

## MARX AND MANKIND

Excerpt from: *Deconstructing Karl Marx & Communism*  
– *Character Study & Metaphysical Analysis of Communism* –  
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Marx' political activism was geared towards bringing down capitalism so as to end the exploitation of the proletariat. But his intentions were broader, reaching much further. He spoke of liberating mankind as a whole of the stupor caused by false consciousness; of the alienations that twisted the species into being selfish and domineering; of ending the limitations that impeded it from reaching its full creative potential. Verily, few goals could be more noble than this. Hence, one might think that Marx had nothing but good intentions in mind for mankind, but to judge people solely on the basis of their professed intentions is rather limited. Marx, in fact, would pay any price to see his vision come to life, even if it meant sacrificing millions of people in a global revolutionary war. You could argue that the victims, technically speaking, wouldn't be real people – according to Marx' philosophical view of the world, current humanity consisted of “un-humans”, soulless, alienated beings ruled by false consciousness. Only through communism would these creatures be able to transform into real human beings, at one with their “species-nature”. Thus, was not any price for communism a good price?

On June 1<sup>st</sup> 1848 Marx founded the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, a newspaper radically outspoken against the Prussian and Austrian governments. But the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* was not simply a hotbed of polemic, it was in fact Europe's most bellicose publication. Its agenda, as Engels summed it up many years later, consisted of “two main points: a single, indivisible, democratic German Republic, and *war with Russia*.”<sup>1</sup>

Remembering how the French Revolution had led to the mobilization of the entire French nation, to the dictatorship of the Jacobins, and revolutionary unrest all over Europe, Marx and Engels felt that if only Germany would go to war – preferably with its most “reactionary” neighbor Russia – somehow the petty backwardness of the German people they were always complaining about would be erased and a new, energetic Jacobin party would arise (they themselves: the Communist League). This party would unify the Germanies (Prussia,

Saxony, Bavaria, Austria...) and lead the proletariat, initiating a socialist revolution across all of Europe – when the time was right.

As soon as the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* was launched, Marx and Engels emerged as full-blown warmongers. On June 7<sup>th</sup>, the paper mentioned in passing that the German unification could “only arise” as the combined result of an internal “movement” and “war with the East.” Two weeks later: “The Germans, allied with the French and united with them, will wage the war of the West against the East.” Another three weeks after that: “Only a war with Russia is a war of a revolutionary Germany, a war in which it can wash away the sins of the past, in which it can become manly ... and free itself internally as it liberates abroad,” etc., etc.<sup>2</sup> Marx’ and Engels’ arguments were based on a combination of military and historic understandings on the one hand, and a determined xenophobia against the Slavs on the other – a people whom they deemed barely worthy of existence (with exception of the Poles and the Magyars).

“Peoples which have never had a history of their own, which from the time when they achieved the first, most basic steps towards civilization already came under foreign domination, or which were *forced* to attain a first stage of civilization by means of a foreign yoke, are not viable to achieve any independence...”<sup>3</sup>

(Perhaps Engels forgot that it was the Roman Empire that first brought a high degree of civilization to the Germanic tribes?) In any case, he showed no mercy in his warmongering against the Slavs – he even came out as a proponent of total genocide:

“... in history nothing is achieved without violence and implacable ruthlessness ... it turns out these ‘crimes’ of the Germans and Magyars against the said Slavs are among the best and most praiseworthy deeds our and the Magyar people can boast about in their history.”<sup>4</sup>

“... fight [with the Slavs] for *annihilation* and ruthless terrorism – not in the interests of Germany, but in the interests of the revolution!”<sup>5</sup>

“All other large and small [Slavic] tribes and peoples have the mission to perish in the revolutionary world storm ... The general war that then breaks out will ... *destroy* all these little, bullheaded nations so that *their very name will vanish*. The coming world war will cause not only reactionary classes and

dynasties to disappear from the face of the earth, but entire reactionary peoples too. And that too, will be progress.”<sup>6</sup>

Marx, editor-in-chief of the newspaper, never expressed any aversion towards his friend’s ruthless opinions – he had his own fair share of them strapped firmly to his heart. The *Neue Rheinische Zeitung (NRZ)* had a circulation of about three to six thousand. A total of 301 issues were published before the paper was forced to shut down by the authorities. In its final blood-red edition of May 19, 1849, Marx openly promised vengeance by means of communist “terror”.

As their later correspondence and writings reveal, the closing of the newspaper had no impact on Marx’ and Engels’ desire to see a German-Russian war come about. They supported the Crimean war of 1853-56, but their anger was mainly directed at the Western alliance for waging war against the Russian expansion “half-heartedly.” In 1860 Marx wrote to Lassalle:

“I think you are deceiving yourself about our relationship with Russia ... Everywhere in Germany there is this hatred of Russia, and as early as the first edition of the NRZ we proclaimed that the war against the Russians was the revolutionary mission of Germany. But hating and understanding are two different things.”<sup>7</sup>

Lassalle warned them that their war phantasies might play out differently in real life as a victory over Russia might not revolutionize or democratize Europe, but instead increase the German monarchy’s popularity. But Marx and Engels were unable to abandon the idea of war with Russia. In two anonymous pamphlets distributed in 1860, Engels warned that France and Russia might form an alliance against Germany. These pamphlets were so nationalistic in tone and so knowledgeable in military matters that it was widely believed they had been written by a Prussian general, a misconception that much pleased Engels: his knowledge of warfare and military tactics had earned him the nickname “General” among his close friends.<sup>8</sup>

When Marx famously called for “a ruthless criticism of all that exists” in a letter to Arnold Ruge,<sup>9</sup> he gave expression to his foremost passion: criticizing. “All that exists” of course includes humankind. Rarely were Marx and Engels caught speaking with affection about peoples, nations or ethnicities (or even friends and acquaintances for that matter), but they never fell short of criticism and scorn. Engels:

“These wretched, ruined fragments of one-time nations, the Serbs, the Bulgars, Greeks and other robber bands ... feel obliged to cut each other’s greedy throats ... the lousy Balkan peoples.”<sup>10</sup>

“Scandinavianism is enthusiasm for the brutal, grimy, pirate-like, Old Norse nationality, for that deep inner life that cannot express its exuberant ideas and feelings with words, but only in deeds, namely in brutality towards women, perpetual drunkenness and tearful sentimentality alternating with wild berserker rage... Obviously, the cruder a nation is ... the more 'Scandinavian' it must be.”<sup>11</sup>

“He is a Slav through and through, sentimental in his frivolity and even in his beastliness, servile and arrogant; and he has nothing of the Englishman save in exaggerated – being a Russian, he must exaggerate – taciturnity.”<sup>12</sup>

Marx:

“What is the worldly religion of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly God? Money.”<sup>13</sup>

“The bourgeois behaves to the institutions of his régime as the Jew does to the law; he circumvents them as often as is practicable in each individual case, but he wants all others to abide by them.”<sup>14</sup>

“This splendid territory [the Balkans] has the misfortune to be inhabited by a conglomerate of different races and nationalities, of which it is hard to say which is the least fit for progress and civilization.”<sup>15</sup>

“Russia is a name usurped by the Muscovites. They are not Slavs, do not belong at all to the Indo-German race, but are *des intrus*,\* who must again be hurled back beyond the Dnieper.”<sup>16</sup>

“The Spaniards have already degenerated. But as a degenerated Spaniard, a Mexican is the ideal. All the vices, boasting, loudmouthing and Donquixotry of the Spaniards to the 3<sup>rd</sup> power, but by no means the solidity they possess.”<sup>17</sup>

“Lafargue has the nasty stigma of the Negro tribe: *no sense of shame*. By which I mean no modesty about making himself ridiculous.”<sup>18</sup>

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\* Intruders

“It would seem as though history had first to make this whole people [the Chinese] drunk before it could raise them out of their hereditary stupidity.”<sup>19</sup>

“The Germans are an essentially peaceful people.”<sup>20</sup>

These, then, are the conclusions of Marx the historian. It is quite puzzling that modern-day self-proclaimed Marxist organizations like Black Lives Matter who insist on taking down the statues of every and all historic figures to have ever uttered the slightest racist opinion, including those who put their lives on the line to free the American slaves, never called out Karl Marx on his racist remarks – but instead, proudly declared themselves to be “trained Marxists” online.\*

But to say that he was a *racist* is to not truly understand Karl Marx. His evaluation criterion for human beings was determined by one variable, and one variable alone: *are they helping the revolution?* If they were not, there was nothing good about them and he would condemn them to oblivion. Given that Marx witnessed no successful communist revolutions come to fruition during his life, he could not but speak badly of most peoples. Yet when an ethnic group acted like good revolutionaries, he would emerge as their biggest supporter. His utter disdain for the Slavs evaporated as soon as he heard of the strides the Russian revolutionaries had been making, and he was quick to commend their efforts (which included the assassination of the Russian emperor Alexander II). Marx had far less sympathy for Russian exiles like Plekhanov and Axelrod, who opposed terrorism and preferred to focus on propaganda instead of revolutionary *force*.

“They – mostly people (not all of them) who have left Russia voluntarily – in contrast to the terrorists who put themselves on the line – form the so-called party of propaganda. (To make propaganda in Russia – move to Geneva! What *quid pro quo!*) These gentlemen are against all political-revolutionary action. Russia must leap with a *salto mortale* into the anarchist-communist-atheist millennium!”<sup>21</sup>

The recklessness behind Marx’ rhetoric had been a cause for alarm for several of his contemporaries. Ruge disliked Marx’ “unconscionable, ungrounded criticisms,” adding that his former associate considered “unscrupulousness, unfaith-fulness and savagery the maxim.”

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\* This information was scrubbed from their website after it got some traction on social media and in the press.

“Snarling and grinning, *Marx*, the new *Babeuf*, would slaughter anyone who stood in his way.”<sup>22</sup>

This harsh judgement can't be dismissed as a groundless reproach, for a few years later the thirty-year-old Marx advertised *terror* as the fastest revolutionary way forward in the NRZ:

“There is only *one means* by which the murderous death agonies of the old society and the bloody birth throes of the new society can be *shortened*, simplified and concentrated, and that is by *revolutionary terror*.”<sup>23</sup>

Though Marx knew how to touchingly describe the dismal life of the laborers, he exhibited no qualms whatsoever about sacrificing them (or anyone else, for that matter) in (a successful) bloody revolution. Proudhon told Marx that he would not get very far if all he had to offer the proletariat was “blood to drink.” He was of the opinion that Marx was presenting himself as an “exterminator” and advised him politely to reconsider his approach.<sup>24</sup> Subsequently, Marx denounced him as a naive idiot whom the world ought to forget as quickly as possible.

Marx was blamed by his own followers for allowing the reputation of the International to be that of a gang of outlaws and assassins. To a firm believer in a violent workers' uprising like Marx, this was certainly not an accusation that kept him awake at night. On the contrary, he very much savored this kind of notoriety. When he published *The Civil War in France* in 1871 – a most blistering, hate-filled and simultaneously brilliant commentary about the defeat of the Commune uprising – it shocked his comrades and political opponents in equal measure. The 40-page pamphlet promptly earned Marx the nick-name “the Red Terror Doctor”, a title the middle-aged activist welcomed as much as he delighted in his newfound position as a target of public odium.

“At this moment, I have the honor of being *the best calumniated and the most menaced man* in London. That really does one good after a boring twenty-year swamp idyll. The government newspaper – *The Observer* – is threatening me with prosecution. Let them try! Those proposterous lowlifes!”<sup>25</sup>

But to take delight in a title such as “the Red Terror Doctor” requires a very specific mindset. It means that one *does not mind* being associated with terrorism (it should be noted that “terrorism” is defined by its approval of the murdering of innocents when it serves the cause).

Heinrich Heine, once a close friend, came to dislike Marx' clique of German communists for a very similar reason. He detested what he perceived as their cynical indifference towards the people they were leading to the revolution (and the inevitable slaughter that accompanied it). In the end, Heine felt it proper to refer to them as a "crowd of godless self-appointed gods."<sup>26</sup>

The popular Italian revolutionary (and devout Christian) Giuseppe Mazzini, who would later become one of the four founding fathers of modern Italy, was convinced that Marx' and Engels' interests were so immensely different from the needs of individual nations and peoples that their ideas "will eventually end up either not functioning, or functioning tyrannically."<sup>27</sup> History has proven him right – repeatedly. In an article about the International Working Men's Association, Mazzini described Marx as:

"A man ... of destructive character, and of domineering temper, jealous of others' influence ... whose heart, I fear, contains more elements of anger, albeit righteous, than love."<sup>28</sup>

Techov saw in Marx and Engels two calculated people concerned with organizing a strong, autonomous party of an extremely authoritarian nature:

"For this purpose, not only should everything alien to it be excluded, all people opposing it in any way should be *mercilessly* persecuted."<sup>29</sup>

During their meeting, Techov got Marx drunk on purpose to hear him out, but the former officer was left uncharmed:

"For our purpose at hand, I regret that this man, beside his eminent intellect, does not have a noble heart to offer. I am convinced that a most dangerous personal ambition has eaten away all the good in him. He laughs at the fools who parrot his proletarian catechism, just as he laughs at communists à la Willich, and at the bourgeoisie. The only people he respects are the aristocrats, the pure-blooded ones who are well aware of it. In order to drive them from their seat, he needs a source of strength, which he can only find in the proletariat. Accordingly, he has tailored his system to them. In spite of all his assurances to the contrary, and perhaps because of them, I took away the impression that personal dominion was the aim of all his endeavors."<sup>30</sup>

*In vino veritas*, then? Twenty-four years later, Bakunin, who acknowledged Marx' brilliance but loathed his character, cast a final judgement on his rival. His words, written shortly after the breakup of the International, confirmed his early impressions of Marx as much as they echoed Techov's assessment:

“Marx does not believe in God, but he believes very much in himself, and relates everything to himself. His heart is not full of love but of bitterness, and he has very little natural benevolence for mankind ... Mazzini wanted to impose on humanity the yoke of God, Mr. Marx aspires to impose his own.”<sup>31</sup>

On September 8, 1872, the day after The Hague congress of the International, Marx declared (in what was presumably his last public speech):

“We do not deny that there are countries, such as America and England, and if I was familiar with its institutions, I might include Holland, where the workers may attain their goals by peaceful means.”

Marxists have used this sentence (and the fact that he deplored the wasted lives of failed revolutions) to claim that Marx *actually* wasn't a proponent of violence – but they always omit the next line in their argument, which provides the proper framework:

“That being the case, we must recognize that in most continental countries the lever of the revolution will have to be force; a resort to force will have to be necessary one day in order to set up the rule of labor.”

At most, Marx conceded that *there might be exceptions* to the rule that force was the way. In 1880, he wrote to Henry Hyndman that he considered an English revolution not “necessary,” but “possible,” again admitting the *possibility* of a peaceful revolutionary approach.

There are a few points of context that should be taken into account when weighing these concessions of his. Firstly, there is Marx' telling complaint to Engels about not being able to use “the old boldness of language” among the other members of the International. Thus, it cannot be ruled out entirely that this talk about peaceful means was diplomacy on the part of Marx. Secondly, (and this affirms the first point) on January 5, 1879 (seven years after The Hague congress and four years before his death), *The Chicago Tribune* published an interview with Marx in which he essentially reaffirmed that force was *the only way* – or at least a *necessary ingredient* of the revolution – when he stated that



“No great movement has ever been inaugurated without bloodshed.” Lastly, in a circular letter of that same year addressed to Bebel, Liebknecht, Kautsky and others, Marx and Engels distanced themselves from the German Social-Democrat Party. The reason for their disengagement (besides the listed inadequacies of its leaders) was that the party “is showing that it does not wish to pursue the path of forcible, bloody revolution.”<sup>32</sup> All of this should make it clear that Marx *never* abandoned his preference for violent revolution as he grew older.

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<sup>1</sup> Engels, *Marx und die Neue Rheinische Zeitung*; MEW, 21, p.19

<sup>2</sup> For further insight into Marx’ and Engels’ bellicose ambitions, see: *Nationalism and Internationalism in Marx and Engels*, The American Slavic and East European Review, Vol.17, No.4, December 1958, pp.407-08

<sup>3</sup> Engels, *Democratic Pan-Slavism*

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Engels, *Der Magyarische Kampf*, Neue Rheinische Zeitung, January 13, 1849; MEW, 6, p.168 & 176

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Marx to Lassalle, September 15, 1860; MEW, 30, p.565

<sup>8</sup> Gustav Mayer, *Friedrich Engels*, New York, 1936, p.152

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Marx to Ruge, September 1843; MECW, 3, p.143

<sup>10</sup> Marx-Engels, *Briefe an A. Bebel, W. Liebknecht, K. Kautsky und andere, Teil 1*, Moskau-Leningrad, 1933, pp.411-12

<sup>11</sup> Engels, *Der Dänisch-Preußische Waffenstillstand*, Neue Rheinische Zeitung, September 10, 1848; MEW, 5, p.394

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Engels to Marx, October 4, 1853; MEGA, 3/6, pp.33-34

<sup>13</sup> Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question*, 1844

<sup>14</sup> Marx, *The German Ideology*; MEGA, 1/5, p.233

<sup>15</sup> Karl Marx, *British Politics*, New York Daily Tribune, March 22, 1853

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Marx to Engels, June 24, 1865; MEGA, 3/13, p.483

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Marx to Engels, December 2, 1854; MEW, 28, p.417

<sup>18</sup> Letter from Marx to Engels, November 11, 1882; MEW, 35, p.109

<sup>19</sup> Marx, *Revolution in China and in Europe*, New York Daily Tribune, June 14, 1853

<sup>20</sup> Marx, *Second Address of the General Council of the International Working Men’s Association on the Franco-Prussian War*; MECW, 22, p.266

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Marx to Friedrich Adolf Sorge, November 5, 1880; MEW, 34, p.477

<sup>22</sup> Nerrlich, p.381

<sup>23</sup> Neue Rheinische Zeitung, November 7, 1848; see: MECW, 7, p.506

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Proudhon to Marx, May 17, 1846.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from Marx to Kugelmann, June 18, 1871; MEW, 33, p.238

<sup>26</sup> Heinrich Heine, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol.10, pp.142-44

<sup>27</sup> Guiseppe Mazzini, *Mazzini e L’Internationale*, Rome, 1871, p.26; see also: MEW, 17, p.390

<sup>28</sup> Mazzini, p.26

<sup>29</sup> Vogt, p.145

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p.151-152

<sup>31</sup> Bakounine, *Oeuvres – Tome iv*, P.V. Stock, Paris, 1908, p.444

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Marx and Engels to A. Bebel, W. Liebknecht, K. Kautsky and others, September 17-18, 1879; MECW, 45, p.404

MEW: Marx Engels Werke

MECW: Marx Engels Collected Works

MEGA: Marx Engels Gesamtausgabe