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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

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www.trinityfoundation.org Email: tjtrinityfound@aol.com Telephone: 423.743.0199

Marxism: Chapter 3 from *Historiography: Secular and Religious* By Gordon H. Clark

Editor's note: The following article is taken from Dr. Gordon H. Clark's Historiography: Secular and Religious, The Trinity Foundation, [1971] 1994 second edition. With the rise of Marxism of various sorts among the young, having been "preached" from the colleges, universities, and even seminaries and among the political class with candidates that openly espouse Marxism, this article is pertinent to today's situation. A few punctuation changes have been made.

The preceding discussions concerned non-historical explanations of history. Geographical determinism and physical determinism depend completely on non-human factors to account for the events commonly called history. Statistical explanation also, even though the murders and marriages it counts are human actions, cannot very plausibly be called an historical explanation. In its exclusive attention to frequencies the theory is more mathematical than historical, and Buckle said that the volition of the agent was immaterial and irrelevant.

In addition to the objections outlined in the preceding chapter, the implausibility of explaining history without reference to human volition is obvious. We therefore turn to historical theories of history; that is, to theories that assign to the decisions of men some large or small, but in any case necessary role in their explanations. Some of these theories are deterministic. They regard the course of history as inevitable. Nevertheless, particular decisions are integral parts of the process. Some later theories are more "historical" than the earlier ones. They are not

deterministic; they are still further removed from naturalism. These will be considered in a later chapter. Here, however, after a brief account of economic determinism, the remainder of this chapter will discuss Marxism.

Economic Determinism

Economic determinism, while it purports to be as scientific as any of the preceding, may be called an historical theory because the factors on which it relies are the choices and actions of human beings. Economic developments are events, human events, just as truly as were the Crusades and the destruction of the Spanish Armada. The point at issue is whether or not the latter, and all history, can be explained as economically determined.

In its simplest form economic determinism is the theory that men are motivated by their economic interests, and that appeals to principles, to morality, to religion, are pretty much hypocrisy. Fortunately, a well-known example of the theory disdains to rely on vague generalities and makes a very specific application susceptible of being tested by methods of research. This example is Charles Beard's *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* (1913). The willingness to offer such a detailed study is most praiseworthy.

Beard's general idea is that the Declaration of Independence was a truly democratic document, while the Constitution was a conservative reaction by bondholders to protect their financial interests. Beard professes to justify this interpretation of the

Constitution by an examination of the holdings of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention.

Now, while such a specific study is most praiseworthy in its aim, it seems that in the later edition of 1935, Beard himself, political reformer though he was, had to modify, virtually retract, his earlier thesis. Here economic determinism makes way for the motivations of the “political man.” Yet the impression remains that the Constitution was pushed through by the wealthy creditors in their opposition to the poor, the farmers, and the debtors.

In 1956 Robert E. Brown in *Charles Beard and the Constitution* challenged the research on which Beard’s conclusions were founded. Brown showed that Beard’s methods were poor, his evidence not only fragmentary but misleading, and that his conclusions are without basis in the evidence. Two years later Forrest McDonald in *We the People* completed the demolition of this economic interpretation of the Constitution.

Both authors show that there was no significant difference of type or amount of property separating Federalists from their opponents in several states. In the case of North Carolina, which at first rejected the Constitution, there is even some ground for belief that the “biggest money” resisted the Constitution, while smaller men supported it. Anti-democratic spokesmen who, for the Beardians, ought to have been Federalists, were in alliance with wealthy and well-born interest groups who vigorously opposed ratification. “Democratic” frontier farmers in places like Georgia voted for, not against, the Constitution. The five biggest bond owners of 1787 either refused to sign the Constitution or left the Philadelphia Convention before its work was finished.

After listing such financial interests of the delegates and their states, and after examining a tabulation of the voting in the Convention, McDonald concludes, “In short, the voting patterns of the state delegations in the Convention by no means followed the lines of basic economic cleavage into realty and personality interests” (97).

In addition to an analysis of the Convention, McDonald in Part III, which occupies more than half the volume, studies the economic alignments in the process of ratification. Here too no economic pattern can be found. In all, the two authors have given a

massive, detailed refutation of Beard’s economic thesis.

To be sure, economic motives have had great effect on the course of history, and if the existence of economic forces were sufficient to prove economic determinism, the latter could be proved a hundred times over. But this is just the difficulty. Economic determinism is the theory that there are no other motives operative in human decisions. Economic terms are the only terms in which historical developments are explicable. If religious or strictly political terms are used, particularly by the historical agents, the theory dismisses them as mere disguises for economic interests. Beard’s attempt was most fortunate precisely because it allowed for a detailed check.

Consider a second example. Louis M. Hacker and Benjamin B. Kendrick in their *The United States Since 1865* emphasize, indeed their left-wing prejudices compel them to overemphasize, the control economic forces have over history. Among other things they represent American policy in Cuba and the Philippines as determined by economics. For example, in October 1929 Senator King of Utah, the leading beet-growing state, and Senator Broussard of Louisiana, the leading cane-growing state, introduced a proposal for the immediate independence of the Philippines. No one doubts that the domestic sugar industry was a part of these Senators’ motivation. And yet the authors can state on the next page (third edition, 367), “American rule over the islands has been distinguished for its humanity in a portion of the earth where the white man’s burden is lightly held. When the United States occupied the islands, the proportion of illiteracy was 85 percent; in 1921 the Wood-Forbes Commission found it reduced to 37 percent.... Deaths from cholera and smallpox have been practically eliminated; order is maintained and justice honestly dispensed.”

It is to the credit of Hacker and Kendrick that they state these facts; but the theory of economic determinism with its attempt to explain the granting of independence to the Philippines as a device to enrich domestic producers of sugar, can hardly account for the “humanity” of American rule. Other motivations must also have been operative; and if so,

events are not determined by economics pure and simple.

Historical Materialism

The theory of Karl Marx and the Communists is not economic determinism but historical materialism. In a letter to the present writer, Dr. Herbert Aptheker, chief theoretician of the Communist Party in America and National Director of the American Institute for Marxist Studies, said, "Identifying economic determinism with historical materialism is common and has been done for almost one hundred years. It is nevertheless an error, and the error has been pointed out and contested by Marxists, ever since Engels himself specifically did so."

It may immediately be admitted that there is at least a verbal difference, and perhaps a difference of some importance. Communism admits, as economic determinism is not supposed to, that economic motives are the only ones operative in history. There are even religious motivations, as well as atheistic, military, ethical, intellectual or philosophical motivations, and any others one can name. However, these are subsidiary; though really operative, they are derivative. Further, the difference between economic determinism and historical materialism can be accentuated by noting that these motivations do not derive from economics in the narrowest financial sense, but rather from the technological level of the epoch's methods of manufacture.

The basic Marxist position is succinctly phrased by Friedrich Engels in the Preface to *The Communist Manifesto*: "In every historical epoch the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch." In another work he repeats the principle in a slightly expanded form:

The final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in the modes of production and exchange...[and conversely] the growing perception that existing social

institutions are unreasonable and unjust...is only proof that in the modes of production and exchange changes have taken place.¹

Marx's own words are,

The sum total relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures, and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life.²

Neither Marx nor Engels seems so averse to the mention of economics as Dr. Aptheker. They both stress economics. It may not be a matter of bondholders versus landholders; but modes of production, division of labor, methods of exchange are economics nonetheless.

Dialectical Materialism

Communism is more than a theory of history in the ordinary sense. It is a theory of economics, politics, even of physics and zoology—a complete philosophy in fact. Karl Marx, as is well known, started out as an Hegelian. He developed his views by inverting or materializing Hegelianism, and not by studying sociology empirically. A certain minimum of this philosophy is needed to put the matter of history in proper perspective.

The first point, which seems to be a matter of physics or maybe metaphysics, is Marxist materialism. Ludwig Feuerbach, who had studied under Hegel, revolted against his master and rejected idealism in favor of materialism. Marx followed him in denying the reality of the spirit. If anything, later Communism stresses materialism more than Marx did. Stalin is very clear that the world is not an Absolute Idea. It is matter in motion. Matter is independent of mind, mind is derivative; matter is the source of sensation, and thought is a product of the brain. True, Communists reject an older form of materialism because it is too static. Heraclitean flux

¹ *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, 94-95.

² *Critique of Political Economy*, 11-12, translated by N. I. Stone. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1913.

is more to their liking. Or, in modern language, instead of metaphysical materialism, their theory is dialectical materialism. With a dictator's disregard of what metaphysics has meant in philosophy, Josef Stalin sketches the Communist view in *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*.

For Stalin, metaphysics is a bad word: It regards nature as an accidental agglomeration of independent things. But dialectics regards nature as an integral whole, each part determined by each other. Nor is nature static; it is in a state of continuous change. Contrary to the metaphysical view, the change is not simple growth, in which quantitative changes never lead to qualitative changes; but rather after the accumulation of imperceptible quantitative changes, there explodes a fundamental qualitative change. This dialectical law of nature explains why gradualism, compromise, and reform are to be rejected in politics, and dependence placed on violent revolution.

That nature and therefore human nature is in this way dialectical is explained by the fact that, contrary to metaphysics, internal contradictions are inherent in all things. The flux of matter and society is a struggle of opposites. There are no eternal and immutable principles of justice or private property. Revolution is natural and class struggle inevitable.

Clearly it is the revolutionary application of the idea of the dialectic that controls Stalin's theory. Even if "metaphysics" had been tied to the view that quantitative changes never lead to qualitative changes—and this is not strictly true even of Aristotle—and even if Communism could be credited with a new insight that the qualitative change is abrupt, there is a great gap between this natural flux and the program of political revolution. After all, the change from feudalism to capitalism, on which Communism stakes so much of its claim, was neither so sudden nor so violent as Stalin requires. More of this history later. At the moment there is another remark appropriate to this dialecticism. A theory of continuous natural change is a poor basis on which to erect a permanent social system. Hegel has been unfairly ridiculed because he was supposed to have thought that the Prussian state was the culmination of universal history. His dialectic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis was also criticized as

preventing any completion at all. However, Hegel's all-inclusive Absolute is a pretty fair answer to these criticisms. But when the Communists retain Heraclitus' flux while discarding his Logos, when they turn Hegel's intellectual dialectic into a natural, materialistic process, it is not so clear that there can be a culmination, despite their asseverations that classes and class warfare will cease. At any rate, Communist metaphysics, philosophy, dialecticism, and its epistemology, as will be mentioned in a moment, are not impressive. Violent revolution is the important idea.

Since violence and the events of history prove what is true and eliminate what is false, Stalin's success in finally murdering Trotsky demonstrates that Stalin's Communism is orthodox. But Trotsky too placed great emphasis on dialectic. In a letter to one James Burnham, who wanted to work out a political solution of the concrete problem of Finland and who thought that the introduction of dialectics into the argument was a red herring, Trotsky wrote, "If it is possible to give a correct definition of the state without utilizing the method of dialectical materialism; if it is possible correctly to determine politics without giving a class analysis of the state, then the question arises, Is there any need whatsoever for Marxism?"³

Both Stalin and Trotsky are to be congratulated on one point, if on nothing else. They insist on an integrated view. History is not to be divorced from physics, nor zoology from politics. But for this very reason, when Stalin and all other Marxists declare that matter is independent of our mind, and that thought is a product of the brain, we may legitimately raise the question of epistemology.

Strangely enough, the epistemological difficulties of materialistic behaviorism do not seem to trouble these people. Feuerbach in early life had been an idealist and had pressed the epistemological difficulties against materialism; later he turned completely around and repudiated Hegelianism, but how he then explained knowledge is not clear. Marx, in the same light-handed fashion, dismissed solipsism as an insult to the proletariat.

³ *In Defense of Marxism*, 78, 189, 187.

Now there are many difficulties in behaviorism.⁴ One only will be mentioned here. If thought is a function of the brain, and if the brain functions according to scientific laws, then the thought of one brain is entirely on a level with that of any other. Everything is strictly physiological, and the chemistry in one case is no “truer” than in a second. A few chemicals and collisions produce the “idea,” or rather the motions we call Communism, while in another brain a few chemicals produce the idea of capitalism. Both are equally good chemistry and there is no ground for a preference. Chemical reactions do not prefer.⁵

Yet Communists prefer Communism. Like professional historians and ordinary citizens Communists too pass judgment on great men and historical events. Indeed, they are severe in their condemnation of capitalistic politics and economics. Can Communism provide any criteria for such judgments? Can ethical norms have a materialistic basis?

The Communist answer is a particularly intricate tangle. A few paragraphs below Marx’s use of the concept of self-alienation will be mentioned, and under this concept Communism could be taken as a prescription for the cure of neurotic personality. This does not solve the question of morality, but it helps to explain its position in Marxism. Because the idea of self-alienation was swallowed up by another concept and became less and less prominent, only the more obvious contradictions in Communism’s ethics will be mentioned here.

In his effort to be scientific and empirical Marx rejected ethics as a normative science, yet his description of feudalism as a bondage is made with ethical fervor and his attacks on capitalism are highly denunciatory. The language is far removed from pure empirical description. Engels was even more obviously self-contradictory. Within the limits of a few pages of his *Anti-Dühring* he asserts that all morality is relative, yet morality has progressed and will progress until there is a truly human morality. On occasion Marxism claims to be a value-free science, construing moral opinions as class demands,

and then sets itself up as the most ethical of all worldviews. Lenin insisted that Marxism contains no shred of ethics and then spoke of the fundamental rules of everyday life and the revolutionary consciousness of justice.

A. F. Shiskin, a contemporary Soviet moral philosopher, defends the derivation of ethical principles from social reality. Marx himself, let it be noted as we continue, did no such thing. But, in any case, if moral norms are derivatives of social reality, then morality must differ in different societies. Yet Shiskin speaks of the objective rigorous norms of Marxism in contrast with the ethical relativism of Goebbels.

Shiskin could obtain some show of consistency by eliminating the rejection of ethics and placing hope in the establishment of norms on a scientific descriptive basis. This consistency, however, would be purchased at the price of logical impossibility. Descriptive details, no matter how detailed, cannot imply normative principles. Communists therefore have no reason for their untiring hatred of other people. Materialism, whether dialectical or otherwise, makes knowledge impossible and fails to justify ethical distinctions. If now these basic flaws are disregarded, does the remainder of Marxism fare much better?

Labor Theory

Labor theory is more closely related to economics, politics, and the Communistic view of history. As an introduction to this labor theory Friedrich Engels’ *Principles of Communism* is most effective. This small work was written in question-and-answer form, and the references will be to the question number.

Q 1. “Communism is the doctrine of the conditions of the liberation of the proletariat.” This statement clearly presupposes that there is a “proletariat”; that it needs to be liberated from something, and, as will be seen, that Communism is the only possible method of liberation.

Q 2. “The proletariat is that class of society which lives entirely from the sale of its labor and does not

⁴ Brand Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought*, Chapter IX. See also Gord H. Clark, *Behaviorism and Christianity*, *The Trinity Foundation*, 1982, combined in *Modern Philosophy*, *The Trinity Foundation*, 2008. – Editor.

⁵ For further difficulties in epistemology, see A. James Gregor, *A Survey of Marxism*, 55-71.

draw profit from any kind of capital.” This explicitly excludes from the proletariat all persons who own a savings account, a few shares of stock, or a war bond. It also excludes farmers. Since there are, however, people who own none of these, the proletariat is not an empty class. What proportion of the total population the proletariat forms, and whether this proportion is increasing or decreasing, are questions to be considered in evaluating Communist theory.

Q 4. “The proletariat organized in the industrial revolution which took place in England in the last half of the [eighteenth] century.” Poverty and proletarianism, Engels explains, are not to be equated. There have always been poor people, but proletarians first came into existence with factories. When machinery became so expensive that only capitalists could own it, when therefore a man had to sell his labor for wages, then the worker became a proletarian.⁶

Since poverty and proletarianism are not synonymous, it is interesting to consider the case of a wealthy proletarian. He owns no stocks and bonds; he may even have revolutionary ideas; but his wages are high; he owns two cars; he works a forty-hour week. Does he need “liberation”? Marx and Engels, of course, do not consider this case. They argue that this case cannot occur.

For Engels, competition between capitalists themselves and among workers reduces the pay of the workers to a bare subsistence level. Q 5. “The price of labor is also equal to the costs of production of labor. But the costs of production of labor consist of precisely the quantity of means of subsistence necessary to enable the worker to continue working and to prevent the working class from dying out. The worker therefore will get no more for his labor than is necessary for this purpose; the price of labor or the wage will, in other words, be the lowest, the minimum, required for the maintenance of life.”

This paragraph, so basic to Communism, is a major blunder in economic theory. First of all, there is the factual blunder in that wages are not held down

to a bare subsistence level. Reference has just been made to proletarians who own two cars and work a forty-hour week. Wages on a subsistence level may have been the cause in the early nineteenth century. But two considerations deprive this fact of all Communistic value. The first, of lesser importance, is that under the conditions of that time the factory workers could not have done better in a different occupation. They would have fared worse; and subsistence is better than starvation. The second point is that Engels mistook the historical accident of subsistence wages for a necessary element of capitalism. This is a stark mistake in analysis.

Another blunder, one that has permeated Communism, is also found in the same paragraph. When Engels says that the price of labor is equal to the cost of producing labor, he depends on the principle that the price of anything is determined by the costs of production. In other words, the value of a commodity is fixed by the amount of labor that goes into it.

This is not true. The price of an article is fixed by supply and demand. One could expend months of labor in producing a surrey with a fringe on the top; but the price it would bring would be below the subsistence level. In Russia and China today the price of an article may not depend on supply and demand; but neither does it depend on the amount of labor necessary to its production. Under Communism the price is fixed by the government. In the United States where left-wing liberals are trying to undermine the capitalism that made the nation great, price is still largely determined by supply and demand. Only the most repulsive and repressive methods of a socialistic state can modify this equation to any great extent.

To pause a moment for a side glance, one can see that equating the exchange value of a product with the labor time expended in its production equates the man hours of an expert with those of an unskilled laborer.

make a rabble of paupers, but that a rabble is created when poverty is joined with hatred against the wealthy, Stein defined the proletariat as a mass of proud defiant poor, and dangerous because of its consciousness of unity in rebellion against society. Stein was a conservative; but Marx adopted many of his expressions and turned them to his own purposes.

⁶ Karl Marx did not develop Communism through actual observation of the working classes, but through an inversion of Hegelian philosophy. Not that he was completely original; no man ever is. Feuerbach was a notable influence. Lorenz von Stein in his *Der Socialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs* seems to be the one who contributed the idea of the proletariat. Following Hegel, who said that poverty does not

That the value or price of a commodity is equal to the labor, the factory labor, required to produce it is tied into a theory of surplus value. Marx had the incredibly stupid idea that “constant capital,” *i. e.* the land, buildings, machinery, and raw materials, are not factors in production. Production depends on labor power alone. Therefore, capital and capitalists, that do not contribute labor power, do not contribute to the value of a commodity. Therefore, also the profits of capitalism are theft, and those who own land and machinery are social parasites. They exploit the workers. Similarly, brokers, distributors, middlemen, lenders, add nothing to the commodity’s value. Consequently, they are not entitled to receive any part of its price. They are thieves.

One would suppose that Marx recognized the need of buildings and machinery. But this theory presents some difficulties. In a moment his attack on the division of labor will be discussed, a consequence of which might be the abolition of factories. The final utopian state of mature Communism is so devoid of organization that one naturally wonders how the material level of even the nineteenth century could be maintained. There is, however, an intermediate stage of “raw” Communism, more frequently called the dictatorship of the proletariat. This occupied the attention of the Soviets, and their solution to the problem of buildings and machinery is not hard to discern. Ownership resides in the state; there is no private property. How the state gets this constant capital is a question socialism can easily answer. It simply confiscates private property. It appropriates the wealth that intelligent and industrious capitalists have built up. Then the laboring man will get the wages he deserves. Socialistic management will be so much more rational and efficient that every worker can have two cars and color television. That an army of bureaucrats would eat up more of the profits than capitalists ever did never occurred to Marx’s one-track mind. That commissars, whose pay comes from the state, whose business operations face no free competition, who are judged by their political reliability and not by their production of commodities, would never be as efficient as private businessmen is another such absent idea. These ideas

also seem to be absent from a large section of the contemporary American mind, too.

Marx wrote so much on labor theory that only a fraction can be considered here. Just one further item, on the alienation of labor, will close this subsection.

How the concept of alienation originated in Kant’s ethics, how Hegel transformed it into cognitive alienation to be overcome by the System, how Feuerbach inverted idealism so that it became materialism, and how Karl Marx developed violent revolution as the method of healing man’s mind is sketched most interestingly in *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* by Robert Tucker (Cambridge, 1961).

Marx had “discovered” that Hegel’s *Phenomenology of the Mind* was actually a treatise on economics, and that his thought processes were to be understood as material production. Alienated or forced labor produces private property. The compulsion that transforms free creative self-activity into alienated labor is not the necessity of self-preservation, but rather the compulsion to amass wealth. Money is power. It commands men. Says Marx, “the less you eat, drink, and read books, ... the less you think, love, theorize, ... the more you save—the greater becomes...your capital. The less you are, the more you have.... Everything that the political economist takes from you in life and humanity, he replaces for you in money.... All passions and all activity must therefore be submerged in greed.”⁷

But whereas Hegel’s acquisitive greed for knowledge overcame alienation and restored one’s right mind, Marx’s greed for money depersonalizes man. What Hegel took for good, Marx took for evil.

The alien thus being created, far from being the Absolute Self, is the capitalist. This important identification does not logically proceed from Marx’s psychiatric analysis of economics. As Robert Tucker puts it: “This position was theoretically untenable.... [There] is no justification for conceiving the alienated self-relation as a social phenomenon in its essential nature. The intra-personal situation remains the primary fact, and the alienated social relation is only a derivative fact and a result. For the theorist to ignore this is to succumb to the alienated individual’s own delusion that the alien man is someone outside himself” (148-149).

⁷ Marx and Engels, *Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, III, 370.

The purely philosophic development of Marx's thought is most interesting, but his specific application to labor theory is more closely related to the problems of history:

The worker becomes poorer the more wealth he provides.... The worker becomes an even cheaper commodity the more goods he creates...the more the worker expends himself in work the more powerful becomes the world of objects which he created in face of himself, the poorer he becomes in his inner life, and the less he belongs to himself.... The life which he has given to the object sets itself against him as an alien and hostile force.... His work is not voluntary but imposed, *forced labor*.⁸

The ideas reflected here are a curious combination, almost as neurotic as the alienated man, of ambiguities, half-truths, and falsities. It should be clear that a rise in the level of material culture—and Communism is materialistic—can occur only through increased production: increased production of food in starving nations, and increased variety of gadgets in the more affluent nations. That the worker becomes poorer by producing more is false. Increased production no doubt requires further division of labor, or, as it would be said today, automation. This may make some routine jobs rather boring. “Boring” is not Marx's term. He so delightfully describes the process as a set of torture devices that mutilates the worker, degrades him to an appurtenance of a machine, and torments him until the essential meaning of human life is destroyed. Compare this outburst with conditions in the United States today where the diabolical capitalists must pay exorbitant over-time for minimum skills because only the unemployed cannot rise to the level of an assembly line.

Marx, however, regards the division of labor as actually worse than the slavery of Roman times. But does he think that undivided labor, one man all by himself, can make an airplane? Even if we restrict the idea of division to the division between labor and capital—and here is where Marx's emphasis lies in

his attempt to ignore the details of assembly lines—one may still ask, Can an airplane be built without capital? Without capital men would be reduced to the level of mere self-preservation. Division of labor also includes the division between competent engineers and incompetent workmen. A good engineer might possibly construct an airplane of the Wright brothers' vintage, provided he had the capital; but just imagine the mass men of Hoffa and Reuther trying to manage General Motors! It is hard enough for General Motors to manage the mass men. Yet Engels in his *Anti-Dühring* predicts that Communism will dispense with professional architects and all other such experts and specialists. I wonder who will perform brain surgery? All in all, Marx's attack on the division of labor is one of his most paradoxical proposals.

Now it may be said that Marx could not foresee automation and the twentieth century. In fact, present-day socialists who decry automation, like the early labor unions who wrecked the linotype machines at their introduction, are similarly blind. But whether such blindness in Communism is an extenuating circumstance or whether it is an aggravation may better be seen in Communism's claim to be scientific. This claim came into prominence after Marx's identification of the alien man with the capitalist and has remained a point of pride ever since.

Scientific Prediction

Going back a step to the idea that wealthy proletarians have displaced workers on the subsistence level, an inattentive student may wish to exonerate Marx and Engels for not seeing this far into their future. This exoneration is inattentive because one must deal with a theory shared by past and present Communists alike. It is the Communists' boast that they can scientifically predict the course of social development. Marx in his *Critique of Political Economy* referred to “the material transformation of the economic conditions of production [which] can be determined with the precision of natural science....” In an introduction to Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Engels assures us that Marx “could never be taken unawares

⁸ *Early Writings*, translated by T. B. Bottomore, London: C. A. Watts, 1963.

by events.” In the present century too, Trotsky in *The Living Thoughts of Karl Marx* (14) wrote, “If the theory correctly estimates the course of development and foresees the future better than other theories, it remains the most advanced theory of our time.” The Communist claim to predict history is one to be tested in several places.

Engels, in the book we have been quoting, *Principles of Communism*, soon provides another place of testing. Q 11. “The proletariat develops in step with the bourgeoisie.... Since proletarians can be employed only by capital, and since capital expands only through employing labor, it follows that the proletariat proceeds at precisely the same pace as the growth of capital.” But it would appear, in contradiction to Communist theory, that this is not so. Capital no doubt needs labor, but capital does not expand only through employing more labor. The expansion instead of being *pari passu* is more nearly one of inverse proportion. At any rate, capital has expanded enormously since Engels wrote, and yet the proletariat, as Engels defined it, has declined. Many of them have been liberated by stocks and bonds and savings funds.

The liberation Engels expected, however, is a different one. Q 16. “Revolutions are...always the necessary consequence of conditions which were wholly independent of the will and direction of individual parties and entire classes.... The proletariat...has been violently suppressed...the opponents of Communism have been working toward a revolution with all their strength.” Therefore, a violent revolution—the sudden qualitative change that breaks out upon an accumulation of small quantitative changes—is inevitable. Q 18. This revolution “will establish a democratic constitution and through this the direct or indirect dominance of the proletariat. Direct in England, where the proletarians are already the majority of the people; indirect in France and Germany.” Q 19. “The Communist revolution will not be merely a national phenomenon but must take place simultaneously in all civilized countries, that is to say, at least in England, France, and Germany. ... It will go slowest...in Germany, most rapidly...in England.”

At this point the quotation of Engels’ catechism will break off and two observations will be made, one concerning the method of the revolution predicted, and the second the prediction itself as an implication of scientific theory.

First, the idea of proletarian revolution, which bulked so large in original Communism, had to be abandoned because the “proletariat” in the early twentieth century was obviously improving its economic status, and was not paid at a bare subsistence level. Therefore, Lenin had to find a substitute. His substitute was the conspiratorial, professional revolutionaries, under strict party control, viewed as “intelligentsia” and proclaimed as the “vanguard” of the working classes.

To disguise the fact that a Communist revolution makes little or no appeal to the working classes, to disguise the fact also that the revolutionaries are criminals just as truly as, though on a far greater scale than, the pirates of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Communists still use the word proletarian for propaganda purposes. For example, conspiratorial criminal revolutionaries and proletarians are joined together in an assertion by James Burnham on February 1, 1940: “The fundamentals of politics are constituted by the central aim...socialism. And we must agree on the most important means...for achieving that aim: the dictatorship of the proletariat, the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist society, the building of the party.”⁹

So much for the means on which Engels so confidently relied to usher in the Communistic state. Now, second, let us look at the prediction itself. The point is important because the claim is made that scientific history can predict the future course of events.

Do these predictions, as Trotsky claims, correctly estimate the course of history, and can historical materialism foresee the future better than any other theory? In a letter to Dr. Kugelmann on December 8, 1857, Marx said he was afraid that the revolution would break before he could finish *Das Kapital*. A few months later in another letter he repeated the same thought. Engels, as just indicated, predicted the rapid success of Communism in England. In another volume he makes his prediction more detailed.

⁹ Leon Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism*, 195.

“Hence also the deep wrath of the whole working-class, from Glasgow to London...a wrath which before too long a time goes by, a time almost within the power of man to predict, must break out into a Revolution in comparison with which the French Revolution and the year 1794 will have proved to have been child’s play.”¹⁰ On a later page (296) he suggests the years 1852 to 1853 as the date of this revolution and asserts that “These are all inferences which may be drawn with the greatest certainty, Prophecy is nowhere so easy as in England.... The revolution must come; it is already too late to bring about a peaceful solution” (297).

But if prophecy is nowhere so easy as in England, Communistic theory is in a bad way; and after the English people refrained from chopping off Queen Victoria’s head in the Tower, Engels in a Preface written in 1892 shrugged off this failure of Communistic science as a result of “youthful ardour” (ix).

Another instance of the failure of historical materialism is found almost at the end of *The Communist Manifesto* where Marx and Engels predict that “Germany...is on the eve of a bourgeoisie revolution [that] will be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution.” Apparently, Germany was to be a Communistic nation by 1871. Marx also prophesied in *Das Kapital* that the United States was destined to take bloody revenge on England for its wrongs to the Irish peasantry.

And what about Russia? Could not scientific Communism predict its own greatest success? That it could not is scarcely surprising; that it still claims to, is.

A theory that has made and still makes claims to scientific prediction must be judged by the event. David Guest in a *Textbook of Dialectical Materialism* asseverates, “The refutation of this bourgeois view [that history is not a science] is simply the continued success of Marxism in predicting the general tendency of world events. Since the world economic crisis, with its accompaniments of the spread of fascism and the practical proof of the economic superiority of the Soviet system—events which can

only be understood in terms of Marxism—many bourgeois intellectuals have come to see daylight.”

David Guest defends not only the claim that historical materialism is scientific, he also refers to the economic superiority of the Soviet system. Of course, he means that the economic system of Russia is superior to that of the United States. This would be a little hard to prove. Suppose we offer him an easier comparison, even easier than West Berlin, viz., Czarist Russia.

The Czarist government of Nicholas II was incredibly inefficient, corrupt, and stupid. All sorts of evil abounded. When an American reads a description of the economic, social, and political conditions that led to the disgraceful collapse of the Russian armies in World War I, he can hardly believe that such a system could have arisen, much less survived for several centuries. Nevertheless, among the welter of evils great and small two good things can be found. First, the Czar’s government was not nearly so brutal as Communism. Of course, the Czar’s secret police sent thousands of political prisoners to Siberia. But Communism sent tens of thousands, besides murdering a few million Ukrainians. Then, second, Czarist Russia was able to feed its own people, and export grain too. The Communists, on the other hand, though they can orbit the earth, cannot raise wheat. The importance of this lies in the fact that an industrial society is a very unpleasant one, unless its people are fed. Strange to say, at least if it were not for the fact that there is so much strange in Communist theory, socialist republics, especially those emerging from primitive conditions, are blind to the need of an agricultural base for an industrial society. They want steel, but they need food. This is one of the flaws in the present Indian socialism. Before the advent of independence and socialism, India not only fed itself, but exported food. Now wheat must be given to India because its government sacrifices food and lets its people starve in order to import heavy industry it cannot properly support. Therefore, its socialism must be fed by capitalistic food from America. And Red China is kept alive by Canada.

That Marxism has made history so scientific as to predict the future is such a distortion of the truth

¹⁰ *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1892, 18.

that one would expect Marxists, if they were normal human beings, to be embarrassed. Marx and Engels asserted that nationalism was declining. In *The Communist Manifesto* they wrote, “National differences, and antagonisms between peoples, are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce.... The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster.”

At the beginning of the twentieth century socialism popularized the view that no great war could any longer occur because the friendly ties among the workmen of the several nations were stronger than their national sentiments. Socialism proved to be woefully mistaken. Since in this case their reading of what was then the present and the near future was so wide of the mark, why should any of their contemporary analyses be credited? Why indeed should their theories be accepted at all?

Marxist History

If these are samples of scientific prediction of the future, the next thing is to see what scientific history can do to the past. Since the Communists use history as a main support for their policies, and since historiography is the subject of this volume, the crux of the matter should be found here.

The test case for this theory Engels believes to be the demise of feudalism and the rise of capitalism. The point at issue is not that capitalism as an economic system requires an economic explanation—that much is self-evident; but rather Engels’ aim is to show that this economic development controls all political revolutions and the entire intellectual history of the epoch. As a quotation from Marx said, “the economic structure of society [is] the real foundation on which rise legal and political superstructures.... The mode of production in material life determines the...spiritual processes of life.” Presumably then American devotion to baseball is the result of capitalism. If this be deemed too facetious, should one identify humanitarianism as the product of the bourgeoisie? But to take an example from Communist theory itself, Engels pointedly asserted that the Protestantism of the British nation is so explained.¹¹

Briefly the account is as follows. At the end of the Middle Ages the rising middle class of the towns were the revolutionary element. This bourgeoisie was incompatible with feudalism. Since the center of feudalism was the Roman church, the church had to be destroyed first. At this very time advances were made in science, and science rebelled against the church. The struggle took on a religious disguise. The Lutheran creed replaced feudalism with absolute monarchy and the peasants were reduced to serfdom. But Calvin instituted republicanism, and his theory of predestination teaches that rewards do not depend on men’s cleverness or energy, but on factors he does not control, *i.e.*, “unknown superior economic powers.” Therefore, there was no absolute monarchy in Holland or Scotland. In England, since the bourgeoisie could not win by themselves, the peasants furnished an army to overthrow Charles I. But now the aristocracy began to desire money; hence, they became bourgeoisie, turned out the farmers, and raised sheep. Thus, the new Tudor aristocracy, which replaced the old class eradicated by the Wars of the Roses, depended on industry and commerce. The manufacturer needed to keep his workers in subjection, and therefore Britain maintained Protestantism.

Coming down to the nineteenth century, Engels insists that “American Revivalism” in the persons of Moody and Sankey, and the indigenous Salvation Army, kept the manufacturers in power and suppressed the stirrings of the working class.

Since the Communists boast so loudly of their scientific methods, Engels can hardly object to an examination of some of his details. Even on points of lesser significance one does not expect a reputable scientist to be careless. And the rise of capitalism and the Protestant Reformation are not points of lesser significance. Therefore, let the scrutiny be a little strict.

First of all, one may admit that the rise of the middle class in the late medieval towns was the result of economic forces. What were these forces? A widely held explanation is that the Turkish advance against Constantinople with its cutting of the old caravan routes induced the Europeans to take to the sea, adding importance and power to the towns. Now, undoubtedly the substitution of ships for caravans is

¹¹ *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, 24-30.

a change in the method of distribution and exchange. But Engels' theory would also require a change in the Turkish methods of production to explain their drive toward Constantinople. Or, prior to this, what change in the methods of production and distribution produced the Arab conquest of North Africa? Could either the Arab or Turkish military action have been more religiously than economically motivated? And still further back, was the Arab acceptance of Mohammed's prophecies in the first place the result of some new form of agriculture? If the Protestant Reformation is to be fitted into the Marxist scheme, the rise of Islam must also be so explained. But there was no industrial revolution in those days.

Karl Kautsky, a Dutch Communist, attempts to excuse Marxism for its failure to explain such historic changes as these. He admits that in antiquity and in the Middle Ages there were "bitter class struggles, civil wars and political catastrophes," but there was no "social revolution" *i.e.*, an upheaval in which a different social class seized political power. This he explains on the ground of the slowness of economic development. Technical progress did not compel new forms of property; hard work was still fundamental. And he offers other reasons. But if this is so, it seems clear that these civil wars, political catastrophes, and class struggles were not the result of altered modes of production, and therefore Marxism is without resources to explain them.¹²

Now, it may be said that if Engels chose to use as his example the change from European feudalism to modern capitalism, a critic misses the point by asking for another example. But it may also be said that if the Communistic theory is to be accepted, it must be applicable to all civilizations and epochs and cannot stand on a single favorable example—if indeed the demise of feudalism is so favorable.

Another point in Engels' account is the assertion that science was making great advances at the very time the towns were emerging from feudalism. Science then rebelled against the church and therefore the economic struggle took on a religious disguise.

Now, for one thing, Engels' dates seem to be about a century off. If Copernicus died in 1543 and if the Galileo incident, which is about the best

example of a conflict between science and the Roman church, occurred in the following century, the great advances in science cannot be made contemporaneous with the rise of the towns near the end of the feudal period. For another thing, Engels fails to support his thesis that this struggle between science and the church was basically economic and only disguised as religious. Giordano Bruno's science and philosophy certainly provided sufficient ground for a thoroughly theological debate. There was little economics about it. It is all the less plausible to explain Lutheran and Calvinistic theology as a religious disguise for economic changes. Nor can the devotion of the Protestant converts be so explained. Manufacturers as manufacturers do not accept martyrdom. Even Galileo declined this opportunity.

But Communist theory is set. Echoing Engels, A. M. Simons¹³ argues that the Crusades are not to be explained by any religious motive of "rescuing the holy sepulchre from the profane touch of the infidel," for "it is at least suggestive that crusades were not preached until trade routes were endangered, and that they ceased when commerce underwent a transformation that rendered these particular trade routes of less importance to the ruling merchant class."

Coming down to the Reformation, he gives the standard Communist account: "The Reformation, with its individualism in theology, was as perfect a reflex of capitalism as 'free competition' and *laissez-faire* in economics" (14).

But if the Reformation was a reflex, the capitalism of which it was a reflex must have existed as a developed movement prior to 1517. Free competition and *laissez-faire* must also have been standard before that date. Yet there was little free competition and no *laissez-faire laissez-passer* for many years thereafter. Production was rigidly controlled by the labor unions. It was in their reaction to their strangle-hold and their obstruction of

¹² Karl Kautsky, *The Social Revolution*, translated by A. M. Simons, Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1916, 21-27.

¹³ *Social Forces in American History*, International Publishers, 1926, 6.

progress that the cry went out: “Let it be produced, let it be transported.”¹⁴

The Communistic explanation of the Reformation deserves further study. Communists are required to account for theological revolutions in terms of the modes of production and exchange; but I have never seen a Communist explanation of how methods of production produced the doctrine of justification by faith. In my capitalistic ignorance and prejudice, I had always supposed that Luther found the doctrine in the New Testament. Or is it the contention that the Apostle Paul derived his ideas from some economic upheaval in the Roman Empire?

Explanations of theology may come hard for the atheistic Communists, for Engels also manages to leave Reformation politics in confusion. Perhaps Lutheranism overemphasized the duty of subjecting oneself to the state, but why should Lutheranism be identified as the cause of absolute monarchy?

Was the France of Louis XIV Lutheran? No doubt Holland and eventually England overthrew absolute monarchy; and no doubt Calvinism played a considerable part in this. But if it was the methods of production and exchange in France that taught Calvin his doctrine of predestination, before he was exiled to Switzerland, and if that theology overthrew the Stuarts in 1649 and finally in 1688, all of which made Britain Protestant in order to hold the factory workers in submission, how is it that France, whose conditions produced Calvin, did not overthrow the Bourbons until 1789, and never became Protestant? Was it because their factories did not have the same methods of production? Or was it because Catherine de Medici massacred 70,000 Protestants and Louis XIV exiled the remainder?

Then, finally, assuming that the Salvation Army and American revivalism prevented the working man from breaking the manufacturers’ chains, one wonders what American method of production

produced Moddy and Sankey? What was wrong with British production that it failed to produce indigenous revivalism and had to import it from America? And now in the latter half of the twentieth century shall we say that Billy Graham’s revivals are to be explained by frozen foods and the welfare state?

These criticisms have been of diverse details; but they concentrate on a single point. Communism claims that not only politics, but also religion, art, and all intellectual history are determined by the methods of production and exchange. Therefore, this principle must be successfully applied to a large number of historical sequences before it appears plausible.

The number must be very large before Communism can justify its claim to have developed scientific history. Can it explain the Old Testament? The religion of the ancient Hebrews differed greatly from that of the surrounding Canaanites. Now perhaps in 1300 BC the Hebrews were a little more nomadic and a little less agricultural than the Canaanites; but it is unlikely that the slight economic differences can account for the extremely great religious difference.

Similarly, production in Czarist Russia by serfs and production by slaves in Georgia and Mississippi, if they differed a little, did not differ sufficiently to explain why Russia was an absolute monarchy while the southerners were Jeffersonian Democrats.

Indeed, during the four thousand years prior to AD 1500, the methods of production and exchange were largely the same all over the world; but the religious, intellectual, and social conditions varied enormously even within relatively short periods of time and close proximity in space.

Instead of interpreting all intellectual activity as economically determined, and especially instead of construing Protestantism as a disguise in the support of capitalism, it would be equally correct, and even

¹⁴ Marxist historiography, besides restricting its examples to western Europe and ignoring the events of the east, is productive of wildly irresponsible assertions. No doubt Simons is correct when he says that the North’s victory in the Civil War “was won as much by the industrial workers who toiled in the shop...as by those who carried guns,” but we wonder at the parenthesis which states, “and whose death rate and percentage of injured was [*sic*] fully as high” (278). Did 360,000 northern factory workers die?

If American workers suffered such losses of life and limb, the socialistic cotton spinners of Lancashire “starved rather than see work come through lifting the cotton blockade. When the capitalists of England, more eager to defend their immediate profits than even the broad interests of their class, would have interfered in behalf of the Confederacy, it was these workers who stood in the way of such action, and not the least of those who were responsible for this steadfast position was the founder of modern scientific Socialism—Karl Marx” (284).

more plausible, to maintain that Protestants are capitalistic in order to ensure the freedom of religion, whereas Communism and the Warren-Fortas Supreme Court use an economic disguise for the purpose of advancing atheism.

Engels himself, in a negative sort of way, invites this suggestion, for he writes, “unless we believe in supernatural revelation, we must admit that no religious tenets will ever suffice to prop up a tottering society” (*Socialism*, 43).

Now, Protestantism, at present so degenerate that churchman proclaim the death of God, may not suffice to prop up our tottering society; perhaps Communism is the wave of the future; but it may still be true that genuine Protestants, Luther and Calvin and those who believe their doctrines, support capitalism in the interest of religion rather than religion in the interest of economics.

American Communism

How Marxists might reply to these criticisms is hard to say. They rather ignore embarrassing details; they prefer generalities to concreteness. But some very up-to-date and definitely American consideration of these points may proceed by an analysis of *History and Reality* (Cameron Associates, 1955) by Dr. Aptheker, the National Director of the American Institute for Marxist Studies.

The Marxists make it annoyingly difficult to understand their theory by reason of the irresponsibility of their method of invective, inherited from Marx and Engels. One expects that the rantings of Gus Hall will be incoherent; but from the chief theoretician of the Communist Party in the United States an undisillusioned student expects something fairly calm and intelligible. But it turns out otherwise.

For example, Dr. Aptheker asserts, “The belief that history is ‘incoherent and immoral,’ in the words of the tortured Henry Adams, permeates bourgeois historiography today...” (17). This half sentence contains three annoyances. First, is the term bourgeois. A bourgeois is a person who derives part of his income from stocks, bonds, or savings accounts. No doubt many such people believe that history is incoherent and immoral, possibly because of the spread of Communism. But others, capitalistic, bourgeois, orthodox followers of the Reformation

believe that God directs history according to an eternal plan. Since different segments of the bourgeois hold different views on this point, the possession of stocks and bonds cannot be said to control one’s historiography. The same conclusion is supported from the opposite side also. Existentialists, whether or not they own bonds or work for wages, are ordinarily left-wingers. On Dr. Aptheker’s principles, therefore, they should deny that history is incoherent. Yet this is their forte. That the incoherence of history is a widespread view may be admitted; but that it is limited to capitalists may well be denied.

The bourgeoisie (the term does not fit French society, and it is totally out of place in America) are those whom Dr. Aptheker denounces as the American “ruling classes” (52). How strange this sounds! Most of my friends and I own some stocks and savings accounts, and life insurance too, but neither they nor I consider ourselves the “ruling class.” We voted for Goldwater. Therefore, when Aptheker denounces the American ruling classes, we would have no idea of whom he meant, were it not that he graciously identifies Walter Lippmann as one of its members. Lippmann’s chief disqualification for legitimate work in historiography, Aptheker makes clear, is the fact that his writing is “lucrative” (54). Communists simply cannot conceal their jealousy when someone earns a good salary.

The second annoyance in the sentence quoted is the description of Henry Adams as tortured—seeing that no explanation is given and no point is made of it. A parallel construction is the reference to America’s sour counterpart of Churchill, Herbert Hoover” (176). This really means nothing more than that these two men were not Communists.

Third, it would be hard to prove that contemporary historiography is *permeated* by the notion that history is immoral and incoherent. The bibliography in this present volume lists a fair number of recent and living writers who do not so believe. Nor does Dr. Aptheker properly follow up his assertion. He cites Harold Temperly, John Buchan, and Charles A. Beard. But he continues with a diatribe against Croce—who, it would seem, did not believe history to be incoherent.

Naturally, Aptheker opposes Croce’s idealism and favors “a consistent materialist view [which] is

possible only from a proletarian standpoint” (21); for which reason it is necessary to decry the attempt of a “naïve” headmistress who wrote against materialism in “gleaming ink.” Then when Toynbee quotes Marx as saying, “Christianity is the opiate of the people,” Aptheker charges him with “the crassest type of misquotation,” because Marx’s words were actually “Religion...is the people’s opium” (23).

These obfuscating outbursts are a long-standing Communist tactic. From the *Manifesto* to Krushchev to Mao, enormities of illogical propaganda are normal procedure. Neurotic, truculent, self-alienation is its best defense.

Even when more substantial matters are discussed, the same confusion reigns that was seen in the materialist account of the Reformation. In the book mentioned above, Dr. Aptheker discusses the nature of history. He will not have history to be a matter of unique events and individual men. The usual philosophic reasons are given. If the contents of history were all unique, there would be no general laws. In particular there would be no cause-and-effect relations. And, in general, science and language cannot handle individuality.

Of course, Dr. Aptheker very much wants history and language to handle individual events. He wishes to retain single events. He says, “The hypothesis of multiple, equal, cumulative, and, in part, unknowable causes—in which...everything is cause to everything else—results...in the denial of the possibility of any effective resolution of human injustice and oppression” (29-30).

In the following chapter a general analysis of causation will be attempted; but in order to consider the possibility of any effective resolution of injustice, a certain amount of anticipatory material cannot be avoided. If some repetition occurs later, it will be paid for by a corresponding brevity in the argument.

Dr. Aptheker continues the outmoded notion of a cause as a single event, necessary and sufficient to prove its effect. But clearly two single events of the same type do not uniformly produce two similar effects. A hearty meal taken by one person may not have an effect similar to that produced by a hearty meal eaten by another person. The health of the person is also part of the cause, and states of health are sufficiently different to produce widely different effects. This is so obvious that no sensible person

could disagree, not even Dr. Aptheker. But the implications extend beyond obvious superficialities. As we trace the interlocking of conditions, we must add to the health of the person other factors, such as a serious accident immediately after the meal, or news that a person’s daughter has just suffered a serious accident, or a declaration of war, or a war without a declaration. In actual situations of historical importance this list must be extended without end. The result is that instead of single events being related as cause and effect, the whole of the past is the cause of the whole of the future. This is just “the hypothesis of multiple, equal, cumulative, and in part unknowable causes” that Dr. Aptheker deplors. It prevents any effective resolution of human injustices. Yet when the Communists try to justify, rather than merely assert, that Luther is the cause of absolute monarchy or that Moody and Sankey helped to enslave the working class, they, including Marx and Engels, are reduced to describing the determinant in terms that apply to the entire social situation.

Does the rejection of the naïve and untenable theory of single causation prevent the amelioration of oppressive situations? Well, if it does, this would not make single causation any the more tenable. But there are some complications. Within the narrow limits of practical politics, it may be that the principle of multiple and in part unknown causes does not prevent some revolution of social maladjustments. One who holds to this theory of causation can also admit that certain parts of the present civil-rights legislation have to some extent improved upon earlier social inequities. And if government action often blunders, possibly American revivalism can help on a small scale. At least Dr. Billy Graham has tried.

But the theory of multiple causation tends toward a rather hit and miss approach, and Dr. Aptheker stands on solid ground when, from the principle of multiple causation as it is stated by most modern historiographers, he draws the inference that the most important problems (and not only the most important) are insoluble.

In contrast to this hit and miss approach of universal causation, the theory of single causes for single effects promises that the social scientist can hit the nail on the head. So far the promise has not been

kept. In capitalistic countries historians have often noted the totally unexpected and often undesirable consequences of social legislation. In the United States the change to the direct election of Senators was to have eliminated the machinations of greedy politicians. Its most noticeable effect was the breakdown of party integrity. “Advanced” penology with its substitution of rehabilitation for punishment has resulted in an unprecedented and as yet uncontrolled increase in crime. And public education seems more efficient in the production of juvenile delinquents than in the salvation of democracy.

Or consider civil rights again. In order to ameliorate the conditions relative to Negro housing, legislation has destroyed the right of homeowners to choose the purchaser of their homes. If a Negro and a white man offer to buy a home, the owner runs the risk of severe penalties if he sells to the white man. This legislation has resulted in the integration of many neighborhoods. But as the Negroes move in, the whites move out; and the integrated neighborhood becomes “de facto” segregated. Thus, the legislation that the Negro thought would solve his problem is so far from successful that insurrection has exploded in the large cities. And how many whites (who may have opposed it previously) want integration protected by law, but the proponents of civil rights have succeeded in declaring integrated communities unconstitutional. True, this may not be the legal wording, but it is the actual situation. The conclusion is that regardless of single or multiple causation, many legislative efforts at melioration produce the opposite result. In fact, if government action has ever improved conditions, it can hardly be due to intelligent foresight.

But, of course, a good Communist would expect all these capitalistic devices to fail. They are economically motivated so as to preserve the privileges of Walter Lippmann and his ruling class. The trouble does not lie in the theory of a single cause for a single effect, but in the wrong identification of the single cause. One must find the cause somewhere along the assembly line of production and then utopia will come.

Perhaps the sub-title *American Communism* was a misnomer. The twists and turns of the Communist Party’s policies and publications are dictated from abroad. Historical materialism is no different here

from what it is elsewhere. All inequities are the result of the methods of production and exchange. Aptheker quotes from a letter Engels wrote in 1894: “What we understand by the economic conditions which we regard as the determining basis of the history of society are the methods by which human beings in a given society produce their means of subsistence and exchange the products among themselves.... Under economic conditions are further included the geographical basis on which they operate.... Men make their history themselves, only in given surroundings...among which the economic relations, however much they may be influenced by other political and ideological ones, are still ultimately the decisive ones....” Aptheker then summarizes Engels’ position: “Marxists hold, then, that it is the productive activities, and the experiences of the human beings responsible for those activities, that form the body of history, that constitute a history of peoples” (35).

What most definitely distinguishes other forms of economic determinism from historical materialism is the latter’s notion of class conflict. The Marxist “sees within these varying modes—primitive, slave, feudal, capitalist—certain patterns of class relationships, certain relationships in the possession and utilization of property, which differ within each mode, and which give rise to conflicts therein. And he sees the resolution of those particular conflicts arising as a result of the smashing of the productive restrictions inherent in each of those modes. And he believes that the present conflict differs decisively, qualitatively, from all others because its resolution, postulating the common ownership of the instruments of production, makes possible the elimination of class conflicts by expropriating the exploiters, and by bringing into being a society consisting entirely of producers” (35-36).

As the significance of the terms *bourgeois* and *proletarian* was questioned some pages back, so here one should examine the meaning of the term *producer*. In Communist jargon factory workers are the producers par excellence. A place has also been made for artists and intellectuals, provided, of course, their work is not so lucrative as Mr. Lippmann’s. But the important thing is that capitalists are not producers. Their success in

previous production seems to have removed them from the class. No doubt industrial managers are producers in Russia, but in America they are the exploiters of the poor laboring man. Somehow, I am reminded of Franklin D. Roosevelt's attempt to reduce the hours of the laboring man under the National Recovery Act. One firm, willing to show its compliance with that unconstitutional measure, displayed a sign: "No one in this factory works more than six hours a day except the executives."

Proceeding toward a conclusion of his article, Dr. Aptheker, in reply to Charles A. Beard, finds it necessary to divorce science from certainty. Scientists, he says, "prefer to avoid 'finality in statement' as being 'out of place in science, especially today, when change and doubt are the very spirit of scientific thought..." (40). But Dr. Aptheker never thinks of doubting the infallible certitude of historical materialism. What he doubts is "American history [which] to date, almost in toto, is the work of non-marxists.... We must rewrite it, at first hand.... The task, then, is not one of 'interpreting' the standard American historians, of 'making allowances,' or shifting emphases. The task is one of mastering their works, and of supplanting them. This process can begin only when Marxist eyes go into the sources and uncover and use sources never touched by them because of distaste, disinterest, or ignorance" (41-42).

This does not mean that history can be objective in the sense that the historian can operate without presuppositions and apart from himself. Yet the denial of objectivity still allows history to be scientific. For truth is absolute, says Dr. Aptheker, though knowledge is relative. That is to say, there is an objective, dynamic reality to which our knowledge more and more closely relates. "Aligning oneself with the rising class...[and] only by this complete renunciation of the bourgeoisie may one resolve that class's problem of an infinitely regressive relativism, may one break the bonds of its subjectivity and create, in this sense, an objective history.... Ascending social classes are wedded to science. That the decadent ones now grasp at every repudiation of reason and make of intellectual despair a lucrative virtue is indicative of their impending doom" (44-45).

This all sounds very grandiose. But the essential evidence is missing. If capitalism has not been unerringly able to identify the single causes of social injustices, and if Communism is really scientific, then the Communists ought to identify the particular elements in past methods of production that have either produced or cured social ills. They ought to show how the process works as clearly as Galileo showed how a marble rolls down an inclined plane. Furthermore, they ought to spend their whole time improving engineering and transportation and renounce their violence. As a matter of fact, they cling to their violence and copy capitalistic methods of production.

Concluding Criticism

Although many critical remarks have been interspersed in the foregoing exposition, one or two points deserve a little further emphasis. The first point, already touched upon, is the one that verbally distinguishes historical materialism from economic determinism. However much religious, military, and intellectual motivations may be operative, still, as Engels hammers home, "the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange...forms the basis...*from which alone* can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch." A. M. Simons has also been quoted to the effect that the theological individualism of the Reformation was "as perfect a reflex of capitalism as 'free competition' and *laissez-faire* in economics." Similarly, Aptheker insists that a consistent materialist view is possible from a proletarian standpoint.

If now, all the intellectual activity of an epoch is the reflex of its modes of production, and if in particular the ideas of an author are determined by his economic class, then Marx's ideas on Communism were determined by and are but the echo of the bourgeois class to which Marx belonged. Marx, be it remembered, was not a proletarian; much less the wealthy manufacturer, Engels. On Communist theory Engels could never have been economically determined to a proletarian viewpoint. His thoughts had to reflect his class interests. Communism therefore must be a capitalist, rather than a proletarian theory.

Furthermore, if the theory of Communism is but the reflection of a class interest, depending on the economics of the mid-nineteenth century, then it cannot be “true” today because modes of production have changed greatly since 1850 and new “truths” have replaced the old. And it will be still less true in the future—unless imposed on a cringing population by military might and secret police methods—because history as yet shows no sign of standing still. New modes of production and exchange are constantly appearing and these innovations, on Communist theory, must inevitably produce new and different theories of economics and politics.

The second point of criticism, and decisively it must be repeated that Marxism fails to explain history concretely and in detail. The earlier sarcasm I permitted myself with reference to the Communistic account of the Reformation is, I believe, fully justified. Furthermore, Kautsky pointed it up by trying to brush off his inability to explain political upheavals in the Middle Ages. Marxists prefer to dilate on social phenomena as large as the replacement of one civilization by another. In this they obtain a measure of abstract security. But when it comes to the details of history, their vaunted scientific methods leave them silent. Charles A. Beard made a courageous attempt to explain the United States Constitution. His figures turned out to be incorrect, but he deserves the credit of attacking a definite problem. Let us then ask the Marxists, since they claim that history is a science, to explain why Napoleon chose to invade Russia rather than to consolidate his hold on Western Europe. Or, let them explain why imperial capitalism in the United States undermined Chiang Kai-shek and invited the Communists to take over China. (Well, maybe the Communists could explain that one, even if not in terms of production and exchange.)

Or let us confront them with other details. If morality is a class demand, and if the proletariat opposes private property, how is it that the extremely poor Christians in AD 40 defended the right of private property even while practicing a sort of voluntary communism? And while individuals may occasionally act contrary to their class and economic interests, how can the Marxists explain that these poor Christians placed spiritual welfare above material prosperity and willingly endured

persecution and martyrdom for approximately three hundred years?

The inability of Communism to support its thesis that the entire intellectual history of an epoch depends on its methods of production has been incisively documented by Eugene Kamenka in *The Ethical Foundations of Marxism* (134-148). In this section, Kamenka examines Marx’s attempt to explain Greek art in antiquity and its appeal to us who live in a different society. He then passes on to Marx’s treatment of English law. The question is, Has Marx succeeded in showing how these things were controlled by the methods of production and exchange? The analysis allows the author to conclude,

In Marx’s brief discussion of aesthetics, his economic account eschews...such central issues as the characteristics of “artistic form” and the nature of beauty. The same is true for his far more frequent comments on law.... At no stage, apart from a few vague remarks about law being based on property, does Marx try to analyze the fundamental categories and principles of English law, or of its various branches, and show that they are determined by the economic structure of English society. He noticeably avoids any consideration of the large and important part of the criminal law concerned with offenses against the person; nowhere does he discuss the tremendous changes in the substantive content and procedural rules of the civil law, changes that were taking place and arousing widespread attention before his very eyes.... Nowhere does Marx show in detail that the structure or content of any ideology is wholly determined by the economic conditions or social structure of the group or society that gave it birth. But neither does he show precisely *what* it is that would, on his view, determine the content of the ideology.

And the author continues to list the inadequacies. He also adds this footnote to his remarks on English law:

Modern Soviet legal theorists, further embarrassed by their inability to discover

fundamental differences in content between Soviet and “bourgeois” law similarly concentrate on showing how the judicial process can be *distorted* by economic interests, rather than how it is shaped by them. Thus Vyshinsky’s discussion of the concrete working of “bourgeois” law (*The Law of the Soviet State*, 501-8) is taken up almost entirely with an account of Dreyfus, Beilis, and Sacco-Vanzetti trials.

Another author, J. H. Hexter, analyzes in detail the social changes in England from AD 1000 to 1750. This is precisely the span which Marxism uses as its most important support for its theory of how feudalism changed into industrialism. On point after point Hexter shows that Karl Marx misread that history. But more than that, Hexter explains why Marxism has been so favorably received by many historians.

Scholars who are concerned with socio-economic history, he says, either try to operate without a general framework or they choose the Marxist interpretation. To reject every framework is to choose inaccuracy and incoherence in describing chaos; to adopt Marxism is to choose intelligibility and coherence in describing a myth, and then to baptize the myth as history. Many historians *say* they have no framework for social history, yet they write the history of western civilization in terms of the rise of the middle class and the decline of the aristocracy—in these strictly Marxist terms and in no other. Hexter’s explanation of the existence of so many unconsciously Marxist historians is that Marx drove home the importance of economic conflict. Not only did Marx *raise* the problem of economic classes; to his own satisfaction, he solved it. Historians were rightly impressed by Marx’s insight into class conflict. It gave them a whole new set of exciting ideas. But in picking up the notion of economic conflict, they quite unconsciously picked up Marx’s theory of social change, dialectical materialism, is the only product of an overheated, over-speculative, nineteenth-century German imagination.”¹⁵

Here Hexter puts Communism and a large number of historians in their most favorable light.

But the details of this chapter show that Marx and his followers are a disgrace to the profession, as Hexter himself so well confirms; this chapter also exposed the blunders, the illogicalities, the obfuscation and propaganda permeating Communist literature. But the disgust engendered in sound minds by this irrationality should not blind one to the solid reality and significance of Communism, for the absurd theory and propaganda is offered by criminals who aim to massacre and steal the capital of those who disagree.

¹⁵ *Reappraisals in History*, 15.