

ROUTLEDGE REVIVALS

Karl Marx

His Life and Work

Otto Rühle



Karl Marx

First published in English in 1929, this is a reissue of Otto Rühle's comprehensive biography of Karl Marx. Written by a leading Marxist and key figure within the German Labour movement, this is an exceptionally detailed and well-researched study which sets Marx's life and work firmly within its social and historical context before examining in depth the major events of his life and the writings for which he has become such an influential figure in modern political philosophy. The final chapter offers an appraisal of both the man and his work, as Rühle summarises why he believes Marx was a genius.

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Translated by
Eden and Cedar Paul



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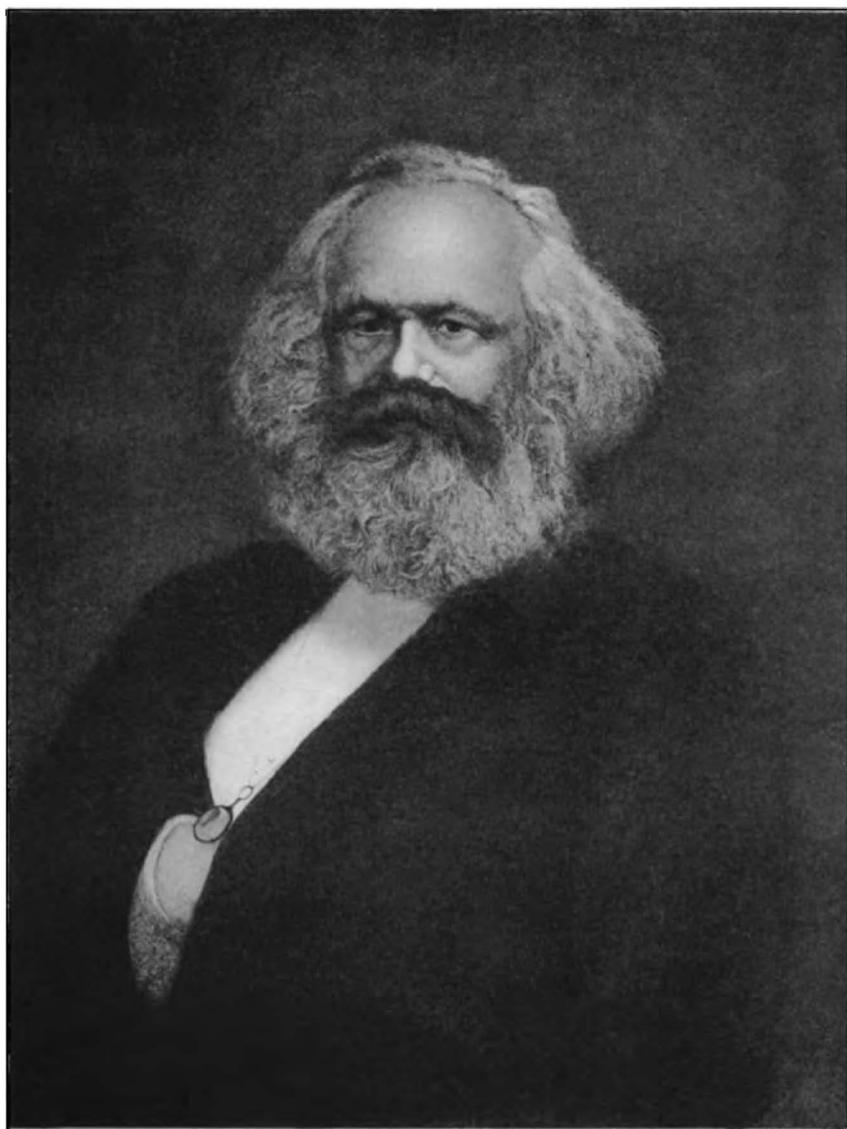
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KARL MARX



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HIS LIFE AND WORK

by Otto Rühle

TRANSLATED BY EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL

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PRELIMINARIES

THE HISTORICAL SETTING

AT intervals of a century, the European revolution in Holland, England, and France blew up the gates and opened a way for capitalist development.

The feudal system, based on a feudalist economy and on serfdom, stabilized by patriarchal despotism, hereditary dependence, and enslavement of the conscience, collapsed before the onslaught of the new economic power.

Money conquered land. The postulates of freedom triumphed over the traditions of slavery. Day dawned over western Europe.

The rising bourgeois class entered into possession of new fields. Starting from Holland, it created a colonial power whose gigantic proportions were rivalled only by the vastness of the wealth which colonial enterprise brought back to the mother country. Starting from England, which it transformed into the factory of the world, the bourgeoisie made that country supreme over all the markets of the world and all the sources of raw materials. Setting out from France, the bourgeoisie pressed the greatest of all military powers into its service, the better to safeguard the social successes of its emancipation. In its craving for activity, it shrank from no difficulties. Boldly it wrestled with the most difficult problems, and its soaring ambition winged it towards the most distant goals. In a frenzy of achievement, the bourgeois class fulfilled its destiny.

First of all came the fulfilment of its economic destiny. By way of manufactures and the mercantile system, the relations of production developed into the system of large-scale industry. The political revolution was followed by a technical revolution. The traditional methods of work were transformed. The secrets of nature were disclosed, her forces were brought

TRIUMPH OF TECHNIQUE

under control, and the natural laws of production were made serviceable to man. In 1764, Hargreaves invented the spinning jenny; in 1769, Arkwright invented the warp-loom; and in 1779 came Crompton's invention of the mule. In 1781, Watt improved the old steam-pump in a way which made it applicable as a source of power for machinery. In 1787, Cartwright revolutionized the textile industry by the invention of the power-loom. There was also a revolution in the spinning trade. Cotton made its way into Europe. "Cotton! Cotton!" was the new watchword of capitalism. Factories grew out of the earth like mushrooms. Armies of men, women, and children disappeared into the factories. One mechanical invention followed on the heels of another. In 1802, the first steamboat made its way up the Firth of Clyde; in 1807, the first passenger steamer navigated the Hudson; in 1819, the ocean was first crossed by a steamship. From 1804 onwards, came the application of Watt's steam-engine to locomotive purposes, until in 1825 the first railway was opened for traffic. Capitalism conquered space and time. In 1835, the electric telegraph began to come into use. Within a few decades, the frontiers of the world had been marvellously expanded. The fables of antiquity had been realized. The productivity of human labour had been increased to an incredible extent. The bourgeoisie was triumphant. "It has executed works more marvellous than the building of Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has carried out expeditions surpassing by far the tribal migrations and the crusades. . . . The subjugation of the forces of nature, the invention of machinery, the application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steamships, railways, electric telegraphs, the clearing of whole continents for cultivation, the making of navigable waterways, huge populations springing up as if by magic out of the earth—what earlier generations had the remotest inkling that such productive powers slumbered within the womb of associated labour?"

The bourgeoisie fulfilled its political destiny likewise. In

A NEW ORIENTATION

France, it withstood the Bourbon reaction after the fall of the Napoleonic empire, and seized power in the July revolution of 1830. In England, during a century and a half, it was able to take advantage of all compromises and partial solutions, until at length, in 1832, with the passing of the Reform Bill, it became supreme. It dictated laws to the governments. Armies marched under its orders. To swell its profits, alliances were entered into and treaties signed, wars were waged and ended, proclamations were issued, and diplomatic notes were exchanged. In the end it had become supreme. Its political position was everywhere secure.

Finally, it had given new tints and new outlines to that ideology which frames the picture of the world within the minds of men. "It has drowned pious zeal, chivalrous enthusiasm, and humdrum sentimentalism, in the chill waters of selfish calculation. It has degraded personal dignity to the level of exchange value; and in place of countless dearly-bought chartered freedoms, it has set up one solitary unscrupulous freedom—freedom of trade. . . . The bourgeoisie has robbed of their haloes all occupations hitherto regarded with awe and veneration. Doctor, lawyer, priest, poet, and scientist have become its wage labourers. The bourgeoisie has torn the veil of sentiment from the family relationship, which has become an affair of money and nothing more." Thus the bourgeoisie had given the world a new visage, had furnished human life with a multitude of new aspects.

From the lofty altitude to which it had successfully fought its way, it looked down with pride and self-satisfaction upon the path up which it had victoriously climbed with such overwhelming speed.

CONDITIONS IN GERMANY

Down to the year 1800, the bourgeois class of Germany had taken scarcely any part in this triumphal march of capitalism.

GERMANY AS STRAGGLER

Three hundred years earlier, capitalism had been ready and willing to effect a complete transformation in the economic life of Germany. The freight brought across the Mediterranean in Italian merchant ships was carried over the passes of the Alps in German caravans. The revolutionizing influences of the new capitalist developments had begun to make themselves felt in the blood and the brains of the Germans, whipping the peasants into revolt, involving the burghers in a conflict with the papacy and the Church, inciting the towns to rebellion. Then came the inroad of the Turks, and the discovery of the sea route to India. The overland roads were blocked, and for Italy and Germany the sources of capitalist life had been cut off. Capitalism, now restricted to the coasts of the Atlantic, flourished successively in Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, England, and France, transforming them all, completing its destructive and creative work. At length, after three hundred years, it resumed the same task in Germany, aided this time by British machinery and American cotton. Thereupon began a revolutionizing of production, a transformation of social conditions, a reshaping of the picture of the world in the minds of men.

On the lower Rhine, on the Ruhr, the Wupper, and the Sieg, in Thuringia, Saxony, Silesia, Wurtemberg, and Baden, a vigorous manufacturing industry sprang to life. The Continental System of Napoleon, which cut off the British from access to the German markets, served as a forcing-house for the growth of this industry. In Saxony, the number of spindles in the cotton mills increased within six years from 13,000 to 210,000. In the Rhine Province, mining, smelting, machine-making, and metallurgy advanced with giant strides. An import and export trade, considerable in view of German conditions, and extending to all parts of the world, thereupon developed. As if determined to make up for lost time, capitalism in Germany strode forward in seven-league boots. New branches of industry made their appearance. Towns grew apace. Intercourse with the great centres of the world market became ever livelier. Capital ac-

GROWTH OF CAPITAL

accumulated in vast masses. Everywhere was an upward movement, progress, success, the growth of power.

But the bourgeoisie is nothing without the proletariat. The bourgeoisie creates the proletariat by the very process of its own development. It must create the proletariat, because the proletariat creates surplus value, upon whose existence the existence of the bourgeoisie is grounded. The bourgeoisie cannot dispense with the proletariat unless it is willing to dispense with its own existence. The mutual dependence of these two classes is an inexorable necessity.

In Germany, as in England and France, the proletariat was recruited out of the masses of impoverished and landless peasants and of handicraftsmen and petty burghers whose means of livelihood had been cut off by the new developments. Those of the first generation were still comfortably provided for on the soil. Those of the second generation devoted part of their labour power to home industry. Those of the third generation thronged through the gates of the factories and became a wage proletariat. Forcibly assembled in the process of production, organized in militarist fashion, they were shamelessly exploited under the supervision of the manager, the stimulus of the master, and the whip of the foreman. Thenceforward their existence was nowhere the expression of any sort of human interest; it had an exclusively capitalist significance, that of one who produced commodities, created surplus value, served the purposes of the master class. The proletarian had himself become a commodity, having to sell himself day by day. He was a beast of burden; something even less than this, an instrument, a wheel in the machinery of exploitation, a dead thing. Impotent, in a spirit of dull resignation, he must accept his lot, under pain of starvation should he refuse. Hopeless, despairing, he submitted to an inevitable destiny. Casual outbreaks of disorder and tumult, like that of the Solingen cutlers in 1826, or that of the Crefeld silk weavers in 1828, had as their only result that the terrors of the criminal law were super-added to the pangs of hunger.

THE SEAMY SIDE

Where large-scale industry had not yet established itself, home industry was dominant. Especially was this so in Silesia, where manorial privileges favoured the industrial enslavement of the impoverished peasants; and in the Erzgebirge, where the sterility of the soil drove the hungry smallholders and cottars into the arms of the sweater. In the towns, however, the craft guilds, working cumbrously and with a narrow horizon, obstinately rejecting technical innovations, continued to supply their local customers after the traditional manner. Here, as in the countryside (where seventy-five per cent of the population was still engaged in rural dwarf industries), the social and intellectual atmosphere remained the oppressive one of the Middle Ages.

UTOPIAN SOCIALISTS

Capitalist development, especially in England and France, was acclaimed with jubilant admiration in the camp of bourgeois society.

A few persons only, men of critical intelligence, were sceptical of the glamour; a few only looked beneath the surface, tried to discover what lay under the fair seeming. These investigators noted the sinister contrast between the success, the wealth, the upward progress of the few, and the exploitation, the impoverishment, and the subjugation of millions. It seemed to them that the gain in material progress was dearly bought at the cost of its accompaniment of barbarism. Their conscience was outraged. Their reason told them that a development characterized by such glaring contrasts must necessarily lead to a social catastrophe. Their sense of responsibility impelled them to raise a warning voice; to call upon their fellows to be-think themselves; to urge better counsels; to enrol recruits on behalf of a more harmonious social order, one which should bring happiness to all sections of society.

In especial, it was the Frenchmen Saint-Simon and Charles



François Marie Charles Fourier



Claude Henri Saint-Simon

REASON, JUSTICE, AND HUMANITY

Fourier and the Englishman Robert Owen who, in the name of reason, justice, humanity, and socialism, appealed to the forum of their day.

They appealed in the name of reason. Had not this been the watchword of all the bourgeois revolutions? Had not Rousseau's theory of the social contract, on which had been moulded the political ideals of the French revolution, found its most classical embodiment in the demand for a reasonable State? The bourgeoisie had established such a State. What face did it present? It was a State characterized by the crudest class contrasts, one in which superfluity issued out of hunger, exaltation out of debasement, splendour out of the darkness of vice and shame. This was the very State against which the voices of the critics and reformers declaimed. What sort of reason was to organize the State of the future?

They appealed in the name of justice. Had not this been the watchword of the bourgeoisie likewise? Well, the old feudal order had been abolished, the storms of the revolution had swept privilege away; bourgeois freedoms such as feudalism had scarcely dreamed of had been established, and all citizens were equal before the law. Had not the demand for justice thereby been satisfied? The bourgeois State claimed to be a just one. Upon what good ground could it be reformed, or replaced by another State?

They appealed in the name of humanity. What had hitherto been nothing more than an emotional gesture, a propagandist declamation, was now to be fulfilled. In time to come, not only the owners of property, but also the dispossessed, were to have a good time. The aim must be to improve the position of all the members of society. But this aim was not to be achieved by revolutionary means, since the terrors of the revolution were still fresh in men's memories. It was to be achieved by means of labour and education, of culture and morality; by means of a new Christianity, a remodelling of life with the aid of phalansteries, a new form of marriage, a transformation of the State, a new system of property.

DREAMS AND WISHES

They appealed in the name of socialism. In this demand, the three great social reformers were at one. But in those days socialism was an economic theory which demanded the regulation of economic life from the standpoint of industry—that is to say from the standpoint of the bourgeois, not of the proletarian class. Nevertheless, however much at odds they may have been in their conceptions of reason and justice and liberty and truth, however chaotic and confused may have been their imaginary pictures of the social order they hoped to establish—in this respect they were fully agreed, that a reconstruction of society must be achieved upon the foundation of communal ownership, communal labour, and communal life. That is why these reformers, these critics of bourgeois society, are entitled to the name of socialists.

But their socialism was a compost of dreams and wishes, a product of speculations and artifices, an outcome of imagination and will, a work of humanity and philanthropy, a creation of a kindly heart and a tender conscience. Their socialism was to be established from above, in accordance with a ready-made plan. It was thought out in all its details. The proletariat, which would play no part in its making, was to accept it in all gratitude as a gift from wise and good donors. This socialism was utopian.

Who can fail to admire the genius of Saint-Simon, the genius that flashes fitfully through the heavy-laden and cloudy atmosphere of his historical, philosophical, and social theorizing? Who can fail to be powerfully impressed by the overwhelming force of the criticism with which Charles Fourier belabours the much-detested capitalism? Who can fail to be deeply moved at sight of the unselfishness, the indefatigable self-sacrifice, with which Robert Owen voices his ideas against a world of adversaries?

Yet how illusory, how romantic, is the hope that the world will be reborn in accordance with the prescriptions of an isolated thinker's brain! How childish is the fancy that factory-owners, bankers, and stockjobbers will, on their own initiative, and im-

PROLETARIAT AS DEMIURGE

pelled by the power of a moral transformation, devote themselves to freeing mankind from the yoke of capitalism! How grotesque it seems to us nowadays that none of these earlier socialists should ever have happened upon the idea that a new and higher social order will be the outcome of a historical process whose instrument must be the proletariat, and which must spontaneously come to pass in a definite phase of social evolution.

This idea was far beyond the scope of the utopists. The preliminaries which could have made it intelligible to them were still lacking. Bourgeois theoreticians were still incapable of thinking in terms of historical evolution, and the proletariat in those days was still weak and politically insignificant. At that time, therefore, such an idea would have seemed an absurdity.

Yet the notion had to be conceived, for it reveals the only possible solution of the problem. It is the business of science to formulate in the abstract that which practical development needs, and embodies in the concrete. The notion, therefore, was conceived.

The titanic lifework of Karl Marx is concentrated upon the universalization of this thought.

KARL MARX

Karl Marx was not of proletarian origin, nor did he come from the ranks of the utopian socialists.

His career was not remarkable in respect of birth, class affiliations, environment, or education. It only began to become remarkable when his path as an individual led him into the great arena of the social movement.

Marx was born at Treves on May 5, 1818. For many generations, all his male forbears, both on the father's side and on the mother's, had been rabbis. Fanatical believers in heredity may infer from this that he had an inborn predilection for soph-

ORIGIN AND EARLY YOUTH

istry and logic-chopping. Without going so far, we may take note that his ancestors were men who must have systematically and successfully devoted themselves to intellectual pursuits, to the cultivation of keenness of the understanding. The descendant, when he became an intellectual, was walking in the footsteps of his forefathers.

His father, however, was not a rabbi, but a lawyer. Versed in the writings both of Voltaire and of Leibniz, Hirschel Marx had absorbed French culture as well as German; his mind was filled with the traditions of the great French revolution no less than with those of the imperial age of Germany. Politically, he was a Prussian patriot, but, being a "moderate" by temperament, he was content to play the part of respectable man and good citizen. He was married to an excellent housewife not overburdened with brains, who never learned to speak or write German correctly.

When Karl was six years old, Hirschel Marx and his family became Protestants, Hirschel being baptized as Heinrich. A change of creed is usually determined by cogent reasons, especially when (as in the case of the Marx family) people are bound to the old faith by strong ancestral ties. It was not until after his mother's death that Hirschel Marx became a Christian, and we have no definite information as to the causes of this decisive step. So much is certain, that in Rhineland a century ago the Jews were detested and shunned, and that to be a Jew was a serious handicap in a bourgeois career. It may be presumed, therefore, that the conversion of the elder Marx—a peace-loving man, always inclined to compromise—was the outcome, not only of the wish to free himself from what was regarded as a stigma by his Christian fellow citizens, but also of the resolve to facilitate his son's entry into the domain of European culture.

In the absence of detailed information regarding the early childhood of Karl Marx, we are left to conjecture as concerns the influence his Jewish birth and upbringing must have had upon his mind. As soon as he began to come into contact

SPLENDID NATURAL GIFTS

with the Gentile world, and was intelligent enough to make comparisons, it was inevitable that he should feel his Jewish origin to be a disadvantage, a shackle upon his aspirations. This may have furnished the incentives for ambition, may account for the vehemence of his determination to force his way upwards in the intellectual world. In that case we must regard his exceptional ability, his amazingly developed powers of association, his astonishing insight, his remarkable faculty for exposition, and the breadth of his knowledge, as tools perfected to the utmost in order that, helping him to fame and standing, they might compensate for the drawbacks of his Hebraic descent. We may further suppose that these early impressions gave a primary twist to the development of the child's character. Delighted though the father was to note the lad's "splendid natural gifts," he was made uneasy by the manifestation in Karl of trends towards stubbornness and defiant harshness with which he himself had no sympathy and which he found it difficult to understand. Little Karl learned very easily, but made no friends; in after life he had never a word to say of any of his schoolfellows. Intellectually, he achieved swift progress in his class work, but his classmates made no appeal to his affections. His mental energies were from the first concentrated upon study, performance, success.

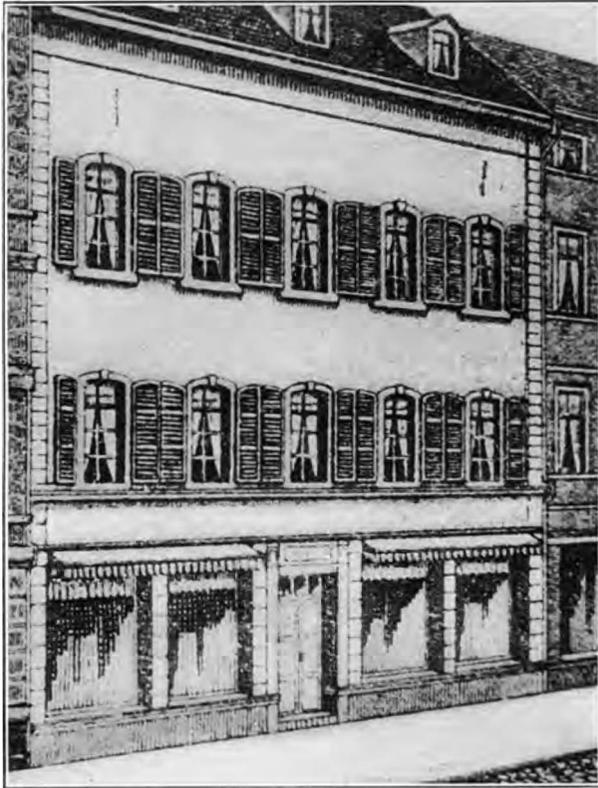
None the less, Marx, having entered the university at the age of seventeen, fell ardently in love a year later with Jenny von Westphalen, one of his sister's companions. The two became engaged. Jenny was of noble birth, daughter of a government official of high standing; she was both clever and beautiful. We cannot but regard young Marx's impetuous and successful wooing as an act of conquest, as bravura, as self-assertion on the part of a youth who at heart was dubious as to his own prestige. Consider him as he stands on the threshold of life, equipped with knowledge, supplied with documentary evidence of his academic acquirements. Now the testing time has come; he must face the great tasks of life. But he is not yet sure of himself, he lacks confidence in his powers. The

AMBITION AND LOVE

year at Bonn has been disappointing. He has not fulfilled the expectations of his parents and his friends, who had looked for a meteoric rise. His father has even urged a change of plans, a diversion to the study of chemistry and physics. Discouraged, he needs salient proof of his worth, his superiority. He finds what he seeks when he wins the heart of the loveliest and most hotly courted maiden of his circle. His father, alarmed to begin with, consents ere long. Westphalen, too, is won over, and accepts the situation cordially. Thus the young hot-head overcomes all obstacles. He is filled with pride, he overflows with self-confidence, now that he has compelled others to recognize him as a man of mark, and has thus established his own spiritual poise. Years afterwards, when revisiting his birthplace, he wrote to his wife in terms of affectionate vanity: "Almost every one I meet asks me for news of 'the prettiest girl in Treves,' for tidings of 'the queen of the ballroom.' It cannot but tickle a man to find that in the fancy of a whole township his wife is enshrined as 'fairy princess.'"

STUDIES

In the autumn of 1836, Marx went to the University of Berlin. From that centre of learning there radiated a powerful magnetic attraction, drawing towards it the studious youth of all Germany. The names of Hegel, Schleiermacher, Savigny, Gans, and Alexander von Humboldt had made Berlin widely celebrated. In especial, the philosophy of Hegel exercised a powerful influence upon contemporary minds. Marx chose jurisprudence as a special topic of study, regarding it, however, "merely as a subordinate discipline compared with philosophy and history." Besides attending lectures, he devoted himself with the utmost zeal to the most diversified domains of science and literature, trying all things by turns. He read, made extracts, translated, studied languages, wandered into solitary



Karl Marx's Birthplace

FIRST CONTACT WITH HEGELIAN SYSTEM

paths, listened to echoes from afar, sought forgotten springs, clambered towards inaccessible peaks. In quiet hours of leisure, he gave expression to his yearning for his beloved in distant Rhineland by writing numerous verses, which must rather be regarded as clumsy products of constructive industry and reflective rhetoric than as manifestations of poetic talent.

Hitherto he had known the writings of Hegel only in broad outline. He had read no more than fragments of the great idealist's philosophy, and its "grotesque craggy melody" had seemed to him "unpleasing." Hegel was one for whom the mainspring of world happenings was not in matter but in the idea; he was one who regarded the content of experience and the rhythmical movement of history as products of the law-abiding activity of the absolute world spirit; he was one for whom thought and being were characterized by a metaphysical identity. Hegel was a man with whom he, Marx, would have to measure swords, and he still shrank from the immensity of the venture. More and more strenuously he wrestled, after the manner of Faust, with himself, with traditional philosophy, and with the monumental grandeur of the Hegelian system. In a letter to his father—a letter penned with a feverish brain, and characterized by ecstatic outbursts of feeling—we find evidence of his mental condition at the time.

"Berlin, November 10, 1837.

"DEAR FATHER,

"There are moments in life which are placed like boundary stones to mark the close of a period, but which at the same time definitely point in a new direction.

"At such a point of transition, we feel constrained to contemplate the past and the present with the eagle eye of thought, that we may become aware of our actual position. Indeed, universal history itself loves such a retrospect, and looks round and about, which often produces the semblance of a retrogression or an arrest of movement, when in reality the spirit of history has merely thrown herself back in an arm-

YOUTHFUL SELF-COMMUNINGS

chair that she may collect her thoughts, may impregnate her mind with a knowledge of her own doings.

“In such moments, however, the individual grows lyrical, for every metamorphosis is to some extent a swansong, to some extent the overture of a great new poem, which in still blurred yet brilliant tints strives to attain harmony. But we should like to erect a memorial to that which has already been experienced, so that it may regain in sentiment the place which it has lost in the world of action; and where could we find a holier site than in the heart of a parent, the most clement of judges, the most ardent participator, the sun of love, whose fire warms the innermost centre of our endeavours! How could much that is objectionable, that is blameworthy, better find compensation and excuse, than when it becomes the manifestation of an essentially necessary condition; how [else], at any rate, could the often hostile play of chance, and the aberration of the spirit, escape the reproach of being due to an unkind heart?

“When, therefore, at the close of a year lived here, I now glance back upon what has passed therein, and in this way, my dear Father, answer your most affectionate letter from Ems, you will allow me to contemplate my circumstances, like life in general, as the expression of a mental activity which shapes itself in all directions, in science, art, private affairs.

“When I left you, a new world had just opened for me, the world of love—indeed to begin with a love that was frenzied in its yearnings and void of hope. Even the journey to Berlin, which would otherwise have delighted me in the extreme, would have incited me to the contemplation of nature, would have inflamed me with the joy of life, left me cold. Nay, it depressed me profoundly, for the rocks which I saw were no rougher, no harsher, than the sentiments of my mind; the great cities were not more animated than my blood; the groaning tables in the inns were not more overladen, the food they bore was not more indigestible, than were the contents of my own imagination; and, to conclude, art was not so beautiful as my Jenny.

WRESTLING WITH PHILOSOPHY

“When I reached Berlin, I broke all existing ties, paid very few visits and those reluctantly, and sought to immerse myself in science and art.

“In my then state of mind, it was inevitable that lyrical poetry should be my first topic of interest, at any rate the most agreeable and most obvious; but, in accordance with my position, and my whole previous development, this was purely idealistic. An equally remote beyond, my love, became my heaven, my art. Everything real grows vague, and all that is vague lacks boundaries. Onslaughts on the present, broad and shapeless expressions of feeling, nothing natural, pure moonshine, the complete opposite of what is and what ought to be, rhetorical reflections instead of poetical thoughts; but perhaps, in addition, a certain warmth of sentiment and a struggle for impetus characterize all the poems of the first three volumes I sent to Jenny. The whole width of a longing which sees no frontiers, assumes multifarious forms, and finds ‘expansion’ in ‘poetizing.’

“But poesy could only be, must only be, a casual companion. I had to study jurisprudence, and above all I felt an urge to wrestle with philosophy. The two were so closely interconnected, that I read Heineccius, Thibaut, and the sources, in schoolboy fashion more or less, quite uncritically, translating, for instance, the first two books of the *Pandects* into German; but I also tried, when studying law, to work out a philosophy of law. I prefixed, as introduction, some metaphysical propositions, and in this ill-starred opus carried on the discussion down to the topic of international law—a work of nearly three hundred pages.

“Most notably, here, I was greatly disturbed by the conflict between what actually is and what ought to be which is peculiar to idealism, and this gave rise to the following hopelessly inaccurate classification. First of all, what I graciously christened ‘metaphysics of law,’ that is to say, principles, reflections, determinative concepts, were severed from all actual law and from every actual form of law; as in the writings of Fichte,

PHILOSOPHY OF LAW

only in my case in a more modern and unsubstantial fashion. Furthermore, the unscientific form of mathematical dogmatism (wherein the subject wanders about the topic, argues hither and thither, while the topic itself is never formulated as something rich in content, something truly alive) was from the first a hindrance to the comprehension of the truth.

“The mathematician may construct a triangle and demonstrate its properties; but it remains a mere idea in space, and undergoes no further development. We must put one triangle beside another, then it assumes different positions, and these differences in what is essentially the same endow the triangle with different relations and truths. On the other hand, in the concrete expression of the living world of thought—as in law, the State, nature, philosophy as a whole—the object must be studied in its development; there must be no arbitrary classifications; the rationale of the thing itself must disclose itself in all its contradictoriness, and must find its unity in itself.

“As second part, there now followed the philosophy of law, this meaning, as I then saw the matter, the study of the development of ideas in positive Roman law, as if positive law in the development of its ideas (I do not mean in its purely final determinations) could be anything different from the configuration of the concept of law, which the first part ought to embrace!

“This part I had, over and above, divided into the formal and the material doctrine of law: the former being the pure form of the system in its succession and its interaction, the classification and the scope; the latter, on the other hand, the content, the condensation of the form in its content; such was to be the aim of my description. This was the outcome of an error which I share with Herr von Savigny, as I was to learn later when reading his learned work *Right of Possession*—but with this difference, that he speaks of formal determinative concepts as ‘finding the place which this or that doctrine occupies in the (supposititious) Roman system,’ and of material determinative concepts as ‘the doctrine of the positive which the

PHILOSOPHICAL MIND ESSENTIAL

Romans ascribe to a concept fixed in this way'; whereas I have understood by form the necessary architectonic and the configurations of the concept, and by matter the necessary quality of these configurations. My mistake was that I believed one could and must develop apart from the other, with the result that I did not achieve any genuine form, but only constructed a desk with a number of drawers which I subsequently filled with sand.

"The concept is, really, the intermediary between form and content. In a philosophical disquisition on law, therefore, one must be shown as arising out of the other, for form can only be the continuation of content. Thus I arrived at a classification (for the subject lends itself readily to shallow classification); but the spirit of law and its truth had perished. All law was subdivided into covenanted and uncovenanted. I even ventured upon a classification of *jus publicum* (which has also been formally elaborated) in order to materialize the scheme better. . . .

"But why should I fill pages with an account of things I have discarded? The whole is permeated with trichotomous classifications, penned with wearisome prolixity, the Roman notions being barbarously misused in order to force them into my system. Still, to some extent I gained an affection for my topic, and achieved a general survey of its subject matter.

"When I had reached the close of the discussion of material private right, I perceived the fallaciousness of the whole, which in its fundamental scheme borders on the Kantian, though differing wholly from Kant in matters of detail. Once more it had been made clear to me that I could get no farther on my way without philosophy. I was therefore again able, with a good conscience, to throw myself into the arms of philosophy, and I wrote a new metaphysical elementary system, but when it was finished I was again constrained to recognize its futility, and the futility of the whole of my previous endeavours.

"Meanwhile I had acquired the habit of making extracts from all the books I was reading; as from Lessing's *Laokoon*,

EARLY STUDIES AND WRITINGS

Solger's *Erwin*, Winckelmann's *Kunstgeschichte*, Luden's *Deutsche Geschichte*, writing critical reflections in comment thereon. At the same time I translated Tacitus' *Germania*, Ovid's *Tristium libri*. I began the private study (with the aid of grammars) of English and Italian, but as yet have made no progress; I read Klein's *Kriminalrecht* and his *Annalen*; and a mass of modern literature, though this latter only in passing.

"At the end of the session, I once more tried my hand at the dance of the muses and at the music of satire; and already in the last pages I sent you, idealism plays its part in the form of forced humour (*Skorpion und Felix*), and in an unsuccessful imaginative drama (*Oulanem*), until at length it utterly miscarries, and is changed into a purely formal art, for the most part without any stimulating objects, without any enthusiastic movement of ideas.

"Nevertheless these last poems are the only ones in which suddenly, as if by the wave of a magician's wand (the experience was, to begin with, overwhelming), the realm of true poesy flashed open before me like a distant faëry palace, and all my creations were shivered to fragments.

"During the first term, I sat up night after night engaged in these multifarious occupations; I went through many struggles, and experienced both objective and subjective perturbations; and in the end I found that my mind had not been greatly enriched, while I had neglected nature, art, and the world, and had alienated my friends. These reflections seemed to disorder my body, a doctor advised country air, and so for the first time I traversed the whole widespread town and went through the gate to Stralau. It never entered my mind that there from being an anæmic youth I should ripen to a robustness of frame.

"A curtain had fallen, my holy of holies had been shattered, and new gods had to be found for the vacant shrine.

"Setting out from idealism (which, let me say in passing, I had compared to and nourished with that of Kant and that

of Fichte), I proceeded to seek for the idea in the real itself. If in earlier days the gods had dwelt above the world, they had now become its centre.

"I had read fragments of the Hegelian philosophy, and had found its grotesque craggy melody unpleasing. I wished to dive into the ocean once again, but this time with the definite intention of discovering our mental nature to be just as determined, concrete, and firmly established as our bodily—no longer to practise the art of fence, but to bring pure pearls into the sunlight.

"I penned a dialogue of about twenty-four pages, entitled *Cleanthus, or the Starting-Point and the Necessary Progress of Philosophy*. Here, after a fashion, art and science, which had been wholly severed, were reunited; and now, a lusty vagrant, I set myself to the main task, a philosophico-dialectical discussion of the godhead, manifested as a concept per se, as religion, as nature, and as history. My last thesis was the beginning of the Hegelian system, and this work (for which I had more or less prepared myself with the aid of natural science, Schelling, and history, and which—since it was really designed to form a new logic—had been so [adverb illegible] written that even I myself can now scarcely make head or tail of it), this darling child of mine, nurtured in moonshine, bears me like a false-hearted siren into the clutches of the enemy.

"Overwhelmed with vexation, I was for several days quite unable to think. Like a lunatic I tore up and down the garden beside the Spree's dirty water 'which washes the soul and dilutes tea.' I even went out shooting with my host; and then returned hotfoot to Berlin in the mind to embrace every loafer at the street corners. Thereafter I confined myself to positive studies: Savigny's *Right of Possession*, Feuerbach and Grolmann's work on criminal jurisprudence, Kramer's *De verborum significatione*, Wenning-Ingenheim's *Pandektensystem* and Mühlenbruch's *Doctrina pandectarum* (which I am still reading), and finally some of Gauterbach's works, books on civil law and especially on ecclesiastical law. As regards this last, I

BY DEVIOUS PATHS TO HEGEL

have read and made extracts from almost all the first part of Gratian, the *Concordia discordantium canonum*, with the appendix, Lancellotti's *Institutiones*. Then I translated part of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, read the *De augmentis scientiarum* of the famous Baco of Verulam, and perused with much delight Reimarus' book *Von den Kunsttrieben der Tiere*. Next I turned to German law, but mainly concerned myself with the capitulations of the Franconian kings, and the letters of the popes to them.

"From grief on account of Jenny's illness and because of the futility of my lost labours, from intense vexation at having to make an idol of a view I detested, I fell sick, as, my dear Father, I have previously related. When I had recovered, I burned all my poems, my sketches for novels, etc., being under the illusion that I could henceforward refrain from anything of the kind—and indeed there is as yet no evidence to the contrary.

"While out of sorts, I had got to know Hegel from beginning to end, and most of his disciples likewise. Through the instrumentality of friends I made while in Stralau, I became a member of a Doctors' Club, to which a number of instructors and Dr. Rudenberg (my most intimate friend in Berlin) belonged. In discussions here, many conflicting opinions were voiced, and I became more and more closely involved in the study of contemporary philosophy, from which I had thought to escape; but all tones were muted, a frenzy of irony had taken possession of me, as was natural enough after so many negations. The trouble of Jenny's silence was superadded; and I could not rest until I had purchased modernity and achieved the standpoint of contemporary science by some poor productions, such as *Der Besuch*.

"If I have perhaps failed to explain this session clearly to you as a whole, and to recount all its details, if its nuances are left hazy, you will excuse me, dear Father, recognizing how eager I am to speak of the present.

"H. v. Chamisso has sent me a few insignificant lines, in

PROSPECTS OF AN OFFICIAL CAREER

which he informs me of his 'regret that the *Almanac* can make no use' of my contributions, 'having long since gone to press.' I had to swallow my vexation. Wigand the bookseller has sent on my plan to Dr. Schmidt, manager of the "Magic Warehouse of Good Cheese and Bad Literature." I enclose Wigand's letter; Schmidt has not answered yet. Meanwhile I have by no means abandoned the scheme, all the more seeing that the æsthetic notabilities of the Hegelian school have promised to co-operate, influenced thereto by Instructor Bauer, who is a big gun among them. Dr. Rudenberg will also lend a hand.

"As regards the question of an official career, I have recently made the acquaintance of an assistant judge, Schmidthänner by name, who advises me to enter upon this after passing the third of my law examinations. The plan smiles to me, since I really prefer jurisprudence to administrative science. This gentleman told me that from the Münster provincial court of appeal he and many others had in three years attained the position of assistant judge, which is easy enough (provided, of course, that one works hard), since in that part of the world the stages are not, as in Berlin and elsewhere, very strictly marked out. If, as assistant judge, one becomes doctor of laws, there are excellent chances of speedy appointment as professor extraordinary. This is what happened to H. Gärtner in Bonn, after he had written a mediocre book on provincial law-codes, his only other title to fame being that he proclaims himself a member of the Hegelian school of jurists. But dear Father, best of fathers, cannot I talk all this over with you face to face? Eduard's illness, dear mother's trouble, your own indisposition (I hope it is nothing serious), all combine to make me long to return home without delay. It is almost imperative that I should come. Indeed, I should already be with you, were I not in doubt as to your approval.

"Believe me, this is not a selfish wish (though I should be so happy to see Jenny again). I am driven by a thought which I cannot put into words. Actually, in many respects, it would be difficult for me to come; but, as my darling Jenny

HOME-SICKNESS

writes, these considerations all give way before sacred duties.

“I beg you, dear Father, whatever you may decide, not to show this letter (or at any rate this page of it) to mother. My sudden arrival might upset her.

“My letter to her was written long before Jenny’s dear letter came to hand, so I may unwittingly have written too much about unsuitable matters.

“In the hope that the clouds which hang over our family will gradually disperse; that I shall be permitted to share your sufferings and mingle my tears with yours, and, perhaps in direct touch with you, to show the profound affection, the immeasurable love, which I have not always been able to express as I should like; in the hope that you too, my fondly and eternally loved Father, bearing in mind how much my feelings have been storm-tost, will forgive me because my heart must often have seemed to you to have gone astray when the travail of my spirit was depriving it of the power of utterance; in the hope that you will soon be fully restored to health, that I shall be able to clasp you in my arms, and to tell you all that I feel,

“I remain always your loving son,

“KARL

“Forgive, dear Father, both the illegible handwriting and the defective style. It is nearly four in the morning; the candle has burned out and my eyes are clouded. Unrest has mastered me; I shall not be able to lay the spectres that haunt me, until I am in your dear presence.

“Please give my best love to my darling Jenny. I have already read her letter a dozen times, finding new charms in it each time. In every respect, style included, it is the most beautiful letter I can imagine a woman writing.”

As we learn from the foregoing letter, Marx was revolting against formalism and the abstract speculations of the traditional idealist philosophy. This philosophy had isolated thought

HEGEL'S WORLD

from the objective happenings of nature. The idea had been made the guiding authority, the animating principle, of the world process, and was regarded as something self-existent, apart from reality and the happenings of experience. Reality was nothing more than plastic stuff, material waiting to be kneaded, the clay in which reason became manifest.

Marx now set out "to seek for the idea in the real itself," endeavouring to evolve it from reality. But in this way, abandoning the standpoint of the idealist philosophy, he was led (without wishing it, and indeed against his will) straight to Hegel. That philosopher, though an idealist, had transcended the opposition between thought and being, resolving them into a unity. To him, the real was no longer a mere object for reason to work upon, no longer passive clay waiting to be animated by spirit. On the contrary, he regarded thought as a result of the process of nature; he looked on the world of experience as the living self-disclosure of the idea, as the positive elaboration of the world spirit in an autonomous activity. From the vacuum of pure abstraction, he had brought philosophical contemplation back to the world of reality.

Thus far had Hegel gone, but no farther. For him, the conceptual unity of thought and being remained purely metaphysical. Against this, Marx's whole nature rebelled. His interest was concentrated in the real; he detested metaphysics, and he began to see that that was where Hegelian idealism could be given its quietus. The thought fascinated him. What an undertaking, to vanquish the titan of the intellectual world! What a triumph, could he be successful in the endeavour! Marx began the critical study of the environing world; began to examine the realities amid which he lived, that he might test the validity of the Hegelian system. His vision grew keener, and he girded up his loins for the task. More and more frequent, more and more cogent, became the times when he considered the possibility of unthroning Hegelianism. More and more attractive seemed the prospects of success. The goal was now clearly visioned; and with all the impetuosity, the indus-

THE RATIONAL AND THE REAL

try, and the consistency that were characteristic of the man, he set forth to attain it.

THE YOUNG HEGELIANS

The origin of the Hegelian philosophy coincided with the rise of the Prusso-German bourgeoisie. With the growth in economic strength of the bourgeois class there ensued a social recognition of the bourgeois members of society and an awakening self-consciousness of the bourgeoisie. These changes secured representation and expression in Hegel's thought system. The classical proposition, "all the real is rational and all the rational is real," was transmuted into the ideal of a constitutional State which would be, so it seemed to the bourgeois, the realization of the moral ideal, the absolutely rational.

Since then, almost two decades had elapsed. The reality of the bourgeois State and the capitalist order had had an opportunity of demonstrating itself in practice. As a result, idea and reality, reason and being, showed themselves crudely opposed. Actual life did not achieve the philosophical conjuring trick whereby, in the metaphysical world, thought and being constituted a unity. The moral ideal incorporated in the monarchical apex of the State conflicted more and more with the vital and developmental needs of the compact mass of the bourgeoisie, which now began to develop its own ideas in conflict with the moral consciousness it proclaimed. The Prussian monarchy, although it had raised Hegelianism to the status of an official philosophy, had not been able to raise itself to the position of a real State in the Hegelian sense. The ideal "ought" of the utopian and socialist demands, as voiced by Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Owen in a region outside the realities of Prusso-German life, was setting itself up as a contrast to the actualities of the political and social world.

But the first things to attract Marx's attention were not these social contradictions and political contrasts. For him, who still

TRIUMPH OF THE HOLY ALLIANCE

felt most at home in the world of theories and systems, the discrepancies and discords which resulted from the application of Hegel's fundamental ideas in the domain of psychology and philosophy were far more conspicuous. Moreover, in the atmosphere of the Doctors' Club, a circle of Hegel's disciples, his critical faculties were being sharpened in a way which made more and more clear to him that his path was diverging from that of Hegel, and that he must pursue an independent course of development.

Superadded was the influence of an ideological movement whose powerful waves of criticism and opposition began to break upon the shores of the world of religious life.

The July revolution in France (1830) had been followed in Germany likewise by a disturbance of the graveyard tranquillity established under Metternich's regime. Here and there there had been students' riots and abortive risings, but these disturbances had been put down with the strong hand. The press, which had become too outspoken, had been remuzzled; rebellious teachers and professors had been cudgelled into silence; the universities had been purged of liberalism and revolutionary doctrinairism. The Central Committee of Inquiry in Mayence, in its endeavours to maintain the State, had resumed the practice of persecuting demagogues. A meeting of the Prussian, Austrian, and Russian premiers in Teplitz, and another meeting of the monarchs of these three countries in Münchengrätz, had solemnly revived the inquisition of the Holy Alliance. A ministerial conference in Vienna had endorsed the decisions of the reactionary dictatorship.

In especial, the rulers had been at one in considering that the insubordinate masses must once more be made humble and obedient—and that to this end, in addition to dog-whip and dog-collar, the wholesome narcotic of religion must be used in increasing doses. The Prussian court, where, under the growing influence of Prince William, everything was draped in the rags of mediæval romanticism, aspired to the lead in the training and utilization of a spiritual police. Here the "illuminates"

STRAUSS'S *LIFE OF JESUS*

and the "pietists" had their headquarters. Here the social question was being solved by means of devotional exercises, psalm singing, and the circulation of unctuous tracts. Perfervid generals, courtiers and State officials with their eyes turned heavenward, and ranting ecclesiastical magnates, joined their voices in a holy chorus for the salvation of the State. To counteract this pietist plague, the intellectuals of the Hegelian school made their protest in the form of an increasingly rationalist analysis of the Christian legend.

In 1835, David Friedrich Strauss, a young Swabian, published his *Life of Jesus*. Voicing the outlook of the bourgeois enlightenment, he unsparingly stripped the gospels of their haloes, deprived them of the right to claim historical value. By strictly scientific methods of investigation, he showed that the Christian tradition was but myth or saga, was an epic deliberately composed in pious ecstasy by the early Christian community. This demonstration was effected under the very eyes of the intimidated faithful. The result was stupendous. The book marked an epoch in the critical study of religion.

It need hardly be said that Strauss's book, and the whole group of problems arising in connexion therewith, were eagerly discussed in the Doctors' Club. The members of this club (headmasters, men of letters, instructors—Young Hegelians one and all) considered themselves the vanguard of the new intellectuals, took delight in the philosophical campaign against hypocrisy and romanticism, and sharpened their wits for the fray. For them, it is true, the shot fired by Strauss was not yet sufficiently well aimed, and did not prove mortal. Bruno Bauer, in especial, an instructor at the University of Berlin and regarded as one of the most brilliant of the Young Hegelians, entered the lists against Strauss. "The contest between the two," as Engels wrote subsequently in his *Ludwig Feuerbach*, "was carried on in the philosophical trappings of a contest between 'self-consciousness' and 'substance.' The question whether the miracles recorded in the gospels had found their way into Holy Writ as the outcome of an unconscious exercise of the myth-

BAUER'S CRITICISM OF THE GOSPELS

opœic faculty in the early Christian community, or whether they had been deliberately invented by the evangelists, was inflated into the question whether in universal history 'substance' or 'self-consciousness' had been the decisive factor. Then Stirner came along, the prophet of contemporary anarchism, and outtopped sovereign 'self-consciousness' by his sovereign 'individual.' ”

For Bauer, this controversy became the fulcrum of his scientific work. He never let the subject drop, but carried on to keener and profounder issues the criticism of the gospels begun by Strauss. Whereas in 1841, in his *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte*, he voiced the opinion that the self-consciousness of the primary evangelist Mark, nourished at the sources of Greek, Græco-Alexandrian, and Græco-Roman literature, had found expression in the gospels—in 1843, in *Das entdeckte Christentum* (seized while in the press, and not until recently made available by republication) he carried this idea a stage further, to the extreme of antitheology and atheism. In a work published three decades later, *Der Ursprung des Christentums aus dem römischen Griechentum*, he contended that not Jesus and Paul, but Seneca and Philo were the creators of primitive Christianity.

Among the Young Hegelians, these religious disputations and philosophical passages of arms had another outcome; they led to the foundation of the "Hallische Jahrbücher," which was planned to be a rallying point for the new intellectuals. The founder of this annual, Arnold Ruge (an instructor in Halle), although a revolutionist, was not especially profound or trustworthy, nor yet a man of markedly independent mind. No doubt, as a victim of the persecution directed against the demagogues, he had had to spend six years in prison, but this had not made his convictions firmer or his character more consistent. None the less, he did invaluable service to the forward movement, and promoted the liberation of people's minds, by providing a tribune. With the advance of the reaction, when all the professorial chairs were packed with obscurantists, and when

RUGE'S "DEUTSCHE JAHRBÜCHER"

all periodicals distasteful to the government were subjected to a rigid censorship and plagued with orders of suppression, Ruge found it necessary to transfer his headquarters from Halle to Dresden, and the "Hallische Jahrbücher" became the "Deutsche Jahrbücher." This implied, not merely a change in place of publication and in title, but also an intensification of tone and an improvement in the quality of the collaborators. In particular Strauss, who had been a dominant figure of the "Hallische Jahrbücher," was replaced by Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach.

BAUER AND FEUERBACH

Bruno Bauer, involved in a new feud with Hengstenberg, the leader of Berlinese orthodoxy, had removed from Berlin to Bonn. He brought with him thither a pledge from his protector, Altenberg, the minister of public worship and education, to the effect that his instructorship in Bonn should become a fixed professorship. But Altenberg died, and with him disappeared the last relics of the Hegelian tradition. He was succeeded by Eichhorn, a reactionary, entirely under the influence of the pietists. This was an end of Bauer's hopes of an academic career; all the more since his collaboration in Ruge's "Jahrbücher," and the radical position he had assumed in theological questions, had not tended to promote the number of his friends in the leading circles of the university. Worst of all, there now appeared his *Criticism of the Gospel History of the Synoptics*, which aroused a storm of indignation. Bauer was dismissed from his instructorship, and the freedom of teaching was curtailed at the universities.

Therewith Marx's plans, too, came to naught. He had never seriously considered the question of earning a livelihood, although his father had frequently put him in mind of the need. In 1838, his father had died. Now his concern for his mother, and his eagerness to be able to support a wife, made it neces-

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Karl Marx's Diploma as Doctor of Philosophy

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

sary for him to seek some remunerative occupation. He had thought of following his friend Bauer to Bonn, in the hope of getting an instructorship there, and perhaps of joining with Bauer in the issue of a scientific periodical. He had not as yet, however, passed his legal examinations, or taken his doctor's degree. He was affected with strong inhibitions against academic studies and examinations, although Bauer was continually urging him forward. "Do make an end of your hesitations, of your dilatory attitude towards a piece of nonsense and a pure farce like an examination," wrote Bauer to Marx. In the end, Marx pulled himself together, wrote a thesis *On the Difference between the Democritean and the Epicurean Natural Philosophy*, and therewith, in April 1841, was "in absentia" granted his doctor's degree by the University of Jena. But with the new turn of events, there was no professorship for Bauer, nor any hope of an academic post for Marx. Furthermore, in the stifling atmosphere of the reaction, there was no chance of realizing the plans for a progressive periodical. Bauer returned to Berlin, and devoted himself to collaboration in the "Deutsche Jahrbücher" now being published in Dresden.

But while Bauer, like Strauss, was trying to elucidate the origin of Christianity, Feuerbach had gone a step further, throwing open for discussion the very essence of Christianity. Ludwig Feuerbach, a son of the great authority on criminal jurisprudence, Anselm Feuerbach, and a pupil of Hegel, had had to abandon his position as instructor in Erlangen, after the publication of revolutionary writings (which were suppressed) had deprived him of any prospect of advance in his university career. Living in rural seclusion, far from the busy world of affairs, he devoted himself to philosophical study, moving continually farther away from Hegel. In 1839, he published his *Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie*, in which he stripped Hegel's "absolute spirit" bare of its trappings, showed it to be the "departed spirit of theology," a metaphysical spook, a "theology made over into logic," a "rational mysticism." If Hegel had taught that nature was postulated by the idea, this

"WE WERE ALL FEUERBACHIANS"

was nothing more than a philosophical dressing-up of the biblical contention that God had created the world. The absolute spirit was in reality nothing other than the finite subjective spirit of man, considered abstractly. If, according to Hegel, the absolute spirit manifested itself in art, religion, and philosophy, this could only mean that art, religion, and philosophy were the highest and most absolute things in the human spirit. Ruthlessly he inverted the Hegelian system. Nature and reality ceased to be "manifestations" and "degradations" of the idea. They became independent, became entities having a worth of their own. Man moved forward into the front of the picture, and was activated, although only in the religious domain. Hitherto nothing more than an object, he became essentially a subject. Materialism was raised to the throne.

This furnished Feuerbach with a platform for his philosophy of religion. From man he proceeded to the study of the interconnexions whose tissue presents itself as religion. According to him, man is independent of all philosophy. Man, the highest of beings, is the beginning, middle, and end of religion. Ideas are reflexions of nature; gods are merely creatures of the human imagination, idealist personifications of human qualities and feelings, projected into a heaven. Religion is the relation of feeling, the relation of hearts, between man and man; and the basis of all ethic is the relation between the ego and the tu.

Feuerbach's *Wesen des Christentums* [Essence of Christianity], in which these thoughts were first developed, was published in 1841. It had the effect of an act of enfranchisement. The spell of the Hegelian system had been broken. All contradictions seemed to be solved. Out of the region of ideas, people had got back once more to solid earth. Engels, to whom at this time Feuerbach was revealing "the true life of man," wrote: "One must oneself have experienced the liberating influence of this book to gain any notion of what an experience it was. Enthusiasm was universal. For the time, we were all Feuerbachians." Marx, likewise, greeted the new outlook with enthusiasm. "Who has annihilated the dialectic of concepts, the

FROM PHILOSOPHY TO POLITICS

war of the gods which the philosophers alone knew? Feuerbach. Who has put man in place of the old lumber, and in place of the infinite consciousness as well? Feuerbach, and no one else! Feuerbach, who completed and criticized Hegel from a Hegelian standpoint, resolving the metaphysical absolute spirit into the real man standing on the foundation of nature, was the first to complete the criticism of religion—inasmuch as, at the same time, he undertook a critique of Hegelian speculation, and thereby sketched the great and masterly outlines of all metaphysics.” Thus did Marx voice his enthusiastic approval.

REVOLUTIONARY FLIGHT

The dethroning of the gods and the dissolution of the ties with a suprasensual world could not be restricted to the domains of religion and philosophy. Once authority had been challenged, dualism questioned, the rights of tradition contested, there could be no limit to the resulting effects. When the absolute monarch in heaven had been dethroned, the throne of the absolute king on earth tottered. When the sovereignty of the idea had been shown to be nothing more than an empty phrase, the nimbus of god-given governmental wisdom and statecraft paled. When it had been recognized that men had had the power to create gods, men were not likely to shrink in future from the thought that they were also capable (without sanction from above) of creating their own political and social conditions.

Thus it was that the Young Hegelians, whose activities had hitherto been confined to the battlefield of theory, became—though not of set purpose—active in the world of political practice. This was the outcome, not of political considerations, not of the formulation of definite aims, but merely of the logic of their own philosophical evolution.

The situation of the Prussian State sufficed to show that rea-

PRUSSIA'S MISSION

son and reality were not, as Hegel had taught, necessarily coincident. Since the July revolution in France, the demands of reality had diverged more and more conspicuously from the insight and wisdom of the government. In the "Hallische Jahrbücher," Ruge had again and again pointed out that the demand for a constitutional State had not as yet been complied with, that the existence of the censorship betrayed a lack of confidence in the spirit and in science, and that the reactionary revision of the Towns' Ordinance of 1808 implied treason to the Prussian mission. It became more and more obvious that the unity of reason and reality could only be achieved when the rational, which had not hitherto attained form and life, had been purposively translated into reality by human activity.

In the view of the Young Hegelians, this purposive activity would not be a revolutionary transformation, but would be the expression of an organic renewal from within. They considered that the process must take its start where the reforms of Stein and Hardenberg had ended. Only thus, by keeping step with historical reality and with progressive ideas, could Prussia fulfil her mission in universal history, her mission to complete the liberation of the human spirit that had been begun by the Reformation and continued by the Enlightenment. To the Young Hegelians it seemed beyond question that Prussia was predestined by history to conduct the evolution of mankind to its climax. By birth, education, and temperament, they were Prussian to the core; and, belonging as they did to the cultured and possessing strata of society, they were full of the self-satisfaction of an aspiring class. In an address penned by Friedrich Köppen, for a festival in commemoration of Frederick the Great, and dedicated "to my friend Karl Heinrich Marx of Treves," we read, among other turgid outpourings of patriotic enthusiasm: "Prussia can never forget that it was cradled in the cradle-days of the Enlightenment, and that it was led on to greatness by the Hero of the Enlightenment. Heaven does not rest more securely upon the shoulders of Atlas, than Prus-

FIRST CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PRESS

sia rests upon the seasonable progressive development of the principles of Frederick the Great."

The hopes for the establishment of a Prussian emporium of spiritual freedom were no better fulfilled than were the dreams of a Prussian constitution with a liberal monarch at the head. A transient alleviation of the censorship, an alleviation which from the nature of things could be nothing more than an expression of despotic caprice, did, indeed, arouse ecstatic delight in the minds of the perennially unteachable philistines; but the headache which speedily followed this brief intoxication was a severe one. Marx had foreseen the coming of the reaction, and had written on the topic for Ruge's "Jahrbücher." In this matter, he made a good start, for his first essay on public affairs was forbidden by the censor. Since the "Jahrbücher" had an offshoot in Switzerland, Ruge had the article, together with some other victims of the censorship, published as *Anecdota philosophica* by Julius Fröbel of Zurich. It was entitled *Bemerkungen über die neueste preussische Censurinstruktion* [Remarks on the latest Prussian Censorship Order], and was described as being "by a Rhinelander."

Meanwhile, Marx had turned his attention towards another press organ, which had been appearing in Cologne since January 1, 1842. It was called the "Rheinische Zeitung," had been founded by a group of well-to-do Rhenish merchants and entrepreneurs, and could be regarded rather as a moderate governmental organ than as an opposition journal. Marx, however, was brought into touch with the newspaper by the fact that some active Young Hegelians (friends of the Young Hegelians in Berlin) were on the editorial staff. For a time Marx had it in mind to settle in Cologne, but in the end decided in favour of Bonn.

As contributor to the "Rheinische Zeitung," Marx for the first time had an opportunity of sharpening the theoretical reasoning of philosophy upon the whetstone of the practical realities of political life. He set himself vigorously to the task, taking a firm stand on the platform of contested opinions, and

REPERCUSSIONS OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT

using his rapier with a master hand. Thus it was that the "Rheinische Zeitung" served as a door by which he entered upon his brilliant journalistic and political career.

RISE OF THE BOURGEOISIE

Thanks to the economic boom of the thirties, the Prussian bourgeoisie had greatly improved and stabilized its position as compared with a couple of decades earlier.

The application of steam-power to production had advanced rapidly. Under the stimulus of improved technique, manufacturing industry had flourished abundantly. New fields of enterprise had disclosed themselves. The utilization of coal and metallic ores had been greatly promoted by the development of railways. The growth of large-scale industry and commerce was leading to the growth of large towns. In certain industries, especially in metallurgy and cotton textiles, gigantic enterprises were being formed. The landed proprietors were emerging from their isolation, were shaking off the fetters of feudalism, and, as distillers and sugar growers, were adopting the more lucrative methods of capitalist production. The revolutionizing of production and distribution was transforming social life. Old traditions were being abandoned, outworn institutions were being scrapped, time-honoured opinions were being revised. The pulses of the bourgeoisie were tingling with the consciousness of power. The minds of members of the rising class were filled with self-confidence. There loomed upon the horizon the image of vigorous individuality, which brooks no restrictions, rebels against oppression, mocks at tutelage, refuses to bow beneath the yoke. This mood began to find expression in literature.

The heroes of classical literature, affrighted by the roughness and barbarity of everyday life, had fled, discouraged, withdrawing into a world of æsthetic illusion, where imagination reigned supreme, and where they could find compensation for the im-

THE SINGERS OF FREEDOM

potence from which they suffered in the real world. The longer the incubus of social slavery and political subjection continued, the more did the most sensitive and most creative among men feel at home in the realm of illusions. The region of ideas is a secure refuge for those who are threatened or maltreated by the realities of the world. The ageing Goethe, despite the universality and the cosmopolitan superiority of his genius, was unable to emerge from the classical domain of a sublimity remote from the actualities of life. But Klopstock, Lessing, and young Schiller were ready for the new world that was in course of formation; its coming struck sparks in their minds, and nourished revolutionary flames. Chamisso drew near to the domain of contemporary social reality. Platen, a bold St. George, fiercely attacked the dragon of reaction, corruption, and subjugation by force. Grabbe inveighed against the cramped particularism of German life with all the clamour and defiance of a titan.

In the thirties and forties, when from the crumbling walls of reaction young green shoots and fresh rice were everywhere thrusting heavenward, a bold, cheerful, self-confident swarm of singers and apostles of freedom appeared in the forest of German poesy. Georg Herwegh, the "iron lark," published his *Gedichte eines Lebendigen* [A Live Man's Poems], and in his triumphal campaign through Germany, set the hearts of thousands aflame. Franz Dingelstedt, in *Lieder eines kosmopolitischen Nachtwächters* [Songs of a Cosmopolitan Night Watchman], unsparingly lashed the police, the clergy, the ministers of State, and "the whole pack of refined and distinguished persons." In the comedy entitled *Die politische Wochenstube* [The Political Lying-in Room], Robert Prutz poured the vials of his scorn and mockery on the German people as slaves, and on the German princes as tyrants. Hoffmann von Fallersleben paid forfeit of his official position and his means of livelihood for the political sallies in his *Unpolitische Lieder* [Unpolitical Lays]. Ferdinand Freiligrath, whose exotic verses about deserts and lions had a brilliant success, devoted his rhetorical powers

YOUNG GERMANY

to the service of the awakening revolution. Gottfried Kinkel, Karl Beck, Moritz Hartmann, Alfred Meissner, Kühne, Jung, and many others, singing enthusiastic battle-songs and pæans on behalf of liberty, joined in the chorus of Germany's awakening after the night of the Middle Ages. From across the frontiers, Heinrich Heine and Ludwig Börne, publishing a succession of criticisms, polemics, and pamphlets, were indefatigable in their fierce onslaughts on the Prussian reaction. They made merry over the blunders of the police; they stigmatized the narrow-mindedness and the obscurantism of the authorities; they pilloried the drowsy inactivity of the philistines; and, filled with moral indignation, they depicted the behaviour of the reactionary despotism in a way that made Europe rock with laughter. Treading in Heine's footsteps, but working independently of him, were the champions of Young Germany, who took up arms against the obsolete and the outworn, and fought on behalf of the new. Gutzkow, Laube, Wienberg, Mundt, and others had a fine flair for all that was springing into life, and felt it their mission to collaborate in the birth. They wrote about the historical conditions requisite for a Prussian constitution, the principles of democracy, the unity of Germany and its significance for the political and intellectual development of the country, and so on; and although they were anything but revolutionists, the very fact that they were so closely watched by the Prussian police made them contribute nobly towards dispelling the prevalent spirit of dull subserviency. The more suspiciously the reaction supervised and persecuted every tendency towards free movement, the more did even timid appeals acquire the significance of trumpet blasts, of calls to arms, and of apotheoses of freedom.

The significance of these poetic revellies was underlined by the results of pioneer work in the scientific field. The capitalist method of production, in its need for the unsealing of nature's treasure houses that commodity production might be intensified, had called natural science and technical acquisitions to its aid. Research was stimulated, experiments were encouraged,

ACHIEVEMENTS OF NATURAL SCIENCE

people's senses were sharpened for the observation and discovery of natural processes which might be turned to account for the purposes of the new developments. In the laboratories, the workshops, and the lecture theatres, the secrets of a new world were being disclosed. Theodor Schwann discovered the cell as the basic element in the bodies of animals and plants. Justus Liebig enunciated new views on chemistry, founded a new theory of plant nutrition, and thus inaugurated a new epoch in agriculture. Johannes Müller created the foundations of modern physiology. In a series of mathematical, physical, and astronomical discoveries, Karl F. Gauss enlarged the boundaries of knowledge. Alexander von Humboldt, geographer and naturalist, gave people a new conception of the world by the record of his extensive travels, and did pioneer work in the fields of geology, mineralogy, zoology, botany, meteorology, and climatology. Robert Mayer formulated the mechanical theory of heat and enunciated the principle of the conservation of energy. The Siemens brothers, making numerous discoveries in the matter of the production of alcohol and of sugar, in electrotechnique, telegraphy, etc., laid the foundation of a number of new industries. A rebirth of society was in progress amid this general competition of active minds. Society, inasmuch as it would only pay heed to what was manifest to human senses and demonstrable by the methods of exact research, freed itself intellectually from dependence on all the old codes, and would now give credence only to the principles of a materialist philosophy, a philosophy with concrete aims. This materialism, an emphatic protest against theological and idealist outlooks, formed the soil on which Feuerbach's trenchant criticism of religion was able to grow so vigorously.

In 1842, when Marx became one of the contributors to the "Rheinische Zeitung" of which he was soon to be editor-in-chief, it was plain to him that in the general pæan to liberty this newspaper could only be one chord. But he was determined that it should be a chord having a timbre of its own.

THE "RHEINISCHE ZEITUNG"

Frederick William III had promised to give the Prussian people a constitution. This promise had not been fulfilled. Consequently, the pledge given to the creditors of the State that every new loan should be sanctioned by the estates of the realm, could not be kept. For the sake of appearances, however, provincial diets were established, impotent bodies, vegetating under the shelter of secrecy, bodies in which the squirearchy continued to exercise its territorial despotism behind the mask of parliamentary procedure. Even the Rhenish diet, in respect of political initiative and status, was no better than the feudalist servants' halls which sat eastward of the Elbe.

Frederick William IV, the heir of his father's unfulfilled promise, had summoned the Rhenish diet in 1841. Taking the minutes of the proceedings as his text, Marx dealt pitilessly with this masquerade. In a series of articles, he discussed the question of the freedom of the press, which had not secured in the diet any advocate against the malicious onslaughts of the authorities. Then he dealt with the matter of the imprisonment of the Archbishop of Cologne, with the result that his article was expunged by the censorship. Finally he referred to the debates concerning a law to punish thefts of wood in the forests. This last gave him hard nuts to crack, seeing that "there was no provision in Hegel's ideological system" for the consideration of social problems and material interests.

The articles on the freedom of the press were brilliantly written. Ruge praised them highly, saying: "We can congratulate ourselves upon the appearance on the journalistic stage of one so highly instructed, so talented, and with such a sovereign power of marshalling ideas upon a topic where confusion is apt to prevail." In this matter, Marx was in his element. He was fully informed regarding the subject matter, and the vigour of his writing could not fail to attract attention. But when

NEED FOR EXHAUSTIVE STUDIES

it came to the third of the before-mentioned topics, he was verging on the limits of his extant abilities. Proceeding further, when he had to discuss hunting rights, the prosecution of poachers, and the difficulties of the small-farming system, with all the involved questions of property relations, he felt that the task was beyond him; he knew that he would not be able to cope with it until he had undertaken a thorough study of political economy, and had faced up to the problem of socialism. His training in philosophy and law had been exhaustive, but this was of little use to him in the handling of economic questions. His idealist outlook upon the State and society involved him in hopeless perplexities when he had to choose a side where the interests of bourgeoisie and proletariat diverge.

A further difficulty was that the "Rheinische Zeitung" had to take a definite line regarding problems and events which were interwoven with the ideas of the French socialists or affected the interests of Rhenish proletarians. The perusal of a book by Lorenz von Stein, *Geschichte der sozialistischen Bewegung in Frankreich* [History of the Socialist Movement in France], which was strongly adverse to the outlooks of Saint-Simon and Fourier, had made Marx realize the necessity of becoming well acquainted with this matter. A dispute with the "Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung" had forced upon him the unpleasant necessity of openly admitting that he knew nothing about the theories of French socialism and communism. The "Augsburger" had reproached the "Rheinische Zeitung" for coquetting with communism. Marx had rejoined that the "Rheinische" did not concede even theoretical validity to communist ideas "in their present form," and still less did it desire their practical realization or regard such a realization as possible. But, he said, the journal wished to subject these ideas to exhaustive criticism. The real danger lay, not in any practical endeavour, but in "the theoretical carrying out of communist ideas." He went on: "Practical attempts, even if made on a large scale, can be answered with big guns as soon as they become dangerous; but ideas which gain the victory over our

THE SOCIETY OF THE FREE

intelligence and our feelings, ideas to which reason has welded our conscience, these are chains which we cannot break without breaking our hearts, these are demons which man can only conquer by subjecting himself to them." The emotionalism of the words had its due effect; but Marx was only too well aware that problems as serious as this could not be permanently shuffled out of the world by declamation or by "amateurish comment."

In the sequel, the problems of socialism and the revolution played a part likewise in the differences that arose between Marx and his Berlin friends. The Doctors' Club had transformed itself into a Society of the Free, which was being joined by literary men of various shades of opinion. In these circles there was a mishmash of ideas, the high-flown theories of cultured academicians being voiced side by side with the more prosaic and straightforward schemes of Chartists, Owenists, and Saint-Simonians—schemes which had been imported into Germany from England and France. It was a crazy amalgam, for the doctrinairism of the German schools could not mingle satisfactorily with the explosive notions of foreign origin. Moreover, raw student zeal made a pretence of being revolutionary efficiency, while crudeness and coarseness were mistaken for manifestations of mental enfranchisement. Friedrich Engels, son of a factory owner in Barmen, and at this time doing his year's military service as an artilleryman in the guards, found his way into the Society of the Free, and played his part there wittily by composing a Christian heroic poem *Die frech bedröute, jedoch wunderbar befreite Bibel oder Triumph des Glaubens* [The impudently threatened, but miraculously saved Bible, or the Triumph of Faith], which mirrors in a fanciful way the intellectual world of these "free spirits."

The only consequence of the hubbub was the vexatious one that Marx was overwhelmed with correspondence, and with proffered contributions, from Berlin, "scrawls weighty with plans for a world revolution but empty of ideas, clumsily written, and tinged with a certain amount of atheism and com-

SUPPRESSION OF THE "RHEINISCHE ZEITUNG"

munism (which the writers have never studied)." He would have nothing to do with all this. "I insisted on the need for less vague argument, pretentious phraseology, and self-satisfied contemplation of one's own image in the mirror; and upon the need for more definiteness, more concern with concrete actualities, more accurate knowledge of the matters in hand. I declared that I regarded it as inappropriate, not to say immoral, to smuggle socialist and communist dogmas—a new outlook on the world—into casual columns of dramatic criticism; and I said that if communism was to be discussed it must be discussed in a very different and far more thorough fashion." If the members of the Society of the Free thereupon rejoined that it was time for the "Rheinische Zeitung" to exchange half-hearted dallying for earnest endeavour, this did not seem to Marx sufficient reason for doing anything foolhardy; but it was made evident to him as a logical necessity that he must devote himself to a thorough study of the problem of socialism.

The censorship, apparently, wished to give him a push in this direction. The "Rheinische" was harried more and more as its circulation increased, and as it gained prestige and influence. At length, by a decision of the ministerial council in Berlin, adopted in the king's presence and perhaps at the king's instigation, an order for the suppression of the paper was issued on January 21, 1843.

The protests and petitions of the shareholders were of no avail. The utmost the authorities would grant was a postponement of the suppression until the end of the quarter. On March 17th, Marx retired from the staff. Thereupon he breathed more freely, since for a long time, as he wrote to Ruge, he had been "weary of hypocrisy, stupidity, the rough handling of authority, and our own smirking, bowing, scraping, and quibbling."

The government had "set him free." What was the best use he could make of this regained freedom? What could he do better than devote himself wholeheartedly to the study of socialism?

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