

CHAPTER VII

IS REVOLUTION THE REMEDY?

MARXIAN Socialism, which seeks to solve the complex problem of human misery by economic and proletarian revolution has manifested a new vitality. Every shade of Socialist thought and philosophy acknowledges its indebtedness to the vision of Karl Marx and his conception of the class struggle. Yet the relation of Marxian Socialism to the philosophy of Birth Control especially in the minds of most Socialists remains hazy and confused. No thorough understanding of Birth Control, its aims and purposes is possible until this confusion has been cleared away, and we come to a realization that Birth Control is not merely independent of, but even antagonistic to the Marxian dogma. In recent years many Socialists have embraced the doctrine of Birth Control and have generously promised us that 'under Socialism voluntary motherhood will

be adopted and popularized as part of a general educational system. We might more logically reply that no Socialism will ever be possible until the problem of responsible parenthood has been solved.

Many Socialists to day remain ignorant of the inherent conflict between the idea of Birth Control and the philosophy of Marx. The earlier Marxians including Karl Marx himself expressed the bitterest antagonism to Malthusian and neo Malthusian theories. A remarkable feature of early Marxian propaganda has been the almost complete unanimity with which the implications of the Malthusian doctrine have been derided, denounced and repudiated. Any defense of the so called law of population was enough to stamp one in the eyes of the orthodox Marxians as a tool of the capitalistic class seeking to dampen the ardor of those who expressed the belief that men might create a better world for themselves. Malthus they claimed was actuated by selfish class motives. He was not merely a hide bound aristocrat but a pessimist who was trying to kill all hope of human progress. By Marx, Engels, Bebel, Karl Kautsky, and all

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the celebrated leaders and interpreters of Marx's great Bible of the working class down to the martyred Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht Birth Control has been looked upon as a subtle Machiavellian sophistry created for the purpose of placing the blame for human misery elsewhere than at the door of the capitalist class Upon this point the orthodox Marxian mind has been universally and sternly uncompromising

Marxian vituperation of Malthus and his followers is illuminating It reveals not the weakness of the thinker attacked, but of the aggressor This is nowhere more evident than in Marx's Capital itself In that monumental effort, it is impossible to discover any adequate refutation or even calm discussion of the dangers of irresponsible parenthood and reckless breeding any suspicion that this recklessness and irresponsibility is even remotely related to the miseries of the proletariat Poor Malthus is there relegated to the humble level of a footnote If the reader reminds me of Malthus whose essay on Population appeared in 1798, Marx remarks

somewhat tartly, I remind him that this work in its first form is nothing more than a school-boyish superficial plagiary of De Foe Sir James Steuart Townsend Franklin Wallace, etc and does not contain a single sentence thought out by himself The great sensation this pamphlet caused was due solely to party interest The French Revolution had passionate defenders in the United Kingdom

The Principles of Population was quoted with jubilation by the English oligarchy as the great destroyer of all hankerings after human development ¹

The only attempt that Marx makes here toward answering the theory of Malthus is to declare that most of the population theory teachers were merely Protestant parsons — Parson Wallace Parson Townsend, Parson Malthus and his pupil the Arch Parson Thomas Chalmers to say nothing of the lesser reverend scribblers in this line The great pioneer of scientific Socialism then proceeds to berate parsons as philosophers and economists, using this method of escape from the very pertinent question of surplus population

¹ Marx Capital Vol I p 675

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and surplus proletariat in its relation to labor organization and unemployment. It is true that elsewhere² he goes so far as to admit that 'even Malthus recognized over population as a necessity of modern industry, though after his narrow fashion he explains it by the absolute over growth of the laboring population not by their becoming relatively super numerary. A few pages later however Marx comes back again to the question of over population failing to realize that it is to the capitalists advantage that the working classes are unceasingly prolific. The folly is now patent writes the unsuspecting Marx of the economic wisdom that preaches to the laborers the accommodation of their numbers to the requirements of capital. The mechanism of capitalist production and accumulation constantly affects this adjustment. The first work of this adaptation is the creation of a relatively surplus population or industrial reserve army. Its last work is the misery of constantly extending strata of the army of labor and the dead weight of pauperism. A little later he ventures again in the direction

²Op cit pp 695 707 709

of Malthusianism so far as to admit that 'the accumulation of wealth at one pole is at the same time the accumulation of misery, agony of toil slavery ignorance, brutality and mental degradation at the opposite pole Nevertheless there is no indication that Marx permitted himself to see that the proletariat accommodates its numbers to the requirements of capital precisely by breeding a large docile, submissive and easily exploitable population

Had the purpose of Marx been impartial and scientific this trifling difference might easily have been overcome and the dangers of reckless breeding insisted upon But beneath all this wordy pretension and economic jargon, we detect another aim That is the unconscious dramatization of human society into the class conflict Nothing was overlooked that might sharpen and accentuate this conflict ' Marx depicted a great melodramatic conflict in which all the virtues were embodied in the proletariat and all the villainies in the capitalist In the end, as always in such dramas, virtue was to be rewarded and villainy punished The working class was the temporary

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victim of a subtle but thorough conspiracy of tyranny and repression. Capitalists, intellectuals and the *bourgeoisie* were all in on this diabolic conspiracy all thoroughly familiar with the plot which Marx was so sure he had uncovered. In the last act was to occur that catastrophic revolution with the final transformation scene of the Socialist millennium. Presented in scientific phraseology with all the authority of economic terms. Capital appeared at the psychological moment. The heaven of the traditional theology had been shattered by Darwinian science and here dressed up in all the authority of the new science appeared a new theology the promise of a new heaven an earthly paradise with an impressive scale of rewards for the faithful and ignominious punishments for the capitalists.

Critics have often been puzzled by the tremendous vitality of this work. Its predictions have never despite the claims of the faithful, been fulfilled. Instead of diminishing, the spirit of nationalism has been intensified tenfold. In nearly every respect Marx's predictions concerning the evolution of historical

and economic forces have been contradicted by events, culminating in the great war. Most of his followers, the revolutionary Socialists, were swept into the whirlpool of nationalistic militarism. Nevertheless, this Bible of the working classes still enjoys a tremendous authority as a scientific work. By some it is regarded as an economic treatise, by others as a philosophy of history, by others as a collection of sociological laws, and finally by others as a moral and political book of reference. Criticized, refuted, repudiated and demolished by specialists, it nevertheless exerts its influences and retains its mysterious vitality.

We must seek the explanation of this secret elsewhere. Modern psychology has taught us that human nature has a tendency to place the cause of its own deficiencies and weaknesses outside of itself, to attribute to some external agency, to some enemy or group of enemies, the blame for its own misery. In his great work Marx unconsciously strengthens and encourages this tendency. The immediate effect of his teaching, vulgarized and popularized in a hundred different forms, is to relieve the proletariat of all responsibility for the effects of

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its reckless breeding and even to encourage it in the perpetuation of misery

The inherent truth in the Marxian teachings was moreover immediately subordinated to their emotional and religious appeal. A book that could so influence European thought could not be without merit. But in the process of becoming the Bible of the working classes, Capital suffered the fate of all such

Bibles. The spirit of ecclesiastical dogmatism was transfused into the religion of revolutionary Socialism. This dogmatic religious quality has been noted by many of the most observant critics of Socialism. Marx was too readily accepted as the father of the church, and Capital as the sacred gospel of the social revolution. All questions of tactics, of propaganda of class warfare of political policy were to be solved by apt quotations from the 'good book'. New thoughts, new schemes, new programs based upon tested fact and experience, the outgrowth of newer discoveries concerning the nature of men, upon the recognition of the mistakes of the master, could only be approved or admitted according as they could or could not be tested by some bit of text

quoted from Marx His followers assumed that Karl Marx had completed the philosophy of Socialism, and that the duty of the proletariat thenceforth was not to think for itself, but merely to mobilize itself under competent Marxian leaders for the realization of his ideas

From the day of this apotheosis of Marx until our own the orthodox Socialist of any shade is of the belief that the first essential for social salvation lies in unquestioning belief in the dogmas of Marx

The curious and persistent antagonism to Birth Control that began with Marx and continues to our own day can be explained only as the utter refusal or inability to consider humanity in its physiological and psychological aspects—these aspects apparently having no place in the economic interpretation of history It has remained for George Bernard Shaw, a Socialist with a keener spiritual insight than the ordinary Marxist to point out the disastrous consequences of rapid multiplication which are obvious to the small cultivator the peasant proprietor, the lowest farmhand himself, but which seem to arouse the orthodox, intellectual Marxian to mor-

dinate fury But indeed the more you degrade the workers Shaw once wrote³ robbing them of all artistic enjoyment and all chance of respect and admiration from their fellows the more you throw them back reckless upon the one pleasure and the one human tie left to them—the gratification of their instinct for producing fresh supplies of men You will applaud this instinct as divine until at last the excessive supply becomes a nuisance there comes a plague of men and you suddenly discover that the instinct is diabolic, and set up a cry of over population But your slaves are beyond caring for your cries they breed like rabbits and their poverty breeds filth, ugliness dishonesty, disease, obscenity, drunkenness

Lack of insight into fundamental truths of human nature is evident throughout the writings of the Marxians The Marxian Socialists according to Kautsky defended women in industry it was right for woman to work in factories in order to preserve her equality with man! Man must not support woman declared the great French Socialist Guesde, be

³ Fabian Essays in Socialism p 21

cause that would make of her the *proletaire* of man! Bebel the great authority on woman, famous for his erudition having critically studied the problem of population, suggested as a remedy for too excessive fecundity the consumption of a certain lard soup reputed to have an anti generative effect upon the agricultural population of Upper Bavaria! Such are the results of the literal and uncritical acceptance of Marx's static and mechanical conception of human society, a society perfectly automatic, in which competition is always operating at maximum efficiency one vast and unending conspiracy against the blameless proletariat

This lack of insight of the orthodox Marx-ians long represented by the German Social-Democrats is nowhere better illustrated than in Dr Robinson's account of a mass meeting of the Social Democrat party to organize public opinion against the doctrine of Birth Control among the poor⁴ Another meeting had taken place the week before, at which several eminent Socialist women, among them Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin, spoke very

⁴ Uncontrolled Breeding By Adelyne More p 84

strongly against limitation of offspring among the poor—in fact the title of the discussion was *Gegen den Geburtstrek!* 'Against the birth strike! The interest of the audience was intense. One could see that with them it was not merely a dialectic question as it was with their leaders but a matter of life and death. I came to attend a meeting *against* the limitation of offspring it soon proved to be a meeting very decidedly *for* the limitation of offspring for every speaker who spoke in favor of the artificial prevention of conception or undesired pregnancies was greeted with vociferous long lasting applause while those who tried to persuade the people that a limited number of children is not a proletarian weapon and would not improve their lot were so hissed that they had difficulty in going on. The speakers who were against the idea soon felt that their audience was against them. Why was there such small attendance at the regular Socialistic meetings while the meetings of this character were packed to suffocation? It did not apparently penetrate the leaders heads that the reason was a simple one. Those meetings were evi

dently of no interest to them, while those which dealt with the limitation of offspring were of personal vital, present interest. What particularly amused me—and pained me—in the anti limitationists was the ease and equanimity with which they advised the poor women to keep on bearing children. The woman herself was not taken into consideration, as if she was not a human being, but a machine. What are her sufferings, her labor pains her inability to read, to attend meetings to have a taste of life? What does she amount to? The proletariat needs fighters. Go on, females, and breed like animals. Maybe of the thousands you bear a few will be come party members.

The militant organization of the Marxian Socialists suggests that their campaign must assume the tactics of militarism of the familiar type. As represented by militaristic governments militarism like Socialism has always encouraged the proletariat to increase and multiply. Imperial Germany was the outstanding and awful example of this attitude. Before the war the fall in the birth rate was viewed by the Junker party with the gravest

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misgivings Bernhardi and the protagonists of *Deutschland uber Alles* condemned it in the strongest terms. The Marxians unconsciously repeat the words of the government representative Krohne, who in a debate on the subject in the Prussian Diet February 1916, asserted

Unfortunately this view has gained followers amongst the German women. These women in refusing to rear strong and able children to continue the race drag into the dust that which is the highest end of women—motherhood. It is to be hoped that the willingness to bear sacrifices will lead to a change for the better. We need an increase in human beings to guard against the attacks of envious neighbors as well as to fulfil our cultural mission. Our whole economic development depends on increase of our people. To day we are fully aware of how imperial Germany fulfilled that cultural mission of hers, nor can we overlook the fact that the countries with a smaller birth rate survived the ordeal. Even from the traditional militaristic standpoint, strength does not reside in numbers, though the Cæsars, the Napoleons and the Kaisers of the world have always believed that large exploit

able populations were necessary for their own individual power. If Marxian dictatorship means the dictatorship of a small minority wielding power in the interest of the proletariat, a high birth rate may be necessary, though we may here recall the answer of the lamented Dr Alfred Fried to the German imperialists. It is madness the apotheosis of unreason to wish to breed and care for human beings in order that in the flower of their youth they may be sent in millions to be slaughtered wholesale by machinery. We need no whole sale production of men, have no need of the fruitful fertility of women no need of whole sale wares fattened and dressed for slaughter. What we do need is careful maintenance of those already born. If the bearing of children is a moral and religious duty, then it is a much higher duty to secure the sacredness and security of human life, so that children born and bred with trouble and sacrifice may not be offered up in the bloom of youth to a political dogma at the bidding of secret diplomacy.

Marxism has developed a patriotism of its own, if indeed it has not yet been completely

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crystallized into a religion. Like the "capitalistic governments it so vehemently attacks, it demands self sacrifice and even martyrdom from the faithful comrades. But since its strength depends to so great a degree upon conversion, upon docile acceptance of the doctrines of the Master' as interpreted by the popes and bishops of this new church it fails to arouse the irreligious proletariat. The Marxian Socialist boasts of his understanding of 'working class psychology' and criticizes the lack of this understanding on the part of all dissenters. But, as the Socialist meetings against the birth strike indicate the working class is not interested in such generalities as the Marxian theory of value, the iron law' of wages, the value of commodities and the rest of the hazy articles of faith. Marx inherited the rigid rationalistic psychology of the eighteenth century and his followers for the most part, have accepted his mechanical and superficial treatment of instinct.⁵ Discontented workers may rally to Marxism because it places the

⁵ For a sympathetic treatment of modern psychological research as bearing on Communism by two convinced Communists see Creative Revolution, by Eden and Cedar Paul

blame for their misery outside of themselves and depicts their conditions as the result of a capitalistic conspiracy thereby satisfying that innate tendency of every human being to shift the blame to some living person outside himself and because it strengthens his belief that his sufferings and difficulties may be overcome by the immediate amelioration of his economic environment In this manner psychologists tell us neuroses and inner compulsions are fostered No true solution is possible to continue this analogy until the worker is awakened to the realization that the roots of his malady lie deep in his own nature his own organism, his own habits To blame everything upon the capitalist and the environment produced by capitalism is to focus attention upon merely one of the elements of the problem The Marxian too often forgets that before there was a capitalist there was exercised the unlimited reproductive activity of mankind which produced the first overcrowding the first want This goaded humanity into its industrial frenzy into warfare and theft and slavery Capitalism has not created the lamentable state of affairs in which the

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world now finds itself. It has grown out of them, armed with the inevitable power to take advantage of our swarming, spawning millions. As that valiant thinker Monsieur G. Hardy has pointed out⁶ the proletariat may be looked upon, not as the antagonist of capitalism but as its actual accomplice. Labor surplus, or the army of reserve which has for decades and centuries furnished the industrial background of human misery, which so invariably defeats strikes and labor revolts, cannot honestly be blamed upon capitalism. It is, as M. Hardy points out of *sexual* and proletarian origin. In bringing too many children in to the world, in adding to the total of misery, in intensifying the evils of overcrowding the proletariat itself increases the burden of organized labor even of the Socialist and Syndicalist organizations themselves with a surplus of the docilely inefficient with those great uneducable and unorganizable masses. With surprisingly few exceptions Marxians of all countries have docilely followed their master in rejecting, with bitterness and vindictive

⁶ *Néo Malthusianisme et Socialisme* p. 22

ness that is difficult to explain, the principles and teachings of Birth Control

Hunger alone is not responsible for the bitter struggle for existence we witness to day in our over advertised civilization. Sex, uncontrolled, misdirected, over stimulated and misunderstood has run riot at the instigation of priest, militarist and exploiter. Uncontrolled sex has rendered the proletariat prostrate, the capitalist powerful. In this continuous unceasing alliance of sexual instinct and hunger we find the reason for the decline of all the finer sentiments. These instincts tear asunder the thin veils of culture and hypocrisy and expose to our gaze the dark sufferings of gaunt humanity. So have we become familiar with the everyday spectacle of distorted bodies, of harsh and frightful diseases stalking abroad in the light of day, of misshapen heads and visages of moron and imbecile, of starving children in city streets and schools. This is the true soil of unspeakable crimes. Defect and delinquency join hands with disease and accounts of inconceivable and revolting vices are dished up in the daily press. When the ma-

majority of men and women are driven by the grim lash of sex and hunger in the unending struggle to feed themselves and to carry the dead weight of dead and dying progeny, when little children are forced into factories, streets, and shops education—including even education in the Marxian dogmas—is quite impossible, and civilization is more completely threatened than it ever could be by pestilence or war

But, it will be pointed out, the working class has advanced. Power has been acquired by labor unions and syndicates. In the beginning power was won by the principle of the restriction of numbers. The device of refusing to admit more than a fixed number of new members to the unions of the various trades has been justified as necessary for the upholding of the standard of wages and of working conditions. This has been the practise in precisely those unions which have been able through years of growth and development to attain tangible strength and power. Such a principle of restriction is necessary in the creation of a firmly and deeply rooted trunk or central organization furnishing a local center for

more extended organization. It is upon this great principle of restricted number that the labor unions have generated and developed power. They have acquired this power without any religious emotionalism without subscribing to metaphysical or economic theology. For the millennium and the earthly paradise to be enjoyed at some indefinitely future date the union member substitutes the very real politics of organization with its resultant benefits. He increases his own independence and comfort and that of his family. He is immune to superstitious belief in and respect for the mysterious power of political or economic nostrums to reconstruct human society according to the Marxian formula.

In rejecting the Marxian hypothesis as superficial and fragmentary we do so not because of its so called revolutionary character its threat to the existing order of things but rather because of its superficial emotional and religious character and its deleterious effect upon the life of reason. Like other schemes advanced by the alarmed and the indignant, it relies too much upon moral fervor and enthusiasm. To build any social program upon

the shifting sands of sentiment and feeling, of indignation or enthusiasm is a dangerous and foolish task. On the other hand we should not minimize the importance of the Socialist movement in so valiantly and so courageously battling against the stagnating complacency of our conservatives and reactionaries, under whose benign imbecility the defective and diseased elements of humanity are encouraged full speed ahead in their reckless and irresponsible swarming and spawning. Nevertheless as George Drysdale pointed out nearly seventy years ago

If we ignore this and other sexual subjects, we may do whatever else we like we may bully, we may bluster, we may rage. We may foam at the mouth we may tear down Heaven with our prayers we may exhaust ourselves with weeping over the sorrows of the poor we may narcotize ourselves and others with the opiate of Christian resignation we may dissolve the realities of human woe in a delusive mirage of poetry and ideal philosophy we may lavish our substance in charity and labor over possible or impossible Poor Laws we may form wild dreams of Socialism, in

dustrial regiments, universal brotherhood, red republics, or unexampled revolutions, we may strangle and murder each other, we may persecute and despise those whose sexual necessities force them to break through our unnatural moral codes, we may burn alive if we please the prostitutes and the adulterers we may break our own and our neighbors hearts against the adamantine laws that surround us but not one step not one shall we advance till we acknowledge these laws, and adopt the only possible mode in which they can be obeyed These words were written in 1854 Recent events have accentuated their stinging truth