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KARL MARX

FORTY YEARS AFTER
(1883-1923.)

by OLIVE M. JOHNSON

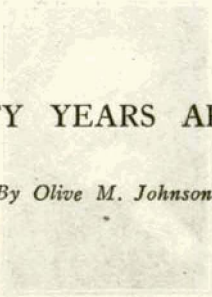
KARL MARX

by DANIEL DE LEON

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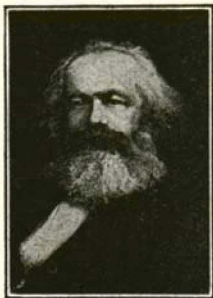
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FORTY YEARS AFTER.

By Olive M. Johnson.



KARL MARX

FORTY YEARS AFTER

Forty years have elapsed since Karl Marx died and his fame burns even clearer today. To the proletariat of the world he is the beacon still. Fools and frauds have taken his name in vain but they have never been able to drag it in the gutter. Capitalist economists, professors, editors and other apologists of the system have set their teeth into his economic and historical theories only to find that it was their own teeth and not his theories that would break. Columnists and clowns have attempted to make themselves funny at the expense of Marxism and materialism (knowing nothing about either) only to discover (if they had wit enough) that the joke was on themselves. The events of these four decades, particu-

larly of the last, have completely vindicated Marx, if, indeed, he required vindication. Capitalism has run its course and is rapidly digging its own grave, proving his analysis of it and the forecast of its end to be thoroughly sound. Capitalism has all reason to hate Marx as the ancients hated the prophets who sang of impending dissolution. It is not pleasant to pass one's own coffin, have one's own funeral dirge continually ringing in the ears.

But it is not only as a prophet of dissolution that we are indebted to Marx. It is far more as a constructive genius, as the prophet of our future life—future, nobler and better life on this earth. It was as the proletarian organizer and leader that he stood out in the boldest relief in his own time and the unique position he then occupied he holds to this very day. Marxism to this moment stands for sound,

uncompromising, working class organization. Marx's last severe struggle was with the "Lassalean movement"—the reform theory and tactics, the compromise with the capitalists, which was swinging itself up and operated under the name of Socialism, with the growth and popularity of the idea and the spread of labor organization in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The evils of the compromises of Gotha, which Marx attacked bitterly in his Criticism of the Gotha Program, spread wildly after his death. Compromise and reform ideas crept into the Socialist movement everywhere.

The German Social Democracy, the legitimate child of the Gotha compromise, was able, during three decades, to hold the leadership of the world proletarian movement. Every group and organization, with the honorable exception of the S. L. P. in America and at times the Parti

Ouvrier Francais, bowed and kowtowed to it. The German Social Democracy was the embodiment of "reform socialism." Like an alp it sat on the chest of the world proletariat, crushing Revolutionary Socialism into the ground and with it any genuine aspiration of the proletariat toward the Socialist Republic, accompanied by the unconditional surrender of capitalism.

The Second International was merely an enlargement of the German Social Democracy which gave it its pinkish color. Most of the affiliated organizations, including (and very emphatically so) the S. P. of America, were merely the satellites revolving around the German Social Democracy. The end of its influence came with the World War, the total collapse of the Second International. This was the supreme vindication of Marxian tactics — his voice thundering against reform, compromise and

political trading which culminated in "Social Patriotism," could fairly be heard above the crash of the collapsing ruins.

In the meantime, in the United States of America, which country had, during the last half of the nineteenth century, taken the lead of England in industrial progress and development, Daniel De Leon had arrived in the Socialist movement and given his thought and leadership to the tactics of the Proletarian Revolution. As uncompromising as Marx himself, setting his face as firmly against reform of, or compromise and political trading with, capitalism, he perceived in the light of the industrial development of the nation in which he labored, a weakness in the proletarian movement. Planting himself firmly upon Marxism, and like Marx and Engels before him, realizing the strength, as a proletarian weapon, of the ballot, a weapon which civilization

has forged for its own advancement, he soon also perceived its weakness.

The political vote required "backing up." Without backing, it was no power at all, merely an expression of popular will. The capitalists back up their political expression, or the political expression they are able to force or cajole out of labor, by the State with its arms of repression and oppression. Back of this State stand the capitalist owners of the nation's wealth. In every previous revolution, political power and expression have been backed by military force, but the present revolution differs in several essentials from all previous revolutions.

First of all, great changes have taken place in military forces. There is no longer a question of a struggle between man and man, nearly equal if numbers tally, but war, civil or otherwise, is now a struggle be-

tween man and machine, one machine gun doing the work of thousands of men and able singly to down thousands who are unarmed or armed in an inferior manner. Secondly, all other revolutions have been in the interests of a rising property-holding class which at the time of the revolution had become equally as powerful economically, or even more so, than the class in power.

Thus, when it was able after a struggle to place itself in political power, it could not be starved into submission by the rulers and when the conflict came, by standing out as the champions of progress against the ruling tyrants, could always appeal to the lower classes to fight its battle.

The modern revolution is the revolution of the propertiless class. De Leon soon perceived that, political power being weakness itself without backing, to depend, in an industrially developed country at least, upon mili-

tary backing was utter folly. If the revolution came about before maturing, that is before the proletariat had voted themselves into the political power, it could and undoubtedly would be shot to pieces by a few hirelings of the capitalist masters—the workers empty-handed or armed with stones, sticks or such poor armature as might be available, could simply serve as cannon fodder in a worse slaughter than that of the bloody week at the fall of the Paris Commune. On the other hand, if things happened “normally” and the workers voted into power their entire ticket from president to county sheriff, the workers could be starved into submission between election day and the day when their candidates would take office — yes, the mere threat of a shutdown of industry would suffice to cow the workers, except under the most extreme pressure, into remaining submissive to the capi-

talist masters even on election day.

The real power of society, so Marx had taught us, was the economic power. The workers, so De Leon perceived, unlike all previous revolutionary classes, have no personal wealth to base power upon. But without economic power they will never be able to become a real power. Political power without economic power is pure moonshine. Even military power without economic power will soon prove to be moonshine too. The foundation of the workers' future, however, so Marx had taught, exists in the machines they operate. De Leon perceived then that the real revolutionary strength of the workers was the means of production and that for the workers to organize around the means of production was the one adequate power of labor — would constitute the most genuine and powerful backing of labor's political

right. The might of labor, said De Leon, was the industrial organization. With a thorough industrial organization, should the capitalists attempt to starve labor into submission by a lock-out, labor would be in a position to lock out the capitalists and operate the industries for themselves. If the capitalists should attempt to crush the revolution by military force, labor, revolutionarily organized on the industrial field, would be in a position not only to feed itself but to starve the army into submission, to keep it from moving, to render it useless in every respect. "De Leonism" is not a modification of Marxism, it is its ultimate logical conclusion.

In 1917 came the Russian Revolution. De Leon had always held that military struggle alone between progress and reaction could bring about the revolution in an industrially back-

ward country like Russia. The events of 1914-1917 had forced the Russian workers and peasants into the army—had made them the army. When that army once willed the revolution, the thing was finished, finished practically without bloodshed. The Russian Revolution was the triumph of Marxism. It demonstrated clearly his historical theory of class struggles and that today the proletariat alone is the true, the historical revolutionary class. One class or group after another came to the helm after the fall of the Czar; the movement did not stop until the proletariat, backward and undeveloped as it was, had come into power and it alone had the strength and adhesive power, as well as the organization capable of saving the revolution.

The Soviet Republic today is a curious combination of the clear-cut dictatorship of the proleta-

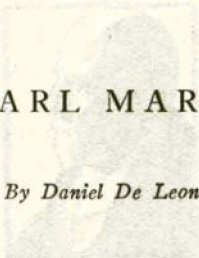
riat — such as was undoubtedly perceived by Marx and Engels as necessary in the transition period, at least in industrially backward countries with a large peasantry—and an embryo, very crude and undeveloped, of an Industrial Republic, perceived by De Leon as being possible as the direct descendant of capitalism in industrially developed countries like America. The soviets (which means councils), elected by groups of workers, partake somewhat of the functions of the Industrial Unions and councils, but are, however, essentially political in their nature. Even closer to the industrial organization is the work of the Russian unions and the Supreme Economic Council, both of which have developed important social-economic functions since the revolution.

De Leon and Lenin stand out unqualifiedly as the foremost

leaders of the Socialist Revolutionary Movement since Marx; both building on the cornerstones laid by the great founder. The development of Socialist revolutionary tactics, both as expressed by "Leninism" in Russia and by "De Leonism" in America, go to emphasize the strength and soundness of the foundation laid by Marx. Practical experience proves that a revolutionary structure can be reared upon this foundation after half a century of time. It also shows that Marxism was sound, just because it has proven itself capable of developing as conditions required.

Professor J. Arthur Thomson says of Darwinism today: "It would be a terrible contradiction in terms if an evolutionary theory did not itself evolve." What is true of Darwinism in this respect is also true of Marxism. It would be a contradiction indeed if the theory of social evolution

had not evolved in these forty years. Its very evolution has proven its soundness.



KARL MARX.

By Daniel De Leon.

[DAILY PEOPLE, MAY 4, 1913.]



DANIEL DE LEON

KARL MARX

Above the dust raised by the recent speeches of Vice-President Marshall, the answers attempted by his critics, his replies, rejoinders and surrejoinders on the subject of "the rich" — above that thick dust there rises, majestic, the giant intellectual figure of Karl Marx—above the confused controversy there is heard, clear as a bell, the scientific note of Marxism.

The Labor Movement, or, be it, the Social Question, is not a phenomenon of date as recent in America as it would seem. It arose about ninety years ago. Nevertheless, first the war with Mexico and thereby the opening of further and vast natural opportunities; thereupon the discovery of gold in California; the Civil War in the Sixties; the sub-

sequent acquisition of the Hawaiian Islands; the speedily following discovery of gold in Alaska; then the war with Spain and the consequent annexation of Porto Rico on the Atlantic and of the broader acres of Philippines on the Pacific; last but not least, the Canal venture on the Isthmus — these, not to mention minor intermediary incidents, were the forces of varying power, recurring at intervals of varying length, that successively “laid on the table” the motion of the Social Question which was first made in the Twenties of the last century. To be sure, each successive time the motion was supposed to be permanently “tabled,” yet was it as regularly and persistently again “taken from the table” at each successively recurring interval—taken from the table with an ever increasing “vote” in the affirmative, until now the slimness of the “vote” in the negative

may be gauged by the insignificance of the only two States carried last November by Mr. Taft. Today the motion is now in permanence "before the house"; it is the only motion.

Epoch-marking in the discussion was the book of Edward Bellamy, "Looking Backward"—a curious work on social science, seeing its teachings were threaded with a love story; a unique romance, seeing it was essentially sociologic. Down to the Nationalist Movement, to which "Looking Backward" gave the impulse in 1889, and since the days of Thomas Skidmore, which may be said to have seen the tangible start of the Social Question, the motion presented by the same bore two characteristics—the distinct note of Revolution, and glaring crudity of thought. The Nationalist Movement was the connecting link between the crude, though Revolutionary Past, and the Revolu-

tionary, but no longer crude, Present. The difference consisted in the Marxism that stamps the present.

From the older, hence more experienced civilization of Europe, the breath of Collectivism was breathed into the land. With the device "Proletarians of all countries, unite!", Collectivism itself had cast off the early Communistic vestiges with which it was at first clothed and Marxism made its appearance here as Socialism, as the compilation of the economic, ethnic and sociologic principles around which a vast Movement was crystallizing on the opposite shores of the Atlantic.

It goes without saying that the appearance of Marxism in America denoted a ripening of social conditions away from the conditions known to the "Revolutionary Fathers." In the measure that Evolution was plowing the field for Revolution, and in

the measure that Evolution was recruiting, even organizing, the forces for the Social Revolution, the Capitalist Class "threw up breastworks" — met the arguments of the approaching Revolution with counter-arguments. The crudities of the arguments of the pre-Marxian days furnished the counter-arguments with welcome handles. The "handles" grew fewer and fewer in the measure that Marxism "took possession." From year to year the clash narrowed down more and more to Marxism and anti-Marxism.

Today it is Marxism against "the field," or, "the field" against Marxism, the multitudinous anti-Marxist theories making common cause against Marxism.

Which is right; hence, to which belongs the future?

Although the dictum of John Stuart Mill—"Social science is not an exact science"—is more sweeping than the facts warrant,

this much is true: Social science is not, like the exact sciences, subject to demonstration in advance. Is, then, man left wholly without guidance, condemned to flounder about in the wilderness, and by accident only to strike the path that leads out of the woods? Not at all—at least not our generation.

Although not directly demonstrable, like a proposition in Euclid, sociologic theories are more or less quickly amenable to a touch-stone that is the test of SCIENCE. What is the touch-stone? It is Prescience — the power to foresee. Not one of the sociologic theories advanced today but has lived long enough to be brought to the touch:—has it foreseen correctly?—has it not? If it has, it is scientific, and true; if it has not, it is nonsense and false. If it has foreseen correctly, then may it be safely banked upon as a cardinal principle, like any mathematical the-

orem; if it has not foreseen correctly, then should it be discarded as a chimera.

Brought to the touch, is Marxism scientific?

Marxism is the sociologic tenet, which, synthetically combining ethnology and political economy, and, proceeding from the theory of the Law of Value, established by itself, follows the law through its numerous ramifications, and arrived at the conclusion that the material goal of civilized existence is an abundance of wealth for all producible and produced without arduous toil by any; that the social structure requisite to reach the goal is dictated by the progressive mechanism of wealth-production, that social structure being the Cooperative Commonwealth — a commonwealth which substitutes "political government," government by political agents, with "industrial government," government by the representatives of the organized

useful industries of the Nation; and that broadening and deepening mass-pauperization, with the consequent enslavement to an ever more plethorically wealthy economic oligarchy, is the inevitable outcome of the continued private ownership of the natural and social requisite for production.

Thus does Marxism foresee and foretell.

How does anti-Marxism?

Anti-Marxism foretells that the social and political institutions raised by the Fathers will be forever; it maintains that they are the last word of sociopolitical evolution, and it surmounts the Constitution with the motto: "Esto perpetua" — so shall it be forevermore.

Anti-Marxism—unmindful of the warning of James Madison that the time would come when a majority of our people would be propertiless and without the hope of acquiring property —

foretells that involuntary poverty is a phenomenon impossible under the Stars and Stripes.

Anti-Marxism, speaking through the mouth of the A. F. of L., asserts the present and foretells the continued "brotherly relations" between Capital and Labor.

Anti-Marxism, speaking Protection, foretells prosperity from a high tariff and dear goods profited from by Brother Labor and Brother Capital alike.

Anti-Marxism, speaking through Free Trade, foretells prosperity from a low tariff and cheap goods, a bountifulness to be shared in reciprocity by Brother Labor and Brother Capital.

Anti-Marxism, speaking through Finance, foretells universal well-being, one day from a gold standard, another day from a silver standard, now from an "elastic currency."

Anti-Marxism, speaking

through its ecclesiasticals, foretells peace on earth from "Godliness," and denounces as "un-Godly" the theorizers who maintain the existence of classes and class war.

Unnecessary to extend the list. Whatever the special complexion of the anti-Marxist, one basic feature all have in common, instinctively in common—a veritable Free Masonry, all reject the Marxian Law of Value, along with its consequent theory of the unbridgeable, irreconcilable and irrepressible Struggle of Classes, *upon the rejection of which each plants his special theory*, speedily to see the prognostics drawn therefrom come to grief. They prove better things. With the regularity of clockwork worse has followed and is following, as illustrated, just now, by the spasms of both Vice-President Marshall and all his bourgeois critics.

Events refute anti-Marxism,

and demonstrate it the opposite of Science. From each recurring refutation of anti-Marxism, and demonstration of its unscientific foundation and spirit, Marxism itself rises re-confirmed; its scientific merits re-demonstrated; taller in inches, stronger of voice; with ever more ears catching its vibrant, clear note; ever more hearts warming and minds rescued from the Slough of Despond by the lofty sentiments its truths inspire; ever larger masses marshalling under its banner.

In the meantime, official economists, and other pensionaries of capitalism, writhing with the cold steel of Marxian science in the vitals of their theories, hide their rage in the wrinkle of a sneer at Marx.

