

Logical Analysis vs. Marxism

Why I Am Not A Communist

By Bertrand Russell

(Bertrand Russell's views on metaphysics and ethics and on the nature and relations of matter and mind have changed profoundly in the course of his life, but what is and has remained fundamental in his original philosophy is his logic. He is one of the few great mathematicians of modern times; his attempted fusion of mathematics and formal logic and his great advances in the analysis of logical concepts have won him an enduring place in the science. What distinguishes Mr. Russell as a thinker is his emphasis on logical analysis as method. The eminent logician in the following article discusses the logic of Marxism as a system of thought. In next month's issue John Dewey discusses the issue, philosophy vs. Marxism. Harry Gunnison Brown follows with a discussion of economic science vs. Marxism.—The Editors.)

When I speak of a "Communist," I mean a person who accepts the doctrines of the Third International. In a sense, the early Christians were Communists, and so were many medieval sects; but this sense is now obsolete.

I will set forth my reasons for not being a Communist in an orderly sequence.

1. I cannot assent to Marx's philosophy, still less to that of Lenin's Materialism and Empirico-Criticism. I am not a materialist, though I am even further removed from idealism. I do not believe that there is any dialectical necessity in historical change; this belief was taken over by Marx from Hegel, without its only logical basis, namely the primacy of the idea. Marx believed that the next stage in human development must be in some sense a progress; I see no reason for this belief.

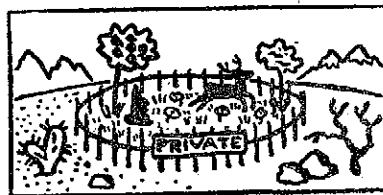
2. I cannot accept Marx's theory of value, nor yet, in his form, the theory of surplus-value. The theory that the exchange-value of a commodity is proportional to the labor involved in its production, which Marx took over from Ricardo, is shown to be false by Ricardo's theory of rent, and has long been abandoned by all non-Marxian economists. The theory of surplus-value rests up-

on Malthus' theory of population, which Marx elsewhere rejects. Marx's economics do not form a logically coherent whole but are built up by the alternate acceptance and rejection of older doctrines, as may suit his convenience in making out a case against the capitalists.

3. It is dangerous to regard any one man as infallible; the consequence is necessarily an oversimplification. The tradition of the verbal inspiration of the Bible has made men too ready to look for a Sacred Book. But this worship of authority is contrary to the scientific spirit.

4. Communism is not democratic. What it calls the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is in fact the dictatorship of a small minority, who become an oligarchic governing class. All history shows that government is always conducted in the interests of the governing class, except in so far as it is influenced by fear of losing its power. This is the teaching, not only of history, but of Marx. The governing class in a communist state has even more power than the capitalist class in a "democratic" state. So long as it retains the loyalty of the armed forces, it can use its power to obtain for itself advantages quite as harmful as those of capitalists. To suppose that it will always act for the general good is mere foolish idealism, and is contrary to Marxian political psychology.

5. Communism restricts liberty, particularly intellectual liberty, more than any other system except Fascism. The complete unification of both economic and political power produces a terrifying engine of oppression in which there are no loopholes for exceptions. Under such a



system, progress would soon become impossible, since it is the nature of bureaucrats to object to all change except increase in their own power. All serious innovation is rendered possible only by some accident enabling unpopular persons to survive. Kepler lived by astrology, Darwin by inherited wealth, Marx by Engels' "exploitation" of the proletariat of Manchester. Such opportunities of surviving in spite of unpopularity would be impossible under Communism.

6. There is in Marx, and in current economic thought, an undue glorification of manual as against brain workers. . . . The division of classes is put by Marxians in practice, even more than in theory, too low in the social scale.

7. The preaching of the class war is likely to cause it to break out at a moment when the opposing forces are more or less evenly balanced, or even when the preponderance is on the side of the capitalists. If the capitalist forces preponderate, the result is an era of reaction. If the forces on both sides are roughly equal, the result, given modern methods of warfare, is likely to be the destruction of civilization, involving the disappearance of both capitalism and communism. . . .

8. There is so much of hate in Marx and Communism that Communists can hardly be expected, when victorious, to establish a regime affording no outlet for malevolence. The arguments in favor of oppression are therefore likely to seem to the victors stronger than they are, especially if the victory has resulted from a fierce and doubtful war. After such a war, the victorious party is not likely to be in the mood for sane reconstruction. Marxists are too apt to forget the war has its own psychology, which is the result of fear, and is independent of the original cause of contention.

9. It is said that, in the modern world, the only practically possible choice is between Communism and Fascism. I do not believe this. It seems to me definitely untrue in America, England and France. The

future of Italy and Germany is uncertain. England had a period of fascism under Cromwell, France under Napoleon, but in neither case was this a bar to subsequent democracy. Politically immature nations are not

the best guides as to the political future.

(Mr. Russell's remarks are presented here by courtesy of the author and of V. F. Calverton, editor of *The Modern Monthly, An Independent Journal of Radical Opinion*, in which they appeared in connection with a symposium on Marxism

to which many outstanding thinkers and writers contributed. Copyright, 1934, by The Modern Monthly Inc., 46 Morton Street, New York. The essay is incorporated in "Scylla or Charybdis: Why I am neither a Communist nor a Fascist," pp. 125-139, in Mr. Russell's "In Praise of Idleness" (W. W. Norton & Co., 70 Fifth Avenue, New York, \$2.50) where a fuller discussion will be found.)