

## Correspondence

### RE THOSE TABLETS.

Editor Clarion:

It is hell to be misunderstood—laments "C"—as he lays the birch on to the posteriors of the groundlings and slant-heads, the obscurantists, romanticists and fanatics who turn up their contemptuous snouts at the pearls of wisdom which "C" has cast before them. But such is ever the reward of the dispenser of wisdom in all ages: "the dunces are all in confederacy against him."

But "C" has worse dunces to contend against; there are magic-mongers of socialist revelation, like the writer, exercising capitalism by spells and incantations, formulas and recipes culled from the medieval chap-book of Karl Marx.

What a versatile personality is "C". Now we see him as the cool intellectual philosopher; again as an experienced practitioner in the shyster lawyer's art of scoring "points"—by imputation. That is to say—that those particular doctrines of the socialist Buddha with which he disagrees, he ascribes the authorship of such to his opponents in the present controversy.

A perusal of "Our Holy Family" would lead the reader to believe that one F. C. was the author of the 32 chap. of Capital—the carver of the tablets of socialist revelation. Why not impute to me the theory of increasing misery—the doctrine of "violent overthrow" contained in the Communist Manifesto and all the rest of the antiquated ideological remains in Marxism—and by the vicarious sacrifice of a "disciple" expiate on the high altar of modern science the sins of that archaic scientist Marx. Do I believe in the divine revelations of the prophet Marx? Do I believe in the second coming of Christ? "Yes, he does," answers "C". Because, forsooth, I set down the central thesis of the Father of the Church over against a socialist Luther, I am immediately convicted by "C" as the author of that wish-we-could-forget-it 32nd Chap. of Capital. Not only am I indecently exposed to the reformist multitude as a practitioner of necromancy, disguised as a monk of the primitive church, I also stand accused as an insidious proponent of mysticism among the revolutionary proletariat. Give up the game, "C" of falling straw-men, and boldly state that Marx as a prophet was, in vaudeville parlance, a "flop." All this marching and counter-marching before the Rubicon, with sallies against the barbarians on the flanks gives the spectators the impression that a great historic event is in the making. Too much fustian! The transit has already been effected and the present controversy is of the nature of senatorial investigation—*ex post facto*.

Why, not be consistent with "your philosophy of it," "C"?

Veblen affirms: that the Theories of Marx must be considered as a whole. Skelton asserts: Marxism is a closely jointed creed. If there is anything revolutionary about the Marxian doctrines, it is in its social and political aspects. The economics of Marx belong to the classical school. Thousands have read the Communist Manifesto—the Civil War in France—the Eighteenth Brumaire—as against the tens who have read the first nine chapters of Capital. Yet it was in the field of political prognostication that Marx assumed the mantle of an inspired prophet, much to the discomfort of his latter day disciples, who may have scientific aptitudes. Marx's propensity to indulge in Hegelian teleology and depict the immanent laws which governed the inevitable development of capitalist society to a self-realizing goal, i. e., socialism, sorely besets the present day rationalizers of Marxism with modern science.

According to "C," the process outlined by Marx in the "Historical Tendencies of Capitalist Accumulation," is in violent contradiction to Darwinian norms of evolution. The whole chapter needs to be re-cast, avers "C," as "it is a cosmology as old as the hills," though the "little cherub sitting up aloft" may be concealed within the garb of the materialist conception of history.

Of course, F. C. is the exponent—how easy it is to pass the buck—of a cosmology which reeks of mysticism, astrology, divination; the auguries of Egyptian priests; the omens of the soothsayer. It is food for infantile minds, half-wits, morons, millennial dawns, and the lunatic fringe of revolutionary romanticists who loudly twang the class-war harp, thereby proving themselves idiots.

I agree with "C's" interpretation of the tablets of socialist revelation, that they are the blab-bunk-bokum! But alas, the "tablets" are inseparable from Marxism! No Marxism without Marx! Nothing can be and not be at the same time in the same respect! If consistency is the bane of little minds then "the millions who can never be wrong" are the repositories of broad-gauge political intellects. A little observation and reflection is sufficient proof of this assertion. Nevertheless, the "revolutionary bokum" of Marx which has "its actual hold on the minds of great masses of men, is very strong, and that it does not a little to embitter their thoughts" (vide Prof. Joseph). Science, it is said, has discounted the revolutionary myth and relegated it to the sphere of mysticism. But the blame thing won't stay put.

Says Prof. Schaffle: "Scientific criticism can only prove that the enduring realization of Socialism is impossible—it

cannot disprove the possibility of a successful attempt being made to start an experiment in it through some violent upheaval of the proletariat." That the political prognostications of Marx have not materialised goes without saying; that they have been absolutely discredited is another matter.

Should the British Labor Party through parliamentary means accomplish any substantial social re-adjustments then the arguments of the high priests of democracy will be given a new validity. As it is now, the Clynes, Thomases, et al. are assuming the role of policing the proletariat in the interests of normalcy. Their slogan is another version of the gospel-millers', "the poor ye have always with you." It may be quite scientific, if not inspirational, to the underdogs in "the land of skilful and pauper institutions."

"Boy," said old Blatchford, "run up to the forepeak and nail the Jolly Roger to the mast." F. C.

### MARX IN SOCIAL THEORY

(Continued from page 3)

came to us not of our will; it was our fates pressed us into battle, ill-equipped as we were; look at our defeats, history is full of them, and would take no denial." When the Manifesto was drafted, by democratic parties were then understood working class political movements such as English Chartism, whose most revolutionary demand was a universal manhood suffrage. Says the Manifesto on pp. 56-7: "Section II. has made clear the relations of the Communists to the existing working class parties, such as the Chartists in England and the Agrarian Reformers in America. The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of the movement. In France the Communists ally themselves with Social Democrats, (\*) against the conservative and radical bourgeoisie, reserving, however, the right to take up a critical position in regard to phrases and illusions traditionally handed down from the great Revolution." "(And) they never cease, for a single instant, to instill into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat." "Whatever 'R' or the rest of those who support the anti-labor position of the S. P. of C. may make of the intentions of Marx and Engels when they wrote that into the Manifesto, it means this to me, quoting myself from an article I wrote some months ago in which I held "that recognition of Labor parties does not hinge on the matter of their reformist character, but on whether they are representative of an independent movement of the working class in politics."

In another article, while in charitable mood, I suggested my Marxist critics were rusty on Marx's theory of history and offered in this series to refresh them on it. Now, however, I suggest that they never understood the materialistic dialectic of Marx, the point of departure for all of his theorizing. Let them think on this: Writing of his programme as editor of the Franco-German Year Books, Marx is remarking to the effect that it is not true, as the French and English Utopians have thought, that the treatment of political questions is beneath the dignity of socialists. Rather is it work of this kind which leads into party conflict and away from abstract theory. And, he goes on to say: "We do not then proclaim to the world in doctrinaire fashion any new principle: 'This is the truth, bow down before it!' We do not say: 'Refrain from strife, it is foolishness!' We only make clear to men for what they are really struggling, and to the consciousness of this they must come whether they will or not." That, says M. Beer in comment, is conceived in a thoroughly dialectical vein. The thinker propounds no fresh problems, brings forward no abstract dogmas, but awakens an understanding for the growth of the future out of the past, inspiring the political and social warriors with the consciousness of their own action.

"Just as our opinion of an individual is not based \* A footnote in the Manifesto says: "The party then represented in parliament by Ledra-Bolla, in literature by Louis Blanc, in the daily press by the 'Reformers' The name of Social Democracy signified, with its three inventors, a section of the Democratic or Republican party more or less tinged with Socialism."

on what he thinks of himself," says Marx, "so we are not able to judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness" ("the legal, political, religious, esthetic, or philosophic—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out") "must rather be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social forces of production and the conditions (institutional) of production." (Preface to the "Critique.")

To Marx, the materialist Hegelian, every form of society was fated by other powers than man's will. By force of economic evolution, the warrior chief in the wandering of the nations during the decay and fall of the Roman Empire, the itinerant trader and the journeyman craftsman of the same era, each, his form of society in its preordained sequence already lay in the womb of time. But Marx mitigated the fatalism in the concept, for his view was that while we could not affect the general trend of history, man could shorten and lessen the birth pangs of every social order by adding to that class-consciousness which is born of habituation, knowledge of and about things that is got by conscious observation and reflection. The lesson of history is, however, that men, taken individually or collectively, mainly learn by habituation rather than by reflection.

A few words more to "R" in respect of his belief that Marx hoped the 1848 revolutionary stirrings in Europe were the expression of the proletarian revolution, and upon which "R" does some unnecessary moralizing upon his speculations in last issue, as to whether Marx was too optimistic or, whether there had been a loss of intelligence among later generations of the working class. "R" is wrong in his belief. The Manifesto itself furnishes a flat contradiction to him. Yet he reasons upon it with such assurance and air of knowledge on the matter against me. Marx 'knew' that the 1848 revolutionary insurrections were the revolution of the liberal bourgeoisie, and refers to them as such, and moreover, threw his energies into the struggle with that consciousness and in accordance with his understanding of the dialectic of history. His view was that the issues must first be fought out with traditional feudalism before the way would be clear for the proletarian-bourgeois class struggle to reach maturity, with the maturing and final exhausting of the possibilities, in 1848 still latent, of the bourgeois order of society. Among other matters in our argument: If pacific English Chartism collapsed, the armed uprisings around the same period on the continent were also abortive. But the liberal bourgeois movement won out—later, be it noted, mainly by constitutional and other non-violent means. And the European working class have gained since—in economic well-being, in intellectual culture, in political and social status, gained a class heritage of culture as the spring-board for further advances. "Away with culture," I hear "R" say. I say, would he expect to find a modern flying machine in Neolithic pastoralism. Culture begets culture, but it takes the culture, material and immaterial, of a state of the industrial arts known as the machine technology to beget such an offspring. So working class advance has been made largely by virtue that the liberal bourgeois movement first cleared the ways of history and feudal concepts and institutional obstacles. Such is the dialectic way of history—according to Marx-Hegel. C.

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