

# MARXISM FOR TODAY

By HAIM KANTOROVITCH

## V

Contrary to other philosophers, Marx came not to discover a new "ultimate, eternal truth" (we have had so many of them!) but to interpret what was going on around him. There is a constant, continuous fight going on among men. What are they fighting for? Where does this fight lead?

### What Men Fight For

What are men fighting for? Of course for ideals, for freedom, for truth, for justice; but Marx saw deeper than that. He saw that it is just men, abstract men, fighting for abstract ideals. "Man," Marx says in his criticism of the Hegelian philosophy of right, "is not an abstract being squatting down somewhere outside the world. Man is the world of men, the state, the society."

It is with human society that we must concern ourselves, and this human society is not something homogeneous. It is, on the contrary, split into different social classes that have different and opposing interests. It is for their class interests that they are fighting.

It is not just a fight among men. It is a fight between classes. It is the class struggle. All ideals that men fight for are secondary qualities. They are the reflections of the class interests for which classes fight. "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."

### Class Struggle

One cannot get away from the struggle. There is no escape. One participates in it, even when he does not know it and does not want it. The class struggle pervades all social activity. It dominates all intellectual activity. It is behind all resounding words, ideals and eternal truths—what is one to do?

There is only one way. One must take sides. One is either with one class or another. One is either on one side of the barricades or the other. There is no middle way.

The development of society has brought about a condition where

the main struggle is really between two classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Of all classes Marx well saw, "The proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class," and he threw in his lot with this only revolutionary class.

He paid the price for it. He paid it with starvation, poverty, the contempt of the official learned world, but he created the revolutionary philosophy of the proletariat. Much heroism was needed for such a task, but he had no lack of it.

Millions of workers all over the world will always remember with reverence the philosopher who neglected his own life so that he could live for them.

### Marx Father

There are still people who have to refer to Karl Marx as the father of socialism. Some think of him with anger. "If not for that few, we would not have this nuisance called socialism." Others point to the employers sat down with the workers and the government representative to negotiate a settlement. The representative of the workers was a youngster. Not knowing what it was all about, he was cowed by the presence of a government official and flattered by the fact that his employer condescended to deal with him. An innocuous agreement such as was sending back workers by the thousands was negotiated.

The terms are familiar: 1. The employees agree to call off the strike immediately. 2. The employer agrees to take all of the employees back to work. 3. The employer agrees to abide by Section 7A of the National Industrial Recovery Act. 4. There shall be him with pride, "What a genius! He created socialism."

Both, however, are wrong. Whether the Socialist movement be a blessing or curse, it is not due to Karl Marx.

Great mass movements, it is true, are always connected with the names of great leaders, but they are not invented or created by them. They grow like weeds in the field. No one knows their

real origin, no one planted them, no one consciously wanted them.

The leader comes later; his job is to cultivate the wild growth; he gives it form and expression, when the time is ripe and conditions favorable he may even somewhat change its direction, but that is all. No leader, no matter how great, can do more; no leader, no matter how great, can create something out of nothing.

### No Exceptions

Karl Marx and Frederic Engels were of course no exceptions. There would have been no Marxism had they not found all the materials for their structure ready at hand.

It is not known exactly what turned Marx' attention to socialism, but when his interest in socialism was aroused, he found ready to hand a Socialist movement, even if small and insignificant; Socialist theories and ideas even if, in his opinion, unrealistic and unscientific, and what is more important, a working class that had already begun to become conscious of its interests and its power, a fact which many socialists of that time overlooked.

The workers of Germany were ready for Lasalle. The workers of England had had their experience in the Chartist movement.

### Formative Years

Speaking about the formative years of Karl Marx, M. Beer says, "The years during which the elements of this new conception of society were accumulating in his mind, and shaping themselves into a system were involved in a revolutionary atmosphere. In 1842, England witnessed its first strike on a large scale, which threatened to extend into a general strike and which bore a political revolutionary character. In 1843 and 1944, the idea of the impending revolution was spreading rapidly on all sides in Germany, and Socialist periodicals appeared in the industrial centers. France swarmed with Socialist systems, Socialist novels and newspaper articles." (Page 69).

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