

Notes on Karl Marx's Racial Philosophy of Politics and History

By NATHANIEL WEYL

Since the end of the Second World War, a good deal has been published concerning the racial or racist views of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Most of this literature has been devoted to showing that Marx, though of unalloyed rabbinical descent on both sides of his family, was a fanatical anti-Semite. Some attention has also been devoted to the fact that Marx's and Engels's private correspondence is filled with contemptuous references to Negroes.¹

What is less well known and considerably more significant is that Marx and Engels privately developed an entire racial hierarchy and racial view of history by the 1860s—that is to say, when they were about forty and in full command of their intellectual powers. By the middle of the decade, Marx was actively searching for some scientific or pseudo-scientific justification for his racial value judgments and prejudices. His ambivalent attitude

¹ A pioneer treatment is Leopold Schwartzschild, *Karl Marx, the Red Prussian*, Universal Library, New York, 1947. A sound but polemical overview is found in Bertram D. Wolfe, *Marxism: One Hundred Years in the Life of a Doctrine*, Dial Press, New York, 1965. For Marx's anti-Semitism, see *inter alia*, W. H. Chaloner and W. O. Henderson, "Marx/Engels and Racism," *Encounter*, July 1975, pp. 18-23, and Camillo Berneri, *Le Juif anti-Sémite*, Paris, 1935. The literature on this topic is much more extensive than these examples would indicate.

² According to Sir Isaiah Berlin, Marx "had a greater intellectual admiration" for Charles Darwin "than for any other of his contemporaries, regarding him as having, by his theory of evolution and natural selection, done for the morphology of the natural sciences, what he himself was striving to do for human history." Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1959, p. 232.

This is the mythical version of the relationship which Engels helped create after Marx's death to give the latter prestige in intellectual circles. "Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature," he said over his friend's grave, "so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history."

Engels was enormously impressed by *The Origin of Species* and recommended it to Marx in the year of its appearance as a "really splendid" work, revealing "the presence of historical development in nature."

It was not until a year later that Marx tackled Darwin's great work. On 19th December 1860, he wrote Engels that "although developed in the coarse English manner, this is the book which contains the basis in natural history for our work." Two years later, he revised his opinion and wrote Engels that Darwin had applied the "Malthusian 'struggle for existence' among animals and plants" and that evolution was simply "Hobbes' *bellum omnium contra omnes*. . . ." The inescapable conclusion is that Marx skimmed Darwin's work, but did not take the trouble to read or understand it. For further light on the Marx-Darwin relationship, Shlomo Aveneri, "From Hoax to Dogma," *Encounter*, March 1967, pp. 30-32.

toward Darwinism derived in part from the fact that the theorist of evolution provided no support for his racist *Weltanschauung*.² Marx's search for scientific validation of his views in the area of race and nationality will be found less in his published work, which had to reflect the internationalist pretensions of the working-class movement he had founded, than in his private correspondence with Engels and others.

The view that Marx and Engels were racists will seem unacceptable to those readers who have taken the internationalist and anti-racist nature of Marxist socialism and communism for granted. The slogan, "workers of the world unite," seems the very antithesis of a race theory.

In recent decades, Marxism has been politically more successful as a revolutionary ideology of have-not races and nations than of have-not classes. This has been a concomitant of the rise of modern nationalism and of the modern nation-state. These have moved to reduce class differences in wealth, income and status within the nation, but have done little to bridge comparable gaps between nations. Consequently, revolutionary socialism and communism have found it expedient and necessary to preach racial equality and take up the cudgels for putatively oppressed races and peoples.

There is little reason to believe that either Marx or Engels foresaw this direction of development. Rather they agreed with Adam Smith and David Ricardo in envisaging an internationalist capitalist order which would promote trends towards equalization of income internationally for members of the same economic class through the freer flow of labor and capital across frontiers in accordance with the laws of comparative national advantage.

One of the more interesting aspects of the Marx-Engels correspondence concerning the racial inequality of peoples, with which I shall deal presently, is that there is no discussion of its possible inconsistency with the philosophy of dialectical materialism. The philosophy of history which Marx had adumbrated 20 years earlier had sought to explain the backwardness of certain peoples and races in terms of the slowness with which they had been drawn into the vortex of world historic processes and the consequent rudimentary development of their social relations of production.

Nevertheless, in one of their earliest and most important, but unpublished, works, *The German Ideology* (1846), Marx and Engels suggested that historic materialism might be superimposed on certain more fundamental conditions which shaped man's fate. "The first premise of all human history," they wrote, "is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. The first fact

to be established is therefore the physical organization of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. We cannot here, of course, go into either the physical characteristics of men themselves or the natural conditions found by men—the geological, oro-hydrographical, climatic and other conditions. All historic work must start on the bases of these natural conditions and their modification in the course of history through the action of man.”

The belief that different peoples and races may be different in ability and hence in civilization-potential was not necessarily in contradiction to dialectical materialism. A synthesis of the two views would have involved the proposition that there are two types of group inequality: one natural, the other the artificial product of class exploitation. Any such theory would also have presupposed interaction between the two sets of factors. The more capable peoples would be expected to move more swiftly through the dialectically determined phases of the historic process and this would in turn stimulate their civilizational level.

Marx thought of history in terms of a European élite engaged in making capitalism universal and drawing the most backward regions of the earth into the maelstrom. Hence, he paid little attention to non-Western areas, except as bones of contention, and scarcely disguised the low opinion he held of the character and capacity of their inhabitants. There are, for instance, hardly any references to Latin America in Marx's and Engels's writings and those that exist are usually pejorative. To the founder of “scientific socialism,” Simón Bolívar was “that coward . . . that vile and miserable swine.”³ He hailed the American military defeat of Mexico in 1848 as an opportunity for that country to be annexed by the United States and thus roused from its centuries-long stupor and kicked into history.⁴

SEARCHING FOR A RACE PHILOSOPHER

Marx's racial prejudices corresponded closely with the views of the expansionist German aristocracy into whose ranks he had married, whose ethos he privately envied and admired, and whose

³ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Works* (Russian edition), Vol. XXII, p. 304.

⁴ Marx's views on this matter were shared in essence by the Mexican Liberal Party which begged General Winfield Scott, when he entered Mexico City as a conqueror, to prevail on President Polk to annex the entire country, since the generation of anarchy and plunder after independence had demonstrated to them the incapacity of Mexicans for self-government. Justin H. Smith, *The War With Mexico*, Macmillan, New York, 1919, two volumes. A similar plea was made by the white inhabitants of Yucatán who faced extermination in a race war. They sent Justo Sierra O'Reilly to Washington to plead for American annexation.

power he perhaps hoped to inherit.⁵ To infer from this, as did Marx's polemical enemy, the brilliant theorist of convergent evolution, Karl Vogt, that Marx was a paid agent of Prussia and later of Imperial Germany would be an over-simplification. Marx considered that the German working-class was the élite and vanguard of world labor. An ideology of German conquest and expansion therefore implied the transfer of peoples, power and territory to that country which both Marks and Engels believed would be the first to embrace socialist revolution. It implied leadership of the world socialist society by that working-class which Marx and Engels considered the most civilized and intelligent on the face of the earth.

These views brought's Marx's political judgments into close alignment with those of Bismark. He considered Russians and Slavs in general (the Poles excepted) to be inferior people and slaves by nature who should be subjugated and perhaps exterminated by Germany. Hatred of Russia and agitation for a German or united West European war to drive the Russians back to Asia was not merely the dream of Marx's and Engels's young manhood; it was an obsession that dominated most of their adult lives.

His hatred of the Jewish people was a pathological political anti-Semitism in many ways comparable to the later ragings of Hitler and Streicher. Since this topic has been expatiated upon

⁵ Gustav Techow, the German officer who had surrendered the Berlin arsenal to the 1848 revolutionaries, gave a fascinating account of Marx's revelations to him on 21st August 1850 of his admiration for the German aristocracy and contempt for the proletariat. It is quoted in full in several modern Marx biographies, including those of Robert Payne and David McLellan.

⁶ Marx had married a reigning beauty, heiress and aristocrat from Trier, Jenny von Westphalen. His academic career was blasted; the revolution on which he had counted was put down; he lived in exile in such grinding poverty that his favorite son died, possibly because of malnutrition; his wife wished herself dead and at one time left him. Marx's books had virtually no influence and few readers until their author was on the threshold of old age. The First International which he started was torn apart by factional struggles and base intrigues, for which Marx was primarily responsible. Living on the edge of financial disaster, Marx sponged on both friends and enemies, even dissipating the life's savings of Lenchen, the German servant girl whom he seduced and whose son he neither acknowledged nor supported.

An example of his anti-Semitism is his characterization of the brilliant Jewish lawyer, writer and socialist leader, Ferdinand Lassalle, whose success he envied. Lassalle entertained Marx in Germany, introduced him to influential people, and did everything he could to encourage the sale of Marx's books. In his letters to Engels and in other private communications, Marx called Lassalle "Izzy the bounder . . . the little kike . . . the canaille . . . the greasy Jew from Breslau . . . the Jewish Nigger. . . ." When Lassalle was killed in a duel, Marx wrote Lassalle's friend, Countess von Hatzfeldt: "I loved him personally."

by highly competent scholars in recent publications, I shall not cite chapter and verse. It was of course an expression of Marx's profound self-hatred. This self-hatred was understandable in a man whose whole life seemed to be a ghastly failure and who had exploited or betrayed almost everyone who loved or trusted him.⁶

In 1865, Marx's search for a savant whose writings would provide "scientific support" for his doctrine of Teutonic expansion and for the proposition that Germany's age-old enemy, Russia, must be ruthlessly destroyed led him to a rather obscure Polish ethnologist named François Duchinski. Born in Kiev in 1817, Duchinski settled in France where, between 1858 and 1864, he published a succession of ethnological and historical volumes designed to prove that the Russians were not really Slavs. As Asiatics, they were intruders of European soil, Duchinski urged, who must be driven back militarily to the Asian land-mass.

On 24th June 1865, Marx wrote Engels in great excitement about Duchinski's discovery that the Great Russians, "that is, the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Moscow, are for the most part Mongols and Finns, etc." Consequently, "*Russia* is a name usurped by the Muscovites. They are not Slavs, do not belong at all to the Indo-German race, but are *des intrus*, who must again be hurled back beyond the Dnieper, etc."

For Marx, the touchstone of any theory of the origin and formation of peoples was whether it provided an ideological justification for the destruction of Russia. Marx's anti-Russian phobia was obsessive, violent, continuous and a major motivating force behind his inflammatory journalism. Thus, the program of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* which the two revolutionaries had edited in the 1840s had consisted of two points, Engels told Florence Wischnewsky forty years later, an indivisible German republic and war with Russia. In 1848-49, Engels echoed Max in predicting terror and devastation against the Russian peoples comparable to that which Hitler would actually unleash a century later. The coming revolution would "*destroy* all these little, bull-headed nations *so that their very name will vanish*. The coming world war will cause . . . entire reactionary peoples to disappear from the face of the earth. And that too will be progress." Engels added that "hatred of Russia was and still is the first revolutionary passion of the Germans" and that "we and the Poles and the Magyars will only be able to safeguard the revolution through the most determined terror against these Slavic peoples." As late as 1868, Marx wrote Engels that any war among the western European nations would be a kind of civil war, whereas war against Russia would be a struggle against "semi-Oriental despotism."

MARX DISCOVERS PIERRE TREMAUX

Duchinski's supposed discoveries provided an inadequate scientific foundation either for these sanguinary visions or for the larger racial geography of history that underlay them.

Marx searched for a better scientific authority and in 1866 his patience was rewarded. He discovered Pierre Trémaux, an ethnologist who claimed to have unveiled the interrelationship between soils, race and human evolution and to have discovered the key to the rise and fall of civilizations.

Trémaux was greater than Darwin!

With an unbounded enthusiasm which contrasted with the faint and condescending praise he had bestowed upon Darwin six years previously, Marx announced his find to Engels. He wrote his "Lieber Fred" on 7th August 1866: "A very important work which I shall send you (but under condition that you return it, since it is not my property) is P. Trémaux, *Origins and Transformations of Man and Other Beings*, Paris, 1865. It is, despite all the faults which strike me, a very important advance over Darwin." (Emphasis in the original.)⁷

At the beginning of his book, Trémaux revealed that he had discovered "THE GREAT LAW OF THE PERFECTING OF BEINGS," namely:

"THE PERFECTING OF BEINGS IS OR SHOULD BE PROPORTIONATE TO THE DEGREE THAT THE SOIL ON WHICH THEY LIVE IS WORKED! And, in general, the soil is more heavily worked to the extent that it belongs to a more recent geological formation."⁸

This "great law" revealed that the beauty, health, intelligence, energy and level of civilization of peoples corresponded directly to geological age of the land they occupied. Crude, brutish, stupid and lazy peoples and races lived on geologically old terrain. Refined, civilized, handsome, healthy, intelligent and energetic peoples lived on geologically new land.

Trémaux may have reached this odd conclusion from his observation of the prevalence of endemic goitre and its deforming effects in the Alps, a region of old granite soils. Two years before the appearance of Trémaux's book, Trousseau had shown conclusively that these goitres were caused by iodine deficiency, but Trémaux was either unaware of this or its significance eluded him.

⁷ Trémaux was just as condescending to Darwin as was Marx. One of Darwin's many errors was "to imagine a struggle for existence which destroys inferior individuals" (p. 238). *The Origin of Species* was "interesting," but not a "serious" work! (p. 14). Quotations here and below are from P. Trémaux, *Origines et transformations de l'homme et des autres êtres, Première partie*, Hachette, Paris, 1865.

⁸ Here and elsewhere, emphasis and capitalization are in the original.

To prove his theory, Trémaux took his readers on a rapid world tour, correlating soils and peoples as he proceeded:

In India, where the soil permits, one finds fairly handsome people, but in its peninsula, where there are large expanses of primitive soil . . . one sees people with black skins as hideous as monkeys who are given the same name as the latter (p. 28).⁹

Turning to Scandinavia, Trémaux observed that it contained “the greatest area of geologically primitive terrain in Europe.” What followed with respect to its inhabitants? Why that “the Lapps are therefore the most inferior of people.” The Swedes and Norwegians and Finns had not lived there long enough, but in time would degenerate to the Lapp level (p. 33).

This gave apparent scientific support to one of Marx’s many bizarre beliefs. “Scandinavianism,” he had written on 12th August 1848, “consists of enthusiasm for the brutal, dirty, piratical old-Norse nationality, for that deep inwardness which cannot bring its over-pregnant feelings out in words, but can in deeds, namely in brutality toward women, permanent drunkenness, and tearful sentimentality that alternates with berserk fury.”

This unflattering evaluation of Scandinavian civilization may have been not unrelated to the fact that Prussia had marched troops into the province of Holstein to seize it from the Danes. German aggrandizement could be justified on the basis of the unfitness of Danes to govern their own territory.

The most favorable soils, according to Trémaux, were “all of the west and south of Europe and more especially France, Italy, Greece, part of Germany, southeast England and eastern Spain. It is there that civilization and the intellectual faculties rule” (p. 34).

All very well, except for such matters as the exclusion of the inhabitants of central and southern Germany where the soils were geologically older—that is to say, specifically, the exclusion of Rhinelanders such as Karl Marx himself.

On geological grounds, Trémaux had confined British civilization to the region around London. By implication, this excluded East Anglia and the Scottish Lowlands. Yet, four years later, Francis Galton would assemble persuasive evidence in *Hereditary Genius* (1869) for the proposition that the two latter regions were “a fraction of a grade superior to the ordinary English” in that they produced proportionately more eminent

⁹ Here as elsewhere, it is difficult to fathom what Trémaux is talking about. He may have had in mind the partially Australoid tribes of Kerala, such as the Uralis and Kadar.

men and a working class that was mentally, morally and physically superior to that of the rest of the British Isles.

One of Trémaux's most remarkable "scientific discoveries" was the reason for the supposedly debased condition of the Irish people. He claimed that, after the wars of 1641 and 1689, the English chased the native Irish into the barony of Flews, by the sea, on a granitic and very poor carboniferous soil." As a result, the English settlers preserved their original character, but the Irish were so changed that "except for their color, they would be taken for a backward population of Australian aborigines" (pp. 107-108).

Another discovery of this scientific genius was that Neanderthal skulls were "strongly reminiscent of the crania of monkeys" (p. 283). He also proclaimed that "the backward Negro is not an evolved ape, but a *degenerate man* . . ." (p. 31), a conclusion that fortified Marx's own prejudices.

Trémaux's most original finding was that the American Civil War was basically a geological struggle. The constitutional issues at stake and the incompatible attitudes of the contestants toward Negro slavery were merely surface phenomena. The real issue was that people who lived on recent soils did not want to be governed by people who lived on old ones. Trémaux wrote in 1864:—

What is the secret of this (Southern) resistance? Ask geology. She will show you that the South has a magnificent zone of soils, quaternary and tertiary. On the contrary, primitive silurian and coal-bearing soils predominate in the North. Here, therefore, the same principle as elsewhere: the inhabitants of geologically recent soils do not wish to be governed by those of ancient soils.

Even an eccentric as blind to the evidence as Pierre Trémaux realized that the North had overwhelming superiority in manpower and industrial output. Moreover, at the time of his writing, Grant was pounding Lee's armies to pieces in the battles of the Wilderness. Hence, Trémaux conceded the possibility of a Northern victory, but hastily added that, in that case, "we dare to predict that in the future it will be the South which will govern the North, assuming the two countries do not remain separate" (pp. 426-428).

Not all of Trémaux's vaporizings reinforced Marx's prejudices. Thus, the French ethnologist believed that the modern Greeks, living on the same new soils as their more illustrious ancestors, shared the physical beauty and quickness of wit of the latter.

Marx thought otherwise. He classified the Greeks as one of "the lousy Balkan peoples," adding: "These wretched, ruined fragments of one-time nations, the Serbs, Bulgars, Greeks and

other robber bands on behalf of which the liberal Phillistine waxes enthusiastic are unwilling to grant each other the air they breathe and feel obliged to cut each other's greedy throats."

Trémaux may have been a foolish man, but he was not an evil or a hate-obsessed man. He did not share the bloodthirsty visions of Marx and Engels. There is no reason to believe that he disliked Slavs or wished them harm. He merely believed that Russia's great areas of old soils inevitably created mediocre people. Moreover, if superior peoples settled there, the unfavorable geological environment would in time make them equally degenerate.

On geological grounds, he opposed russification of "poor Poland, which suffers most bitterly, as its geological frontiers with Muscovy are ever more vigorously invaded. The Slavic and Lithuanian races have their true frontier with the Muscovites in the great geological line that stretches north of the Niemen and Dnieper basins. In effect, the Slavs who crossed that border have been largely changed, brutalized say the other Slavs, who attribute this effect to the power of this or that prince. . . . But it is not at all the same south of this great geological line: the aptitudes and the types appropriate to this region will always remain entirely different from those of Russia. When they are in conflict with the great laws of nature, the projects of man are merely calamities, as witness the efforts of the Czars to transform the Polish people into Muscovites" (pp. 420-421).

Marx had supported Prussia's aggression against Denmark to devour Schleswig-Holstein by branding the Scandinavian Danes as inferiors—"dirty, piratical" Norse, addicted to drunkenness, wife-beating and berserk savagery. He defended "the right of civilization against barbarism, of progress against stability . . . this right is worth more than all treaties for it is the right of historic development."

Trémaux agreed that there was no analogy between Russian aggression against Poland and German aggression against Denmark. Since the Danes and Germans lived on similar soils, it made little difference which nation came out on top (pp. 422-423).

Trémaux pleased Marx by observing that the Hungarians lived on splendid, geologically recent land and were therefore superior to their Slavic neighbours. Writing in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in 1849, Marx had argued that the Hungarians were a superior people who had every right to rule and oppress their Slavic neighbors:—

If the eight million Slavs have had to be satisfied to let four million Magyars keep them under their yoke, then this alone is enough to show which is the more capable of living and more energetic, the many Slavs or the few Magyars. It

turns out that this "crime" of the Germans and Magyars against the dubious Slavs is one of the best and most worthy acts of which our people and the Hungarians can boast.

In this analysis, Marx deliberately ignored the fact that the great landowners were Magyars, while the peasants and landless laborers were primarily Slavs. Extending Marx's argument that the fact that a minority ruled proved its superiority and therefore its right to wield power to the relationship between social classes would serve to justify the domination of the landed aristocracy and the merchants and industrialists over the workers. This passage is one of many which suggests that Techow may have been right when he stated that Marx had revealed to him that the only element in society for which he had any respect was the aristocracy, that he despised the working-class, and that he used the workers solely as a means to gain power.¹⁰

ENGELS REJECTS TREMAUX'S FANTASIES

On 7th August 1866, Marx explained to Engels why he found Trémaux's book exciting: —

In its historical and political applications, it is far more meaningful and fruitful than Darwin. Here is the only place where a basis in nature is provided for certain questions, such as nationality, etc.

Trémaux had proved that "on the basis of the predominant earth formation in Russia, the Slav must become tartarized and mongolized, just as he (he was long in Africa) proves that the common negro type is merely the degeneration of a far higher one. . . ."¹¹

Having discovered Trémaux, Marx abandoned Duchinski. It was no longer necessary to "prove" that the Russians were not Slavs to justify throwing them out of Europe. Trémaux had revealed that the fact that they occupied geologically old terrain had inevitably made them brutalized, degraded and inferior people who should be ruled by the superior Germans, Magyars and Poles.

Engels did not share his illustrious colleague's credulity in scientific matters. On August 7, Marx urged him to read

¹⁰ "I am convinced that a most dangerous personal ambition has eaten away all good in him. He laughs at the fools who parrot his proletarian catechism, just as he laughs over the communists *à la* Willich and over the bourgeoisie. The only people he respects are the aristocrats, the genuine ones, those who are well aware of their aristocracy. In order to prevent them from governing, he needs his own source of strength, which he can find only in the proletariat." Robert Payne, *Marx*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1968, p. 288.

¹¹ Actually, Trémaux had "proved" nothing. His book consists of dogmatic assertions supported by "evidence," consisting of misstatements of fact or the vaguest sort of generalities.

Trémaux's "very important work." On the 13th, Marx again alluded to the subject. Finally, Engels got around to reading the book and on October 2 gave his "Dear Moor" his verdict:—

Concerning Moilin and Trémaux, I write more fully today: the latter I have not entirely finished reading, but am convinced that there is nothing to his theories, because he neither understands geology nor is capable of the most ordinary literary-historical criticism. The stories about the Nigger, Santa Maria, and about the transformation of whites into Negroes are laughable.¹² Namely, that the traditions of the Senegal niggers are worthy of unconditional belief *precisely because the fellows don't know how to write!* Beyond that, it is beautiful to attribute the difference between a Basque, a Frenchman, a Breton and an Alsatian to earth formation, which is doubtless also responsible for the fact that these people speak four different languages!

The way the fellow explains how we Rhinelanders on our Devonian transitional rocks (which have not been under water since long before the era of coal formation) did not become idiots and Niggers, he will perhaps show us in his second volume, or else assert, that we really are niggers.

This book is worth nothing, pure hypotheses that fly in the face of all the facts, and for every proof that it supplies, another proof must be adduced.

Best greetings to the ladies,
Dein

F. E.

It is worth noting that one of Engels's fundamental objections to the Trémaux theory was his belief that race differences in character and ability were permanent. If soil determined ability, then Swedes, Rhinelanders and Scots were destined to degenerate into idiots, whereas Negroes, living on the favorable soils of the American South, could develop into people of high intelligence and outstanding ability.

Marx failed to see that Trémaux's theories, far from supporting his own beliefs in fundamental and durable psychic differences, actually undermined them. On October 3, the day after Engels's devastating letter, Marx penned a rejoinder. Because they were ignorant of geology, Marx wrote, certain "German nature visionaries" who maintained that species could vary had been ridiculed by Cuvier. Yet they had been right and Cuvier wrong. Marx added:—

¹² The English word *Nigger* occurs in the original. Marx and Engels used it frequently to indicate their private opinion of a race they had to praise publicly. Where the correct German word, *Neger*, is used, it is translated here as *Negro*.

Trémaux's basic idea concerning *the influence of soil* . . . is, to my mind, an idea which merely has to be *uttered* to earn for itself an eternal citizenship in the sciences, and this independently of Trémaux's exposition.

Two days later, Engels wrote another crushing reply: —

You say that Cuvier threw ignorance of geology in the faces of the German nature philosophers when they asserted the variability of species and that they were right. But that had nothing to do with geology; when, however, someone presents a theory of variation of species based *exclusively on geology* and yet makes such geological extracts as to *falsify* the geology of entire countries (for example, Italy and even France) and, for the rest, takes his examples from those other countries about the geology of which we know practically nothing (Africa, central Asia), then it is something very different. As for the ethnological examples, those which deal generally with known countries and peoples are, almost without exception, false, either the geological premises or the conclusions drawn from them—and the many cases which point in the opposite direction he simply leaves out, for instance, the alluvial plains of inner Siberia, the enormous alluvial basin of the Amazon River, the entire alluvial land southward from la Plata to the southern tip of the Americas (east of the cordilleras).

That the geological structure of the earth has much to do with the soil on which things grow is an old story, just as the soil's capacity to bear vegetation has much to do with the plant and animal species that live upon it. That this influence has hardly been studied at all up to now is also true. But from that to the theories of Trémaux is a colossal leap.¹³

Marx did not reply. The two Engels letters apparently ended Marx's infatuation with the French pseudo-ethnologist. At least, there are no further references to Trémaux in the correspondence, nor did Marx succeed in finding substitute "scientific authority" for his race views. The road was thus paved for the subsequent presentation of Marx and Darwin as two great pioneers who pursued parallel paths in different scientific fields: the first laying bare the evolutionary laws of human society, the second those of biology. The road was also cleared for the convenient political myth that Marx and Engels were true internationalists who opposed the conquest and domination of weak peoples, nations and race by strong ones.

¹³ All quotations are my own translations from the German edition of the *Marx-Engels Briefwechsel*.

Notes on the Laetolil Find and Prehominid Racialiation

By NATHANIEL WEYL

In October 1975, anthropologist Mary Leakey announced that teeth and mandibles of 11 distinct hominids were found in volcanic ash beds in the East African Rift Valley about 25 miles south of the Olduvai Gorge. These finds have now been dated by stratification from 3.35 to 3.75 million years ago. The inference is that these large-brained, upright carnivores, who presumably ranged the savannas for a minimum time-span of 400,000 years, coexisted during that period with the more primitive *Australopithecus*. The Leakey find not only places the origins of *Homo erectus* almost a billion years further back in time than the 1972 discoveries of Richard Leakey (the son of Mary Leakey), but casts in doubt the theory that more advanced types of *Homo* systematically exterminated their more primitive contemporaries.

The Leakey discovery also sheds light on Carleton S. Coon's hypothesis of prehominid racialiation (that is to say, that human races evolved before the emergence of *Homo sapiens*), one which he cogently expounded in his 1962 volume, *The Origin of Races*, and which had been previously suggested by the late Franz Weidenreich. Coon's conjecture was received with unscholarly abuse and opprobrium by liberal anthropologists who feared that, if true, it would militate against the dominant ideological view that mankind is a single family and that racial differences are insignificant and superficial from an evolutionary standpoint.

It is rather early in the day to do more than offer tentative suggestions concerning the possible bearing of the most recent Leakey discoveries on the theory that mankind separated into distinct races before passing the *erectus* threshold and becoming *sapiens*. Since the Leakey discovery pushes back the origins of *Homo erectus* into even more distant frontiers of time, one might assume *a priori* that this made the Coon hypothesis improbable. However, the prehominid racialiation hypothesis does not concern the date when *Homo erectus* emerged from other *hominid* species, but rather the time when *Homo sapiens* arose from *Homo erectus*. This date is not in any way affected by the Laetolil discoveries.

What does seem most relevant is the inescapable conclusion that primitive and more advanced man-like types lived on the same continent for almost half a billion years. If this is a general rule, then the probability would seem considerable that Cro-Magnon man and Neanderthal man may have similarly coexisted