

ERIK VON KUEHNELT-LEDDIHN

IN THE "German Democratic Republic" they tell the story about a weary old man who tries to gain entrance into the Red Paradise. A Communist Archangel holds him up at the gate and severely cross-questions him:

"Where were you born?"

"In an ancient bishopric."

"What was your citizenship?"

"Prussian."

"Who was your father?"

"A wealthy lawyer."

"What was your faith?"

"I converted to Christianity."

"Not very good. Married? Who was your wife?"

"The daughter of an aristocratic Prussian officer and the sister of a Royal Prussian Minister of the Interior who persecuted the Socialists."

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"Awful. And where did you live mostly?"

"In London."

"Hm, the colonialist capital of capitalism. Who was your best friend?"

"A manufacturer from the Ruhr Valley."

"Did you like workers?"

"Not in the least. Kept them at arm's length. Despised them."

"What did you think about Jews?"

"I called them a money-crazy race and hoped that they would vanish from the Earth."

"And what about the Slavs?"

"I despised the Russians."

"You must be a fascist! You even dare to ask for admission to the Red Paradise—you must be crazy! By the way, what's your name?"

"Karl Marx."

Man, indeed, is a very strange animal. This has been proved in

many ways, but especially by the Marx-renaissance of recent decades. And yet the ideas of this odd and by no means constructive thinker are responsible all over the world for rivers of blood and oceans of tears. There can be no doubt that without the Communist challenge National Socialism, its competitor, would never have succeeded. Hitler boasted to Rauschning that he was the real executor of Marxism (though "minus its Jewish-Talmudic spirit"); thus the macabre death dance of our civilization in the past fifty years is due to that scurrilous, evil and unhappy man who spent half his life copying endless passages from books in the British Museum Library's reading room. Yet, with the exception of numerous pamphlets and the first volume of a book, he left nothing but badly assembled, unpublishable manuscripts and a mountain of notes. It was his friend Friedrich Engels who, with the most laborious efforts, had to bring them into shape.

New Interest from the Left

This Marx-renaissance is due largely, but not solely, to the rise of the New Left which argues that the dear old man had been thoroughly misunderstood by the barbaric Russians. Also a number of men and women would be hor-

rified to be called Socialists or Communists but still have a soft spot in their hearts for a man who "at least was filled with compassion for the poor and was an admirable father and a tender husband." Surely, Marx was a complex and contradictory person, and the renewed attention paid to him has produced a number of German books analyzing this most fatal figure of our times. Destructive ideas almost unavoidably derive from a destructive and — in this case — rather repulsive person.

Karl Marx was born in Trier, of Jewish parents, in 1818. Only a few years earlier this Catholic bishopric was forcibly incorporated into the Kingdom of Prussia and Karl Marx's father embraced the Lutheran faith of the Prussian occupants. The children and the rather reluctant mother were baptized by a Prussian army chaplain only at a later date. The deism of Enlightenment was the true faith of Heinrich Marx who, however, was a cultured man and a devoted father. Young Karl finished high school-college with flying colors at the age of seventeen and set out to study law which he shortly abandoned for philosophy, eyeing the possibility of an academic career. He first matriculated in Bonn, then in Berlin where he fell under the spell of the Hegelians. He received his Ph.D. from

the University of Jena, but renounced the idea of becoming a professor. He also gave up writing his self-centered poetry and his dream of running a theatrical review. He then married into the Prussian nobility and established himself as a free-lance writer in Paris where he soon clashed with the more humanitarian French socialists. He moved to Cologne, then returned to Paris and, finally — expelled from Belgium as an enemy of the established order — he took a permanent abode in London where, with interruptions, he remained until his death in 1883.

So much for the facts of his life. Within the last decade three books have been published in German analyzing Marx psychologically. These tomes are very different in scope but they hardly vary in their judgments. The authors belong to no "school" in particular, but all are serious students of our "hero's" works and personal history. These books are *Marx*, by Werner Blumenberg, a small, but exceedingly readable paperback (1962), *Karl Marx, Die Revolutionäre Konfession* by Ernst Kux (1967) and *Karl Marx, Eine Psychographie* by Arnold Künzli (1966). The last two have not been published in the United States and whoever is acquainted with the tremendous difficulties encountered by translations of

learned books in the United States will not be surprised. The reasons for this state of affairs are not solely of a financial nature. This article is partly based on the work of these authors.

A Generation Gap

Let us return to the personality of the founder of socialism and communism. Even as a young man Marx does not appear to have been attractive. As a student he is liberally provided with money by his affluent father, and spends his annuity of 700 Thalers — a nice middle class income would then be around 300 Thalers — in a manner still unexplained. In spite of his love for Jenny von Westphalen he is an unhappy, "torn" person and writes in these terms to his father. Heinrich Marx ticks him off: "To be quite frank, I hate this modern expression — 'torn — used by weaklings if they are disgusted with life merely because they cannot get without effort beautifully furnished palaces, elegant carriages, and millions in the bank." And in another letter the old gentleman, knowing his son only too well, tells him that he suspects his heart not to have the same qualities as his mind. "If your heart is not pure and human, if it becomes alienated by an evil genius . . . my life's great hope will be dashed."

Karl Marx was impatient. In this connection it is worthwhile to have a look at his doctoral dissertation on Epicurus, the materialistic Greek philosopher who, as the founder of Epicureanism, made sensual pleasures the main purpose of life. Here Marx quoted several lines from Aeschylus in which Prometheus rants against the gods and ridicules the idea of being an obedient son to Father Zeus. The figure of Prometheus was, indeed, as Kux and Künzli demonstrate one of the guiding stars in Marx's life. The revolt against God (and the gods), the rebellion against the entire existing order, all quite natural in youth, remained his *leitmotiv* until his death. Marx, as our authors insist, never really grew up. His entire relationship to other people continued to be juvenile, if not infantile.

Marx's basic vision was that of a humanity freed from all oppression, repression and controls and thus open to an egotistic "self-realization" — primarily of an artistic order. There was, as he believed, a Raphael, a Michelangelo, a Shakespeare, a Bach in every man. This great liberation, however, could only be achieved by the rule, the dictatorship of the poorest and most tyrannized people, the working class. These were the ones, he thought, who could

be indoctrinated to destroy the existing order entirely — and then to build a new one. They were ordained "by history" to carry out his murderous dreams.

The trouble was that he had no knowledge of the mind and mentality of the workers nor any affection for them. He only knew "statistically" about their situation, their living conditions; and these were humble, inevitably so, because at the beginning of *any* industrialization (be it capitalistic or socialistic) the purchasing power of the masses is still low and the costs of saving and investing (i.e. the buying of expensive machinery) are bound to be very high. In the period of early capitalism the manufacturers, contrary to a widespread legend, lived rather puritanically and were by no means bent on luxury. But none of this endeared the workers to Marx in any way. He had only words of contempt for them, except as they might be mobilized against the "bourgeois" society which Marx so hated.

Glaring Inconsistencies

Despite his entirely "bourgeois" background this is the way his lifelong opposition against his family, above all against his parents, took shape. Interestingly enough, Marx's anti-middle-class complex was not accompanied by

any marked loathing for the aristocracy to which his wife belonged. He probably preferred her father to his own. The young leader of the German Worker's Movement directed his wife to have her calling cards printed: "Jenny Marx, née baronne de Westphalen." He also sported a most feudal-looking monocle and was a real snob. His two closest friends belonged to the hated *grande bourgeoisie*: Friedrich Engels, the Presbyterian textile manufacturer; and August Philips, a Dutch banker, a Calvinist of Jewish origin who was his maternal cousin.

Apart from these two, Marx had no real friends. Budding friendships he destroyed almost automatically through his pettiness, his envy, his rancor and his urge to domineer. He was one of the greatest haters in modern history, and one of the reasons why he never really got ahead in his basic work was his endless hostile pamphleteering. If he felt slighted by anybody, if he saw in some writer a possible competitor, if an innocent author had written about a theme of interest to Marx but with conclusions differing from his, Marx immediately dropped every serious research object, sat down and wrote a vitriolic reply or an entire pamphlet. He had the most poisonous pen under the sun and used the most unfair personal

arguments. Even as a scholar he never could refrain from going off on a tangent. He sometimes copied half a book which had nothing to do with his main subject; hence the mountains of undecipherable notes and casual remarks on small slips.

A Vindictive Nature

He was a brilliant talker who dominated conversations with his caustic remarks. A Prussian lieutenant named Techow, a convert to socialism, after visiting Marx said in a letter that he would be ready to sacrifice everything for him "if only his heart were remotely as good as his mind." Marx, needless to say, vilified almost everybody within his reach and despised especially the German refugees, the 48-ers, in whose company he had to live most of the time. (Significantly enough, he had hardly any contacts with genuine Englishmen who probably could not stand his manners and mannerisms.) Marx had nothing but contempt for women in general and never engaged in genuine conversations with his wife who was decidedly an intelligent and sensitive woman with a good educational background.

Part of Marx's worst ire was directed against the Jews. In this he was not in the least inhibited by his Jewish descent. His hatred

for Jews had certain religious aspects but was primarily a racism of the most wicked sort.

No, Marx certainly was not a "good man". In his memoirs, Carl Schurz, the German democratic revolutionary, who later became a U. S. Senator, has given us his impressions of Marx: "The stocky, heavily built man with his broad forehead, his pitch black hair and full beard, attracted general attention . . . What Marx said was indeed substantial, logical and clear. But never did I meet a man of such offensive arrogance in his demeanor. No opinion deviating in principle from his own would be given the slightest consideration. Anybody who contradicted him was treated with barely veiled contempt. Every argument which he happened to dislike was answered either with biting mockery about such pitiful display of ignorance, or with defamatory suspicions as to the motives of the interpellant. I still well remember the sneering tone with which he spat out the word *bourgeoisie*. And as *bourgeois*, that is to say as an example of a profound intellectual and moral depravity, he denounced everybody who dared to contradict his views."

Arnold Ruge, a well-known German essayist, with whom Marx collaborated in Paris in a literary venture and who soon fell out with

him, wrote to Fröbel (nephew of the famous educator of the same name) that "gnashing his teeth and with a grin Marx would slaughter all those who got in the way of this new Babeuf. He always thinks about this feast which he cannot celebrate." Heinrich Heine, who also quickly learned to dislike Karl Marx, called him a "godless self-god."

Unkempt and Undisciplined

Karl Marx was in no way an attractive man; he had no hidden charms. A Prussian detective, sent to London in order to find out what this intellectual wire-puller of Socialism was like, informed his government that Marx was leading "the true life of a gypsy. To wash, to comb his hair or to change his underwear are rare occurrences with him . . . if he can, he gets drunk . . . he might sleep during the day and stay up all night . . . he doesn't care whether people come or leave . . . if you enter his home you have to get used to the smoke of tobacco and the coal in the open fireplace with the result that it takes some time until you can see properly the objects in the rooms."

Gainful work was alien to him and when he landed a part-time job as the correspondent for the *New York Tribune* (under Charles A. Dana, an early American social-

ist), it was his friend Engels who had to write most of the articles during the first year. Marx could have earned money by giving language lessons, but he refused this and continued to sponge on Engels, who really made Marx. (Once Marx, as a true socialist, tried to gamble at the London Stock Exchange, but failed.) Engels was his "angel" from every imaginable point of view.

A Most Unhappy Family

The sufferings of the Marx family, and especially of poor faithful Jenny, are difficult to describe. Though they did have a housekeeper and though Friedrich Engels spent in the course of the years *at least* 4000 Pounds on Karl Marx, they lived in abject misery. The death of one child, a boy, is directly attributable to poverty and neglect. Family life must have been absolutely terrible, but Marx could not be moved — neither by entreaties, nor by tears, nor by cries of despair. For two chapters of *Das Kapital* he needed fourteen years. No wonder that only the first volume was published during his lifetime and that it was Engels' headache to assemble and to rewrite the rest, so that — as one author suggested — we should speak of Engelsism rather than of Marxism. Yet it would be a mistake to think that Marx suffered

silently and proudly. By no means! In his letters and in his conversations he never failed to complain and to lament. He had a colossal amount not only of self-hatred, but also of self-pity, but no human feelings for others, least of all for his wife whose health he had ruined completely.

Marx liked his daughters. These were — intellectually, linguistically, artistically — extremely gifted girls, but the spiritual background of the family had an adverse influence on them. Marx was a fanatical atheist, a disciple of Feuerbach who thus succinctly formulated his views: "*Der Mensch ist, was er isst* — Man is what he eats." And in an early poem Marx had declared: "And we are monkeys of an icy god." Jenny, too, had completely lost her childhood faith and her sufferings had made her practically despondent toward the end of her life. She was older than her husband and preceded him in death.

The oldest of his daughters, also named Jenny, the most beloved by the father, died of cancer at the age of thirty-nine. Karl Marx survived her only by two months. Laura, for reasons unknown, committed suicide together with her husband later in their lives. The French Socialist Party was stunned; at their grave one of the speakers was a Russian refugee,

Vladimir Ilyitch Ulyanov, better known under his pen-name: Lenin. Years later, each time he looked up from his desk in the Kremlin study (now transferred to the Lenin Museum in Moscow) he saw on his desk not a crucifix, an ikon or a picture of his wife, but the statuette of a reddish ape with an evil grin. "We monkeys of an icy god!"

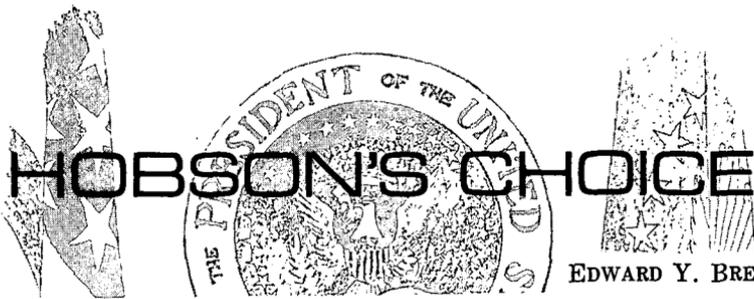
Eleanor, the third daughter, a quite hysterical child and later a passionate socialist and feminist, admitted that she "saw nothing worth living for." She also committed suicide. Still, in her farewell letter to her nephew Jean Longuet, she exhorted him, above all, to be worthy of his grandfather.

Who can explain the influence of this queer and sinister man on the world? Undoubtedly he was talented in many ways, but there is nothing truly valuable about his extremely negative, nay, even absurd message. However, history is not reasonable. Mankind is not either. Surely, all the prophecies of Marx in the economic and historical field have proved wrong. His philosophical insights are totally obsolete. They are not even worth refutation except, maybe, as an exercise for high school students or college undergraduates. They are, above all, proved to be

wrong *empirically*. But what does it matter? Material victories or publicity triumphs are one thing, truth or goodness very different ones.

The Children of Darkness have always been more clever than the Children of Light. Socialism, moreover, has always been a "clear, but false idea." A free market economy, on the other hand, is far more complex and cannot be explained in a nutshell. In the political arena it competes poorly with the notion of collective ownership and central planning — until the latter's bankruptcy is proved in *practice*. The ideas of the hate-swollen bookworm in the library reading room can only be shown up in *life*. Here the method of trial and error, however, has its terrible pitfalls. To experience Marxism entails a captivity from which, as we know, escape is not so simple. The poor East Europeans realize all this only too well.

More than a hundred years ago the German classic poet and writer Jean Paul wrote that "In every century the Almighty sends us an evil genius in order to tempt us." In the case of Marx the temptation is still with us, but as far as the perceptive observer can see, in spite of the renewed interest in the "Red Prussian," it is now slowly, slowly subsiding. ☉



IN SPITE of all the hopes and the fears, the planning and the hard work, the promises and rationalizations — it really doesn't matter who they call the winner in November of a Presidential election year.

This isn't an attempt to be cynical about the reliability or the intent of party platforms or campaign promises. We're used to taking these with tongue in cheek. We don't really expect a winning candidate to do what he said he would do.

This time though, let's assume that A and B held radically different views and that both men honestly believe what they say and are determined and dedicated to make those views a part of our domestic and foreign policies.

Go even a step further and assume that each candidate has managed to convert to his views a con-

siderable segment of the people who voted for him. He has, then, a following of true believers in the general public, including some politicians, some very capable men, and some zealots.

When the dust clears in November, our man A is on his way to the White House; and B, who held totally different views on practically all issues, is out.

Why, then, do I say that the voters have had Hobson's Choice?

A government — any government — can be called a "body politic." Like the physical body, it has a head, brain, heart, circulatory system, arms and legs, internal organs and so on right down to cells and atoms. In our case the head can be the President, the blood which nourishes the body is the flow of tax money in and out, and so right down to a buck private in the army, a sweeper in the Treasury building, or a trusty in one of our Federal Prisons.

The trouble, when it comes to "reform" or even a simple change, is that the body politic resembles

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