

The Significance of Marx

It is well known how the Marxian theory has been the object of many attacks on the part of so-called critics of Marx. And it is unfortunate that these attacks have had considerable influence upon the militant proletariat of all civilized countries. There are not a few individuals today who are convinced that Marxism as a theory has outlived its usefulness and should give way to new theories whose many colored mixture goes under the name of critical Socialism; and it was only at a recent meeting that I heard an old time veteran of the class struggle make the statement that he thought perhaps the time had come to revise the teachings of Marx.

I am going to try to prove in this article that the teachings of Marx are as sound today as they ever were. The history of mankind can be biologically divided into many different epochs, each respective epoch performing a peculiar function of its own, and to know the function of these different stages in historical evolution we must above all things understand their physiology, or their structures, and we must also comprehend upon what particular economic premises their organisms were reared. In other words, in order to permit a comprehensive and an intelligent appreciation of history a thorough and fundamental knowledge of the previous social systems in society and of their functions is essential.

And it is impossible to formulate an intelligent understanding of history unless we are acquainted with the laws and principles governing our own society. And so the object before us is to analyse the structure of our own society, and to acquire a knowledge of the economic premises upon which its foundation is based. What then is the form of our society? It is a capitalist society. What is it that distinguishes the capitalist epoch from the preceding epochs? What force was it that lifted up society to the unparalleled height that it occupies today? And what are the forces inherent in Capitalism that are working toward its disintegration and preparing the basic elements for a different foundation?

The Marxist, equipped with an understanding of the class struggle, and the materialistic conception of history, sees clearly how capitalism appeared in response to certain material conditions prevailing during the latter period of the middle ages. "The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life." (Marx). When one looks at history through capitalist glasses it takes on the appearance of a collection of dates and events concerning kings, princes, wars, battles, royal marriages and intrigues, but we learn precious little concerning the basic causes that underlie human activity, and it is only by applying the materialistic interpretation of history as it was taught us by Marx that we come to a correct understanding of history and events.

Capitalism is to be distinguished from all other earlier forms of society by its system of producing commodities and also their exchange. A commodity is a product of human labor produced for the purpose of exchange in the markets of the world, and Marx starts out in "Capital" by telling us that "the wealth of capitalist society presents itself to us as an 'immense accumulation of commodities.' A commodity may contain a two-fold character, that of a finished article, and that of raw material, which is determined entirely by its function in the labor process. The capitalist buys the commodity labor-power (L); for money (M), and sells its product for more money (M plus), and the process of exploitation it follows is therefore M—L—M—plus. In

the socialist society the plus will have disappeared, the entire product will belong to the producer; if he then exchanges it for other products by means of money the formula will be C—M—C. Money will then become merely a medium of exchanging articles of equal value.

The key to Marx's economic doctrines is his theory of value, and the reason why he stresses the importance of labor-power in capitalist production is to point out and emphasize that the worker is the important factor in our present social system. Value is that element which is embodied in the products of human energy or labor; although the phenomena of nature may be use-values they cannot be values in this sense, for the simple reason that no human labor has been expended in their production, while material objects are products and results of human energy. It is true, natural forces are co-operative agents in the creation of material objects, yet they play only a secondary importance, while Labor, which organizes the shapeless substances of nature into tangible forms is the productive factor.

Marx took hold of the social question and placed it upon a scientific basis; he came upon the scene when that question was drifting about aimlessly, when the effects of capitalist production were being analyzed by utopian thinkers in whose hands the practical application of politics was directed toward appealing to the humanitarian instincts. He studied the nature of society, and came to the conclusion that the social structure was based upon the economic arrangement of society. In other words he found that the social structure depended upon the method of wealth production, and the relationship existing between the producers and the appropriators of the goods, and proceeding still further along this line of reasoning he was able to point out the existence of class formations and divisions in society.

→ In "Capital" Marx develops the subject of relatively increasing misery. To this the reformer objects that there can not be any doubt about the fallacy of such an idea, and he claims that the working class in our day can secure for itself considerable improvements. This is substantially incorrect. The capitalist and the worker are both subject to the inexorable laws that underlie and govern our present day society. As capitalism develops the markets become glutted, and the orders failing to come in any longer, it makes necessary the closing down of industry until such a time when the conditions of the market will warrant the reopening of these establishments. And in the meantime the laborer and his fellow workmen find themselves face to face with a condition of affairs that bodes no good to them and their families.

The great task before the socialist movement today, a task which will also rejuvenate and impart fresh vitality to it, is to individualize the workers as a class or, in other words, to make independent thinkers out of followers; and this necessitates the education of the proletariat in the sciences from a Marxian perspective. Knowledge is power, and the dynamic of that creative proletarian vitality in the socialist movement rests in the class consciousness of its membership. As this class consciousness develops among the workers their actual revolutionary power increases. The power of the labor "fakirs" rests in the intellectual immaturity or undeveloped mental condition of the millions of workers. Being incapable of perceiving and determining their position as exploited wage slaves they are, therefore, also unable to appreciate the great and glorious task of emancipating their class and society from the fetters of private property.

So that, on its fundamental doctrines Marxism appears to be in no need of revision. Quite often the critics who would revise Marxian doctrine are not overly well acquainted with their subject on hand. Elaboration, extension, interpretation interlinking Marxian concepts with the apparent trend of thought today towards materialism has its uses. But we are too far off our objective yet to ditch the pilot.

THE CLAIMS OF "NORDIC" RACE SUPERIORITY.

(Continued from last issue)

These advocates of the "Nordic" theory mislead the public; this is certain. What are the facts? Ever since Mendel, scientists have been testing the fluidity of human traits, and independent scientific experiments the world over have disproved Weismann's theory and have established beyond doubt the great fact that the human body is molded and modified by its environment, that it passes on to following generations the physical changes and mental habits which it acquires, and that these characteristics, whether acquired in pre-historic times or in the last generation, remain the same only as long as the environment is unchanged. In other words, science dismisses the idea that a tall, blond race settled in the north while a short, dark race occupied the south, and justifies the belief that through countless ages the northern people were bleached in complexion and were increased in stature, whereas the southerners were tanned and diminished in size by the climate and the living conditions peculiar to each division of the earth. We have had it demonstrated in the United States that minute modifications of both extremes toward a new type, or rather toward new types, best fitted to survive in the various sections of our vast country, take place within one or two generations.

As for the nebulous "Nordic," the latest anthropological analysis by Professor Roland B. Dixon of Harvard University finds the origin of this type in the mixture of Caspian and Mediterranean types. It is safe to assume a "mixture" for the "Nordic" as for all other races, inasmuch as recent research has shown that the closest sort of contacts existed between north and south even in the earliest days of our civilization. The tens of thousands of Arabic coins which have been found on Swedish soil and which date back to the first dynasties, form one instance of the constant intercourse between the south, which wanted amber, and the north, especially Scandinavia, which needed bronze. War, however, was more effective as a means of merging the types than peace. Long before the great migration of Goths to the equatorial regions, as a result of which northern blood infiltrated every people of the Mediterranean, there occurred Viking raids in which the warriors, if they got away at all, carried off as many women as the ship would hold to bear more Vikings in the northern fastnesses. In later days conquests, invasions, alliances and crusades brought alien armies into every spot of Europe and intermingled every type and people. The conclusion of anthropologists that "every modern race and nationality is of strongly mixed descent" is founded on many kinds of evidence.

These facts in themselves are sufficient to destroy the illusion of a perpetually superior race responsible for a superior culture; but the preposterous impudence of this theory becomes fully apparent when we consider the history of civilization. We find, to begin with, that different nations or races are at various times in the vanguard of cultural development. Thus in the fifteenth century the standard of civilization in China is much higher than that of Europe. Western Europe surpassed the Orient during the Renaissance, but Western civilization was taken over and improved upon in many respects by the Japanese during the lifetime of the average middle-aged man. It is clear that a cultural advance is an inexplicable phenomenon; it is an accidental and fortunate combination of the right mind, the propitious time and the proper place. Cultural expansion, the shattering of old walls and the enlargement of life is always the result of a flash of genius in the powder magazine of economic and political conditions. If the leader is lacking or the time is unpropitious, the masses stagnate, whether they be white, black, red or yellow. But though nothing can explain the rise and continuation of culture in primitive peoples, we see that after a certain stage the civilization of a race is the cumulative increment of all other cultures.

Culture Origins Due to Non-"Nordics"

Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the
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