

NOTES OF THE MONTH

Marxism Today—Living Marxism—1848 and To-day—The Long Transition—How Marx Built the Socialist Movement—Weaknesses of Old Social Democracy—Marx's Lead to Mass Work—Distortion to Opportunism—Modern Lies and Concealment—Marxist Revolutionary Tactics—Marx's War on Opportunism—Call to Split Social Democracy—Engels' Advice Ignored—Falsification of Engels' Testament—Thirty Years of Falsification—Engels' Dying Anger—The Dance of all the Dirt—Revisionism—Degradation—Effects of 1905 Revolution—1914-18—Engels on War of 1914—Engels on Future Communist International—Since the War—Which Path?—Lessons of the German Revolution—Contrast of German and Russian Revolutions—Britain's "Alternative" to Marxism—The Outcome—Labour Disillusionment—The "Revival" of Marxism—Marxism is Communism

There is an international tendency of the bourgeois theoreticians to kill Marxism by "gentleness," to choke it in their embraces by an apparent acceptance of "all" the "truly scientific," sides and elements of Marxism EXCEPT its "agitational," "demagogic," "Blanqui-like," "Utopian," side. In other words, they take from Marxism all that is acceptable for the liberal bourgeoisie, including the struggle for reforms, including the class struggle (without the dictatorship of the proletariat), including a "general" recognition of "Socialist ideals" and the substitution of a "new order" for capitalism; they repudiate "only" the living soul of Marxism, "only" its revolutionary content.—LENIN

FIFTY years ago Marx died. The whole world to-day is his monument. On the one side, the world crisis of capitalism, working out with merciless exactness the laws that he laid bare to the outcome that he foretold; on the other side, the proletarian revolution, springing, as he foretold, from the crisis of capitalism and building up

triumphant socialism in the first sector of the earth ; gathering world economic and political conflicts and convulsions, as we are swept forward ever more rapidly to the second cycle of wars and revolutions, opening out the path to the extension and final victory of the world proletarian revolution—the whole world to-day is Marxism in action. Every other theory and world outlook lies in ruins, shattered and impotent before the march of events. The voices of the puny critics and revisers of Marxism are long forgotten. Marxism alone rides the storm, and casts its searchlight in front on the path forward of humanity. The meaning of Marx in human history is only beginning to be understood. Philosophers, prophets, statesmen, system-makers and leaders of action there have been in plenty in every age. But with Marx the whole of human theory and practice entered into a new stage, as decisive in its ultimate significance as the advance from the pre-human stage to the first beginnings of technique and human culture. For the first time the completely conscious understanding and control of the whole range of human life and social development became possible. The full significance of this—Engels' "leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom"—will only be finally realised with the victory of the world socialist revolution. To-day the fight of revolutionary Marxism, carried forward in Leninism, the fight of the revolutionary working class, organised in the Communist International, represents this fight for the future in the midst of the chaos of a dissolving civilisation.

IT is the privilege of every one living to-day to be able to take part in this fight at the greatest turning-point of mankind. But in order to take part effectively and most usefully in this fight it is essential to have the necessary equipment and understanding. That necessary equipment and understanding is Marxism. Marxism is the weapon of the fight, of the fight for the liberation of the working class, for the socialist revolution. What is Communism ? asked Engels in his Questions and Answers on Communism. Communism he answered, is " the teaching of the conditions of the liberation

of the working class." That is the essential concrete content, the decisive task in front, to which the whole of Marxist theory is directed. Marxism is the weapon of this concrete fight in progress, of a fight both theoretical and practical, of what is in the last resort a physical fight of millions of men against the existing régime of violence and exploitation, of civil war, as Marx never failed to make clear. A Marxist is only he who takes his organised part in this fight. There can be no Marxism separate from the mass struggle, from the revolutionary fight. It was never more important to remember this than to-day, when all the bourgeois philosophers and dilettantes, awakened from their slumbers by the thunder of the world crisis, are "discovering" Marxism and trying to make a speculative plaything of it, or when all the opportunists and agents of capitalist servitude in the working class are trying to hide their treachery behind a Marxist cover. It was never more necessary than to-day when the fight is close and urgent, when all the forces of barbarism, of world war more destructive than ever before, of imperialist savagery and anarchy, of Hitlerism and all "the wild asses of the devil" are threatening their supreme attempt to engulf the world and destroy all human culture, and when the sole force of world order and civilisation is the Communist International and the Soviet Union. In words that apply with burning force to the present epoch Marx declared in 1848 :

The cannibalism of the Counter-Revolution will teach the peoples that there is only one means to shorten, to minimise and to concentrate the murderous death-agonies of the old society and the bloody birth-agonies of the new, only one means—Revolutionary Terrorism. (Marx in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* of Nov. 6, 1848.)

THE full revolutionary force of Marxism was not yet understood in his own epoch or by the early social democratic parties of the Second International which carried on his work and teaching with many weakenings. Marxism had found itself in the direct revolutionary epoch leading up to 1848, when all the basic contradictions of capitalist society and their political reflection were already laid bare,

when the passing of the bourgeoisie to counter-revolution, the vacillation and impotence of the petit-bourgeois democracy ("social democracy," as it called itself), and the inevitable transference of revolutionary leadership to the proletariat as the inaugurator of the social revolution, were fully demonstrated, and the whole future epoch of history up to the present day was in its essence disclosed in a flash in those days of struggle to eyes trained to see, as Marx and Engels had trained themselves in the preceding years through every form of historical, philosophical and economic study alongside participation in the movement, to see and to understand the process of events. Thus the combined outcome of the highest development of bourgeois thought, which at that period reached its apex in the German classical philosophy, along with French materialism and English economic theory, and at the same time the beginning of the proletarian movement, of French Socialism and Communism and English Chartism, provided the origins and contributory sources which united, at the critical turning-point of revolutionary struggle, at the turning-point from the declining bourgeois revolution to the nascent proletarian revolution, to produce Marxism, the theory of the future period. The "Communist Manifesto," written at the end of 1847, already contained the essential main outlines of the future.

BUT after 1848 there followed the long period of capitalist expansion, in which the still ascendant capitalism was working out all its possibilities till their final limits and decline, in which the proletariat was slowly gathering its forces, and the revolutionary tempo of 1848 passed into a memory, until in 1871 the Commune lit the torch anew and blazed the light forward on the future proletarian dictatorship. The hopes of Marx and Engels of speedy advance to the proletarian socialist revolution out of the revolutionary struggles of 1848 were doomed to disappointment. The bourgeois revolution was in its essence complete in Europe with 1848, although the formation of the modern bourgeois national states had still to be completed through the political struggles and wars of

1848-1871: in this sense the conditions were ripe for the next stage, for the socialist revolution. But the forces of the proletariat were not yet strong enough; and capitalism in Europe had still a vast sphere of expansion in drawing the whole world into its orbit. Marx was quick to see the consequence of this for the whole future line and tempo of development. In 1858 he posed the question as follows:

The special task of bourgeois society is the establishment of the world market, at any rate in its main outlines, and of a production upon this basis. Since the world is round, this process appears to have reached its completion with the colonisation of California and Australia and the opening up of China and Japan. *The weighty question for us now is this: On the Continent the revolution is imminent, and will from the first take on a socialist character. But will it not inevitably be crushed in this small corner, since the movement of bourgeois society is still ascendant on a far wider area?*

(Marx, letter to Engels, October 8, 1858.)

The truth of this was abundantly shown by the Commune (which Marx advised against beforehand, but fully supported once the fight was started—in contrast to modern “socialist” leaders of the Second International, who preached revolution in the abstract until revolution came, and have since opposed it): the Commune laid bare the imminent socialist revolution in Europe, and its necessary form in the dictatorship of the proletariat, but it could not be successful and was inevitably crushed, since on a world scale capitalism was still ascending.

IN consequence the essential task during the second half of the nineteenth century was the gathering of the forces of the proletariat, the spreading among them of the principles of Marxism, of the socialist revolution, and the training in daily warfare against capitalism over immediate demands. This is the task to which Marx set himself and accomplished through the First International (1864-1876), laying down the foundations of the movements throughout Europe, and subsequently through direct guidance of the developing social-democratic parties in the leading countries in Europe, by Marx and Engels until the death of Marx in 1883, and by Engels until his death in 1895. In the battles

against the petit-bourgeois socialism of Proudhon, against the reformism of the British trade unions, against the national state socialism of Lassalle, and against the anti-centralist and conspirative anarchism of Bakunin, Marxism established itself as the theory of the rising proletariat, of the socialist revolution. The socialist movement in Europe and throughout the world grew up in the last decades of the nineteenth century on the basis of Marxism. At the close of the First International in 1873 Engels could write :

I think that the next International, after Marx's writings have exercised their influence for a few years more, will be directly Communist, and will be definitely devoted to the diffusion of our principles. (Engels, letter to Sorge, September 27, 1873.)

These hopes were not to be as rapidly fulfilled as then seemed likely. The Second International, which grew up in 1889, proclaimed the basis of Marxism, and represented an enormous advance in organised strength on the First ; nevertheless it did not attain full political clearness of programme, contained heavy weaknesses, and even marked a setback in respect of national separatism and decentralisation as compared with the First International. It was not until 1919, after the purging experience of war and of a new revolutionary epoch, that the Communist International, to which Engels looked forward, could be established.

THE social-democratic parties which grew up in the last quarter of the nineteenth century based themselves upon Marxism in principles, programme and tactics. Nevertheless, the revolutionary edge was blunted by the conditions of the epoch, by the predominantly peaceful, legal mass-organising, trade union and parliamentary work which was the necessary path of advance, and by the expansion of capitalism and even apparent improvement of conditions of a section of the workers, based in reality upon intensified world exploitation. The revolutionary aims and principles were repeated as a shibboleth ; but the daily organising work and daily fight for reforms became more and more the whole.

aim in practice. In the words of Lenin ("Answer to the I.L.P."): :

In the long process of the peaceful development of capitalism, the object of this preliminary struggle, of this organising period of struggle was forgotten, the aim having become in the eyes of most of the leaders of the working class, and of a considerable number of the workers themselves, largely an aim in itself instead of a means.

Only a minority of the most far-sighted, the Marxist left in the old Second International, maintained the line of revolutionary Marxism, and were able to see through the outward peaceful surface of this period of transition to the approaching crisis of capitalism and decisive battles.

THE lead of Marx and Engels in the second half of the nineteenth century to the task of preparatory work for future revolutionary struggles, to organising work, to the daily struggle, to mass work, to the building of legal parties and trade unions, was misunderstood and distorted and falsified under the conditions of capitalist corruption and in the imperialist period to opportunism. Lenin has explained with complete clearness in the passage already quoted the lead actually given :

When after the failure of the revolution of '48, capitalism entered upon a period of further development, spreading and gaining new strength every day ; when the idea of the direct seizure of power proved erroneous, Marx and Engels, boldly confronting the facts indicated a method of preparing the working class for its future decisive revolutionary battles for power.

They pointed out to the working class that capitalism affords it the possibility of organisation and union, that it gives the advanced section of the working class the possibility of exercising its influence upon the backward sections, infusing into them the consciousness of class solidarity of all the oppressed ; they demanded from the class-conscious workers that they should, without waiting for the final and decisive battle, utilise every possibility which had been forced from the capitalists for the establishment of legal open Workers' Parties and for the organisation of Trade Unions, being guided by the principle that the working class will be able to utilise every capitalist crisis with the greater facility, the greater its unity, organisation and class consciousness will be.

They called upon the workers to fight for universal suffrage and democracy, in order that the masses might be able from the parliamentary tribune to tear the mask from every capitalist deceit, proving to the worker how every kind of transaction between the various sections of capitalism is made at the expense of the working class. They called upon the workers to make use of the conflicts arising between the various sections of the capitalist class in order to secure economic and social reforms which would tend to ameliorate the position of the working class, to strengthen it and afford it an opportunity of making progress in its struggle against capitalism.

They called upon the working masses directly to take part in politics and to exercise direct pressure upon the bourgeoisie. *They appealed to the working class never to forget that all this struggle for democracy, that all this struggle for reform, is only preparatory work whose aim is to strengthen the organisation and class consciousness of the workers, and to prepare them for the epoch of decisive battles with capitalism* which is being torn by inner contradictions, by capitalism which will no longer be able to keep the masses in hand, but will on the contrary provoke revolutionary uprisings against itself.

It was in relation to this lead that "in the long process of the peaceful development of capitalism the object of this preliminary struggle, of this organising period of struggle, was forgotten."

IT is important to give this compact statement of the Marxist lead with regard to mass work and the daily struggle in the pre-revolutionary period at length, because it is just here, in the incorrect understanding of this, that lies the first root of the distortion and falsification of Marxism, which finally blossoms out into open treachery and passage to the bourgeoisie. It is on the direct misinterpretation of this whole line of revolutionary mass work and the mass struggle that the mountain of attempts of opportunism to find its justification in Marx base themselves (*e.g.*, the question of the significance of the Ten-Hour Day). All the conventional bourgeois and social-reformist pictures of Marx and Marxism invariably try to conceal its revolutionary character, and to present Marx as "opportunist" or at any rate as "inconsistent," "partly revolutionary, partly opportunist,"

“curious dualism,” “inclining to a maturer, reformist view in his older years” and similar idiocies. This nonsense, which would not survive the shortest serious consistent study of Marx’s line, reveals only equal ignorance of the elements of dialectics and of revolutionary tactics.

THUS the old-time “standard” English “Life of Marx” by Spargo (the subsequent war-time jingo-socialist), pours out this kind of stuff for the benefit of innocent readers :

Marx was, in fact, a good deal of an opportunist, and of the two wings of the present-day Socialist movement, popularly denoted as “Opportunist” and “Impossibilist” respectively, the former is much more truly Marxian than the latter, at least in its fundamental principles. . . .

. . . The Marx of this later period was in many important respects a very different person from the Marx of 1848 . . . his thought was more mature, and his political wisdom had greatly ripened. Socialism on its practical political side must conform to the thought of this later period, not to the youthful and immature expressions of the Communist Manifesto, if it would claim the sanction of Marx’s maturest thought. The sagacity and practical statesmanship . . . contrast in a most striking manner with some of the expressions of a raw crude radicalism which Marx manifested in his youth, but learnt to regard with contempt.

This kind of filthy caricature, which would not survive half-an-hour’s confrontation with Marx’s actual writings, has been peddled round for decades by the opportunist falsifiers of Marx : and, let it be noted, right up to the war this was the only available Life of Marx for English readers, while at the same time a serious Life, such as that of Mehring, remained (and still remains) untranslated, and the great part of Marx’s writings have been kept from the English workers. On such a basis, using in fact the bourgeois dictatorship and monopoly of publishing to conceal the truth (and not one of the university presses with their enormous resources and facilities for research doing anything whatever to make available any work of Marx or any information about him, but instead circulating through the university professorial ignor-amuses still grosser stupider lies), the opportunist falsification

of Marxism has been kept up in England and America, until to-day Leninism and the Communist International has taken up the fight and begun to make something more of the writings available, and to compel a more serious treatment of Marxism from its enemies.

MARX less revolutionary in his old age! Marx disclaiming "the youthful and immature expressions of the Communist Manifesto," "a raw crude radicalism which Marx manifested in his youth, but learnt to regard with contempt"! What dirty lies! It was just in 1871 that Marx was drawing the lesson from the Commune that his previous declarations on the necessity to "seize the machinery of the State" did not go far enough, and that it was necessary "not merely to take over, from one set of hands to another, the bureaucratic and military machine, but to shatter it," and that this, as he made clear in the 1872 Preface, was the sole correction of principle needing to be made to the Communist Manifesto. In the 1872 Preface, Marx and Engels explicitly declared :

Though conditions have changed in the course of the twenty-five years since the Manifesto was written, yet the general principles expounded in the document are on the whole as correct to-day as ever.

Only the immediate measures set out in the second section (graduated income tax, &c.—which measures, incidentally, another precious "Marxist" falsifier, Woodburn, theorist of the Plebs anti-Marxist Labour Colleges, has the impudence to quote to-day as proof that "Marx's Programme" is practically identical with the Labour Party Programme! see "Would Marx Have Joined the Labour Party?" by A. Woodburn in *Forward*, September 3, 1932) are explicitly stated by Marx in 1872 to be "out-of-date." And it was in 1875 that Marx wrote his scorching "Critique of the Gotha Programme," which ridiculed the opportunist Lassalleian confusions of this unification programme of the German Social Democracy in the light of revolutionary theory, including

the famous exposure of the whole conception of the "Volkstaat" or Popular Democratic State, and the clearest exposition of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the which criticism was withheld from publication by the Social-Democratic Party leadership for sixteen years, and even then only issued, as has since been revealed, under heavy pressure from Engels (and thereafter left buried in the "Neue Zeit," and actually not republished in Germany till 1920).

MARX in fact was already in his closing years, in the late seventies and early eighties, at full war with the rising opportunist tendencies he discerned in German Social-Democracy. His letters of the closing years reveal a continuous merciless criticism of these tendencies, and even of the two leaders closest to Marxism, Bebel and Liebknecht, for their failure to fight them. So in 1877 he wrote :

In Germany in our party there is a spirit of rottenness revealing itself, not so much among the masses, as among the leaders. The compromise with the Lassalleans has led to compromise also with other half-way types, with Dühring and his admirers, and with a whole crew of half-ripe scholastics and super-wise doctors who want to give to Socialism a "higher ideal" orientation, *i.e.*, to replace its materialist basis (which requires serious objective study for any one to be able to use it) with a whole modern mythology of goddesses of Justice, Freedom, Equality and Fraternity. Dr. Höchberg, who publishes the *Zukunft* is a representative of this tendency, and has "bought his way in" to the Party—I recognise with the "noblest" intentions, but I do not care a button for "intentions."

(Marx to Sorge, October 19, 1877.)

This bankers' son, Höchberg, whose group Marx here attacks, had for his secretary, Bernstein, the future "reviser" of Marxism : the tendency of this group Marx was already thus in 1877 denouncing in the strongest language as a menace to the party. And again in 1879 :

Liebknecht, after his blunder in the negotiations with the Lassalleans, has now opened the door wide to all these half-men, and in spite of himself has prepared a demoralisation in the Party, which could only be conquered through the Socialist Law.

(Marx to Sorge, September 19, 1879)

IN fact, as Marx and Engels soon found reason to complain, the effect of Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Law was the opposite to their hopes, and did not purge the party. While it steeled and strengthened the working masses in the party, it facilitated the rising influence of the opportunists in the leading circles, since these were conducting the legal press in Germany and were able to strengthen their hold on the machine, while the best fighting leaders were in exile. In 1883 Engels writes (letter to Bernstein, February 25, 1883) of "the petit-bourgeois philistine temper in the party with which we have always been violently at war." By 1884 *Engels very seriously discussed the necessity of a split in German Social-Democracy on basic questions of programme against the opportunist tendencies*; he only advocated the necessity of waiting with the split until the repeal of the Anti-Socialist Law, as until then the opportunist tendencies might be able to secure the majority (letter to Bernstein, June 5, 1884—these letters, it may be noted, Bernstein only published in 1925, after, as he admits in his preface, publication in Russia compelled him at last also to publish). In 1887, in the Preface to his pamphlet on the Housing Question, Engels speaks openly of the existence of "petit-bourgeois socialism" within the German Social Democratic Party, "including in the Reichstag fraction." In 1891 Engels' strong critique of the draft Erfurt Programme dealt specifically with opportunism and "the way opportunism is gaining ground in the Social-Democratic press":

What else can result from this than that the party may suddenly, at the first critical moment, prove helpless, that on decisive questions confusion and division will arise within the party because these questions had never been discussed?

The neglect of great fundamental considerations for the sake of the momentary interests of the day, this chase after momentary successes, and this race after them without account of ultimate results, this sacrifice of the future movements for the present, is perhaps the result of "honest" motives, but is and remains none the less opportunism, and "honest" opportunism is perhaps more dangerous than any other.

This critique, sent from Engels to Kautsky in 1891, was withheld from publication until ten years later.

THUS already in the first years of the imperialist epoch Marx and Engels, then in the closing period of their lives, were in full war against the growing opportunist tendencies of Social-Democracy, and already even beginning to sound the direct call to the necessity of the future split against opportunism. Had the advice of Engels been taken in time, the consequence for the whole future of international socialism would have been incalculable ; Revolutionary Social-Democracy would have been steeled and ready to meet the period of imperialism in the spirit of Marx and Engels, in the spirit of Bolshevism ; 1914 would have told a different story. But the advice of Engels was not taken, save in one country only, in Russia, where the split against opportunism was carried out in time, and in consequence the party of Marxism was ready when the revolutionary crisis came. In German Social-Democracy, the leader of world Social-Democracy, the split for which Engels called was not carried out until thirty-four years later, after corruption had done its work, after the world crisis had begun, after the revolutionary struggles had begun. Hence all the painful travails of the present period, of the workers' movement having to struggle from a late start, and in the face of the entrenchments of a powerful opportunist machine, to overtake the headlong process of history and of the capitalist breakdown.

IN place of the line of Marx and Engels, Social-Democracy inevitably moved to the only alternative, to suppressing the line of Marx and Engels. This is the ugly reality which revealed itself already in the closing months of Engels' life. In 1895 Engels wrote his last work, the famous Preface to Marx's *Class Struggles in France*. This Preface is dated March 6, 1895. Engels died on August 5, 1895. In this, his last writing for the international working class, Engels sketched out with a masterly hand the future of the revolutionary struggle, the gradual massing of the workers' battalions under the cover of legality, leading up to the final armed struggle and the conquest of power. The Social-Democratic leadership, confronted with this Preface, carefully suppressed every

single revolutionary passage in it, every sentence and paragraph referring to the future armed struggle, and then published it as a vindication of legality as the only future method. The meaning of the Preface was turned into the exact reverse of what Engels wrote (see the *LABOUR MONTHLY* for January, 1933, p. 49, for two of the principal suppressed passages quoted in T. H. Wintringham's "Modern Weapons and Revolution"; the full text is in the Russian Marx-Engels Archiv No. 1.) In this mutilated form it has been circulated by Social-Democracy in every country in the world as the "proof" that Marxism finally abandoned the conception of violent revolution as out of date. It was not until 1924, that is, after this lie had done its work for thirty years, that the true text was at last discovered and made known to the world through the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow.

THE effect of this veritable Ems forgery at the root of Social-Democracy cannot easily be measured (up to 1924 it was still in full circulation, also in England and America, as the "repudiation" of Bolshevik methods by Engels). The Preface in its falsified form was circulated as the "Political Testament of Engels," and at the critical point of the advancing imperialist epoch opened the full flood-gates to opportunist legalism. Bernstein made this falsified Preface of Engels the entire basis and starting-point of his Revisionist campaign (see his "Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus," translated in English under the title "Evolutionary Socialism," which constantly refers back to this Preface as his justification). The opposition of the Left was paralysed. The combined revolutionary and also military authority of Engels was too great to be contradicted. The effect can be traced through the whole utterances and line of the Marxist Left in German Social-Democracy, in the lack of clearness and certainty on the question of the state, and on the meaning of the conquest of power, in the confinement of the attempt to raise the revolutionary issue on the question of the mass strike, &c. Even a Rosa Luxemburg could declare, in the midst of

her sharp controversy against Bernstein and the opportunists (at the Stuttgart Congress, 1898):

The only violent means which can lead us to victory is the socialist enlightenment of the working class in the everyday struggle. And even as late as 1918, at the Foundation Congress of the German Communist Party, Luxemburg could still declare, referring to the Engels' Preface without awareness of its falsification:

I will not say that Engels, by this Preface, made himself a sharer in the guilt for the whole line of development in Germany; I will only say: Here is a classic document for the conception which was living in German Social-Democracy, or rather, which killed it.

The courage, clear-sightedness and tenacity of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in maintaining the line of revolutionary Marxism and of the armed revolution in the face of such "authoritative" falsification stands out all the more powerfully, to an extent that is not to-day easy to realise, when all these questions have now been fully cleared in principle thanks to their work.

ENGELS' fury at the falsification was extreme. Although in his last illness, he wrote at once to Kaustky (April 1, 1895):

To my amazement I see to-day in *Vorwärts* an extract from my Preface printed without my previous knowledge, and chopped up in such a fashion that I am made to appear a pacific worshipper of legality at any price. All the more I desire that the Preface be printed without abbreviation in the *Neue Zeit*, in order that this *shameful impression* shall be wiped out. I shall express my opinion very emphatically on this to Liebknecht, and also to those, whoever they may be, who have given him this opportunity to misrepresent my views. (Italics in the original.)

And on April 3 he wrote to Lafargue:

X. has played me a dirty trick. He has taken from my Preface to Marx's articles on France, 1848-1850, everything that he considered useful for the defence of tactics of *peacefulness at any price and avoidance of violence*, which he is for some time now loving to preach, especially at the present moment, when exceptional laws are being prepared in Berlin; whereas I recommend such tactics purely and solely for *present-day Germany*, and *then only with essential reservations*. In France, Belgium, Italy and Austria, these tactics, taken as a whole, cannot be followed, and in Germany they can become inapplicable to-morrow. (Italics in the original.)

Such was Engels' opinion on the falsification which became for thirty years the Bible of Revisionism and "Evolutionary Socialism." But his protest availed nothing. Death came to the rescue of the opportunists. He died on August 5 without having been able to secure the correction of the "shameful" "misrepresentation" of his basic views by the leaders of Social-Democracy; and it needed the first proletarian revolution to obtain the first publication of the truth.

WITH this symbolic direct distortion of Marxism by the leaders of Social-Democracy the new period began. Marx and Engels were dead. The full imperialist epoch set in. The last work of Marx, the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, was, as we have seen, withheld from publication for sixteen years and then only published under the strong pressure of Engels. The last work of Engels, the Preface to the *Class Struggles in France*, was directly falsified to produce an exactly opposite and counter-revolutionary meaning. The voices of Marx and Engels were silenced; the succeeding leaders of the movement, of Social-Democracy, were not strong enough to carry on their work, were even assisting to conceal and distort the teaching of Marxism, at first half-consciously through "honest" opportunism (in Engels' words), later, more and more consciously, until 1914 laid bare the fruit in open treachery; and thereafter the whole and open rôle of Social-Democracy becomes to slander and distort Marxism by gross, dishonest, deliberate misrepresentation. The revolutionary Left in the old Second International were still finding themselves. Imperialism was able to find the path open for it in the working class movement, to divide the workers, to buy off sections with concessions, to bribe and corrupt the leadership. Revisionism, Fabianism, Progressivism, Liberal-Labourism, Evolutionary Socialism, all rose to the surface upon this basis of social corruption, expressing it into political systems, and had their short-lived day. "The dance of all the dirt began."

REVISIONISM was seen in its time as an ideological and political controversy of doctrines and tactics. To-day we can see it more simply as an expression of the period of imperialism leading up to the war (when it could still appear to philistines and idiots as "progressive," "liberal," expanding "social reforms," and even "pacific") and of certain social strata (mainly petit-bourgeois professional, civil servants, sections of the aristocracy of labour) closely connected with the process of imperialist corruption, and temporarily riding on the wave. The supposed "theories," which were once so solemnly discussed, and have long since disappeared into the waste-paper basket under the merciless disproof of facts—the denial of the concentration of capital, the imagined diminution of crises, the harmonising of the contradictions of capitalism, the reconciliation of classes, the improvement of the condition of the masses, the democratising of the state, &c.—can now be conspicuously seen as the short-sighted illusions of a temporary phase and of special strata. Twenty, thirty and forty years ago the Fabians and progressives could still endeavour to speak patronisingly and pityingly of Marx as "obsolete," as not understanding modern progress, and of the Marxists as "revolutionary romantics," &c. To-day their tune is changed to a general fit of the blues and self-doubting. It is their own writings and theories that have become musty and forgotten, and bear already an antiquated and parochial air. The world war shattered their little house of cards and revealed Marxism anew as the science of world realities.

NOT Revisionism itself was so important as the general situation of the working class movement revealed in an extreme form in the diseased growths of Revisionism, Fabianism, &c. By the beginning of the twentieth century the process of adaptation to capitalism was already setting in strongly throughout Social-Democracy. It was not merely in England that such an open anti-Marxist party as the Independent Labour Party could declare :

Fortunately, "revolution" in this country has ceased to be anything more than an affected phrase.

(I.L.P. *Monthly News*, January, 1899.)

The same process was in reality going on in the "Marxist" Socialist Parties in France and even in Germany. The leader of French Socialism, Jaurès, the would-be conciliator of Marxism and bourgeois philosophy, could declare :

In a democracy, in a Republic where there is universal suffrage, the State is not for the proletarians a refractory, hard, absolutely impermeable and impenetrable block. Penetration has begun already. . . . All act on each other, and henceforth the State is penetrated in part by the force of Socialism and the proletariat. . . .

Henceforth Socialism must guard its part of the country's general interests—those of freedom, security and prosperity.

(Jaurès at the Bordeaux Congress of the French Socialist Party, 1903.)

Here sounds already 1914. In Germany the form of Marxism was maintained against a Bernstein, but not the reality ; and Bebel could declare, when challenged with the line of the Communist Manifesto :

The Communist Manifesto has been appealed to. I affirm that already in 1872 Engels in concert with Karl Marx declared that they wished to re-publish it only as a historical document. (Bebel at the Lübeck Congress of the German Social-Democratic Party, 1901.)

Behind the form of Marxist phrases, opportunism won all along the line, as shown especially in the trade union question, in the colonial question, in the war question, &c. (Bebel's affirmation of patriotism in a future war and opposition to any action likely to endanger the party organisation).

BY 1908 the Preface of Fabian Essays re-issued in that year could boast :

Since 1889 the Socialist movement has been completely transformed throughout Europe ; and the result of the transformation may fairly be described as Fabian Socialism. In the eighteenth-eighties, when Socialism revived in England for the first time since the suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871, it was not at first realised that what had really been suppressed for good and all was the romantic revolutionary Liberalism and Radicalism of 1848, to which the Socialists had attached themselves as a matter of course, &c., &c.

This pompous nonsense (the cock-a-hoop tone of these slavish parasites of capitalism in 1908, after the suppression of the Russian Revolution had confirmed them in the belief in the suppression of all future revolutions, may be usefully compared with the complete dejection of tone of the 1931 Preface, in face of the bankruptcy of Fabianism and capitalism, and triumph of the Russian Revolution) was in fact not only profoundly inaccurate—the fly boasting it had moved the wheel of imperialism—but also already by then out-of date for the real movement of forces. The thunder of the First Russian Revolution had already begun to re-awaken the proletarian forces throughout the world. The left elements were gathering around the fight on the mass strike. The negative sides of imperialism were revealing themselves ever more sharply, the growing burdens on the workers, the gathering crisis and contradictions, the drive to war. New waves of working class unrest were spreading. But these were taking confused, sporadic, theoretically helpless, anarchic forms, owing to the failure of leadership of Social-Democracy. The leadership of Revolutionary Marxism was lacking to draw together the rising workers' struggle and give it political form. There was only parliamentarism on one side, and scattered tendencies of struggle and syndicalist confusion on the other, in Western Europe. On this situation of the working class movement, cut off from its life, from Marxism, there broke inevitably, like a bolt from the unknown instead of as the long-awaited and prepared-for decisive clash, the blow and collapse of 1914.

UNLIKE the pigmies who were “completely transforming” European Socialism along the lines of liberal-reformist myopia and imperialist servility in those critical decades before the war, Engels already a quarter of a century before the world war was anxiously and systematically working out its probable main outlines and revolutionary significance. In 1888 he wrote to Liebknecht :

How things will turn out when it actually comes to war it is impossible to foresee. Attempts will no doubt be made to make it

a sham war, but that will not be so easy. If things turn out as we would like it, and this is very probable, then it will be a war of positions with varied success on the French frontier, a war of attack leading to the capture of the Polish fortresses on the Russian frontier, and a revolution in Petersburg, which will at once make the gentlemen who are conducting the war see everything in an entirely different light. One thing is certain: there will be no more quick decisions and triumphal marches either to Berlin or Paris.

(Engels to W. Liebknecht, February 23, 1888.)

The remarkable closeness of this 1888 forecast to the essential character of the war of 1914-18 (a war of positions on the Western Front; German advance through Poland in the East; no quick decisions or triumphal marches on Berlin or Paris; revolution in Petersburg transforming the whole situation) is a striking testimony to the power of Marxist penetration. (As a matter of military interest it may be noted that on another occasion Engels worked out the most probable line of the German advance through Belgium, disregarding the Neutrality Treaty as a "scrap of paper"—Engels' words—and that the German advance on Paris would probably be halted at the Marne. However, we are for the present concerned only with the political significance of Engels' line on the world war).

IN a further article in 1891 (reprinted in the *LABOUR MONTHLY* for August, 1931), Engels worked out the revolutionary significance of such a war. He laid down the line for the defeat of every capitalist government in such a war, which Lenin was later to work out in practice:

No Socialist, whatever his nationality, can desire the triumph in war either of the present German Government or of the French bourgeois republic and least of all of the Tsar which would be equivalent to the enslavement of Europe.

"The socialists in all countries," he declares, "are for peace," since peace means certainty of victory within a measurable time, whereas "war brings either victory in two or three years or complete ruination for at least fifteen to twenty years." But "if, nevertheless, war comes, then one thing is certain":

This war, where fifteen and twenty million armed men would slaughter one another and lay waste Europe as never before, this war must either bring about the immediate victory of Socialism, or so shatter the old order of things from top to bottom, and leave behind such a heap of ruins, that the old capitalist society will become more impossible than ever before, and the social revolution, though it might be set back for ten or fifteen years, would, however, in this case also have to conquer and in so much the more speedy and thorough fashion.

Of these two alternatives consequent of the world war, the first, the "immediate victory of Socialism," "victory in two or three years," was offered by the Russian Revolution, followed by the revolutions in Central Europe; but Social-Democracy was able to hold the workers outside Russia back and secure the restoration of capitalism. Therefore we are faced with the second, with the "heap of ruins," with "the old capitalist society" that has "become more impossible than ever before," and the necessary painful interval (estimated by him at "ten or fifteen years"—in fact longer, because he did not calculate on the full measure of betrayal by Social-Democracy) to the renewed revolutionary situation, which is likely in fact to be connected with renewed world war.

BUT Engels went further in his working out of the consequences of the future European war for the socialist movement, and just this is of especial importance to-day. He saw sharply the weaknesses of the existing Social-Democracy, and he saw in the future European war the instrument that would destroy it and mean a heavy setback to the movement. But he saw at the same time that out of this situation would arise a new revolutionary party which would carry on the fight, freed from the weaknesses of the old.

A European war means the death of the present German Social-Democratic Party. . . . Such a war would be our greatest misfortune, it could throw back the movement twenty years. *But the new Party that must inevitably in the end arise from these conditions would in all the countries of Europe be free from a host of vacillations and pettinesses which to-day hem in our movement on every side.* (Engels, letter to Bebel, December 16, 1879, quoted in Bebel *Aus Meinem Leben*, III. p. 85.)

This prophetic leap of Engels carries the line of development straight from Marx and Engels to the Communist International. *The war did in truth, as Engels foresaw, mean the "death" of the old German Social-Democracy. But from the ruins, as Engels also foresaw, has arisen "the new Party" of revolutionary Marxism, on an international scale ("in all the countries of Europe"), fighting opportunism ("free from a host of vacillations and pettiness which to-day hem in our movement"), fighting without reserve along the full line of Communism, that is, the line of Marx and Engels—the Communist International.* This is the most important lesson for every one on this Marxist anniversary.

TO-DAY, nearly two decades have passed since the great watershed of 1914. Eighteen and a half years of struggle and experience, of revolution and counter-revolution, of capitalist crisis, have taught in letters of fire the meaning of the two paths, have taught anew the lessons of Marxism. No longer in argument and doctrinal strife, as before the war, but in experience in the lives of the working class has been shown where the two paths lead, the path of the Second International, of the betrayal of Marxism, and the path of the Communist International, of Marxism. What began as opportunism (when Marx and Engels already gave the advice to lop the branch and save the tree, but their advice was not taken), what reached its full fruit in 1914 as social-patriotism and the betrayal of the revolution for open service to the capitalist state, has continued into the epoch of the proletarian revolution as the strangler of the workers' struggle and the builder of the basis and conditions for Fascism. What began as the fight of the revolutionary left in the old pre-war Second International against the revision and distortion of Marxism, and for the line of revolutionary mass struggle, has developed into the first proletarian revolution over one-sixth of the earth, and is now marshalling the forces of the workers throughout the world for the final struggle and the final victory of the world proletarian revolution. The line

of development has gone far since the old Communist Manifesto of 1848, first laid out the line of the battle in front and of the future course of history. Nevertheless in the broadest sense we are still in the stage of history which the old Communist Manifesto opened, in the stage of the transition from the bourgeois revolution to the world proletarian revolution ; and therefore the basic principles of the Communist Manifesto are still valid for our own time, developed by the whole subsequent experience of Marx and Engels, developed by the experience of Lenin and Bolshevism, of imperialism and the first proletarian revolution, of the whole further unfolding of capitalism and the workers' struggle up to the present day.

WHERE to-day have all the movements that have abandoned Marxism, that have abandoned the Communism of Marx and Engels, the majority movements of post-war Social-Democracy and Labourism, where have they brought the working class? In every country where they have dominated, they have brought the working class to a pitch of weakness and defeat, of misery and worsening of conditions, of staggering under the blows of a daily more aggressive world reaction, without parallel for half-a-century. In Italy, to the victory of Fascism. In Germany, where fifteen years ago the workers held all in their hands, the Counter-Revolution has been put back in the saddle by the help of Social-Democracy, and the workers' movement is left at the mercy of the murder-bands of Hitler. In Britain, where millions and millions of workers listened hopefully to the call of Labourism, put Labour Governments in office, came out on the General Strike, to-day the capitalist offensive throws all the burdens of the crisis upon the workers, reaction reigns in the form of the National Government, and the leaders of the Labour Party cynically throw off the professions of allegiance to the movement they no longer need, and join the National Government, leaving demoralisation behind. Only in the country where Communism, where the line of Marx and Engels has been followed, only there the workers

have conquered the bourgeoisie, smashed the counter-revolution, established their power unshakeably and advance in the triumphs of building up socialism. That is the lesson of these eighteen and a half years since the outbreak of the war, to which the workers' movement throughout the world is awakening. *Marxism, Communism, is the lifeblood of the working class movement. Cut off from Marxism, the working class movement perishes and goes down in defeat.*

LOOK at Germany. Fifteen years ago the German workers held all power in their hands. Kautsky wrote with truth in 1931 :

In November, 1918, the Revolution was the work of the proletariat alone. The proletariat won so all-powerful a position that the bourgeois elements, to begin with, did not dare to attempt any resistance. (Kautsky : Preface to the 3rd edition of *The Proletarian Revolution*, 1931.)

That was fifteen years ago. What have the leaders of Social-Democracy done with that power which the German workers won by their sacrifice and their blood and hopefully entrusted to their hands, to the hands of the leaders of Majority Social-Democracy and Independent Social-Democracy, as Commissars on behalf of the workers' and soldiers' councils for the fulfilment of the revolution ? The leaders of Social-Democracy gave the power back into the hands of the bourgeoisie. In the name of " democracy " they gave the power back to the bourgeoisie. In the name of " democracy " they dissolved the workers' councils. In the name of " democracy " they disarmed the proletariat. In the name of " democracy " they armed the White Guards and the officers' corps, to shoot down the workers and the workers' leaders, Liebknecht and Luxemburg. In the name of " democracy " they came as ever more humble suppliants and junior partners to share in " coalition " a fragment of the power they had themselves given the bourgeoisie and administer for capitalism, until at last the bourgeoisie kicked them out as no longer necessary. Marx had written :

Between the Capitalist and the Communist social order lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other.

To this there would correspond a political period of transition, when the State could be nothing else than the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. (Marx : *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.)

But Kautsky wrote :

Between the time when the democratic state has a purely middle class government and the time when it has a purely Labour Government extends a period when the one is being transformed into the other. To this a political period of transition would correspond when the Government would assume generally the form of a coalition. (Kautsky : *Die Proletarische Revolution*, published in English as *The Labour Revolution*, p. 45.)

TO-DAY we can see where this "correction" of Marxism in the interests of the bourgeois régime has led. Step by step all the gains of the revolution have been thrown away. Step by step Social-Democracy has helped the bourgeoisie to consolidate its power. And to-day at last, the process completed, even the shell of "democracy," for which all was sacrificed, is thrown aside, and the open face of Fascism confronts the workers. This is where the path of the Second International has led. The workers are faced with the most desperate struggle in their history for the barest existence of the movement, against the menace of counter-revolution, against the menace of world counter-revolution, against the menace of world counter-revolutionary war. The examples of the Russian Revolution and of the German Revolution over these fifteen years teach the workers of the world on a giant scale how a workers' revolution can conquer and how a workers' revolution can be laid in the dust. The issues to-day confronting the workers throughout the world are the most serious since the war.

TURN to Britain. With what confidence Labourism and Fabianism and I.L.P.ism turned on their "alternative" path to Marxism? The line of Marxism, the line of the class struggle, the line of the workers' revolution, was "obsolete" and "out of touch with modern realities." They called the workers to the path of "peaceful democratic advance," of reformist parliamentarism, as the sure path to

Socialism. The overthrow of Marxism—this was the great work of Fabianism, declares Pease in his official *History of the Fabian Society* (1916) :

Its first achievement was to break the spell of Marxism in England. . . . The Fabian Society freed English Socialism from this intellectual bondage, and freed it sooner and more completely than Revisionists have succeeded in doing anywhere else.

In its place they set up the basis of the bourgeois Labour movement :

It accepted economic science as taught by the accredited British professors ; it built up the edifice of Socialism on the foundations of our existing political and social institutions.

i.e., on the foundations of capitalism. So MacDonald corrects the “ errors ” of Marxism in relation to Britain :

But the England of 1844 did not break out into revolt ; Chartism did not develop into Socialism. The logical conclusion was not the line of advance. The class-war created trade unionism ; the working classes became citizens ; law, morality, the force of combination lifted to some extent the pall of darkness which hung over the land. The Marxian to-day still wonders why England fell from grace. England did not fall from grace. Neither Marx nor Engels saw deep enough to discover the possibilities of peaceful advance which lay hidden beneath the surface.

(MacDonald : *Socialism and Society*, 1905.)

Thus MacDonald “ correcting ” Marx from his profound understanding of the real “ peaceful ” line of capitalist development. Or again, Wells :

The Marxist presents dramatically what, after all, may come methodically and unromantically, a revolution as orderly and quiet as the procession of the equinoxes. There may be a concentration of capital and a relative impoverishment of the general working mass of peoples, for example, and yet a general advance in the world’s prosperity and a growing sense of social duty in the owners of capital and land may do much to mask this antagonism of class interests and ameliorate its miseries. Moreover, this antagonism itself may in the end find adequate expression through temperate discussion, and the class-war come disguised beyond recognition, with hates mitigated by charity and swords beaten into pens, a mere constructive conference between two classes of fairly well-intentioned albeit perhaps still biassed men and women.

(Wells : *New Worlds for Old*, 1908.)

Such was the outlook and understanding of world tendencies from the basis of which these petty philistines "corrected" Marxism and built up the "Labourist" (bourgeois reformist) ideology. (Needless to say, the same "pacific" Wells turned into a servile tool of the War Office during the war, and in 1918 was demanding that the "little beast" of a Bolshevik, Lenin, "ought to be killed by some moral sanitary method"—see the *Labour Leader* of July 25, 1918).

AND to-day what is the outcome? What has been achieved of the "evolutionary path to Socialism"? The workers have followed the Labour Party, have voted in two Labour Governments. What have they gained? The conditions of the workers are worse than ever. The power of capital is intensified. Socialism is as far off as ever. Let the reformist themselves speak. Pease concludes his *History of the Fabian Society* in 1916 with a "Review of Thirty Years," and finds that after all the complacency and self-satisfaction he has to admit:

It must be confessed that we have made but little progress along the main road of Socialism. Private ownership of capital and land flourishes almost (sic) as vigorously as it did thirty years ago. Its grosser cruelties have been checked, but the thing itself has barely been touched. Time alone will show whether progress is to be along existing lines.

That was after thirty years. Follow up after forty years. In 1931 a new edition of *Fabian Essays* was published with a Preface entitled "Fabian Essays Forty Years Later—What They Overlooked." Here we learn:

The distinctive mark of the Fabian Society among the rival bodies of Socialists with which it came in conflict in its early days was its resolute constitutionalism. When the greatest Socialist of that day, the poet and craftsman, William Morris, told the workers that there was no hope for them save in revolution, we said that if that were true, there was no hope at all for them, and urged them to save themselves through Parliament, the municipalities and the franchise.

It is not so certain to-day as it seemed in the eighties that Morris was not right.

The workers, in short, trusted the promises of the reformist leaders ; they sought to " save themselves through Parliament, the municipalities and the franchise," and voted Labour Governments into office. What is the outcome ? The new Fabian Preface continues :

The Treasury Bench has been filled with Socialists. Yet, so far as Socialism is concerned, it might as well have been filled with Conservative bankers or baronets.

WHAT is the outlook of the Labour Party leadership to-day ? We find the following revealing expression :

George Lansbury said he had lived to see all that Dr. Aveling, Eleanor Marx and H. M. Hyndman had personally taught him come true. The present collapse of capitalism had come about precisely as they had prophesied. There was need to-day for an absolute belief in Socialism. After the war we had rejoiced in a swing back to Socialism, but we had been deceived. The gospel of Socialism had not been sufficiently spread.

Hamilton Fyfe disagreed. Socialism after the war, he declared, had been killed by the Labour Government in 1924.

(*New Clarion*, January 28, 1933.)

This discussion of the leader of the Labour Party and of the former Editor of the *Daily Herald*, reported in the principal weekly organ of the Labour Party, is typical of the present stage. After the overwhelming effects of the crisis, the failure of the two Labour Governments, the departure of the principal leaders to join the Conservatives, and the heavy electoral setback, the prevailing expression of the Labour Party leadership is one of discouragement and failure. The aged leader of the Labour Party begins to wonder aloud whether the revolutionary Marxism that he learned in his youth and abandoned is not after all being proved correct. From this he draws no conclusions : for the failure of all Labour " progressive " " democratic " promises of " the peaceful path to socialism " he endeavours to throw the blame on the workers : " we had rejoiced in a swing back to socialism, but had been deceived. The gospel of socialism had not been sufficiently spread." The ex-Editor of the *Daily Herald*,

freed from the responsibility of official position, throws the blame on the Labour Government.

TURN to the leadership of Left Labourism. From Maxton we find the same confessions of failure :

So far as the achievement of our major purpose, the creation of a new social order, is concerned, I say frankly that twenty-seven years of effort on my part in the working class movement seem to have ended in failure, and this applies also to the efforts of every section of our Movement.

(Maxton at Sheffield, *New Leader*, December 30, 1932.)

In subsequent discussion Maxton has endeavoured to argue that this confession of failure applies equally to Marxism or Communism as to Labourism. This is only to attempt to conceal the real meaning of the lesson. The line of Marxism or Communism has already fully proved its correctness *theoretically* in relation to the whole development in England and every question of the working class movement as against the line of Labourism. But it has still to be tried *in practice* by the British working class, when it will equally demonstrate its *power in practice to defeat capitalism and establish Socialism*. The line so far of the organised British working class movement, of its leadership and policy, has been the line of Labourism, of Fabianism, of I.L.P.ism, of the denial of Marxism. And it is this line, and this line alone, that has led to the present disastrous outcome.

MARXISM on every side is coming into its own again in Britain and throughout the world. The force of facts, the lessons of experience, drive the working class anew to the revolutionary line of Marxism. The collapse of the old I.L.P. reformism, and its hoisting of the flag of "revolutionary Marxism," is a sign of the deeper processes at work within the working class, and especially among the politically conscious workers. The old fog of opportunist illusions, which dimmed the understanding of Marxism in the long "peaceful" period of Capitalism and imperialism up to 1914, has been ever more heavily shattered

by the successive experiences of the war, of the post-war period and of the present world crisis. Marxism is to-day on the lips of all. But the fight against Opportunism, against the distortion of Marxism, is not yet over. When Opportunism has failed in the open fight against Marxism, it dons the cloak of Marxism, it invokes the name of Marxism in order to fight real Marxism, that is, revolutionary working class advance or Communism. The Second International, which has betrayed every principle of Marxism, to-day dares still to celebrate the anniversary of Marx. But the working class to-day has its strong weapon against such distortion of Marxism. The fight to clear Marxism of the dross of philistine caricatures, vulgarisation and downright distortions, the fight which it is the imperishable glory of Lenin and the Bolsheviks to have begun and waged without flinching in the conditions of the old pre-war Second International, is carried forward to-day by the Communist International, which realises the principles of Marx and Engels in the epoch of capitalist downfall and of the proletarian revolution. Marxism, the Marxism of Marx and Engels, is Communism. The fight of Marxism to-day is the fight of the Communist International. This is the most important fact for every Marxist to understand on the present fiftieth anniversary of Marx's death, if he wishes to realise his aims as a Marxist and to take his place in the fight.

R. P. D.