

MARXISM SINCE MARX

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ONE HAS only to know a little history to immediately connect the relevance of Marxist ideas to countries, such as ours, which are on their way to development. For the forces against which Marx tilted his spear in mid-19th-century Germany and England are today to be found in our own country. In the 1840's Germany was in the grip of acute class differences, and was under the hegemony of a hierarchical social structure with undertones that were nearly casteist. These made for formidable obstacle to be raised against the forces of modernization and industrialization. In this atmosphere, Materialism as a philosophy challenged the stability of the society; it denied any validity for the continuance of the *status quo* with its privileges and positions. Similarly, in our own country, the communists are up in arms against the 'forces of reaction', such as 'feudalism, communalism, casteism, capitalism', etc.

In another sense too, Marx is of vital importance. It is generally pointed out that the capitalist order which he described so vividly, today remains only a historical description—for capitalism was changing under the very nose of Karl Marx. More pertinently for us, his onslaughts remain eloquent against the great dislocations that took place in an industrializing society in its infancy, in which countless infants and people, absolutely helpless, were herded like animals, made to work like chattels, all victims of the machinations of the wicked capitalists. The U. S. A. and Great Britain early came through the conditions described by Marx, and soon reached a maturity rendering all his dark prophecies wide off the mark. But this should not blind us to its basic relevance to societies that are today in a position industrially similar to that of England in the 1830's.

Commentators on Marx have frequently stressed his dogmatism, his suspicion of all colleagues and his basic obstinacy. What is not generally recognized is the fact that there are important strains in the Marxian way of thinking that dominantly belong to Western humanism. The nineteenth century believed in the progress of all