The Fraudulent Bankruptcy of Marxism

Eusebio C. Carbo

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BY WAY OF A PROLOGUE

In the Spanish-language bibliography — so copious in other respects — there is very little sharp criticism of Marxism.

On the other hand, there have been some very notable vivisections on it in the public forum. It is a pity that some of the lectures devoted to this subject were not recorded in shorthand to be published in pamphlets.

Convinced, without a doubt, that the predominance that federalist tendencies have always achieved in Spain would be enough for the masses to reject outright a centralism that, in addition to being repugnant to their natural inclinations, consecrates the most savage forms of a despotism that covers itself with the cloak of the interests of the proletariat, our writers fought it through their general propaganda, but without ever devoting preferential attention to it.

Everything seems to indicate the convenience of filling this gap. Everything proclaims the need to pay attention today to that which was neglected yesterday.

The most attentive observers — however doctrinally distant they may be from us, and precisely for this reason their judgment has more positive value — are convinced that the cataclysm that now shatters the framework of the political and economic organization of Europe, with obvious repercussions throughout the Universe, will be followed by a shock as wide and as deep as the causes destined to engender it, and of a scope that currently escapes all predictions.

If this prediction — which we share without reservation — is confirmed, things may reach unsuspected extremes.

Never have popular ferments had such deep roots. Never has hatred of the present assumed the vivid forms it does now. Never has the desire to put an end to unrest, misery, submission, and sterile sacrifice been so acute.

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Two fundamental facts characterize the present moment. On the one hand, the failure and final disgrace of all parties which, whatever flag they wave in the wind, thrive in the shadow of the antagonisms that war engenders and reinforces the bonds imposed on the people at the point of the bayonet. On the other hand, the propensity of those multitudes that capitalism exploits and the State subjugates, to support the most audacious attempts. It is true that never — whatever may be said — have the circumstances been so favorable to them, because never have the incentives been so powerful.

The crisis, acute, brutal, threatening, is accentuated day by day. And the foundations of the system are cracking. And the anarchist affirmations remain standing, as a promise and as a hope.

For the same reason that there is no sunset without a sunrise, at the same time that the collapse of the regime forged by the revolution of 1789–93 begins, when the vassals, tired of carrying the heavy cross of their bloody martyrdom, put an end to the prerogatives of aristocratic feudalism, the prospect of a new order already appears on the horizon of human destinies.

Everything leads us to believe that the hour is approaching when those outcasts from enjoyment and life will see the hopes they have nurtured in tumult and silence for centuries realized.

The very fact that it is forced to resort to certain procedures on a scale hitherto unknown, proves that the omnipotence of the dominant oligarchies is tottering. It has lost its balance forever. In its desire for a power without which it can no longer live, it infinitely exacerbates those factors that are about to pronounce a death sentence against it.

It is certain that when the time comes, the rhapsodists of the proletarian state will try to dazzle the unwary. State theology will try its luck. It will try to make its way through, using the same unworthy methods as always. And we must, from now on, prepare ourselves in time, and sterilize the furrow and the seed for the conscious vanguard.

We have more than enough means to do this.

Let us tell the workers what Marxism means and represents. Let us put before their eyes the thousand examples that Russia offers in all spheres.

Let us show them that Marxism is characterized by a totalitarian conception of the state, and that totalitarianism, whether in the form it is given in Germany and Italy or in the form it has taken in the homeland of the proletariat, can offer the wretched and the slaves nothing but privations and chains.

Let us bring to light before their eyes the true meaning of Russia's alliance with Germany[1], a fact which must necessarily be invincibly repugnant to every honest conscience.

Let us tear away the veils which conceal from their gaze the infamous conduct of the Communists of all countries during the course of the Spanish Civil War.

Let us document, through indisputable facts, the absolute falseness of Russian aid to Spanish anti-fascists, and the reality of the scandalous business carried out in Spain by Stalin's henchmen.

Let us repeat endlessly, without stopping and without tiring — proving it in the process — that the foundations of Marxism are false and lead to barracks rules, which, far from emancipating the individual, bind him to the most frightful of yokes, destroying at the base any possibility of rebellion.

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The moment is propitious for this task.

If the desired gesture — so feared now in the highest spheres — takes place, the people, still half stunned by the roar of the cataclysm that has put them on their feet, will look for a direction. It is important to prepare their spirit so that, overcoming the last fear of the inexperience of the unknown, they are ready to make their own the one we offer them.

The struggle between our tendencies and those of those who must insist on attracting the workers to their orbit is irreconcilable. The two are placed face to face, in a war without quarter.

By highlighting the aberrations on which all schools of authoritarian socialism are based, and in particular the German one that bears the name of Marx without any justification, a double objective is achieved: to remove blind followers from the stupid religion of the State, and to patent the unquestionable virtues and the unshakeable foundations of anarchist socialism.

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We, convinced that this responds to an imperative need of the present hour, lead the way.

Let others better prepared, if they deem it appropriate, follow.

Eusebio C. Carbo

The starting point of the Marxist conception

"*It is difficult to find in Marx a single idea not previously expressed by writers of the so-called utopian period.*" (G. Richard, in "La Question Sociale et le Mouvement Philosophique").

[1] Hitler and Stalin were still at odds at the time the last page of this work was written.

Background

There is no longer any doubt that the materialist conception of history — the axis of the Marxist dialectic — has its origin in Hegelian philosophy. And it is well known that Hegel, as a keen disciple of Kant and more markedly of Fichte, was in his time the standard-bearer of metaphysics.

Dominated by the powerful influence of both thinkers — and especially of the latter — which was transmitted to him by his main inspirer and teacher, Marx, without succeeding, even in part, in escaping it, imitated them in everything.

Engels has said: "Without Hegel's philosophy, German socialism, which is the only scientific socialism that exists, would never have come into being." (Béchaux in "L'école individualiste", quoted by Gonnard in "Histoire des doctrines économiques.")

It would be equally true if Engels had not recognized it. But the fact is that, to make matters worse, he does recognize it, as did other socialists closely related to Marxism before him, at least at times.

Such influence provides the explanation for many things. Because it highlights to what extent the spirit of research was stifled in the supreme pontiff of authoritarian socialism by transcendental idealism.

And just as Fichte in his pantheistic conceptions sees in God the efficient cause of all the phenomena that occur in the world, whatever their character, and of all the manifestations offered by social and human life, Marx, following the norms that characterize metaphysics without a substantive alteration, since all the variations he introduces into the system refer only to a simple question of names, replaces God with Economics.

He turns it into a new divinity, to which everything, absolutely everything, is subordinated. As we shall see later, modern criticism, by demonstrating the absolute lack of scientific rigor of Marxist dialectics, as well as its complete disdain for the demonstration of facts, has reduced its value to microscopic proportions, without taking into account the value that could have been attributed to it yesterday.

But before examining this aspect of Marx's conceptions it is necessary to establish, as summarily as the limited framework of a pamphlet requires, the series of theses that constitute the framework of his doctrine.

THE CENTRALS POINTS OF MARXISM

The central points of Marxist doctrine — by virtue of which dialectics is condemned to permanent war council — allow us to see with meridian clarity, first of all, the most complete absence of originality in the statements that serve as its basis, and how a materialist conception of history could have been engendered in the mind of a man who completely ignored historical facts, to the point of constructing the edifice, which is ruinous from the foundation to the top — for the same reason that nothing based on mere abstraction can have firm points of support — of economic metaphysics.

The points in question are the following:

First: **Historical Materialism**. — According to this thesis, historical events always recognize material interests as the sole cause. It is not the conditions of material life that dominate all the manifestations of man. Consequently, “it is the mode of production that determines in each epoch the customs, social, legal, political institutions, etc.”

Second: **Surplus value**

Third: **The theory of value**

Fourth: **The growing accumulation of capital**.

Fifth: **The growing proletarianization.**

Sixth: **The class struggle.**

Seventh: **The automatism of the leveling revolution.**

Such is the statement of the extremes that serve as the basis of a doctrine whose main purpose is to reduce to zero the value of certain factors whose influence cannot be denied by anyone in the progress and evolution of societies, nor in customs, nor in the concept of art, law, justice, life, which culminate or predominate in a given epoch.

And it is not out of mere whim that those factors that prevent human groups from stagnating and finally perishing are destroyed, since they represent the sovereign impulse in the race forward and the main dynamic spring of the efforts with which the people, frequently galvanized by the ardor and by the example of the acting minorities, strive to rise to a higher plane, but because these factors deny the possibility of giving the State that omnipotence that constitutes the only ideal of authoritarian socialism.

The individual is — in every historical period and whatever the economic conditions and modes of production — the irreplaceable main focus of creative vibrations. And this focus is reduced to a lower category, disappears, collapses or plays the clumsy role of an automaton in the system devised by Marx, whose unmistakable characteristic is the State crushing the individual.

We must see this. Not on the basis of the criticisms formulated by the anarchists — sworn enemies of the State in all its forms — but through the testimony of those Marxists — Sorel and Leone, among others — who enjoy a well-deserved reputation for being sincere, cultured and independent.

And, by the way, we will prove in an irrefutable manner that the central points of Marxist dialectics are not a creation of Marx, but the copy — shameless in several cases — of what others created.

MARX IS NOT THE CREATOR OF THE SYSTEM THAT ARBITRARILY BEARS HIS NAME

It is necessary to proclaim loudly, since historical truth so desires, that Marx is not the creator of the system that arbitrarily bears his name.

He is not. Neither in that part of it that is engendered by a subjectivism that connects with sophistry, nor in that other part that is based more or less on logic, on the objective observation of social phenomena and economic realities.

It is clearly absurd to attribute to Marx the paternity of any of the theses indicated, the basis of the system that bears his name. And it is equally absurd to suppose him the father of the famous dialectic. A thousand documents of irrefutable value prove it. Everyone knows today that Marxist dialectics is… Hegelian.

The great fetish of authoritarian socialism does not create, order and systematize. And it is very difficult, if not impossible, to find in his work a single idea born from his mind from head to toe.

There are no ideas in it that can be considered original. Not even in the terrible omnipotence that its congenital authoritarianism assigns to the State!

The concept of class struggle

The concept of class struggle predates Marx.

A few decades before his birth, this concept was already familiar to various thinkers and theorists of political economy. This assertion is not dictated — and we could excuse ourselves from pointing this out — by **anti-Marxist sectarianism**, as the faithful and eternal followers say, but by those historical testimonies that the partials ignore when judging their teacher, but that we, more even-tempered and more eager to base our assessments on unshakable bases, must always take into account.

It is true that we take them into account because we know them and that Marxists despise them because in most cases they are unknown to them. We are referring — of course — to the subordinates. Because when it comes to the bigwigs, it is already known that they are subordinate to the rigorous pact that ignorance and bad faith signed long ago.

The clear, conclusive and definitive demonstration that Marx is not the author of the concept of class struggle is provided in his book, L'idée de lutte de classes au XCIII siecle.

If it were not for the fact that they were to give an excessive length to this work, we would transcribe paragraphs and more paragraphs from Caen, Deville and others, demonstrating that Marx spent his life offering other people's ideas as his own, with no more trouble than to cover them lightly with a veil. He was accused of this publicly and loudly by personalities who radiated much more than he, without trying to defend himself.

We would also prove that before, long before Marx did so, Turgot and Mirabeau had spoken of the class struggle, and what they said is not in the least comparable to what has been said about it later.

We must limit ourselves to stating it in a categorical manner, having the absolute certainty that no one will dare to contradict us, and adding that in making these concepts his own, Marx did not introduce even a single detail capable of modifying them more or less…

The growing proletarianization

The theory of increasing proletarianization was enunciated sixty-five years before Marx made his first attempts, by thinkers of socialism as well as of other schools.

As for the consequences of this proletarianization, they have broken down resoundingly at the base. And they have broken down precisely in Russia, which is where the categorical confirmation of the predictions attributed to the author of Capital is intended to be recorded.

Neither does proletarianization follow the rhythm that dialectics attributes to it, nor do those countries that are becoming proletarianized on a larger scale come closer to total subversion than those of today.

No one ignores that Russia, before 1917, was one of the least proletarianized peoples in the universe, in proportion to the number of its inhabitants.

If we admit the inadmissible, that is, that, as Marxists claim, the subversion of capitalism has taken place there, we have the most conclusive proof that dialectics is wrong.

Consequently, Marxism is wrong where it seems to be right, and even less right where it seems to be wrong.

The same can be said of the concentration of capital and of what Marx, having reached a certain stage — which we have already left far behind — called "its inevitable consequences."

It has failed with the same resounding failure. For the same reasons and to the same degree. Neither its degree nor its derivations bear the slightest resemblance to the guarantees offered by Marx.

These two points would be enough to demonstrate that the cornerstones of Marxism rest on sand. But there are others. And they are much more conclusive than those indicated.

Adam Smith, who was able to earn the title of father of capitalism, has an incomparably clearer vision of the concentration of capital — which he studies in detail in his "Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of Wealth" — than Marx. And we would have little trouble naming several Marxists who have confessed this…

The ways in which capitalism evolves, the current modes of production, whose power — as a determining cause of the character of institutions and individuals — is infinitely branching out, and the ever-increasing tendency of workers to fight, consciously or unconsciously, against the State — a gigantic artifice with no other purpose than to maintain political domination and economic privileges, both sworn enemies of true socialism — completely refute Marx's prophecies.

But where the lack of a solid foundation of the labyrinthine Marxist system is most clearly demonstrated, and where it is most obvious that Marx was able to formulate his theses thanks to the appropriation of other people's ideas into which he cleverly mixed some of his own thoughts, is in the three points that demand the most detailed examination: surplus value, the theory of value and historical materialism.

Some of these foreign ideas sometimes have positive value and indisputable foundations. But then they are falsified when juxtaposed with their own. Thus it follows that there are few ideas of Marx in Marxism and that, both because of their small number and because, almost all of them, they are false or superficial, they were incapable of giving scientific character to socialism…

They can, yes, serve as a basis for State socialism. But State socialism — whether Marxists like it or not — is the most emphatic antithesis of authentic and unadorned socialism: that which wants to socialize the land and the instruments of production and exchange, as an expression of the wealth created by human effort in the course of generations.

And it is already known that this complete, real, unmistakable socialization cannot be carried out as long as there remains even the remotest vestige of the authoritarian powers whose unequivocal form of expression and whose irreplaceable organ is the State…

The theory of value

We must repeat what we have said about other extremes. Long before Marx appeared on the stage of authoritarian socialism, Smith and Ricardo, among others, had enunciated the theory of value. Marx does nothing more than incorporate it into his system, after adding a few unimportant details. And his manipulations make it abstruse and labyrinthine.

The same can be said about the law of bronze, whose foundations are mainly due to Lamennais and Lassale.

The demarcation that Marx establishes between use value and exchange value is totally foreign to socialism proper. It may be useful to State socialism, which has not even the remotest relationship — as we have already said — with true socialist achievements. It may also be useful to the criticism of an order based on plunder, but it does not fit into a doctrine that claims to reflect new forms of coexistence.

What strange conception of socialism is there in establishing a difference between the hour of work in a particular industry and the effort of the same duration in any other branch of productive activity?

Is not the principle of categories between those vital elements of production which together ensure everything that society needs together absurd?

Is not the fact — which we would call absolutely anti-socialist — of placing skilled workers and simple workers on different levels the antipodes of the most elementary conception of socialism?

Yes. To the same degree as differentiating use and exchange. And it is useless to try to attenuate the shrill tone of these sophistical subtleties with those coefficients that Marx assigns to the latter for the calculation of their respective values.

No one understands these coefficients.

But neither do Marxists succeed in explaining them.

No. The value of the "ordinary man" and the "specialized man" — which is how Marx distinguishes and separates them — are socially equivalent. As they are equivalent — "per se" and not on the basis of their quality or the time and nature of the effort that the products require.

Furthermore, it is known that the privilege of "specialties" is even more absurd, already in the present — and Marx speaks of them speculating about a future that must deny the injustices and aberrations in force today — as there are countless activities applied to production that do not require them.

And if it is monstrous that they currently serve as a support for social hierarchies among workers, it is inconceivable that there are those who try to justify them in the name of socialism.

Making the concept of value more concrete

Work cannot be valued according to its "quality" as understood in the capitalist system.

Once all wealth is socialized, this false concept is automatically removed from circulation.

The former devotes his efforts to the production of something that is indispensable for consumption. The latter devotes his efforts to something else that is also of recognized public utility. And this is enough to know — without any distinction being possible — that they are equally necessary and, consequently, have the same value. What matters least is to find out what is manufactured by their hands or by the machines that their hands set in motion.

A modern locomotive, with all its mechanical complexities, is not "worth" more, for example, than a fan or an electric light bulb. Being equally necessary, their respective values — socially considered — are equivalent. And in this sense, too, the pheasant cannot have priority over potatoes. Nor is the person who assembles automobiles, or telescopes, or barometers, more esteemed than the person who ensures the daily hygiene of towns and cities. Not this, nor the opposite supremacy. One would be as negative and as iniquitous as the other.

The problem is not to displace iniquity by giving it aspects contrary to those it has always had, but to destroy its basis and make it impossible. And for these it is necessary to resolutely confront — wherever they come from — the scholastic vestiges of a conception that claims to be socialist and that denies socialism, establishing the unity of social value of all functions and all useful things.

It is worth repeating with insistent insistence. Since men need means of transport, housing, food, clothing, study, etc. in equal degree, it is necessary to consider that the airplane, the house, the book, and potatoes — this is an example — have an equivalent importance.

If the measure of value of an object — as Marx claims — was based on the amount of work necessary to produce it, this value could not in any case be calculated without dismantling the Universe from top to bottom.

Who would be able to estimate, even approximately, the work that it cost to produce the sheet of paper on which I am now stamping my thoughts? And the work of a pin? And the time of printing? And the time of the machine on which I am typing? And the time of teaching you, reader, so that you could read what I write?

Does not each of these manifestations of the creative virtue of muscle and intellect reflect the productive effort — continued, persistent, interrupted — of a hundred or a thousand generations? How can we distinguish the various forms of productive activity involved in each of them? Would it have been possible to manufacture this sheet of paper, or a machine, or a pair of sandals, without the help of the miner, the farmer, the chemist, the mechanic, the engineer, etc.?

What matters least is whether the person who produces necessary things handles the compass or the rubber band, the pen or the hoe, the microscope or the awl…

As we have seen, the Marxist theory of value — which is presented to us as one of the main keys to the system — has no solid foundation on which to stand. This is because criticism almost completely devalues it by highlighting its subjective character. It is considered much less well-founded than Ricardo's theory. And it is incapable of resisting in any sense the objectivity of scientific analysis.

Worms demonstrates this convincingly in his Philosophy of Social Sciences. And he is not the only one. G. Richard in "La Question Sociale et le Mouvement Philosophique" exposes its inconsistency and describes it as "extremely fragile."

Goblot goes even further: he declares it unintelligible. "Marx himself," Goblot points out, "confesses that the chapters of Capital in which he explains the theory of value are difficult to understand. He is wrong: these chapters are unintelligible." ("Le systheme des Sciences", page 165).

And in all areas of modern thought, from the most irrudent to the most moderate, identical judgments are issued. For if up to now we have pointed out what those belonging to other schools have said about certain of Marx's theses, later we will see what the Marxists themselves say about them as a whole.

Everything indicates that another of the main pillars of the so-called scientific socialism has been broken at the base, simultaneously with those of that arrogant dialectic which, instead of being a logical and scientific deduction of the phenomena to which it is applied, aspires, like a new divinity, that these be deduced from it, so that historical experience, the intrinsic value of the facts and what has been experimentally demonstrated, are subject to merely subjective appreciations.

This way of inverting the terms is common to all the theses that constitute the fabric of "Capital." However, "Capital" remains the Gospel and the only guiding light for the brotherhood that insists on establishing absurd, impossible harmonies between the principle of authority and the practices of true socialism.

THE MARXIST CONCEPT OF SURPLUS VALUE

It cannot be denied that Marx dealt more extensively than anyone else with surplus value. But he did not do so with such originality and clarity as Deville in "Principes socialistes" or as profoundly as Proudhon in "What is property?"

Regarding the latter, Marx himself had to admit it explicitly. Despite the hatred he felt for Proudhon — of which the crude ironies he allowed himself against him in "The Poverty of Philosophy", which is a bad-tempered, empty, sectarian reply to "The Philosophy of Poverty" are a living example — he was forced to quote him in his unfortunate disquisitions on surplus value.

Because the fundamental aspect of this theory and the one that calls for a broader and deeper knowledge of what pulsates in the living entrails of social phenomena — recorded in detail by Proudhon — had escaped Marx's perception.

As always — and repeating what has always been said — the Marxist concept of surplus value is directly linked to the concept that was already prevalent among certain thinkers in the Middle Ages. This was made clear by Dalalys in "La valeur d'aprés Marx et les scolastiques".

Perhaps this is why he dilutes so much — complicating them to infinity — the simplest formulas, and he goes over and over details that are completely unimportant in our time.

Because you don't have to be anti-Marxist — which is to be anti-authoritarian — as we are, to affirm that the observations of two centuries ago — and more particularly if they refer to certain aspects of the economy — do not shed any light on the phenomena we are currently witnessing.

Even those of half a century ago have mostly become old. They are generally useless, if not to cloud the prism.

Although Deville, in the work cited above, calls Marx "the last Jewish prophet," the fact remains that his prophecies, far from being confirmed by the facts, are being more and more roundly refuted every day.

Guesde, the leader of the extremist faction of French socialism, recognized this when he said: "Socialists are neither social architects nor prophets." And Kautsky, more measured — and more objective — than Deville, gives Marx and his blind apologists a shovel on the knuckles in these terms: "Thinkers can, to a certain extent, know the direction of economic phenomena, but they cannot determine them at their whim, nor foresee exactly the forms they will take later."

These displays of heterodoxy will have contributed greatly to Kautsky, who before 1917 bore the title of "the most general definer of Marx", being called afterwards, without there being recorded since then even the slightest mutation in his ideas, "the cynical mystifier of Marxism."

But it is necessary to close these considerations and return to our sheep.

The general lines of the Theory

Marx asserts that since the dawn of the capitalist era, which he traces back to the beginning of the 14th century, exchange has taken two forms. He expresses them thus: "Alongside the immediate form, which is manifested by the sky COMMODITY-MONEY-COMMODITY, and which tends to replace a commodity with a certain use value by another intended for another use, there appeared the form MONEY-COMMODITY-MONEY, which no longer explains the fact of selling according to need, but buying for resale, in order to make an indefinitely repeated profit."

Gonnard, in "Histoire des doctrines économiques", breaks down the content of both forms. In the second, money is incorporated into circulation to be recovered later, at the end of the economic process, with an increase. All the money obtained in this way becomes CAPITAL. The first exchange movement begins and ends WITH COMMODITIES. The point of the operation is to replace an object suitable for CERTAIN USES with one that is intended for OTHER USES. The exchange is based on the EQUALITY OF VALUE BETWEEN THE EXCHANGED COMMODITIES.

It is not that the author of "Capital" did not know how to explain things clearly. It is something else. It is that no one can explain the most terrible confusions in clear language. Even the learned get lost in this labyrinth.

The second movement of exchange is more understandable. And Gonnard, extracting Marx's exposition — which we cannot, because of its length, transcribe — puts it this way: "…It begins and ends with money. And then the interest of the operation is only conceived if the quantity obtained IS GREATER than the amount advanced. Exchanging a certain quantity of bread for a quantity of wine OF THE SAME VALUE is a useful operation for both who carry out the exchange, since one of them needs the wine and the other the bread. But exchanging a hundred francs against another hundred would be a vain operation. Whoever throws the hundred francs into the exchange ring does so in order to withdraw later a hundred and five or a hundred and ten. This increase is the SURPLUS VALUE."

The first thing to do, then, is to specify how it can be realized and repeated ad infinitum. Marx does this. But, by sticking more to the external form than to the core of the problem, he rather confuses than enlightens those who wish to be brought up to date.

Let us try to demonstrate this.

Parallel confusions

The confusion that Marx creates is due to the fact that the errors committed before, when judging value, are now projected — necessarily — into the study of surplus value. And it is these errors — as well as the lack of a clear and broad vision of the problem — that subject him to the deceptive appearances of form.

The exchange of bread for wine, or of dynamos for espadrilles, or of suits for combustion engines, or of potatoes for furniture — which will only be viable in exceptional cases on a personal level, from individual to individual — differs in no way from that which is carried out on the basis of any of the two cycles established to ensure the speculations of capitalism… or of a State that takes the management of the Economy into its hands.

There is not even the remotest analogy between the two modes of exchange. It is something that is obvious. Because surplus value results — in the case that Marx presents — from the exchange between a real value and a fictitious one. If the exchange is made between real values — AND WITHOUT INTERMEDIARIES — speculation becomes impossible.

But neither the aspects of surplus value are covered by this formula, nor are those indicated the only ones, nor can it be forgotten that the exchange — even carried out between real values — can take on characteristics capable of mortally wounding justice.

How can we establish, for example, the equivalence of value between two objects or two determined products? There can be no one — rationally — to think about it. What non-cabalistic and non-arbitrary elements could serve as a basis for such a calculation?

Without the artificial representation of these products — as happens in the commodity-money-commodity cycle as in the current cycle, money-commodity-money — who would be capable of calculating how many pairs of shoes a typewriter costs, how many reams of paper a house costs? It is an impossibility. And a tremendous threat to the sense of equity.

Is there anyone capable of understanding it? Do these formulas expect something that can be understood?

Deville, in the work we have already cited, says it with a clarity that Marx always lacks: "…Capitalism has to buy commodities at their fair value, then resell them for what they are worth, and yet extract more value from them than it advanced. Such are the conditions of the problem." If the fact that the production of a certain surplus value were to be based solely on the cycle of money-commodity-money, it is obvious that if the other cycle, commodity-money-commodity, were to be introduced — since, according to him, the whole point of the operation then lies in replacing an object capable of certain uses by another that is suitable for other uses — the present system would completely lose its reason for existence.

But this is not the case. And we have already explained the reasons for this.

It may happen that capitalism, seeing itself seriously threatened one day, will try to temporize in a new way. What would this consist of? This has already been foreseen by some of its family doctors, among whom are the socialists.

It would consist in being prepared to pay each worker his labor power considered individually, which is what each worker — submitting to a categorical imperative that has its uniform expression in force — exchanges for wages. But even this does not solve the great problem. Things remain, with slight variations, as they were before.

It is absolutely impossible for capitalism to renounce profit. In doing so it would lose its entire reason for being. And since profit is nothing other than surplus value, that is, the difference between what it obtains from a given product and what that product costs it, it does not seem that profit is compatible with the full payment to each worker — no matter how it is calculated — of his individual labor force. And the question arises spontaneously from the depths of the matter: How can both extremes be harmonized?

If we were to adhere rigorously to the way in which Marx poses the problem, it would not be possible. But it is possible. Because other factors of undeniable power intervene. An element comes into play, experimentally proven, which went unnoticed by Marx, but which Proudhon's aquiline vision brought to light.

It was Proudhon who first observed what happens when productive effort loses its individual character to become a social fact. And with this observation he found the main key to surplus value, since the other — the one established on the basis of speculation between the cost price and the sale price — can disappear as capitalism approaches the full payment of the labor force of each worker, while the one that results from the orderly conjugation of the productive effort between dozens and hundreds of workers, always remains standing.

Let us repeat it: it remains standing even in the case of capitalism totally renouncing the benefit that — separately — each worker ensures. Because then it retains the benefit of the collective effort, effort that "does not add, but rather multiplies the result of individual efforts."

Let us see how Proudhon puts it:

> "It is said that the capitalist has paid his workers for their days' wages. But this is not so. The capitalist has paid as many days' wages as he employs workers each day. And this is far from being the same thing. A force of a thousand men acting for twenty days has been paid as many workers as he employs each day. And this

> is far from being the same thing. A force of a thousand men acting for twenty days has been paid as the force of one man would be for fifty years. But this force of a thousand has accomplished in twenty days what the force of one man, repeating his effort for a million centuries, could not accomplish." ("Qu'est-ce que la propriete?" pages 94–96).

From which it follows that surplus value is something more than "the production of value carried beyond a certain limit." And it cannot be said that it begins as soon as the wage-earner "creates more value than he receives as an equivalent of his effort."

We have already seen that it takes other forms, and that these remain unchanged, even if reduced to a rational minimum, the effort required of each person.

Marx was unable to perceive the meaning, scope and necessary consequences of work as a social phenomenon, because he was prevented from doing so by an excessive attachment to the old forms and authoritarian prejudices. However, Proudhon, who was called the father of anarchism, quickly grasped them.

Therefore, the disease cannot be eradicated by returning to the primitive cycle — as deceptive as the other — nor by limiting the productive effort, nor by giving each one — with an accuracy whose calculation escapes all possibilities — the equivalent of his performance.

It will remain standing, growing, producing greater damage every day, while an effective value — WORK IN ALL ITS USABLE FORMS — which is and represents everything, is exchanged, in ANY FORM, for an artificial, false, conventional value — MONEY, OR BONDS, OR VOUCHERS with which it can be replaced tomorrow — which is of no use.

The sign of change that covers the forms indicated is the unmistakable seal of social differences.

And it will not disappear until the last vestige of the current order disappears, for the same reason that political dominations and economic privileges — consecration of those differences — determine each other reciprocally.

MARXISM, FIGHTED BY ITS OWN AND OUTSIDERS, CANNOT WITHSTAND THE ATTACKS OF CRITICISM. AND MARX'S OWN DISCIPLES JOIN THE CHORUS.

Eusebio C. Carbo
The Fraudulent Bankruptcy of Marxism
1941

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