

A black and white profile photograph of José Carlos Mariátegui, looking towards the right. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie. The background is a blurred, natural setting.

JOSÉ CARLOS
MARIÁTEGUI

an anthology

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4—Defense of Marxism

The Defense of Marxism was one of the three books that José Carlos Mariátegui prepared for publication during his lifetime (*The Contemporary Scene* and *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality* are the other two). Unlike the first two and a third manuscript on ideological and political themes that was sent to Spain but lost, *Defense of Marxism* was published posthumously in a Chilean edition in 1934 and finally published in its original form as part of the *Obras Completas* by Editorial Amauta in 1967. It has the bulk, though not all, of Mariátegui's writings on Marxism and makes very clear his revolutionary yet non-dogmatic approach to the doctrine.

Mariátegui's longtime friend, comrade in their early struggles, and companion in his European exile, Jorge Falcón, provided one of the best descriptions of Mariátegui's Marxism in the presentation of this work which the Mariátegui family published in the *Obras Completas* edition with the Editorial Amauta. Falcón notes that Mariátegui was positioned far from leftist sectarianism and rightist revisionism long before he wrote *Defense of Marxism*. He goes on to remind the reader that *Defense* was written as a direct refutation of the criticism of revolutionary Marxism by the likes of Belgian revisionist writer and parliamentarian Henri de Man, as found in de Man's book *Beyond Marxism*

(*Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus*, published in Jena in 1926 and translated into French in 1927 as *Au delà du marxisme*). He reminds the reader that Mariátegui clearly states: "Marxism, where it has shown itself to be revolutionary—that is to say where it has been Marxism—has never obeyed a passive and rigid determinism." And that "socialism cannot be an automatic consequence of a bankrupt enterprise; it has to be the result of a tenacious and belabored work of ascension." He further reminds the readers, by quoting Mariátegui, that they should keep in mind that "the classes that have emerged in the domination of society have always disguised their material motives with a mythology that credits the idealism of their conduct." De Man ends by suggesting that such an approach will give a correct interpretation of the objective reality of a society and locate the routes of its historic process, unifying, as had Mariátegui, practice and theory.

The following selections (indicated with the letters a through j) contain most but not all of the sixteen chapters of *Defense of Marxism* and allow Mariátegui to present his arguments in full force. Chapter 2, "The Tentative Revisionism of *Beyond Marxism*"; 5, "Features and Spirit of Belgian Socialism"; 11, "The Position of British Socialism"; 14, "The Myth of the New Generation"; and 15, "The Process of Contemporary French Literature," do not seem as germane to Mariátegui's main arguments on Marxism and so are not included here. We do include, however, sections of chapter 15 on dogma in III.2 that set the stage for the discussion of this defense of Marxism.

4.a—*Henri de Man* and the Crisis of Marxism¹

In a tome that perhaps strives to achieve the same resonance and diffusion as the two volumes of *The Decline of the West* by Spengler, Henri de Man goes beyond Eduard Bernstein's endeavor of a quarter of a century ago, and would not only "revise" Marxism, but "liquidate" it. . . .

But neither Bernstein nor the rest of the "revisionists" of his school were able to expunge the citadel of Marxism. Bernstein, who has not tried to sustain a secessionist current but to reconsider circumstances not foreseen by Marx, operated within a German social democracy that was more influenced by the reformist spirit of Lasalle than by the revolutionary thought of the author of *Capital*.

It is not worth it to enumerate other minor offenses. . . .

The true revision of Marxism, in the sense of the renovation and continuation of the work of Marx, has been done, in theory and practice, by another category of revolutionary intellectual—Georges Sorel, in studies that separate and distinguish what is essential and substantive in Marx from that which is formal and contingent. In the first two decades of the current century, he represented more than the

reaction of the classist sentiment of the unions against the parliamentary and evolutionist degeneration of socialism. He represented the return of the dynamic and revolutionary conception of Marx and his insertion in the new intellectual, organic reality. Through Sorel, Marxism assimilates the substantial elements and acquisitions of philosophic currents after Marx. . . . And Lenin appears incontestably in our epoch as the most energetic and profound restorer of Marxist thought, whatever doubts plague the disillusioned author of *Beyond Marxism*. Whether the reformists accept it or not, the Russian evolution constitutes the dominant accomplishment of contemporary socialism. It is to this accomplishment, of which the historical reach cannot yet be measured, that one must go in order to find the new stage of Marxism. . . .

Active, living Marxism of today has very little to do with the desolate proofs offered by Henri de Man.

NOTES

Source: *Defensa del marxismo*, in *Obras Completas*, 3rd ed. (Lima: Editorial Amauta, 1967), chap. 1, 5:15-19.

1. The reference to the crisis of Marxism comes from Henri de Man's critical writings on Marxism, especially *Au delà du marxism*, (Paris: F. Alcan, 1929) and *La crisis del Socialismo* (Madrid: no publisher given, 1929).

4.b—*Liberal and Socialist Economics*

The revision—and much less the liquidation—of Marxism cannot be conceived unless it endeavors to be an original and documented rectification of the Marxist economy before anything else. Henri de Man, however, is content in this area with jokes like “why didn’t Marx derive social evolution from geological or cosmological evolution,” instead of ultimately making it depend on economic causes. De Man does not offer us either a critique or any conception of the contemporary economy. . . .

Henri de Man entertains himself by joking about the extent of Marx’s predictions that the development of mechanization would make skilled labor obsolete. . . .

De Man is sure that Taylorism¹ will be discredited, as it is proven that “it causes psychological consequences that are so unfavorable to production, that they cannot be compensated by the economic benefits of labor and salaries that are theoretically possible.” Moreover, in this and other speculations, his reasoning is based on psychology and not economics. Industry now obeys Ford’s reasoning much more than that of Belgian socialists. The capitalist method of rational organization radically ignores Henri de Man. Its objective is reduction of cost through the employment of machines and unskilled workers. . . .

Neo-revisionism is limited to a few superficial empirical observations that do not comprehend the course the economy has taken, or explain the feeling of postwar crisis. The most important of Marxist predictions—the concentration of capital—has been accomplished. . . .

But de Man thinks that capitalism is more a mentality than a type of economy, and reproaches Bernstein for the deliberate limits of his revisionism, which, instead of debating the philosophical hypotheses from which Marxism came, labors to employ the Marxist method and continue his inquiries. One must, then, look elsewhere for his motivations.

NOTES

Source: *Defensa del marxismo*, in *Obras Completas*, 3rd ed. (Lima: Editorial Amauta, 1967), chap. 3, 5:27–33.

1. Taylorism was a theory of scientific management that Frederick Taylor (1856–1915) pioneered to analyze and synthesize industrial work flows with the goal of improving economic efficiency and labor productivity. It provides a fundamental rationale for the routinization of labor into simple, repetitive tasks.

4.c—*Modern Philosophy and Marxism*

Using the language of the Bible, in 1919 the poet Paul Valéry expressed a genealogical line in this way: “And it was Kant who begot Hegel, who begot Marx, who begot . . .”¹ Although the Russian Revolution was already in progress, it was still too soon not to prudently content oneself with these ellipses in discussing Marx’s descendants. But in 1925, C. Achelin replaced them with the name of Lenin. And it is probable that Paul Valéry himself would not find this too bold a manner of completing his thought.

Historical materialism recognizes three springs as its source: classical German philosophy, English political economy, and French socialism. This is precisely Lenin’s concept. Kant and Hegel precede and engender first Marx, and later, Lenin (whom we now add) in the same way that capitalism precedes and gives rise to socialism. To such conspicuous representatives of idealist philosophy as the Italians Croce and Gentile, who have dedicated themselves to the philosophical background of Marx’s thought, this obvious affiliation to historical materialism is certainly not foreign. The transcendental dialectic of Kant is a prelude to the Marxist dialectic in the history of modern thought.

But this affiliation does not signify any subjugation of Marxism to Hegel or his philosophy, which, according to the famous phrase, Marx

turned on its feet against the intent of its author, who left it standing on its head. In the first place, Marx never proposed the elaboration of a philosophical system of historical interpretation to serve as an instrument for carrying out his political and revolutionary ideas. His work is in part philosophical, because this type of speculation is not, properly speaking, reducible to systems in which, as Benedetto Croce warns—anyone's thought with a philosophical character is a philosophy—even though at times one only encounters external manifestations. Marx's materialist conception is born, dialectically, as the antithesis of Hegel's idealist conception. And this very relationship does not seem clear even to critics as sagacious as Croce. "The connection between these two conceptions," says Croce, "seems to me more psychological than anything else, because Hegelianism was the pre-culture of the young Marx, and it is natural that everyone ties new ideas to old as development, as correction, as antithesis."²

The efforts of those, such as Henri de Man, who summarily condemn Marxism as a simple product of nineteenth-century rationalism, could therefore not be more hasty or capricious. Historical materialism is precisely not metaphysical or philosophical materialism, nor is it a philosophy of history left behind by scientific progress. Marx had no reason to create anything more than a method of historical interpretation of modern society. Refuting Professor Stamler, Croce claims that "the presupposition of socialism is not a Philosophy of History, but a historical conception determined by the present conditions of society and the manner in which they have appeared."³ Marxist criticism studies capitalist society concretely. As long as capitalism has been transformed definitively, Marx's canon remains valid. Socialism or, rather, the struggle to transform the social order from capitalist to collectivist, keeps this critique alive, continues it, confirms it, corrects it. Any attempt to categorize it as a simple scientific theory is in vain since it works in history as the gospel and method of a mass movement. Because, Croce goes on to say, "Historical materialism arose from the need to be aware of a particular social configuration, not as a research design for studying the factors of historical existence; and it was developed

in the minds of political leaders and revolutionaries, not those of cold and plodding library learned wisemen.”⁴

Marx lives in the struggle to attain socialism unleashed throughout the world by the innumerable multitudes animated by his doctrine. The fate of the scientific or philosophical theories he used, surpassing and transcending them as elements of his theoretical work, do not in any way compromise the validity and relevance of his ideas. It is radically different from the mutable fortunes of the scientific and philosophical ideas that accompany or immediately precede them in time.

Henri de Man formulated his criticism in the following manner: “Marxism is a child of the nineteenth century. Its origins go back to the epoch in which the reign of intellectual knowledge, which was begun by humanism and the Reformation, reached its apogee in the rationalist method. This method took its religion from the precise natural sciences, to which it owed the progress of productive technique and communications; and it consists of transporting the principle of mechanical causality, which manifests itself in technology, to the interpretation of psychic actions. It sees in rational thought, which modern psychology recognizes only in its function as organizer and inhibitor of the psyche, as the ruler of all human desire and all social development.” And he immediately adds that “Marx made a psychological synthesis of the philosophical thought of his era” (agreeing that it was “so singularly new and vigorous in the sociological realm itself that it is illicit to doubt its brilliant originality”), and that “what is expressed in Marx’s theories is not the movement of ideas, which have only arisen from the depths of working-class life and social practice since his death; it is the causal materialism of Darwin and the teleological idealism of Hegel.”⁵

The irrevocable sentences against Marxist socialism pronounced, on the one hand, by futurism and, on the other, by Thomism are not very different. Marinetti lumps Marx, Darwin, Spencer, and Comte together to execute them more rapidly and implacably, without taking account of the distance that might separate their equally nineteenth-century, and therefore easy to dispense with, ideas. And the neo-Thomists, coming from the opposite extreme—the vindication of the

medieval against modernity—find in socialism the logical conclusion of the Reformation and all Protestant, liberal, and individualist heresies. Thus de Man lacks even the merit of originality in his perfectly reactionary attempt to catalog Marxism among the most particular mental processes of the “stupid” nineteenth century.

It is unnecessary to defend that century against the contrived and superficial diatribes of its detractors to refute the author of *Beyond Marxism*.⁶ Nor is it necessary to show that Darwin, like Spencer and Comte, in any case, corresponds in different ways to the capitalist method of thought; that like Hegel, from whom he descends—with the same apparent revolutionary rationalism of Marx and Engels—there is the conservative rationalism of historians who apply the formula “Everything that is rational is real” as a justification for despotism and plutocracy. If Marx could not base his political plans or his historical theories on De Vries’s biology, or Freud’s psychology, or Einstein’s physics, then, none other than Kant would have had to content himself with Newtonian physics and the sciences of his era in elaborating his philosophy. Marxism in its later development—or rather, its intellectuals—has not failed to continually assimilate the most substantive and relevant of post-Hegelian or post-rationalist philosophical and historical speculation. Georges Sorel, so influential in the spiritual formation of Lenin, illuminated the revolutionary socialist movement—with a talent that Henri de Man certainly does not ignore, although his book omits any reference to the author of *Reflections on Violence* in light of Bergsonian philosophy, continuing the work of Marx, who fifty years earlier had elucidated this in light of the philosophy of Hegel, Fichte, and Feuerbach. Revolutionary literature does not abound, as de Man would like it to, in erudite publications of psychology, metaphysics, aesthetics, etc., because it must attend to the concrete objectives of agitation and criticism. But outside the official party press, in journals like *Clarté* and *La Lutte des Classes* in Paris, *Unter den Banner des Marxismus* in Berlin, etc., one will find expressions of philosophical thought much more serious than in his revisionist attempt.

Vitalism, activism, pragmatism, relativism: none of these philosophical currents, insofar as what they bring to the Revolution, have

remained marginal to the Marxist intellectual movement. William James is no stranger to Sorel's theory of socialist myth, which, on the other hand, is so markedly influenced by Vilfredo Pareto.⁷ And the Russian Revolution, in Lenin, Trotsky, and others, has created a type of thoughtful, active person, which should give something to think about to certain cheap philosophers, full of all the rationalist prejudices and superstitions of which they imagine themselves purged and immune.

Marx gave birth to this type of man of action and thought. But this ideologue-actor appears with a clearer profile in the leaders of the Russian Revolution. Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin, and Lunacharsky philosophize in theory and praxis. Lenin leaves, along with his works on the strategy of class struggle, *Materialism and Emperiocriticism*. In the midst of the difficulties of the civil war and the party discussion, Trotsky found time for his meditations on *Literature and Revolution*. And was not Rosa Luxemburg always both a fighter and artist? Who among the professors that Henri de Man so admires live with more fullness and intensity of ideas and creativity? A time will come, despite the conceited academics who now monopolize the official representation of culture, when the amazing woman who wrote such marvelous letters from prison to Luisa Kautsky will inspire the same devotion and find the same recognition as a Theresa de Avila. A spirit, active and contemplative at the same time, more philosophic and modern than the pedantic crowd that ignores her, infused the tragic poetry of her life with a heroism, beauty, agony, and joy taught in no school of knowledge.

Instead of accusing Marxism of backwardness or indifference with respect to modern philosophy, it would be more appropriate to accuse the latter of a deliberate and fearful incomprehension of the class struggle and socialism. A liberal philosopher like Benedetto Croce—a real philosopher and a true liberal—had already opened this issue in unassailably just terms before another philosopher, Giovanni Gentile, also an idealist and liberal and the continuator and interpreter of Hegelian thought, accepted a position in the brigades of fascism, in the promiscuous company of the most dogmatic neo-Thomists and the most incandescent anti-intellectuals (Marinetti and his patrol).

The bankruptcy of positivism and scientism as a philosophy in no way compromises the position of Marxism. Marx's theory and politics are invariably cemented to science, not scientism. And as Benda observes, all political programs now wish to base themselves on science, even the most reactionary and anti-historical. And today, as Benda observes, all the political programs—including the most reactionary and anti-historic—want to rest on science. Does not Brunetière, who proclaims the bankruptcy of science, hope to wed Catholicism and positivism? And does not Maurras also claim to be a child of scientific thought? As Waldo Frank thinks, the religion of the future, if a belief has to ascend to the category of a real religion, will rest on science.

NOTES

Source: *Defensa del marxismo*, in *Obras Completas*, 3rd ed. (Lima: Editorial Amauta, 1967), chap. 4, 13:35–42.

1. Paul Valéry was a well-known French poet, writer, and philosopher in the first part of the twentieth century.
2. Benedetto Croce, *Historical Materialism and the Economics of Karl Marx* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1922), chap. 1; originally published in Italian in 1900.
3. Rudolph Stammler was a professor at the University of Halle, in Leipzig. This quote comes from the first pages of the second chapter of Croce, *Historical Materialism and the Economics of Karl Marx*.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Henri de Man
7. Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923) was an Italian thinker known for his work in economics and sociology.

4.d—*Ethics and Socialism*

The way Marxism is reproached for its supposed anti-ethicism, for its moveable materialism, for the sarcasm with which Marx and Engels treat bourgeois morality in their polemical pages, is not new. Neo-revisionist critiques do not say in this respect anything that the utopians and phrase-makers of all kinds have not already said. But the vindication of Marx from an ethical point of view has also already been done by Benedetto Croce. He is one of the most authoritative representatives of idealist philosophy, whose dictum will seem much more decisive than that of any Jesuit deploring petite bourgeois intelligence. In one of his first essays about historical materialism, in which he disapproves of the anti-ethical thesis about Marxism, Croce wrote the following:

This current has been principally determined by the necessity in which Marx and Engels found themselves, facing the multiple types of utopians, to affirm that what has been called the social question is not a moral question (that is, as it has been interpreted, it is not resolved with sermons and with what could be called moral means) and by their acerbic criticism of class ideologies and hypocrisies. Later, it has been helped, it seems to me, by the Hegelian origins of Marx and Engels's thought. It is well known that Hegelian philoso-

phy and ethics lose the rigidity that Kant might give and that Herbart conserves. And, finally, the denomination of "materialism" is not lacking in efficacy, as it immediately makes one think of well-understood interests and the calculation of pleasures. But it is evident that the ideality and the absolute of the moral, in the philosophical sense of such words, are of course a necessary motive of socialism. Is it not perhaps a moral or social interest, as one might want to say, that moves us to construct a concept of surplus value? Does not the proletariat sell its labor for what it is worth, given its situation in the present society? And without this motive, how would one explain, together with Marx's political action, the tone of the violent indignation or the bitter satire that is noticed in each page of *Capital*? (*Materialismo Storico ed Economía Marxista*)¹

It has fallen to me to appeal to this judgment by Croce, in regard to some of Unamuno's phrases in *The Agony of Christianity*, writing that, in truth, Marx was not a professor but a prophet.

Croce has ratified more than once these quoted words. One of his critical conclusions about the matter is precisely "the negation of the intrinsic amorality or of the intrinsic anti-ethicalism of Marxism."² And in the same work, he marvels that no one "might have thought to call Marx, as an honorary title, the Machiavelli of the proletariat." One must find the ample and definitive explanation of his concept in his defense of the author of *The Prince*, also so persecuted by the disapproval of his posterity. On Machiavelli, Croce has written, "He discovers the necessity and the autonomy of politics that is beyond good and moral evil, that has its laws against which it is futile to rebel and which one cannot exorcise or drag from the world with holy water."³ In Croce's opinion, Machiavelli is "as divided as soul and mind about politics, and of which he has discovered autonomy and that it now appears to him as a sad necessity of debasing one's hands by having to have it out with brutish people, now as a sublime art of founding and sustaining that grand institution that is the State" (*Elementi di politica*).⁴ Croce himself has expressly indicated the similarity between the two cases in these terms:

A case, analogous in certain aspects to that of the discussions about the ethics of Marx, is the traditional critique of Machiavelli: a criticism that was surpassed by De Sanctis (in the chapter about Machiavelli in his *Storia della letteratura*), but that continually returns in the work of Professor Villari, who finds the imperfection of Machiavelli in this: in that he did not consider the moral question. And it has always occurred to me to ask myself by what obligation, by what agreement, Machiavelli should treat all manner of questions, including those which did not interest him and those about which he had nothing to say. It would be the same to reproach someone among those who do research in chemistry for not going back to general metaphysical research about the principles of what is real.

The ethical function of socialism—with respect to that which fearlessly induces the hurried and summary excesses of some Marxists like Lafargue—should be sought not in grandiloquent Decalogues, nor in philosophic speculations that by no means constitute a necessity in Marxist theorizing, but in the creation of a producers' moral for the very process of anticapitalist struggle. Kautsky said, "It is in vain to look to use moral sermons to inspire in British workers a more elevated conception of life—the sentiment of noble effort. The ethic of the proletariat emanates from its revolutionary aspiration; it is they who give it its force and elevation. It is the idea of the revolution that has saved the proletariat from once again being strongly driven down." Sorel adds that for Kautsky the moral is always subordinated to the idea of the sublime and, although not in agreement with many official Marxists who paint the moralists with extreme paradox and ridicule, they agree that "Marxists have a particular reason to be doubtful of all that has to do with ethics; the party-going propagandists, the utopians and democrats had made such an abuse of justice that they had a right to view all dissertations along these lines as an exercise in rhetoric or a sophistry that was destined to mislead the people who were concerned with the workers' movement."

We owe an apology about this ethical function of socialism to the Sorelian socialist thought of Eduard Berth. Daniel Harvey, says Berth,

seems to believe that the exaltation of the producer should prejudice that of the man; he attributes to me a totally American enthusiasm for an industrial civilization. It absolutely is not that way; the life of the free spirit is as dear to me as to him, and I am far from believing that there is nothing more than production in the world. It is always, ultimately, the old reproach made to Marxists, who are accused of being morally and metaphysically materialists. There is nothing more false; historical materialism does not impede in any way the highest development of what Hegel called the free or absolute spirit; it is, on the contrary, its preliminary condition. And our hope is, precisely, that in a society seated on an adequate economic base, composed of a federation of workshops where free workers will be motivated by a lively enthusiasm for the production of art, religion, and philosophy that can take in an enormous impulse and the same ardent, frenetic rhythm, will transport them to the heights.⁵

The wisdom, not exempt from the fine French irony of Luc Durtain, sustains this ascendant religiosity of Marxism, in the first country to have a constitution consistent with its principles. Historically it was already understood, through the Western socialist struggle, that the sublime of the proletariat is not an intellectual utopia or a propagandistic hypothesis.

When Henri de Man, reclaiming in socialism an ethical content, forces himself to show that class interest cannot be by itself a sufficient motor, it absolutely does not go “beyond Marxism,” nor repair things that have not been foreseen by revolutionary criticism. His revisionism attacks reformist syndicalism, wherein class interest is content with satisfying limited material aspirations. A producer’s morality, as Sorel conceives it and as Kautsky would conceive it, does not mechanically flow from economic interest: it forms in class struggle—liberated by heroic animus possessed of passionate will. It is absurd to look for the ethical sentiment of socialism in the bourgeoisified unions—in which a domesticated bureaucracy has debilitated class consciousness—or in the parliamentary groups, spiritually assimilated to the enemy through their combat through speeches and motions. Henri de Man says something

perfectly useless when he affirms “class interest does not explain everything. It does not create ethical motives.”⁶ These affirmations can impress a certain type of nineteenth-century intellectuals who noisily ignore the history of class struggle. They, like Henri de Man, exceed the limits of Marx and his school. The ethic of socialism is formed in class struggle. In order that the proletariat fulfill its historic mission in regard to moral progress, it is necessary to assume its existing class interest, though class interest by itself is not enough. Long before Henri de Man, the Marxists have felt and understood it. It is precisely from this that they start their steeled criticisms against facile reformism. “Without revolutionary theory there is no revolutionary action,” Lenin submitted, alluding to the yellow tendency to forget revolutionary finality by only paying attention to present circumstances.

The struggle for socialism elevates the workers, who with extreme energy and absolute conviction take part in it, to an asceticism, to which it is totally ridiculous to berate its materialist creed in the name of a morality of theorizers and philosophers. Luc Durtain, after visiting a Soviet school, asked if he could not find a lay school in Russia, because the Marxist teaching seemed religious. The materialist, if he professes and serves his faith religiously, even if only for linguistic convention, can be opposed and distinguished from the idealist. (Already Unamuno touched another aspect of the opposition between idealism and materialism when he said that “as materialism is nothing more for us than an idea, materialism is idealism.”)

The worker, indifferent to class struggle, content with his tenor of life, satisfied with his material well-being, can arrive at a mediocre bourgeois morality, but will never manage to elevate himself to a socialist ethic. And it is false to pretend that Marx wanted to separate the worker from his work, deprive him of what spiritually tied him to his work, so that the demon of class struggle could better take hold of him. This conjecture is only conceivable to those such as Lafargue, the apologist for the right to slothfulness, who adhere to marxist speculations.

The shop, the factory, affects the worker psychologically and mentally. The union, the class struggle, continues and completes the work that is begun there. “The factory,” Gobetti notes,

gives the precise vision of the coexistence of social interests: work solidarity. The individual becomes assumed to being part of a productive process, an indispensable part of the same means of production that is lacking. Here you have the most perfect school for pride and humility. I will always remember the impression I had of the workers, when it occurred to me to visit the Fiat factory, one of the few Anglo-Saxon, modern, capitalist establishments that exist in Italy. I felt in the workers an attitude of domination, an unassuming security, a contempt for all types of dilettantism. Whoever lives in a factory has the dignity of work, the habit of sacrifice and fatigue. The rhythm of life is based strongly on the spirit of tolerance and interdependence that accustoms one to punctuality, to rigor, to continuity. These virtues of capitalism are resisted by an almost arid asceticism; but on the other hand such suffering feeds, through exasperation, the courage of struggle, and the instinct of political defense. Anglo-Saxon maturity, the capacity to believe in precise ideologies, to confront dangers by making them stand out, the rigid resolve of practicing the political struggle with dignity, are born in this novitiate, which signifies the greatest revolution to come after Christianity.⁷

In this severe atmosphere of persistence, of effort, of tenacity, the energies of European socialism have been tempered, even in the countries where parliamentary socialism prevails over the masses; it offers an admirable example of continuity and duration to the Indo-Americans. The socialist parties, the union masses, have suffered a hundred defeats in these countries. However, each new year will always find increased and obstinate elections, protests, and any ordinary or extraordinary mobilization. Renan recognized the religious and mystical in this social faith. Labriola correctly exalts German socialism: "This truly new example is imposing in terms of social pedagogy, that is, in a large number of workers and petit bourgeois a new conscience is formed, one in which the governing sentiment of the economic situation, which induces class struggle, equally coincides with socialist propaganda, understood as goal and arrival point."⁸ If socialism should not be realized as a social order, it would

be enough as a work of education and elevation to be justified in history. De Man himself admits this concept when he says, although for a different reason, that “the essential in socialism is the struggle for it,” a phrase that reminds us a lot of Bernstein advising the socialists to worry about the movement, not its goal. He was saying, according to Sorel, something much more philosophical than the revisionist leader imagined.

De Man did not ignore the spiritual, pedagogical function of unionism and the factory, even though his experience might be that of mediocre social democracy. “The union organizations,” he observes, “contribute to strengthening the ties that bind the worker to his work much more than most of the workers and almost all the bosses suppose. They obtain this result almost without knowing it, trying to sustain a professional aptitude and develop industrial teaching, organizing the worker’s right to inspection and to democratize workplace discipline, by means of a system of delegates and sections, etc. In this way they give the worker a much less problematic service, considering him a citizen of a future city, before looking for the remedy in the disappearance of all the psychic relations between the worker and the environment of the workshop.” But the Belgian neo-revisionist, his idealistic boasts notwithstanding, finds the advantage and the merit of this in the growing apogee of the worker in his material well-being and in the extent to which this makes him a philistine. Paradoxes of petit bourgeois idealism!

NOTES

Source: *Defensa del marxismo*, in *Obras Completas*, 3rd ed. (Lima: Editorial Amauta, 1967), chap. 6, 5:47–54.

1. Mariátegui was well acquainted with Benedetto Croce’s work and had copies of four of his books, including a fourth edition of *Materialismo storico ed economia marxista* (Historical Materialism and the Economics of Karl Marx) (Bari: Guiseppe Laterza, 1921), in which these themes are discussed at some length. See the first two chapters of *Historical Materialism*; and H.

- E. Vanden, *Marátegui, influencias en su formación idelógica* (Lima: Editorial Amauta, 1975), and *National Marxism in Latin America, José Carlos Mariátegui's Thought and Politics* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1986).
2. See the first two chapters of *Historical Materialism*.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Benedetto Croce, *Elimenti di politica* (Bari: G. Laterza & figli, 1925).
 5. From Édouard Berth, a French socialist writer best known for *Les Méfaits des intellectuels* (The Misdeeds of the Intellectuals). Published in Paris in 1914 with a preface by Georges Sorel.
 6. From the Spanish thinker and writer Miguel de Unamuno.
 7. From Piero Gobetti.
 8. From Antonio Labriola (1843–1904), an Italian Marxist thinker who influenced Benedetto Croce and Antonio Gramsci.

4.e—*Marxist Determinism*

Another frequent attitude of intellectuals who entertain themselves by denigrating Marxist bibliography is to self-interestedly exaggerate the determinism of Marx and his school, with the aim of declaring them a product of the mechanistic mentality of the nineteenth century, which is incompatible with the heroic, voluntaristic conception of life to which the modern world has been inclined since the war. These reproaches do not accord with a critique of the rationalist and utopian superstitions and the mystical foundation of the socialist movement. But Henri de Man could not miss the opportunity to support the argument that wreaks havoc even among twentieth-century intellectuals, who are seduced by the reactionary snobbism against the “stupid nineteenth century.” The Belgian revisionist observes a certain prudence in this regard. “One must point out that Marx,” he declares, “does not merit the reproach that is frequently directed against him, that of being a fatalist, in the sense that he might deny the influence of human will in historical development; actually, he considers this will to be predetermined.” He adds, “Marx’s disciples are right when they defend their teacher from the reproach of having preached this type of fatalism.” But none of this keeps him, however, from accusing them of their “belief in another sort of fatalism, that of categorical, inevitable ends,” since “according to

the Marxist conception, there is a social will, subject to laws, which is fulfilled by means of the class struggle and is the inevitable result of an economic evolution that creates opposed interests.”¹

In substance, neo-revisionism adopts the idealist critique that reaffirms the action of the will and spirit, although with discreet amendments. But this critique only pertains to social democratic orthodoxy, which, as we have already established, is not and was not Marxist, but rather, Lassallean, a fact proven by the vigor with which the slogan “Back to Lasalle” is disseminated inside German social democracy today. For this critique to be valid, it would have to begin by proving that Marxism is social democracy, an effort that Henri de Man avoids attempting. On the contrary, he recognizes the Third International as the heir to the International Working Men’s Association, in whose congresses one could breathe a mysticism quite close to that of the Christianity of the catacombs. And he corroborates this explicit judgment in his book: “The vulgar Marxists of communism are the real usufructs of the Marxist heritage. Not in the sense that they understand Marx better in reference to his era, but because they more effectively use it for the tasks of their own era, to realize their objectives. The image of Marx that Kautsky offers us appears more like the original than the one Lenin popularized among his disciples. But Kautsky has commented on a politics that Marx never influenced, while the words that Lenin took from Marx after his death as his saint and sign are his very politics, and they continue creating new realities.”

In his *The Agony of Christianity*, Unamuno praises a phrase attributed to Lenin, pronounced in contradicting someone who observed that his efforts went against reality: “So much the worse for reality!” Marxism, where it has shown itself to be revolutionary—that is, where it has been Marxist—has never obeyed a passive and rigid determinism. The reformists resisted revolution during the postwar agitation for the most rudimentary economic determinist reasons—reasons that were, in essence, identified with the conservative bourgeoisie and that denounced the absolutely bourgeois and non-socialist character of such determinism. To the majority of its critics, the Russian Revolution appears, on the other hand, as a rationalist, romantic, anti-historical

effort of utopian fanatics. All caliber of reformists primarily rebuked the revolutionaries' tendency to force history, censuring the tactics of the Third International's parties as "Blanquist" and "putschist."

Marx could only conceive or propose realistic politics, and he therefore carried to extremes his demonstration that the processes of the capitalist economy lead to socialism to the extent that they are fully and energetically realized. But he always understood the spiritual and intellectual capacity of the proletariat to create a new order through class struggle as a necessary condition. Before Marx, the modern world had already reached the moment when no political and social doctrine could appear in contradiction to history and science. The decline of religion has its quite visible origin in its increasing alienation from historical and scientific experience. And it would be absurd to ask a political idea like socialism, so eminently modern in all its aspects, to be indifferent to this order of consideration. As Benda observes in his book *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, all contemporary political movements, starting with the most reactionary, are characterized by their efforts to attribute to themselves a strict correspondence with the course of history. For the reactionaries of Action Française, who are literally more positivist than any revolutionary, the whole period inaugurated by the liberal revolution is monstrously romantic and anti-historical. The limits and function of Marxist determinism have been fixed for some time. Critics alien to any party criteria, such as Adriano Tilgher, subscribe to the following interpretation:

Socialist tactics, to lead to success, must take into account the historical situation in which they must operate, and where this is still too immature for the installation of socialism, they must certainly take good care not to have their hand forced. But on the other hand, they must not Quietistically² give up during the course of events, but rather, insert themselves in this flow to orient these events in a socialist sense so as to make them ripe for the final transformation. Marxist tactics are thus as dynamic and dialectical as Marxist theory itself. Socialists do not agitate in a vacuum, do not disregard the preexisting

situation, do not delude themselves that they can change things with calls to humanity's better emotions, but adhere solidly to historical reality, without resigning themselves passively to it. Rather, they always react more energetically against historical realities with the goal of economically and spiritually reinforcing the working class, accentuating its consciousness of conflict with the bourgeoisie, until, having reached the limit of exasperation, and with the bourgeoisie having reached the end of the power of the capitalist regime, it becomes an obstacle for the productive forces, and they can be usefully overthrown and replaced by a socialist regime to everyone's advantage. (*La Crisi Mondiale e Saggi critiche di Marxismo e Socialismo*)

The voluntarist character of socialism is, in truth, no less evident—even if less understood by its critics—than its determinist foundation. To give it its true value, though, it is nevertheless enough to follow the development of the proletarian movement from the actions of Marx and Engels in London at the beginning of the First International to the present, dominated by the first experience of a socialist state: the USSR. In this process, every word, every Marxist act, resounds with faith, will, heroic and creative conviction, whose impulse it would be absurd to seek in a mediocre and passive determinist sentiment.

NOTES

Source: *Defensa del marxismo*, in *Obras Completas*, 3rd ed. (Lima: Editorial Amauta, 1967), chap. 7, 5:55–58.

1. Henri de Man, *Au delà du marxisme* (Paris: Alcan, 1929; repr., Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1974).
2. Referring to Quietism, a form of religious mysticism focusing on passive meditation.

4.f—*The Heroic and Creative Sense of Socialism*

All those, like Henri de Man, who preach and proclaim an ethical socialism based on humanitarian principles, instead of contributing in some way to the moral elevation of the proletariat, unconsciously and paradoxically work against its affirmation as a creative and heroic force, that is, against its civilizing role. By way of “moral” socialism and its anti-materialist conversations, one can only manage to fall back into the most sterile and lachrymose humanitarian romanticism, the most decadent, “pariah-like” apologetics, and the most sentimental and useless plagiarism of evangelical epigrams about the “poor in spirit.” And this is the equivalent of returning socialism to its romantic, utopian period, when its demands were, in grand part, nurtured by the sentiments and ramblings of this aristocracy that, after having entertained itself in an idyllic, eighteenth-century way by dressing as shepherds and shepherdesses and being converted to the *Encyclopédie* and liberalism, strangely dreamed of nobly leading a revolution of the shirtless and the helots. Obeying a tendency to sublimate one’s sentiments, this type of socialist—whose services no one thinks of denying, and among whom some extraordinary and

admirable spirits rise to great heights—pulled from the gutter the sentimental clichés and demagogic images of the era of *sansculottes* so as to inaugurate a paradisiacally Rousseauian age throughout the world. But, as we have known for some time, this was absolutely not the road to socialist revolution. Marx discovered and taught that one had to begin by understanding the necessity and, especially, the value of the capitalist stage. Socialism, beginning with Marx, appeared as the conception of a new class, as a theory and movement that had nothing in common with the romanticism of those who repudiated the work of capitalism as an abomination. The proletariat succeeded the bourgeoisie in the work of civilization. And it assumed this mission, conscious of its responsibility and capacity—gained in revolutionary activity and the capitalist factory—when the bourgeoisie, having fulfilled its destiny, ceased being a force for progress and culture.

For this reason, Marx's work has a certain tone of admiration for the work of capitalism, and *Capital*, as it lays the bases for socialist science, is the best history of the epoch of capitalism (something that seemingly does not escape Henri de Man's view, but that does in its deeper sense).

Ethical, pseudo-Christian, humanitarian socialism, which anachronistically tries to oppose itself to Marxist socialism, might be the more or less lyric and innocuous exercise of a tired and decadent bourgeoisie, but not the theory of a class that has reached its adulthood, overcoming the greatest objectives of the capitalist class. Marxism is completely foreign and contrary to these mediocre, altruistic, and philanthropic speculations. We Marxists do not believe that the job of creating a new social order, superior to the capitalist order, falls to an amorphous mass of oppressed pariahs guided by evangelical preachers of goodness. The revolutionary energy of socialism is not nurtured by compassion or envy. In the class struggle, where all the sublime and heroic elements of its ascent reside, the proletariat must elevate itself to a "producers' morality," quite distant and distinct from the "slave morality" that its gratuitous professors of morals, horrified by its materialism, officiously attempt to provide. A new civilization cannot arise from a sad and humiliated world of miserable helots

with no greater merits or faculties than their servility and misery. The proletariat only enters history politically, as a social class, at the moment it discovers its mission to build a superior social order with elements gathered by human effort, whether moral or amoral, just or unjust. And it has not gained this ability miraculously. It has won it by situating itself solidly on the terrain of the economy, of production. Its class morale depends on the energy and heroism with which it operates on this terrain, and the amplitude with which it understands and masters the bourgeois economy.

De Man touches upon this truth at times, but he generally takes care not to adopt it. He thus writes, for example, "The essential part of socialism is the struggle for it. According to the formula of a representative of the German Socialist Youth, the purpose of our existence is not paradisiacal, but heroic." But this is not exactly the conception that inspires the thought of the Belgian revisionist, who, a few pages before, confesses, "I feel closer to reformist than extremist practice, and I value a new sewer in a working-class neighborhood or a flower garden in front of a worker's house more than a new theory of class struggle." In the first part of his book, de Man criticizes the tendency to idealize the proletariat, just as the peasant, the primitive, simple man, was idealized in the age of Rousseau. And this indicates that his speculation and practice are almost solely based on the humanitarian socialism of intellectuals.

There is no doubt that, until now, this humanitarian socialism has been propagated a little among the working masses. The *Internationale*, the hymn of the revolution, addresses itself in its first verse to the "poor of the earth," a phrase clearly reminiscent of the gospels. If one remembers that the author of these verses is a popular French poet of a purely bohemian and romantic stripe, the vein of his inspiration becomes clear. The work of another Frenchman, the great Henri Barbusse, is impregnated with this same sentiment: the idealization of the masses—the timeless, eternal mass, the caryatidic masses—upon which the glory of heroes and the burden of culture weigh oppressively. But this mass of people is not the modern proletariat, and its generic demands are not revolutionary and socialist.

The exceptional merit of Marx consists, in this sense, in having discovered the proletariat. As Adriano Tilgher writes, "Marx stands before history as the discoverer, one could almost say the *inventor*, of the working class. He, in effect, not only gave the proletarian movement the consciousness of its nature, its legitimacy and historical necessity, of its internal laws, the ultimate goal toward which it is moving, and in this way has thus imbued the working class with the consciousness it had previously lacked; he has created, one could say, the very notion, and behind the notion, the reality of the proletariat as the class essentially antithetical to the bourgeoisie, and the true and sole bearer of the revolutionary spirit in modern industrial society."

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Source: *Defensa del marxismo*, in *Obras Completas*, 3rd ed. (Lima: Editorial Amauta, 1967), chap. 8, 5:59-62.

4.g— *The Liberal Economy and the Socialist Economy*

Those phases of the economic process that Marx did not foresee—and it is necessary to desist in consulting the fecund volumes of criticism and theory in which he espouses his method of interpretation as if these were the memoirs of a fortune-teller—do not minimally affect the fundamentals of Marxist economics. It is precisely the increasingly severe and profound events that have rectified the practice of capitalism during the last century that have forced, in line with specific cases, protectionism over free trade and intervention over laissez-faire policies, but they have not challenged the fundamentals of the liberal economy that provide the theoretical bases of the capitalist order. Today, in the time of worldwide standardization of services and enterprises, the leader of the Republican Party and President-elect of the United States claims these individualist principles to be essential to the prosperity and development of that nation. This comes in light of the tendency of the opposition party to overreward the state with business functions as part of its attack on the most vital force of the Yankee economy. No matter how much the Republican regime keeps the Yankee state in its classical economic line, reserving business and production for private enterprise, a pro-

trust policy, and monopoly practices, it represents the derogation of the old principles that Hoover proclaims so vigorously. But if these principles are in the last analysis reduced to the principle of private property, capitalism will not retain anything with which it can ideologically oppose socialism. Although the facts restrict and, in certain cases, annul its validity—as corresponds to an economy that has served its mission—these principles, which constitute the substance of the liberal economy, cannot be denied by these developments and, consequently, by its statesmen or politicians. . . .

“Liberal political economy,” Sorel observes,

has been one of the best examples of utopia that can be cited. They have imagined a society in which everything can be reduced to commercial patterns under the most complete laissez-faire laws possible. Today this society would be as difficult to achieve as that of Plato. But great modern ministers have owed their glory to the efforts they have made to introduce something of this commercial liberty in industrial legislation.

Croce for his part does not explain under which rubric the liberal economists censure socialism as utopian, when it is evident that

the socialists can return the same censure to liberalism, if they were to study it as it is now and not how it was years ago, when Marx conjured his critique. Liberalism directs its exhortations to an entity that, at least now, does not exist: the national or general interest of a society; because present society is divided in antagonistic groups and knows the interest of each of these groups but not, or only weakly, of a general interest.¹

And it cannot be said, on the other hand, that Marxism as a praxis currently relies on the data and premises of Marx’s economy studies, because the theses and debates of all its congresses are not anything other than a continual reintroduction of the economic and political problems, according to the new aspects of reality. The Soviets,

who in this respect can invoke a varied and extensive experience, have sustained in the last European Economic Conference the principle of the legitimate coexistence of states with a socialist economy with those states with a capitalist economy. For this coexistence that is given in history today as a fact, they reclaim it as a right, in order to achieve the legal and economic organization of their relations. In this proposition, the first socialist state shows itself to be much more liberal than the formally liberal states. This confirms the conclusion to which liberal thinkers arrive when they affirm that the historic and philosophical function of liberalism has passed to socialism, and that liberalism today, being a principle of incessant evolution and progress, is less liberal than the old parties of this name.

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Source: *Defensa del marxismo*, in *Obras Completas*, 3rd ed. (Lima: Editorial Amauta, 1967), chap. 9, 5: 63–66.

1. Benedetto Croce, *Materialismo Storico ed Economía Marxista*, 4th ed. (Bari: Guiseppe Laterza, 1921), 96.

4.h—*Freudianism and Marxism*

The recent book by Max Eastman, *The Science of Revolution*, coincides with that of Henri de Man in a tendency to study Marxism with data from the new psychology. But Eastman, resentful of the Bolsheviks, is not exempt from revisionist motives. He comes from a different point of view than the Belgian writer, and in varied ways brings a more original contribution to the critique of Marxism. Henri de Man is a heretic from reformism or social democracy and Max Eastman is a heretic from revolution. His super-Trotskyite intellectual criticism divorced him from the Soviets, whose leaders, especially Stalin, he attacked violently in his book *After Lenin's Death*.¹

Max Eastman is far from believing that contemporary psychology in general, and Freudian psychology in particular, diminishes the validity of Marxism as a practical science of revolution.² To the contrary: he affirms that it reinforces it and shows interesting affinities between the essential discoveries of Marx and the discoveries of Freud, and similarly in the reactions provoked in official science by one and the other. Marx shows that the classes idealized and masked their motives and that behind their ideologies, that is, in their political, philosophical or religious principles, their interests and economic necessities were operating. This assertion is formulated with

the rigor and the absolutism that each revolutionary theory always has when it begins, and that for polemical reasons is accentuated in the debate with those who contradict it. It profoundly injures the idealism of the intellectuals, who until now were unwilling to admit any scientific notion that implies a negation or a reduction of the autonomy or majesty of thought, or, more exactly, of the professionals or functionaries of thought.

Freudianism and Marxism, even though the disciples of Freud and Marx are not yet those with the greatest propensity to understand it and notice it, are related in their distinct dominions not only for their theories of "submission," as Freud says, because of the idealist conceptualizations of humanity, but for the methods used to confront the problems considered. "To cure individual upheavals," Max Eastman observes, "the psychoanalyst pays particular attention to the deformations of conscience produced by repressed sexual motives. The Marxist who tries to cure the upheavals of society pays particular attention to the deformations engendered by hunger and egoism." Marx's term "ideology" is simply a name that serves to designate the deformations of social and political thought produced by repressed motives. This term translates the idea of the Freudians when they speak of rationalization, of substitution, of transference, of displacement, of sublimation. The economic interpretation of history is not anything more than a generalized psychoanalysis of the social and political spirit. From it we have a sample of the spasmodic and unreasonable resistance against the patient. Marxist diagnosis is considered more as an outrage than as a scientific answer. Instead of being embraced with a truly comprehensive critical spirit, it runs into rationalizations and "defensive reactions" of the most violent and infantile character.³

Freud, examining the resistance to psychoanalysis, has already described these reactions, which neither the physicians nor the philosophers have attributed to properly scientific or philosophical reasons. Psychoanalysis was objected to because, more than anything, it contradicted and stirred up a thick layer of sentiments and superstitions. Its affirmations about the subconscious, and especially about

the libido, inflict on men a humiliation as severe as that felt with Darwin's theory and with the discovery of Copernicus. Freud may have added a third precedent to biological and cosmological humiliation: that caused by economic materialism just as idealist philosophy was at its full apogee.

The accusation of pan-sexuality that Freud's theory encounters has an exact equivalent in the accusation of pan-economism that Marx's doctrine still encounters. Apart from the fact that the concept of economy in Marx is as broad and deep as Freud's concept of the libido, the dialectical principle on which all of the Marxist conception is based excludes the reduction of the historical process to a purely mechanical economics. And the Marxists can refute and destroy the accusation of pan-economism with the same logic with which Freud, defending psychoanalysis, said, "They reproach his pan-sexualism, even though the psychoanalytic study of the instincts might have always been rigorously dualist and might never have failed to acknowledge, with regard to sexual appetites, other rather strong motives for rejecting sexual instinct."⁴ Likewise, in the attacks on psychoanalysis there has been no greater influence on the resistance to Marxism than the anti-Semitic sentiment. And many of the ironies and reserve with which psychoanalysis is received in France, because it comes from a German whose nebulousness is little related to Latin and French civility, seems surprising in terms of those that Marxism has always encountered. This is not only the case among the anti-socialists in this country where unconscious nationalism has habitually inclined people to see the thought of Marx as that of a dark, metaphysical Boche.⁵ The Italians, for their part, have not spared the same epithets nor have they been less extremist and jealous in opposing, as the case may be, Latin idealism and positivism to Marx's German materialism or abstraction.

To motives based on class and intellectual education that stiffen the resistance to the Marxist method, as Max Eastman says, Freud's own disciples—inclined to consider revolutionary attitude as a simple neurosis—do not, among men of science, manage to exclude themselves. Class instinct determines this fundamentally reactionary judgment.

The scientific, logical value of Max Eastman's book—and this is the curious conclusion to which one arrives after reading it and recalling the antecedents in *After the Death of Lenin* and his noisy excommunication by the Russian Communists—is very relative, if one does a little research on the sentiments that inevitably inspire it. Psychoanalysis, from this perspective, could be prejudicial to Max Eastman as part of his Marxist critique. For the author of *The Science of Revolution* it would be impossible to prove that his neo-revisionist personal reasoning, in his heretical position, and above all in his conceptions about Bolshevism, are not minimally influenced by his personal resentments. Sentiment is too frequently imposed on the reasoning of this writer, who so passionately tries to situate himself on objective and scientific ground.

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Source: *Defensa del marxismo*, in *Obras Completas*, 3rd ed. (Lima: Editorial Amauta, 1967), chap. 10, 5:67–70.

1. The original title in English was *Marx and Lenin: The Science of Revolution*, first published in 1926, following the publication of *After the Death of Lenin* (1925). Mariátegui used and cited a French edition, *Depuis la mort de Lénine* (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1925). For this essay, written in 1929, Mariátegui evidently used a Spanish translation of *Marx and Lenin: The Science of Revolution*. See *La ciencia de la revolución* (Barcelona: Librería Catalonia, 1928).
2. Max Eastman (1883–1969) was one of the most prolific leftist writers in the United States and masterful editor of *Masses*, until government censorship closed it. After a year's stay in the Soviet Union and befriending Leon Trotsky, he became increasingly critical of Stalin and eventually of Soviet Communism.
3. Eastman, *Marx and Lenin: The Science of Revolution*.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

4.i—*Materialist Idealism*

A friend and comrade whose intelligence I greatly value writes to me that, in his judgment, the merit of Henri de Man's work is as an effort to spiritualize Marxism. In his dual role as intellectual and academic, my friend should have been scandalized more than once by the simplistic and elemental materialism of orthodox catechists. I know many of these cases, and I myself had this experience in the early stages of my investigations into the revolutionary phenomenon. But even without advancing practically with this investigation, it is enough to consider the nature of the ingredients with which such a judgment contents itself to see its uselessness. My friend would find a pretension of claiming to understand and appraise Catholicism through the sermons of a parish priest absurd. He would insist on a serious and profound treatment of scholasticism and mysticism in such a critique. And any honest investigator would join him in such a demand. How, then, can he agree with the first philosophy student who has just picked up a dislike and disdain for Marxism from a phrase by his professor about the need to spiritualize this theory, too gross for the academic palate as it is understood and propagated by its public vulgarizers?

Above all, what kind of spiritualization do we want? If capitalist civilization, in decadence similar to that of Roman civilization in so

many ways, renounces its own philosophic thought and abdicates its own scientific certitude to search for drug-like Oriental occultism and Asian metaphysics, then the best sign of the health and power of socialism as the source of a new civilization is undoubtedly its resistance to all these spiritualist ecstasies. In comparison with the return of the decadent and menaced bourgeoisie to mythologies that did not trouble the bourgeoisie in its youth, the most solid affirmation of the creative power of the proletariat would be its resounding rejection, its smiling deprecation of the anguish and the nightmares of a menopausal spiritualism.

Against the sentimental—nonreligious raptures—the other worldly nostalgias, of a class that senses its mission to be concluded, a new ruling class disposes of no more valid defense than its confirmation of the materialist principles of its revolutionary philosophy. What would distinguish socialist thinking from the most senile and rotten capitalist thinking if it shared all its hidden tastes? No, nothing is more insincere than to suppose that the incipient tendency of a professor or banker to revere Krishnamurti, or at least to show himself able to understand his message, is a sign of superiority. None of his clients asks the same banker, no one in his audience asks the same professor, that they show themselves similarly capable of understanding Lenin's message.

What person who follows the development of modern thought with critical lucidity can fail to note that the return to spiritualist ideas, the retreat to Asian paradises, has clearly decadent causes and origins? Marxism, as philosophical reflection, discovers the work of capitalist thought at the point where it abandons its forward march and begins its retreat, vacillating before its extreme consequences, a vacillation that precisely corresponds, on the economic and political plane, to a crisis of the liberal bourgeois system. Its mission is to continue this work. Revisionists like Henri de Man, who, according to the phrase of Vandervelde, “de-bone” Marxism for fear of appearing backward in relation to philosophical attitudes of a clearly reactionary impulse, intend nothing other than an apostate rectification in which socialism would attenuate its materialist premises to the point of making them

acceptable to spiritualists and theologians for the frivolous purpose of adapting itself to current fashion.

The first false position in this meditation is that of supposing that a materialist conception of the universe is not suitable for producing great spiritual values. The theological—and not philosophical—prejudices that act as residue in minds that imagine themselves free of vanquished dogmatisms lead them to attach an untamed existence to materialist philosophy. History contradicts this arbitrary concept through innumerable historical testimonies. The biographies of Marx, Sorel, Lenin, and a thousand other protagonists of socialism find nothing to envy as to moral beauty and the full affirmation of the power of the spirit in the biographies of those heroes and ascetics who had earlier worked in accord with a spiritual or religious conception, in the classical sense of these words. The USSR combats bourgeois ideology with the most extreme weapons of materialism. The work of the USSR nevertheless tests the current limits of rationalism and spirituality in its declarations and objectives, if the object of rationalism and spiritualism is to improve and ennoble life. Do those who aspire to a spiritualization of Marxism believe that the creative spirit is less present and active in the actions of those who struggle for a new world order than it is among those New York moneylenders and industrialists who, marking the moment of capitalist exhaustion, disown potent Nietzschean ethics—the sublimated morality of capitalism—to flirt with fakirs and occultists? Just as Christian metaphysics have not kept the West from great material accomplishments, Marxist materialism, as I have affirmed on other occasions, encompasses all of our era's possibilities for moral, spiritual, and philosophical ascent.

Piero Gobetti, a disciple and heir of Crocean idealism, drawing on the doctrine's purity and active orientation, has considered this problem in admirably proper terms. "Christianity," Gobetti writes,

reached the world of truth inside us, in the intimacy of spirit, it pointed out to humanity a duty, a mission, a redemption. But having abandoned Christian dogma, we have found richer, more conscious, more actionable spiritual values. Our problem is moral and political: our

philosophy sanctifies the value of practice. Everything is reduced to a criterion of human responsibility; if the earthly struggle is the only reality, everyone has value insofar as they work, and it is all of us who make our own history. This is progress because ever richer new experiences unfold. It is not a matter of reaching a goal or denying oneself through an ascetic renunciation; it is a matter of always more intensely and consciously being oneself, of overcoming the chains of our weakness in a perennial superhuman effort. The new criterion of truth is work that is adequate to each person's responsibility. We are in the kingdom of struggle (the struggle of man against man, of class against class, of state against state), because only through struggle are capabilities tempered and everyone, intransigently defending their position, collaborates in the vital process that has transcended the death of Greek asceticism and objectivism.

A Latin mind could not find a more classically precise formula than this: "Our philosophy sanctifies the value of practice."

The classes that have succeeded in dominating society have always disguised their material interests with a mythology that credits the idealism of its conduct. Since socialism, consistent with its philosophical premises, renounces this anachronistic garb, all spiritualistic superstitions rebel against it, in a conclave of international Pharisaism, whose holy decisions timid intellectuals and ingenuous academics feel obliged to consider.

But because bourgeois philosophical thought has lost the security and stoicism with which it wished to be characterized in its affirmative and revolutionary era, should socialism imitate its withdrawal to the Thomist cloister or its pilgrimage to the pagoda of the living Buddha, following the Parisian itinerary of Jean Cocteau or the touristic itinerary of Paul Morand? Who are more idealistic in the higher, abstract sense of the word, the idealists of the bourgeois order or the materialists of the socialist revolution? And if the word *idealism* is discredited and compromised by its service to systems that signify all the old class interests and privileges, what historical need has socialism of taking on its protection? Idealist philosophy, historically, is the philosophy of

liberal society and the bourgeois order. And we already know the results that it has theoretically and practically given since the bourgeoisie became conservative. For every Benedetto Croce who loyally develops this philosophy and denounces the inflamed conspiracy of academia against socialism, which is unrecognized as an idea that arises from the development of liberalism, how many Giovanni Gentilis¹ serve a party whose ideologues are sectarian supporters of a spiritual restoration of the Middle Ages who repudiate modernity in toto? During the era when the formula "All that is real is rational" sufficed against egalitarian rationalism and utopianism, the historicist and evolutionist bourgeoisie dogmatically and forcibly disposed of almost all "idealists." Now that the myths of History and Evolution no longer serve to resist socialism, they become anti-historicist, reconcile with all religions and superstitions, favor the return to transcendence and theology, adopt the principles of the reactionaries who fought it most furiously when they were revolutionary and liberal, and once again discover the solicitous suppliers of all sermons useful for the rejuvenation of the oldest myths in the ranks and leading circles of a "bonne à tout faire" idealist philosophy (neo-Kantian, neo-pragmatist, etc.), whether dandies and gallants like Count Keyserling or pamphleteers and provincials à la Léon Bloy, like Domenico Guilliotti.

It is possible that those of the university who are vaguely sympathizers of Marx and Lenin but more particularly of Jaures and Macdonald feel the lack of a feverishly spiritual socialist theory or literature with abundant citations from Keyserling, Scheller, Stammer, and even Steiner and Krishnamurti.² It is logical that Henri de Man's revisionism, and others of lesser distinction, would find disciples and admirers among such elements who are often lacking any serious knowledge of Marxism. Few among them will bother to find out if the ideas of *Beyond Marxism* are at least original, or if, as Vandervelde himself certifies, they add nothing to the older revisionist critique. Both Henri de Man and Max Eastman draw their best arguments from the critique of the materialist conception of history formulated some years ago in the following terms by Professor Brandenburg: "It wishes to base all the *variations* of the collective life of humanity in the

changes that take place in the realm of productive forces, but it cannot explain why the latter must constantly change, and why this change must necessarily occur in the direction of socialism." Bukharin responds to this criticism in an appendix to *Historical Materialism*. But it is easier and more convenient to content oneself with reading Henri de Man than to investigate his sources and inform oneself of the arguments of Bukharin and Professor Brandenberg, which are circulated less widely by news distributors.

On the other hand, the following proposition is peculiar and exclusive to Henri de Man's attempt to spiritualize socialism: "Living values are superior to material ones, and among living values, the highest ones are spiritual. Eudemonistically, this could be expressed as follows: Under equal conditions, the most desirable satisfactions are those which one feels in one's conscience when reflecting what is most enduring in the reality of the self and the medium that surrounds it." This arbitrary categorization of values has no other purpose than to satisfy those pseudo-socialists who wish to be furnished a formula equivalent to that of the neo-Thomists: "the primacy of the spirit." Henri de Man could never satisfactorily explain how living values differ from material ones. And to distinguish material from spiritual values would require a reliance on the most archaic dualism.

In the appendix to his book on historical materialism, Bukharin passes judgment on a tendency in which one could place de Man:

According to Marx, the relations of production are the material base of society. Nevertheless, among numerous Marxist (or, rather, pseudo-Marxist) groups, an irresistible tendency to spiritualize this material base exists. The progress of the psychological school and method in bourgeois sociology could not fail to "contaminate" Marxist and semi-Marxist milieus. This phenomenon went hand in hand with the growing influence of idealist academic philosophy. The Austrian school (Bohm-Bawerk, L. Word, and all the rest) began to remake Marx's construction, introducing the "ideal" psychological base into the material base of society. The initiative in this task fell to Austro-Marxism, theoretically in decline. They began to treat the material

base in the spirit of the Pickwick Club. The economy, the mode of production, became a category inferior to that of psychological reactions. The solid cement of the material disappeared from the social edifice.

Let Keyserling and Spengler, those sirens of decadence, remain on the margins of Marxist thought. More harmful and disturbing to socialism at its current stage is the fear of not seeming intellectual and spiritual enough to academic critics. "Men who have received an elementary education," Sorel wrote in the introduction to his *Reflections on Violence*,

are generally imbued with a certain reverence for the educated world, and they readily attribute genius to the people who attract the attention of the literary world to any great extent; they imagine that they must have a great deal to learn from authors whose names are so often mentioned with praise in the newspapers; they listen with singular respect to the commentaries that these literary prize winners present to them. It is not easy to fight against these prejudices, but it is very useful work; we regard this task as being absolutely of the first importance, and we can carry it to a profitable conclusion without ever attempting to direct the working-class movement. The proletariat must be preserved from the experience of the Germans who conquered the Roman Empire; the latter were ashamed of being barbarians, and put themselves to school with the rhetoricians of the Latin decadence; they had no reason to congratulate themselves for having wished to be civilized.³

This warning, from the man of thought and learning who took for socialism the best parts of Bergson's teachings, has never been as relevant as during these interim periods of capitalist stabilization.

NOTES

Source: *Defensa del marxismo*, in *Obras Completas*, 3rd ed. (Lima: Editorial Amauta, 1950), chap. 13, 5:83-90.

1. Giovanni Gentilis (1875–1944) was an Italian neo-Hegelian idealist philosopher.
2. Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986) was an Indian-born writer and speaker on philosophical and spiritual issues.
3. Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, trans. T. E. Hulme and J. Roth (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1950), 61–62.

4.j—*The Science Of Revolution*

The Science of Revolution by Max Eastman is almost reduced to the assertion that Marx never managed to emancipate himself from Hegel in his thought. If this incurable Hegelianism had persisted only in Marx and Engels the author of *The Science of Revolution* would be little worried. But as it is found living in Marxist theorizing and those who continue it and, above all, dogmatically professed by the ideologues of the Russian Revolution, Max Eastman considers it urgent and essential to denounce and combat it. One must consider his fixing of Marx as reparations of Marxism.

But what *The Science of Revolution* demonstrates rather than the impossibility of Marx emancipating himself from Hegel is the inability of Max Eastman to emancipate himself from William James. Eastman shows himself particularly loyal to William James in his anti-Hegelianism. William James, after recognizing Hegel as one of few thinkers who propose a comprehensive solution to dialectic problems, pressures himself to add that Hegel “wrote so abominably that I cannot understand him” (*Introduction to Philosophy*).¹ Max Eastman did not force himself to understand Hegel any more. In his offensive against the dialectical method, all his North American resistances come into play—the proclivity for a flexible and individualist practicality, permeated with pragmatic ideas—against German panlogism,²

against the system of a utilitarian and dialectical conception. At first glance, the "Americanism" of Max Eastman's thesis is in his belief that revolution does not need a philosophy, only a science, a technique. At the bottom, however, it is truly in its Anglo-Saxon tendency to reject, in the name of pure "good feeling," all ideological construction that jars his pragmatic education.

Max Eastman on reproaching Marx for not having liberated himself from Hegel, reproaches him in general for not having liberated himself from all metaphysics, all philosophy. Not taken into account is if Marx, with the tediousness of a German expert, had only proposed and achieved the scientific elucidation of the problems of the revolution, as they were empirically presented in his time, he would not have achieved his most effective and valuable scientific conclusions. Moreover, he would not have elevated socialism to the level of an ideological discipline and political organization that converted it into the constructive force for a new social order. Marx could be an expert on revolution the same way Lenin was precisely because he did not belabor the elaboration of some strictly verifiable recipes. If he had rejected or been afraid to confront the "difficulties" of the creation of a "system," so as not to disgust the irreducible pluralism of Max Eastman later, his theoretical work would not be any better than that of Proudhon and Kropotkin³ in its historical transcendence.

Nor does Max Eastman note that without the theory of historical materialism, socialism would not have advanced beyond the low point of philosophical materialism, and in the inevitable aging of this, by its lack of understanding of the necessity to fix the laws of evolution and movement, it would have been more easily contaminated by all derivatives of reactionary "idealisms." For Max Eastman, Hegelianism is a demon that must be forced to exit the body of Marxism, exorcising it in the name of science. What are the reasons for supporting his thesis to affirm that the work of Marx continually is at variance with the most metaphysical and Teutonic Hegelianism? In truth, Max Eastman does not have any more proof of this conviction than those who in times past were believers in the presence of demons in someone's body that had to be exorcised. Here is his diagnosis of the case of Marx:

Upon happily declaring that there is no such idea, that there is not any such empirical order that occupies the center of the universe, that the ultimate reality is not the spirit, but materialism, he put aside all sentimental emotion, and in a disposition that seemed completely realist, he put himself to write the science of the proletarian revolution. But in spite of this profound emotional transformation that he experienced, his writings continue to have a metaphysical and essentially animist character. Marx had not examined this material world the same way an artisan examines his materials, in order to be able to get the best out of them. Marx examines the material world the same way a priest examines the ideal world, with the hope of finding his own creative aspirations in it, and in the contrary case, to see how to transplant them in it. In his intellectual system, Marxism does not represent the passage of utopian socialism to scientific socialism; it does not represent the substitution of a non-practical evangelization for a better world by a practical plan, helped by a study of actual society, and indicating the means of replacing it with a better society. Marxism constitutes the passage of utopian socialism to socialist religion, a scheme destined to convince the believer that the universe itself automatically engenders a better society and that he, the believer, does not have to do anything more than follow that universe.⁴

The propositions that Eastman himself copies in *The Science of Revolution* from *Thesis on Feuerbach* are not enough for him as a guarantee of the totally new and revolutionary sense found in Marx when the dialectic is employed. He does not remember at any time this definitive affirmation of Marx: "The dialectic method not only differs in regard to Hegel's essence, rather it is totally contrary. For Hegel the process of thought, that he transforms under the name of ideal, into an independent subject, is the *demiurg* (creator) of reality, this last not being more than its exterior manifestation. For me, on the contrary, the idea is not anything but the material world translated and transformed by the human brain."⁵ Without doubt, Max Eastman will try to maintain that his criticism does not concern the theoretical exposition of historical materialism but a spiritual and intellectual Hegelianism—in

certain mental conformity to a professor of metaphysics—and that in his judgment Marx never knew how to get off the ground in spite of historical materialism whose signs one has to look for in the dominant tone of his speculation and sermonizing. And here we touch on his fundamental error: his repudiation of philosophy itself, his mystical conviction that everything, absolutely everything, is reducible to science, and that socialist revolution does not need philosophers, but technical experts. Emmanuel Berl definitively ridicules this tendency, although without distinguishing it, as is de rigueur, from the authentic expressions of revolutionary thought. “This same revolutionary agitation,” Berl writes,

ends up being represented as a special technique that can be taught in a central school. Conclusions can be obtained in examples of the study of advanced Marxism, the history of revolutions, and more or less real participation in diverse movements that can emerge at any point from which one can extract abstract formulas that cannot be applied automatically where ever a revolutionary possibility emerges. At the side of the Commissar of Rubber, the Commissar of Propaganda, both multifaceted technical experts.

The scientism of Max Eastman is not rigorously original either. In the times that the positivists still pontificated, Enrico Ferri⁶ gave the term “scientific socialism” a strict and literal acceptance. He also thought that something like a Science of Revolution was possible. Sorel was greatly amused by this, at the expense of the learned Italian, whose contributions to socialist speculation were never taken seriously by the heads of German socialism. Today the times are less favorable than before to attempt it again, not from the point of view of the positivist school, but rather from that of Yankee practicality. Besides, Max Eastman does not represent any of the principles of the Science of Revolution. In this respect, the intention of his book, which coincides with that of Henri de Man in its negative character, never gets past the title.

NOTES

Source: *Defensa del marxismo*, in *Obras Completas*, 3rd ed. (Lima: Editorial Amauta, 1967), chap. 16, 5:107–11.

1. William James, *Some Problems of Philosophy: A Beginning of an Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1911), 92.
2. In philosophy, panlogism is a Hegelian doctrine that holds that the universe is the act or realization of Logos.
3. Proudhon and Kropotkin were anarchist thinkers.
4. Max Eastman, *Marx, Lenin and the Science of Revolution* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1926).
5. Ibid.
6. Enrico Ferri (February 25, 1856–April 12, 1929) was an Italian socialist and editor of the daily socialist newspaper *Avanti*.