

# Marxism for Today

By HAIM KANTOROVITCH

## IV

In his notes on Feuerbach, Marx remarks: "Philosophers have only interpreted the world differently; the point is to change it."

If one has in mind that Marx was a German philosopher, raised on German metaphysics, the direct descendant of Kant, Fichte and Hegel, for whom explaining the world was even more important than changing it, one can understand how revolutionary Marx's remark must have been at that time. It was nothing short of philosophic heresy.

Marx was a philosopher, he remained a philosopher all his life; his economic studies as well as his historic writings are economic and historic illustrations to his philosophy. Some one has truly remarked that "Capital" is even more a philosophic work than an economic study. Marxism is Dialectical Materialism applied to history and to the analysis of capitalist society.

### Marx a Philosopher

Marx was all his life a philosopher. Marxism is a philosophy, though not listed as such in the usual bourgeois histories of philosophy.

But Marx was a different kind of philosopher, a philosopher who thought changing the world is as much the task of the philosopher as explaining it; nay, more than that, that changing the world is the real urge for explaining it. "The life of society is essentially practice. All the mysteries which seduce speculative thought into mysticism find their solution in human practice."

This constant emphasis on practice is probably the main reason why professional philosophers can not, even in our time, admit Marxism in their philosophical temple. Their temple is the Ivory Tower which is so high above life that it has lost all contact with it, if it ever had any.

Philosophy even in our time of pragmatism is still looked upon as something out and apart from life. The "vulgar crowd" may be

busy, living, fighting, starving, dying, trying to change the world; the philosophers are content to reflect on eternal problems in their Ivory Tower, heedless of what is going on below.

### The Ivory Tower

In his novel, "The Pupil," Paul Bourget has depicted such a typical philosopher. He is a man entirely out of the world; he has no friends, he never goes anywhere, he reads no newspapers, he never notices people, he is always shut up in his study in a side street; the shutters are always closely shut so that the noise of the whirling street may not penetrate into the philosopher's study and disturb his reflections on the eternal problems of the universe.

If this is the philosopher, Marx was not a philosopher; but fortunately this is nothing but a perversion of philosophy. It was up to Marx to bring philosophy back to life, and put life into philosophy.

Spurred on by the social struggles of his time, Marx abandoned speculative metaphysics and set as his task, as he said in a letter to his friend Ruge, "discovering a new world through criticism of the old one." In that letter, written at the outset of his career, he mapped out his life program. "We do not say to the world, Cease your struggles which are foolish, for we will give you the true battle cry. We merely show the world what it is really fighting for..."