proves that Marx's distorted misinterpretation of history that "...the bourgeoisie played a most revolutionary role...drew even the most barbarous nations into civilization..." is false, as false as his fantastic theory that the centralized bourgeois state is also a "dialectic" blessing.

Conclusion

Thorough research by highly qualified historians leads to the conclusion that capitalism is not, as the Marxists insist the indispensable precondition for the transition to socialism. Actually, capitalism usurped, and still usurps, the creative achievements of mankind and reversed the libertarian trends of society the better to subject the people to the greed of the capitalists and the despotism of the State.

There is a libertarian alternative: a flexible society permeated by individual and collective freedom, solidarity, self-management federalism and free agreement. Without in the least idealizing the medieval cities or ignoring the internal and external conflicts responsible for their disintegration, the fact remains that the village communities, brotherhoods, guilds and free cities indicate the existence of a creative libertarian trend in the evolution of society. The alternative to authoritarianism--left or right--is to stimulate the forces that propel society in a libertarian direction. Like Kropotkin, Tawney writing thirty years later, found that the *"...rise of the free cities was one of the glories of medieval Europe and the germ of every subsequent advance in civilization..."* ("Religion and the Rise of Capitalism", p. 557)

Marx's theories have not been sustained by events. His system could be best designated as "The Dialectic Falsification of History." There are no "laws of history" and progress from one stage of development to another is not inevitable. Marxism is no longer relevant to the growing number of people who are alarmed by the unprecedented proliferation of the economic and military powers of the modern State and the concomitant regimentation of the individual. Nationalization of property and means of production, even in a "socialist" State, as advocated by Marx and Engels, does not fundamentally alter the basic inequality between those wielding power and those subject to it. Even Marxists no longer believe that the State will "wither away". Freedom is not merely the reflection of the mode of production but the essence of life. The dogma that science, philosophy,

the arts, ethics and free institutions only mirror the economic mode of production is giving way to the conviction that these phenomena have an independent share in the shaping of history. A theory for the renewal of society that attaches little or no importance to these supreme values does not merit the respect of freedom-loving people.

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