

# The society of to-morrow

By Charles Rappoport

The result of all the more or less ingenious plans of the future society is but to demonstrate the *possibility* of the Socialist System. All who have nothing to lose and everything to gain by the social transformation easily persuade themselves of the excellence of the future society. Even the petit bourgeois—the small capitalist—having the presentiment of his impending ruin, being tormented by the knowledge of his insecurity and filled with a feeling of vagueness, is quite ready to say “Yes, Socialism is an excellent thing, but, alas! it is Utopia!” And to show you the Utopian character of Socialism he invokes, first, human nature; secondly, the indestructible selfishness of humanity that results in the war of each against all; and thirdly, the opposition of those who possess, which he declares impossible to overcome.

How does the Marxian conception comport itself in order to reduce to nothing this triple impossibility?

Human nature! This has been invoked every time there has been any question of advancing a stage in history. The slave-holders called to witness this same human nature in order to clinch the absolute impossibility of the abolition of chattel slavery. In his “Politics”, Aristotle, “the giant of antique thought”, sought to demonstrate that the Greeks are by their very nature destined to dominate the rest of human kind as masters. Nature is eternal. And every dominant class desires—quite naturally—to eternally prolong the régime which secures its domination and enjoyment: it considers, therefore, its own system as *natural*. Its nature becomes Nature itself. It does not see beyond its own interests, and it confounds the laws of its own conservation with those of the universe. It suppresses history—which only exists by changes—and invents a *physical* theory of society, which theory seeks to persuade us that inequality between men socially is as eternal and necessary as that between the organs of the body. The laws of Nature are not slighted with impunity, therefore the system of the exploitation of man by man is, according to the exploiters, a law of Nature. Every revolt against it is consequently madness or a material impossibility.

To these interested sophisms the Marxian conception opposes the true history of humanity. It demonstrates the fact of the perpetual changes that occur and have occurred in forms of production and appropriation.

Human society is a particular case in universal evolution. Nothing is eternal and unchangeable. Everything is variable. By showing that the struggle of the classes is at the base of history, Marxism unveils the historical mechanism and shows that every given social form is entirely relative, entirely conditional.

Classes and systems succeed each other and differ from each other. Thus all objections drawn—by the hair—from that much invoked “human nature” are destroyed. Marxism does not recognise man *in abstracto*. It knows only the owner of the slave, the feudal lord, the capitalist, the proletarian, and other “historic categories”. It replaces the vague and confused by that which is concrete and clear, and abandons generalities to the psychologists, philosophers, and metaphysicians.

Better still—by analysing scientifically the capitalist system, the Marxian shows not only that Socialist society is possible, but also that it is *necessary*. Collective organisation of labour is possible because it *exists*. It is present in the factory, in the mines, in the great stores, in the great financial establishments. It circles the world by railway and ploughs the ocean in Dreadnoughts. Individual exploitation is in flagrant contradiction with this collective organisation. From this come crises—catastrophes which demonstrate more and more that the capitalist system is becoming impossible. Soon it will be no longer for us to show the possibility of Socialism. It will be the task of the partisans of the present tottering system to prove the possibility of its continuation by any normal and progressive development.

As to the selfishness of individuals and of classes, not only does Marxism not deny it, but it utilises it to organise the proletarians into a class party, preoccupied above all with its *interests*, which, happily, are in complete accord with those of the social organism and of true civilisation.

There remains the third objection—the third pretended impossibility of Socialism—the resistance of those who possess. The Marxian conception is easily victorious. Socialism becomes possible just in the same degree as great capital absorbs smaller capitals, and production on a great scale supersedes small-scale production. Socialists have not to expropriate the *owners*—they will only expropriate the expropriators. They will restore to society the property which has been stolen from society. They do not fight private ownership of objects of immediate consumption. They struggle against capitalist property, against the oligarchy of property—the monopoly of the means of production.

The possibility—nay, more, the inevitable historic necessity—of Socialism springs thus from the play of economic forces. The organisation of the working class and the conquest of political power by this class indicate the first stages on the route to be followed.

(translated from *Le Socialisme*)

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