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MARIÁTEGUI

José Carlos Mariátegui

(14 June 1894 – 16 April 1930)

was born in Monquegua, Peru.

A journalist by profession, he was one of the most influential socialist thinkers of Latin America. His most famous book **Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality**, translated and reprinted many times since its first publication in 1928, is considered a landmark in the analysis of the culture, politics and economy of a country—
in this case, Peru.

Florestan Fernandes (1920–1995)

was a Marxist intellectual from São Paulo, Brazil.

He was a highly regarded professor of sociology and a socialist activist.

Lucía Reartes and **Yael Ardiles** are members of the José Carlos Mariátegui School, which has an orientation towards the political education of people's movements. The school is located in Argentina.

José Carlos Mariátegui

Selected Essays

Introduction by

Florestan Fernandes

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Preface

Lucía Reartes and Yael Ardiles

You will come again in the dew of life
in the laughter of the blacks by the sea
in the fields distributed among Indians
in the national happiness of women
you will come again
in the land for the peasants
in the factory to the worker
in the water and health for all
and in the living alphabet of books.

—To José Carlos Mariátegui,

Gustavo Valcárcel (1955)

This book is a tribute to José Carlos Mariátegui on the anniversary of his birth. Amauta lost his life at the young

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age of 35 and left an inescapable theoretical and political legacy for the emancipatory projects of Our America and the world.* This small gesture to a great revolutionary does not seek to be a melancholic memory, but rather a recovery of the vitality of the being and doing of Mariátegui, because when it comes to drawing up a praxis with the capacity of impacting reality, it is necessary to make use of all the practical and theoretical tools provided by our people and by our organic intellectuals.

Mariátegui's intellectual production is faithful to its time. However, his thinking transcends the few years of his life, running the borders of time to whisper to those who want to hear the keys to interpreting and transforming reality. By way of presentation, we want to highlight five great legacies—among many others—that Mariátegui left behind, which remain fully valid despite having been written a hundred years ago.

* Mariátegui was nicknamed 'Amauta', the name of the magazine that he founded in 1926. Amauta (**amawt'a**) comes from Quechua—the language of the Inca people—and means 'teacher' or 'wise one'.

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AGAINST POSITIVISM:

FOR A NEW SOCIALIST RATIONALITY

Mariátegui was born in Moquegua (Peru) on 14 June 1894, and spent most of his life in a context of strong systemic convulsions: the end of the hegemony of liberalism, the debacle of the Enlightenment and positivism as a system of ideas, the First World War and the interwar period, the economic crisis, the fall of the old European empires and the emergence of titans like communism and the fascist monster.

At an early age, he suffered from tuberculosis arthritis, rickets, and an accident at age eight in school that prevented him from continuing his formal studies, condemning him to a childhood bedridden in a hospital. These circumstances will later be the cause of the amputation of one of his legs. However, Mariátegui's will was not subdued: he becomes an avid self-taught reader and then begins a path in journalism that accompanies him throughout his work, intellectual and political life.

His sensitivity to the cause of the oppressed, his closeness to the literary avant-garde and intellectual circles of Peru,

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and a pro-indigenous and anti-gamonal* militancy forced him into exile in 1919, under the government of Augusto Leguía. Installed in Italy, Mariátegui embraces the ideas of Marxism from a particular angle, seduced by the spirit of the European epic, the interwar zeitgeist: a Marxism stripped of positivist, deterministic and economistic elements. As a contemporary of Gramsci, Lukács, Bloch, Brecht, and Luxemburg, and a scholar of Sorel, Gobetti, and Croce, Amauta highlights the potential of Marxism as a creative and critical method that, situated in concrete processes and through its meticulous analysis, enables revolutionary praxis. This way of understanding reality makes Mariátegui the father of Latin American Marxism and a cornerstone of emancipatory thought.

From his first travels, Mariátegui draws a valuable lesson: the need to combine the meticulous analysis of reality with the exaltation of the creative potential of human praxis, highlighting the particular configuration of the social and

* Gamonalismo was the name adopted by the oligarchic regime in Peru. Creole landowners, who did not come from a caste of colonial approval, who expanded their estates and their socio-political power by expropriating land from indigenous ayllus (family clans) with violent methods, were called 'gamonal'.

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class formations of each reality. In this key, the article 'Anniversary and Balance Sheet', compiled in this book, points to his already immortalized statement: 'We certainly do not want socialism in Latin America to be a copy or imitation. It should be a heroic creation'; it's an invitation not to repeat recipes and to think where your feet step, adopting a particular sensitivity for our culture, traditions, history, and the correlation of forces specific to the context of Our America.

INVITATION TO A HEROIC LIFE:

THE MYTH

From this first great lesson derive the following contributions from Amauta. His rejection of positivism does not distance Mariátegui from the optimism of the will. On the contrary, it reinforces his hopes in the emancipatory promises of the project of Enlightenment. It does not place its lens on structural determinants of historical development, but instead analyses the actions of the people: What mobilizes the oppressed classes? Where do they get the conviction, the strength to face an unequally more powerful enemy? What brings them to organize collectively? Here, Mariátegui finds

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a mobilizing concept, the myth*: the myth that provides the images, the force that mobilizes the profound self and transcends what exists, inviting to a heroic life. Mariátegui does not discard the idea of the rationality of the modern project but instead points out the power of myth in creating alternative rationality, worthy of an authentic life.

The myth renews the community's ties and provides common codes of interpretation and intervention in reality, which is why, at some point, it is what produces the community. However, myth should not be understood as a fictional construction, a 'deception' that allows for the instrumental utilization of the masses: it emanates from the history of each people. It is the tense but inseparable articulation of millennial tendencies and emerging processes. For people's organizations, it is about understanding the mobilizing force of the myth of our people and not about creating a new myth alien to popular sensibilities.

* This concept comes from the readings of the French philosopher Georges Sorel, but is reinterpreted and qualified by Mariátegui.

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THE SUBALTERN CLASSES IN LATIN AMERICA: THE PROBLEM OF THE INDIAN

Mariátegui is a witness to a period of constant indigenous uprisings in Peru. Stripped of their lands, semi-enslaved under the gamonal system, and permanently under violence, many communities led rebellions and joined causes with the labour and student movements and the intelligentsia. As a contemporary of González Prada, Valcárcel, and Ugarte, Mariátegui carefully follows 'the problem of the Indian'.* Moreover, in this intellectual climate he revitalizes the thesis of Inca communism, not as a restoration of a lost idyllic past, but as part of the national and Andean cultural matrix: the study of the Peruvian reality is inseparable from the question of the Indian.

Amauta recognizes the potential of an indigenous subject without abandoning the class perspective. Rejecting determinism and evolutionism, he understands the heterogeneity of oppressed subjects and proposes to articulate to the labour movement, the indigenous, student,

* This is the title of the famous second section of the book **Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality**, published for the first time in 1928, in Lima.

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peasant struggles, and even the women's struggle. An example of the latter is found in the article compiled here, 'Feminist Demands' (1924), which is very innovative within the context in which it was written. Mariátegui does not essentialize a revolutionary subject, but instead discovers transformative potential in subalternity, in the multiplicity of experiences of the oppressed and, above all, in their capacity for agency, in their will for emancipation, to the extent that this power is found anchored in the subjects' history.

THE PROFOUND SELF:

A NEW SOCIALIST ETHICS

Mariátegui's legacy is also linked to his disdain for the empty shell that life offers under the logic of instrumental rationality. What does socialism have to offer to our peoples? What does socialism have to offer to a worker, a peasant, a young woman, an Indian? Mariátegui believes profoundly in the need for a horizon of hope as the driving force of a new civilizational project and new rationality that allows the societal fabric to be recomposed, guided by a new socialist ethic. For this reason, the Peruvian intellectual does not propose a surgical separation between the society

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of now and a future society. Instead, he values prefigurative experiences and exalts the weight of collective subjectivity as carriers of a true socialist ethics. Recuperating the historical character of praxis in Inca communities, he offers economic, social, and political alternatives typical of the Indo-American people to dispute the daily forms and contents of the ruling classes, in a kind of dialectic between the past and the future.

This book also contains the article 'Ethics and Socialism' (1928), which in the middle of an open polemic with revisionists of his time, highlights the ethical component of the socialist project. This key invites us to think: What is the ethical content of our political project? What are the elements of practical socialism in our daily work, in our base's militancy, in our territories, in our organization?

INTERNATIONALIST NATIONALISM:

FORGING A SITUATED LEFT

In a famous book about Mariátegui, Flores Galindo*

* We refer to **La agonía de Mariátegui: la polémica con la Komintern** [Mariátegui's Agony: The Controversy with the Comintern], the book by Alberto Flores Galindo.

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indicates that the experience of exile generated two ideas in Amauta: defence of the national and the need for internationalism. Mariátegui is not only an avid international expert and analyst but on his return to Peru in 1923 commits himself to strengthen the organization of the subaltern classes on an international scale: contributing to the Red International of Labour Unions and the Third Communist International. Despite sustaining serious differences with the stagist and standardized approaches of the Third International, he continues to intervene in it as a really existing organization of the international left, which is why he receives strong criticism from Aprismo.* This is proof of his anti-sectarianism and a fully comprehensive vision of the historical moment since a political force that lacks geopolitical perspective and supranational strategy is short-sighted and is destined to run into the same stone again and again, until falling.

Mariátegui's internationalism is combined with the prevailing need to understand national processes. His

* The Latin American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) was created in 1924 by Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre. Mariátegui and a group of militants and close intellectuals were part of it, but their differences grew, leading to a rupture in 1928.

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journalistic collaboration in the magazine **Mundial** is part of this legacy, assiduously writing the section 'Let's Peruvianize Peru'. The generalization of the State form as a mode of organization and social domination forces him to understand the national processes for a successful political intervention and, in this sense, he rejects numerous proposals of the Third International that propose the same form of political intervention in the different national realities that made up the International.

The legacies we list, as well as the articles compiled here, are just an arbitrary sampling of Amauta's prolific work. His thinking and practice maintain an enormous validity and teach us to de-essentialize political processes, placing the focus on the reality in which we live, and to put our greatest organizational and human effort into living a heroic life in pursuit of a new socialist rationality.

The Current Significance of José Carlos Mariátegui*

Florestan Fernandes

Lima, 1894–1930

A Peruvian thinker and politician, he was the first American intellectual who applied the Marxist historical-materialist method, in a rigorous fashion, to the concrete reality of Hispanic America. In 1919, on a scholarship, he moved to Italy, where he experienced the influence of Marxist thinkers. On his return to Peru in 1923, he joined the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA), led by Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre. After leaving the ranks of the APRA, he launched the journal **Amauta** (1926–1930), through which his political theories were disseminated. In 1928, he played a key role in founding the Peruvian Communist Party. In that same year, he

* Originally published in commemoration of his centennial in **Anuario Mariateguiano**, Lima, **Amauta**, vol. 6, no. 6 (1994).

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published his masterwork, **Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality**.

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The recourse to the diverse realities between Europe and Latin America, as a defence against Eurocentrism, was already a characteristic of the Latin American intellectual movement of the time. It was already present, for example, in the discourse of Haya [de la Torre]. It was only with Mariátegui, a short while thereafter, that the passage to an entirely new cognitive perspective occurred, although it is unclear if this was the product of a conscious construct. It was not, however, systematic.

—Anibal Quijano, 1991

Mariátegui's contributions have been widely discussed: spanning from his overall education, his intellectual and political maturity, his reading of Marxism and of the multiplicity of themes he approached with originality and creativity, to relations with the surrounding and foreign historical world, and his depth, integrity, and particularly audacious demeanour. None of these issues or characteris-

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tics have been discussed exhaustively. He was, however, able to escape the missteps of collective memory, and his presence overcame all sorts of isolation that threatened his work while he was still alive. This happened because he was more than 'radical yeast' to be used against the existing order—but was rather an authentic revolutionary, who wielded pioneering influence with deep roots in American reality.

We are particularly interested in what he would represent today, given the peculiarities of his thought and action, in the present day's tragic stage of negation of socialism. Oligopoly capitalism, automated and 'global', seem to have forever suppressed the various currents of anarchism, socialism, and communism. Marxism, in particular, is no longer thought of as reflecting the humanity that is to come and its future, but rather as musty trifles from mid-nineteenth century England and France. According to this dominant reading of events, shattered by the heyday of the Cold War, its set of inherent weaknesses and paradoxes would have drowned 'dogmatic ideologues' with their exotic delusions. Goodbye Marxism, goodbye illusions! . . .

To confront the inquiries proposed here is quite the

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venture. Yet, the significance of Marxism set off bright sparks over the practical and theoretical predicaments that Mariátegui faced. This in moments in which hardy hopes were revealed and in which the conflicts were barely unveiling the seeds of a foreseeable evolution. He did not use narrow devices and succumb, less than other prominent figures of Marxism, to the accommodations that blinded or paralysed successive generations of experienced revolutionaries.

That Mariátegui would not swallow the mystified adage of 'socialism is dead' is obvious. He knew, from a ripened perspective, that capitalism cannot solve 'human problems', which it generates and multiplies. Schumpeter's 'axiom', according to which capitalism would only succumb through its own successes, could never square in his mind. His conviction was clear: the progresses of capitalism result in a geometrical increase in barbarism. This reality has always been underestimated by the Eurocentric perspective. A Peruvian Marxist, however, has no reason to make this mistake. One need only look to the past or the present. Successes and progresses always bring with them growing contradictions—which, in the fatal extreme, can be implosive. A civilization that rests on wealth, on grandeur,

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and on power by whichever means, requires a social system of exclusion, oppression, and repression. It can maintain and reproduce itself by freeing its fascist and racist potentialities, that is, by destroying nature, humanity, and culture. Its own structure, functioning, and historical rhythms are what decimate its foundations and durability. It does not matter if the historical agents are the proletariat or all those who repudiate iniquity as a lifestyle.

For this reason, a conversation with Mariátegui must be characterized by a preference for a coherence not seen in the mainstream. That which is held to be an 'open society' or a 'social-democratic order' closes itself to the immense majority (whether silent or contesting) and offers 'democracy' only to the elite in power (that is, to the elite of the dominant classes). Not all techniques, institutions, and social values of this civilization are covered by the issue at hand; rather, its axiological and technological, but also asphyxiating and uncoercively corrosive, foundations. Therefore, today, Mariátegui—unlike many anarchists, social-democrats, socialists, and communists—would find the fundamental inquiry within himself: How can one represent and explain the historical totality constitutive of

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automated monopoly capitalism? What does it offer that is new to the evolution of humanity and of 'post-modern civilization'? What does it hold for those below, for the 'scum', for the inactive 'mechanical labourer', for the lower and intermediary strata of the middle classes? What does it wrest from the periphery, sub-capitalist or capitalist-developing, and those countries in which the slow transition to socialism has not yet been ravaged? Were science, technology, and rationalized technocracy, at last, placed in service of 'free and equal men' or do they merely serve the Roman conception of wealth, grandeur and power—also found in the United States's 'manifest destiny' and in the constellation of powers that embody the same aspiration of achieving it? And what is the civilizational essence of this ultramodern capitalism? Does it hold the propensity for the abolition of classes, class domination, and class society? Or does it conceal them behind a mirage through which a concealed 'ideology' reappears with a strength not felt before—in 'neoliberalism'?

The works **Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality** and **Defence of Marxism** outline Mariátegui's stance. This organic intellectual of the revolution does not betray himself

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nor the ideals, the certainties, and the hopes that transform them into a reality whether nearby or remote. The lucky ones experience the decisive moments of the revolution. Others have to labour for its coming or against the adversities that arrest them and seem to suppress them 'forever'. They have their political faculty amplified and must refine their critical qualities: on the one hand, because they have to go all the way in—with no misgivings or weakness, because this could foster demoralization or encourage them to join the victors for reasons of circumstance; on the other hand, because proletarian revolutions broke out in societies characterized by unequal development, late against the backdrop of the resources of capitalist civilization, and incorrigibly poor, 'colonized' or neocolonial and dependent. Marxism does not abridge 'recipes', whether for the 'ideal society' or for means through which to achieve the transition itself or communism. The revolutionary optics advanced by the disseminated Eurocentric illusions do not proceed from Marx nor Engels, who relate with the proletariat and their miserable living conditions in the passage from simple reproduction to accelerated accumulation. Nothing crumbled 'forever'. But rather, the difficulties that are inherent in a revolution come

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to light. This revolution, one of such complexity, strives for a new society, a new civilization, and a new human.

I see in Mariátegui the purest and most capable Marxist intellectual for the task of discerning what came to be; and, if he were alive, to delineate the path to triumph that connects, dialectically, the third capitalist revolution to the mature cornucopia of revolutionary Marxism. Marx made reference once to the various possible Marxisms. The attendant mistakes of Eurocentrism's and Bolshevism's supremacy, with Marxism as a political philosophy at their heart, irradiate from a historical obfuscation. They believed in the inevitability of that which they should provoke and guide as collective agents. They forgot the claim central of Marx about the different degrees of capitalist development and its 'natural' impact on the course of revolutions, both capitalist and socialist. By simplifying Marxism, they made their practical tasks more difficult and blocked or weakened historic rhythms of both revolutions, catenated by Marx and Engels objectively and within the concrete notion of 'permanent revolution'. The distance that separates Mariátegui from de la Torre, for example, originates in his uncensored understanding of Marxism. He was the only

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one who understood the slow and gradual rhythms of the Peruvian revolution and the incessant acceleration of processes that impress themselves on nationalism, populism, and anti-imperialism. A victory of these movements would only ground in reality the historical premises of the decisive revolutionary cycle, which Haya de la Torre neither sensed nor desired. It is, thus, evident how far Mariátegui transcends the orbit of the triumphant Marxism of his time, and how he shares with us the need to go further or perish—the direct challenge brought forth by the juncture of the end of the twentieth century with the twenty-first as regards socialism and communism.

Never has that which appears to be dead been so very alive and blazing. The contradictions present in today's monopoly capitalism have shortened the range of motion even for the social-democracy associated with the reproduction of the order. The Cold War and the recovery of North American hegemony gather alongside the continental capitalist conglomerates and join the market's unprecedented expansion, propelled by the interaction between finance capital, gigantic companies, and automated technocracy. However, monopoly capitalism

has lost the ability to hide behind the mirror. It cannot conceal, ideologically speaking, the peripheries that are born, that grow in and through it. 'Neoliberalism' is reduced to a rudimentary representation of the capitalist mode of production; and the growing internal and external abuses do not feed any utopia ('liberal and libertarian'). In this manner, when socialism and communism are withdrawn from the historical scene, a sentiment of anti-capitalist dissatisfaction is injected and instigated in the masses. At the same time, those countries that remained faithful to Marxism and communism (despite appearances), like China and Cuba, represent sites of tension and perform the role of 'dangerous allies' or assume the riskier role of 'pseudo-satellization'. We thus live in a historical situation rife for socialism and revolutionary Marxism—circumstances that instigate dissatisfaction from the inside out and lead to one of possible solutions, in their connection to socialism and Marxism, **as an alternative to the totalitarian social order that ignores its structures and real dynamisms.** Those countries that have yet to set themselves free from the revolutionary maternal womb do everything they can, even if through teetering, to reconcile the 'neoliberal' pressures

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with the continuity and strengthening of the pre-transition to socialism. In preparation, they define their field on the world stage against 'capitalist globalization'.

Mariátegui did not come to witness this tragic transaction. He did, however, grasp the direction towards which monopoly capitalism was heading—visible in its innards in Latin America (and particularly in Peru), and apprehended with excruciating clarity the clashes between theory and Marxist praxis in the USSR (and how this equation panned out externally, on account of the architecture and the relation between means and ends in the Communist International). He was always discrete in his unwavering defence of Marxism. His discretion was, however, born out of a dialectic embryo, not a naive propensity for forging loyalties devoid of any revolutionary meaning. He distanced himself from something close to vulgar heresy; without, however, conflating Marxism with the more or less egregious deviations of the post-Bolshevik Russian Revolution and its international diffusion. He evoked iniquitous suspicions and ended up getting involved in misunderstandings that culminated in his being ignored. This dramatic experience, which was also observed with other personalities with similar

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notoriety, attributed greater depth to his Marxist perspective. I see it as the primary factor of his historical perspective's grandeur and the solidity in the content acquired by his vision of Marxism, in all of its developments.

Suffering, self-mastery, and conscious sublimation of hopes and deceptions allowed him to interpret the present as anticipation of the future. He avoided banalities, for they did not square within him and with his relation with a complex bipolarized world. And, like Gramsci, he rid himself of the chains that could, in other psychological, moral, and political circumstances, force him to capitulate or to become alienated. He showed not only his resilience. He proved himself to be the quintessential Marxist intellectual in Latin America. It is a pity, alas, that he was so restrained by the exposure of his discoveries and apprehensions. In addition to his illustrious status as an 'apostle of Marxism', he traces Marxism's historical premises as a theory and praxis, in the universe in which he put together his arsenal (delimiting, implicitly or explicitly, how those premises are defined, concretely, in the Latin Americas of his time). Nothing distances us further from the 'death of socialism' and the 'end of communism'.

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As a thinker, he never simplified things for anybody. Democracy was never a 'universal value', that is, a value in and of itself. In the most precise tradition of classical Marxism, it was not held as an institution to be inherited, but rather one that would need to be built collectively by human beings, alongside a movement that has been interrupted precisely by bourgeois class domination. The transition should disrupt the inertia and revamp the process in terms of new contradictions, for the logical and historical premise of the majority's constitution and dissolution will be of a socialist nature. Its plentitude would depend, however, on the socialist means and techniques of collective self-emancipation, capable of sustaining, intensifying and renewing the advent of communism. Class struggle would have to be exhausted, in historical terms, for this to happen. The jargon around 'traitors to Marxism', which rationalizes their scandalous 'democratic-bourgeois' conversion with empty formulas, is out of place and presupposes an ineffable mystification. From this angle, Mariátegui is the beacon that lights, within the poverty and late-development of Latin America, the insurmountable limits of capitalist civilization and the elementary demands of 'civilization

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without barbarism', which the proletarian revolutions failed to achieve. Was it too early? Did they lose their way? These are questions that only history as process could answer. Mariátegui's equations classified precisions found in the classical tradition, paradoxically, as if he were a Max Weber in service of communism (repeating, in a way, Gramsci's tragedy).

It is only natural that Peru occupy a privileged place in Mariátegui's thought. He forges on, nevertheless, next to Marxist tradition. Peru cannot be decoupled from the various Americas and from the passive-active onset of all those involved in the historical worlds of the '**conquistadores**', ancient and modern. His condition as Peruvian is basic. He had behind him and in his gaze an entire civilization, the destiny of its bearers and its wreckage. This propelled him to study the past and the present in such a way that no other competent Marxist could. And this required of him not only to search for analogies and differences that proceeded either from the homologous situation of 'emerging nations' from the Americas of the Iberian matrix, or from the fluctuating character of colonization and independence as processes of long duration. His sociological intelligence was, therefore,

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propelled to macro-historical investigation in the Marxist model. The horizon navigated is vast and required that he travel to Europe, the original source of the type of direct colonization put into practice by the invaders-explorers, and in the United States, pioneers of a style of despotic and devastating imperialism.

The summary provided above is superfluous and unnecessary. I took the risk because the explanation sheds light on what our polymorphic intellectual sought in his studies, in Europe and in his focused investigations. He did not adhere to Marxism because it was fashionable. His travels to Europe began under diverse intellectual auspices, which could have led him through other, less harsh paths. The **Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality** allows us to probe into what may have led him to nosedive without turning to these paths; and, later, surpassing them, why he aspired to enrich Marxism above and beyond the Eurocentric circles. Those who read Marx's brief but powerful essay on India might risk drawing a parallel—yet it would be totally inaccurate. In another of Marx's writings, his introduction to the **Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right** would not be unfounded. Here, Marx inaugurates

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the theme of the sociology of dependence in European thought to speak of Germany's relations with France. Mariátegui explored this theme in a less painful and cruel manner. The parallel, while brilliant, is equally inaccurate.* Mariátegui's attraction to Marxism, in spite of, at moments, very strong and divergent influences, sprouts from a discovery of an answer to his anxiety to observe, represent, and explain historical processes of long duration; and of an attendant revolutionary proposal, which articulates, dialectically, past, present, and future. Colonization and decolonization, social revolution, being Peruvian and Latin American, were all irreversibly intertwined. The capture of Mariátegui's intelligence was not due to the grandeur of Marx as a philosopher, a critic of existing social science and a combatant for consequential revolutionary socialism. He took deeper roots in the elucidation of being, in the

* Here, Fernandes is speaking of possible comparisons, or parallels, that could be drawn between Marx's two referenced ventures into explaining what has been denominated as dependence/dependency in Latin American scholarship (or even core-periphery relations), on the one hand, and an attempt to look beyond the European experience (an escape from Eurocentrism), on the other. We could restate his reading of both of these writings as not 'enriching] Marxism above and beyond Eurocentric circles'.—Tr.

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integral understanding of a native civilization stricken by colonization, and in the need to break with an opprobrium that the latter could only explain in part.

I believe that this global approach seizes open intellectual propensities (due to his talent and to the cultural opportunities of Peruvian society and the European world) and determines the reasons for choosing the Marxism of a refined intellectual, of vast culture and of many concerns; and elucidates why this choice had reached Mariátegui's mind and heart so deeply. Understand, however, that these same reasons superimpose themselves on an equally acute creative impulse, which undid in him the condition of proselyte.* As his inquests progress, he measures himself by the purest and most rigorous Marxist tradition; and he rises, within cultural benchmarks—both Peruvian and Latin American—to the level of the founders of Marxism, as a producer of knowledge and a man of action. If he were still living today, he would wage many battles for and against

* The 'condition of proselyte' refers to the dogmatic and almost religious adherence to Marxist doctrine that characterized some Marxists. It is placed here both to present a criticism of that treatment of Marxism, as well as to affirm that Mariátegui, against any dogmatism, is able to evade this tendency through his 'creative impulse'.—Tr.

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the displacements of proletarian revolutions and he would not evade the constraints imposed by this era, which widens and complicates the theoretical and practical tasks of those who claim to be Marxists.

What marks this last incursion into Mariátegui is evident. After engaging with the saga and downfall of the Incan civilization and examining the incisive aspects of how the economy, society and the state in Peru evolved, he became well versed in the conflicts of outcasts, the working classes, the caste of lords and the ruling classes, which asserted the socialist revolution as the point of arrival and departure of a new era. He learned, in life, that capitalist civilization holds a disproportionate capacity for self-defence and counterattack to defeat insurrections and to hinder rising proletarian revolutions. Its leaders resort, simultaneously, to market forces, technological developments, science, mass culture, development and retraction of production, militarism, transitory or permanent alliances, geopolitics, diplomacy, war, etc., to shatter or block internal insurrections and promising revolutions abroad. This speaks to a civilization with the capacity to interfere in crucial historical rhythms and to take immediate and long-term advantage of this.

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It can, however, face internal and external confrontations. Only revolutionary socialism can interfere in this complex process and unleash mass action to restrain, weaken, and destroy it. Socialist movement is not merely an alternative for social reform. It erupts as the only threat to the existence and survival of such a civilization.

Mariátegui's defence of Marxism is founded on these two poles. The historical rhythms that capitalist civilization unleashes and regulates within and without it. Socialism carries the potential capacity to implode this civilization, also from within or without, imposing faster, stronger and more destructive historical rhythms. It is not a case for making comparative inroads. The facts spoke for themselves (or had, at least until the end of the Cold War). Like other Marxists (and non-Marxist nationalist revolutionaries), Mariátegui upheld the view that the erosion that had begun would not reestablish itself and would tend to spread following the Russian Revolution and several insurrections that broke out far and wide. In this context, the resumed aggressions by capitalist initiatives could evoke such slogans as: 'socialism has died' or 'communism is

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over'. Its empirical and practical base of support was weak. Mariátegui's intellectual horizon was prepared to stave off such formulations, despite divergences and incongruities in socialist practice being prominent in his observations and critical analyses. Confidence in revolutionary socialism and Marxism prevailed, which turned him into the legendary master figure of revolutionaries in Peru and the Americas.

The tragic blow came after his death. The Soviet Union overinvested in the Cold War and in its developments, to the detriment of valuable political compensation for the so-called socialist world. On some occasions, this led to the auspicious defeat of opponents, who resorted to methods of clandestine struggle, supported by internal dissatisfactions, hidden race, ethnic, religious and class-based conflicts, and by institutions specialized in counterinsurgency, both legal and religious. The apparently unbeatable titan was imploded, impaling its capacity for self-defence and allowing the allies to conquer the strongholds that should function as a periphery (even in the defence of the Soviet core). A collapse occurred in interlinked stages. The pseudoscientific explanation around the 'end of ideologies' was strengthened

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and the slogans around the 'disappearance of socialism' and the 'death of communism' spread. In its place, the **ersatz** was offered as a way to reposition 'neoliberalism' within a universe of oligopolies, conglomerations of economic systems, and 'globalization' as the brand for a new type of imperialism. The sociological analysis of this array of micro and macroeconomic, social, cultural, and political complexes is a formidable venture. One aspect worth noting has to do with the unequal character of these historical rhythms, between capitalist civilization and the emerging semi-socialist civilization. Those historical rhythms that are stronger and faster dislocated the slower and weaker ones. The human forces that sustained these historical rhythms were extremely unequal. A period of long duration of recent history came to an end. The victory of one civilization does not, however, point to the 'death' or 'end' of another. New relations of human forces will have to decide what will survive: civilization with or without barbarism in the long run, or unforeseeable combinations in the present.

This brief summation allows for an inquiry: would the Marxist-Mariáteguian propositions absorb the simplified

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formulas—'disappearance of socialism', 'end of ideologies', 'death of communism'—and would they be complacent with 'neoliberalism'? History has a meaning, on which Mariátegui has always been focused both firmly and lucidly. Peru, now along with the rich and the poor Americas, finds itself at a crossroads. The capitalism of our days is, by its own nature, taken to concentration and centralization. It needs oppression and repression to sustain its reproduction. The challenge is imposed by a 'false consciousness', bourgeois or not, propagated among the elites in power and the miserable and the unemployed who are separated from the 'low' and sometimes 'middle' middle classes (following the North American concepts). Capitalism does not have Aladdin's lamp at its disposal to distribute wealth and return to 'dignified standards of life' for all. In fact, 'neoliberalism' consists of a neocolonial fascism. We, thus, come upon an 'irony of fate'. The spectre of poor and underdeveloped societies in Latin America arose from a contradiction: fascism or socialism? In this context, would Mariátegui's propositions march on as before, following Engels's abbreviation: socialism or barbarism? These

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are propositions that were not swept away by the storm. Mariátegui still stands as a beacon, shining unto the political and intellectual horizon of those who want to confer on Latin Americans the option for Marxism.

TEXTS FOR REFERENCE

For readers with little familiarity around Mariátegui's thought or who desire sources to elucidate his writings, I am including a few extracted and translated citations from the Peruvian editions:

1. 'The agrarian problem presents itself, above all, as the problem of the eradication of feudalism in Peru. This eradication should have already been completed by the democratic bourgeois regime that the independence revolution formally established. But in Peru, we have not had a true bourgeois class, a true capitalist class, in one hundred years as a republic. The old feudal class, camouflaged or disguised as a republican bourgeoisie, has kept their positions. [. . .] There are two expressions of feudalism that have endured: large estates and servitude. These expressions are connected through solidarity and

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substance; their analysis leads us to the conclusion that one cannot eliminate the servitude that weighs on the Indigenous race without eliminating the large estates' (Mariátegui 1972, p. 51). He elucidates, later on: 'We do not so much reject the Spanish heritage as we do the feudal heritage' (ibid., p. 53).

2. 'Peruvian unity is yet to be built; the problem at hand is not that of articulation and coexistence, within the confines of a unified state, of several former small states or free cities. In Peru, the problem of unity goes much deeper, because what is needed is not the merging of plural local and regional traditions, but rather a unity of race, of language, and of feeling born out of the invasion and conquest of an aboriginal Peru by a race that was unable to unite with an indigenous race, eliminate it, nor absorb it' (Mariátegui 1972, p. 206).
3. 'Up to what point might the situation of the Latin American republics resemble that of the semi-colonial countries? The condition of these countries is, without a doubt, semi-colonial; and, to the extent that their capitalism grows and, consequently, the imperialist penetration, this aspect of its economy must necessarily

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become stronger. The national bourgeoisie, however, that find that cooperating with imperialism allows them a source of advantages, feel sufficiently in possession of political power not to be seriously concerned with national sovereignty. These bourgeoisie, in South America, that have not yet become acquainted with yankee military occupation, with the exception of Panama, have no predisposition to recognize the need to fight for a second independence, as was naively assumed by **Aprista** propaganda. The state, or rather, the dominant class, does not seek not even a greater and safer degree of national autonomy. The revolution of independence is relatively close, its myths and symbols very alive in the conscience of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. The illusion of national sovereignty is preserved within its main consequences. The aspiration that a feeling of revolutionary nationalism, similar to those who under distinct conditions represent an anti-imperialist struggle in colonial countries subjugated by imperialism in Asia in these last decades, would firm itself in these social layers would be a grave mistake' (Mariátegui [1929] 1991, p. 203).

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4. 'Capitalism no longer coincides with progress. This is a characteristic fact of the monopoly stage' (Mariátegui 1980, p. 37).
5. 'Marxism, where it proved itself revolutionary—that is, where it was in fact Marxism—never adhered to a passive and rigid determinism. The reformists resisted the Revolution during the post-war revolutionary agitation, under the most rudimentary economic determinism. Reasons which, at a deeper level, could be identified with those of the conservative bourgeoisie, and which exposed the thoroughly bourgeois, not socialist, character of this determinism' (Mariátegui 1980, p. 67).
6. 'Only socialism can solve the problem of an effectively democratic and egalitarian education, in virtue of which each and every member of society receives all of the instruction that his or her capacity grants as a right. The socialist educational regime is the only one that can thoroughly and systematically apply the principles of the unified school, the work school, the school communities and, in general, all the ideals of the contemporary revolutionary pedagogy. The privileges of the capitalist school are incompatible with these principles, for they

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condemn the poor classes to cultural inferiority, making higher education a monopoly of the wealthy' (Mariátegui 1991, p. 155).

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Ethics and Socialism*

José Carlos Mariátegui

'Revolution is, unfortunately, not made with fastings. Revolutionaries from all parts of the world must choose between being the victims of violence or using it. If one does not wish to see one's spirit and one's intelligence serving brute force, one must forcibly resolve to put brute force under the subservience of intelligence and the spirit.' The author of this passage, written more than forty years ago, was José Carlos Mariátegui, founder of the Peruvian Communist Party, a physically feeble man of unstable health who combined a powerful, cold and

* From Mariátegui's **Defensa del Marxismo** (1930). The following is an English translation and introduction first published in **Tricontinental**, Theoretical Organ of the Executive Secretariat of the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, no. 3 (November–December 1967), pp. 20–27. Taken from Marxists Internet Archive, for which it was transcribed by George Georges, July 2010, the text is produced here with slight edits.—Ed.

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lucid intelligence with an exquisite artistic sensitiveness and an incorruptible revolutionary morale. His short life, ended before he was thirty-five, elapsed between long periods of hospitalization and poverty. Jail and the continuous humiliations he suffered did not deter him from accomplishing his life's work, which, given the circumstances he had to cope with, does not cease to stimulate today more and more amazement, as well as the increased attention and admiration of revolutionaries the world over. Suffering from the time he was seven years old from an incipient physical disability which denied him a normal childhood, and when called upon, helping his mother out by working as proofreader in a publishing house, his career as a revolutionary writer began when an army man made a cowardly attack on him for the ideas he expressed in a newspaper article.

The sum total of Mariátegui's work constitutes an ideological struggle against reformism, first and foremost. His work **Defence of Marxism** is imbued with this spirit, and the very founding of the Peruvian Communist Party denounces 'domesticated socialism': 'The ideology we adopt,' states Mariátegui in his thesis of affiliation with

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the Third International, 'is that of militant revolutionary Marxism-Leninism, a doctrine which we wholly and unreservedly adhere to in its philosophical, political and socio-economic aspects. The methods we uphold are those of orthodox revolutionary socialism. We not only rebuke in all their forms the methods and tendencies of the Second International, but oppose them actively.' In this document he did no more than ratify before the world what he had previously made known in a magazine: 'The political sector with which I can never come to terms is the other one: that of mediocre reformism, of domesticated socialism, of Pharisaical democracy. Moreover, if the revolution demands violence, authority, discipline, I am all for violence, authority, discipline. I accept them in block form, with all their horrors, without any cowardly reserves.'

Between 1919 and 1923 Mariátegui made a tour of Europe. It was in Italy where his thought ripened and became richer. In addition to his admiration for the theorist of violence, the revolutionary trade-unionist Georges Sorel, there was his passion for Gobetti, Labriola, and he found in Croce a friend with whom he could

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enter into controversy. Mariátegui was an eyewitness to the great social upheavals which foreshadowed the triumph of Nazism and the reformist preachings of class collaborationism. On his return to Peru, in a work on the world crisis and on the role that the Peruvian proletariat ought to play in it, he wrote:

'... The proletarian forces are divided in two great groupings: reformists and revolutionaries.

There is the faction of those who want to bring about socialism by collaborating politically with the bourgeoisie; and the faction of those who want to bring about socialism by conquering for the proletariat in its entirety political power.' To this global crisis, Mariátegui answered in a vein both aggressive and critical: 'I am of the same opinion as those who believe that humanity is going through a revolutionary period. And I am convinced of the imminent decline of all the social-democratic theses, of all the reformist theses and of all the evolutionist theses.' In another article, he denounced the impotence of reformism to avoid war: 'The thought of Lassallean social-democracy guided the Second International; that is why it proved itself impotent

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before war. Its leaders and sectional corps had become accustomed to a reformist and democratic attitude and resistance to war demanded a revolutionary attitude.'

Defence of Marxism (a work from which we publish here one of its most interesting chapters) constitutes a rebuttal of **Beyond Marxism** by the Belgian revisionist Henri de Man, and of other social-democratic theorists, such as Vandervelde, a rebuttal which arises from revolutionary tenets and from practical positions. Mariátegui, who is brought to task in a controversy over principles, is equally removed from all sectarian and dogmatic standpoints, because he understood that Marxism was never 'a set of principles embodying rigid consequences, similar in all historical climes and all social latitudes'. 'We must strip ourselves radically of all the old dogmatisms,' he wrote, 'of all the discredited prejudices and archaic superstitions.' It is the correct interpretation of Marxist theory that makes him state directly: 'Marx is not present in spirit in all his so-called disciples and heirs. Those who have carried on his ideas are not the pedantic German professors of the Marxist theory of value and surplus value, incapable

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themselves of making any contribution to the doctrine, devoted only to fixing limitations and labels to it; it has rather been the revolutionaries, slandered as heretics' A deplorable article by Mirochevsky, published in **Dialéctica**, in which Mariátegui is grossly characterized as a petty-bourgeois populist, was later impugned by the articles on Mariátegui of Semionov and Shulgovski, both of whom see the great Peruvian Marxist in a totally different light. But even today there are people interested in misrepresenting his political thoughts and actions to the point of belittling his significance from the Liberation Army spokesman he is to that of a sort of moralizing Salvation Army sermonizer. With each passing day, though, this task grows more difficult.

In this chapter, 'Ethics and Socialism', transcribed from his work **Defence of Marxism**, Mariátegui comes to grips with revolutionary ethics, with the ethics of socialism. For the great Peruvian, Marxist revolutionary ethics 'does not emerge mechanically from economic interest, it is formed in the class struggle, engaged in with heroic disposition, with passionate willpower'. And further on, he adds: 'The worker who is indifferent

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to the class struggle, who derives satisfaction from his material well-being and, generally speaking, from his lot in life, will be able to attain a mediocre bourgeois moral standard, but will never be able to raise himself to the level of socialist ethics.'

Some of Mariátegui's works remain unpublished, but those that have been published suffice to make of him one of the most noteworthy Marxists of our time.



The charges that have been brought to bear against Marxism for its attributed unethicity, for its materialistic motives, for the sarcasm with which Marx and Engels deal with bourgeois ethics in their pages, are not new. Neo-revisionist critique does not say, as regards this matter, one single thing which socialist Utopians and all the run-of-the-mill Pharisaical socialists have not said beforehand. But Marx's reinstatement, from the standpoint of ethics, has also been effected by Benedetto Croce—being one of the most fully recognized representatives of idealist philosophy, his judgments will seem to all concerned to carry more weight than any Jesuitic regret over the petty-bourgeois mentality.

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In one of his first essays on historical materialism, confusing the thesis of the lack of ethics inherent in Marxism, Croce wrote the following:

This current has been principally determined by the necessity in which Marx and Engels found themselves, before the various strains of socialist Utopians, of stating that the so-called social question is not a moral question (i.e. according to how it should be interpreted, this question will not be solved by preachings or by moral means), as well as by their severe criticism of class hypocrisy and ideology. It has also been nurtured, as far as I can see, by the Hegelian origin of the thoughts of Marx and Engels for it is known that in Hegelian philosophy ethics loses the rigidity which Kant gave it and which Herbart was later to lend support to. And, finally, the term 'materialism' does not surrender in this connection a shred of efficacy, seeing that the mere term brings immediately to mind the full implications of what is meant by 'interest' and 'pleasure'. But it is evident that the ideality and absoluteness of ethics, in the philosophical sense of such words, are necessary

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assumptions of socialism. Isn't the interest that drives us to create the concept of surplus value a moral or social interest, or whatever term might be used for defining it? In the sphere of pure economic science can one speak of the theory of surplus value? Doesn't the proletariat sell its productive capacity for what it's worth, given its situation in present-day society? And, without this moral assumption, how can the tone of violent indignation and bitter sarcasm, along with Marx's political actions, contained in every page of **Das Kapital**, be accounted for? (**Materialismo Storico ed Economía Marxista**)

I have previously had occasion to set forth this passage from Croce, which led me, in turn, to quote some phrases by Unamuno, in his work entitled **La agonía del cristianismo** ('The Agony of Christianity') and which consequently made me the recipient of a letter by Unamuno himself, who wrote me therein that Marx was more truly a prophet than a professor.

On more than one occasion, Croce has quoted verbatim the passage referred to above. One of his critical conclusions on this subject is precisely 'the negation of the intrinsic

amorality or of the anti-ethicality of Marxism'. And, in this same text, he wonders why no one 'has thought of calling Marx, in the way of extending him a further honour, the Machiavelli of the proletariat', a fact which can be thoroughly and amply explained in the light of the conceptions he formulates in his defence of the author of **The Prince**, who was no less persecuted by regrets of which posterity made him the victim. On the subject of Machiavelli, Croce writes that he 'discloses the necessity and autonomy of politics which is beyond good and moral evil, [that has] laws which it would be of no consequence at all to rebel against, which are immune to [any] sort of exorcism and which cannot be made to take leave of the world with the aid of holy water.'

In Croce's opinion Machiavelli gives evidence of being of 'a divided mind and spirit on politics, of the autonomy of which he has become aware, and he now thinks of it as a corrupting influence for compelling him to sully his hands in dealing with basely ignorant people, and now as a sublime art with which to found and uphold that great institution, the State' (**Elementi di politica**). The similarity between these two cases has been clearly pointed out by Croce in the following terms:

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A case, in some respects analogous to that around which the discussions on Marxian ethics have centred, is the one having to do with the traditional critique on the ethics of Machiavelli; a critique which was brought to fruition by De Sanctis (in the chapter concerning Machiavelli in his **Storia della letteratura**), but a critique which nevertheless recurs quite systematically, and in a work by Professor Villari, one reads that Machiavelli's great imperfection is to be found in the fact that he did not propound the moral question. And I have often asked myself if Machiavelli was bound by contract or in any way obliged to deal with every sort of question, including those in which he took no interest and on which he had nothing to say. It would be tantamount to reproof of those who study chemistry for not delving into the metaphysical principles of matter.

The ethical function of socialism—in regard to which the hurried and summary extravaganzas of Marxists such as Lafargue, no doubt make for error—should be sought out, not in highfalutin decalogues nor in philosophical speculations, which in no way constitute a necessity in the

formulation of Marxian theory, but in creating a morale for the producers by the same process of the anti-capitalist struggle.

'Vainly,' Kautsky has said, 'have the English workers been made the object of moral preachings, of a loftier conception of life, of feelings underlying nobler deeds. The ethics of the proletariat derives from its revolutionary aspirations; from them will it be endowed with more strength and elevation of purpose. That which has saved the proletariat from debasement is the idea of revolution.'

Sorel adds that for Kautsky ethics is always subordinated to the idea of the sublime, and though he disagrees with many official Marxists, who carried to extremes their paradoxes and jokes on the moralists, he nonetheless concurs in that 'Marxists had particular reasons for showing lack of confidence on all that which touched upon ethics; the propagandists of social reforms, the Utopians and the democrats had so repeatedly and misleadingly recurred to the concept of Justice that no one could be denied the right of looking upon all dissertations to this effect as a rhetorical exercise or as a sophistry, destined to lead astray those who were involved in the labour movement'.

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One can ascribe to the influence of Sorel's thought Édouard Berth's apologia on this ethical function of socialism. Daniel Halévy, states Berth,

seems to believe that the exaltation of the producer is bound to harm the man; he attributes to me a completely American enthusiasm for an industrial civilization. But it will not be thus; the life of the free spirit is as dear to me as it is to him, and I am far from believing that in the world there is nothing else save production. It is always, in the end, the old charge levelled against the Marxists, who are held responsible for being, both morally and metaphysically, materialists. Nothing could be more false; historical materialism does not impede in any way whatsoever the highest development of what Hegel calls the free or absolute spirit; quite the contrary, it is its preliminary condition. And our hope is, precisely, that in a society which rests on an ample economic base, made up by a federation of shops where free workers would be inspired by a spirited enthusiasm for production, art, religion and philosophy would in turn be given a prodigious impulse and the frantic and ardent rhythm

resulting from it would simply skyrocket.

Luc Durtain's sagacity, sharpened by a finely wrought characteristically French irony, throws light on this religious-like ascendancy pervading Marxism, a phenomenon which conforms to principles inherent in the constitution of the first socialist country in the world. Historically, it had already been proven by the socialist struggles of the West, that the sublime, such as the proletariat conceives of it, is not an intellectual utopia nor a propagandistic hypothesis.

When Henri de Man, demanding from socialism an ethical content, tries to demonstrate that class interest can not of itself become a sufficiently potent motor of the new order, he does not in any way go 'beyond Marxism', nor does he make amends for things which have not already been pointed out by revolutionary criticism. His revisionism attacks revisionistic trade-unionism, in the practice of which class interest is content with the satisfaction of limited material aspirations. An ethics of producers, as is conceived by Sorel and Kautsky, does not emerge mechanically from economic interest, it is formed in the class struggle, engaged in with heroic disposition, with passionate willpower. It is

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absurd to look for the ethical sentiments of socialism in those trade unions which have fallen under the influence of the bourgeoisie—in which a domesticated bureaucracy has become enervated in its class consciousness—or in the parliamentary groups, spiritually assimilated by the class enemy, regardless of the fact of their combative stand before it as witnessed by their speeches and motions. Henri de Man expresses something which is perfectly superfluous and beside the point when he states: 'The class interest doesn't explain everything. It does not create ethical motives.' These avowals may impress a certain breed of nineteenth-century intellectuals, who, glaringly ignoring Marxist thought, glaringly ignoring the history of the class struggle, facilely imagine, as does Henri de Man, that they can surmount the limits of the Marxian school of thought. The ethics of socialism is formed in the class struggle. If the proletariat is to comply in its moral progress with its historical mission it becomes necessary for it to acquire beforehand a consciousness of its class interests; but in itself, class interest does not suffice. Long before Henri de Man, the Marxists have understood and felt this perfectly. Therein, precisely, arise their stalwart criticisms against

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lubberly reformism. 'Without revolutionary theory, there is no revolutionary action,' Lenin used to repeat, referring to the yellow-streaked tendency to forget historical finality in order to pay attention only to hourly circumstances.

The struggle for socialism instils in workers which take part in it extreme energy and absolute conviction along with an asceticism that forcibly cancels and makes utterly ridiculous any charge levelled against them having to do with their materialistic creed, and formulated on behalf of a theorizing and philosophical ethics. Luc Durtain, after visiting a Soviet school, asked whether he couldn't find in Russia a lay school, to such an extent did he regard of a religious tenor Marxist education. The materialist, if it be one who practices and is religiously devoted to his convictions, can only be distinguished from the idealist by a convention of language. (Unamuno, touching upon another aspect of the opposition between idealism and materialism, states that 'since what is matter to us is no more than an idea, materialism is idealism'.)

The worker who is indifferent to the class struggle, who derives satisfaction from his material well-being and, generally speaking, from his lot in life, will be able to attain

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a mediocre bourgeois moral standard, but will never be able to raise himself to the level of socialist ethics. And it is preposterous to think that Marx ever advocated, or ever wanted to separate the worker from his source of livelihood, or ever wanted to deprive him of all that which binds him to his work, so that the class struggle might take hold of him more firmly, more completely. This conjecture is only conceivable in those who abide by far-fetched Marxist speculations, as Lafargue, the apologist of the right as the individual to idleness, was wont to do.

The mill, the factory, act on the worker's mind and soul. The union, the class struggle, continue and complete the worker's educational process. 'The factory,' Gobetti points out,

offers the precise vision of the coexistence of the social interests: the solidarity of labour. The individual grows accustomed to feeling himself part of the productive process, an indispensable as well as an insufficient part. Here we have the most perfect school of pride and humility. I will never forget the first impression the workers gave me, when I undertook a visit to the Fiat furnaces, one of

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the few English-like modern capitalistic enterprises in Italy. I felt in those workers a self-possessed attitude, an unassuming assertiveness, a contempt for every manner of dilettantism. Whomever lives in a factory possesses the dignity of work, the willingness for making sacrifices and the habit of resisting fatigue. A way of life severely founded on a sense of tolerance and interdependence which induces punctuality, strictness and perseverance in the worker. These virtues of capitalism are offset by an almost bleak asceticism; whereas, on the other hand, self-restrained suffering nourishes, when exasperation sets in, the courage to fight and the instinct for taking a defensive stand politically. English adulthood, the capacity for believing in precise ideologies, of undergoing perils in order to make them prevail, the unbending willpower of carrying forward with dignity the political struggle, are born of this apprenticeship, the significant implications of which are ushering in the greatest revolution since the rise of Christianity.

In this severe environment of persistency, of effort, of tenacity, the energies of European socialism have been

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forged, which, even in those countries where parliamentary reformism holds a big sway over the masses, offer Latin Americans an admirable example of continuity and duration. In different Latin American countries the socialist parties and the trade-union members have suffered a hundred defeats. However, each new year the elections, protest movements, any rally whatever, either of an ordinary or extraordinary character, will always find these masses greater in number and more obstinate. Renan recognized that which was mystical and religious in such a social creed. Quite justifiably Labriola praised German socialism:

This truly new and imposing case of social pedagogy, i.e. that in such great numbers of workers and middle-class sectors a new conscience should take shape, in which equally coincide a guiding perception of the economic circumstance—a stimulant conducive to stepping up the struggle—and socialist propaganda, understood as the goal and arriving point.

If socialism should not be achieved as a social order, this formidable edifying and educational accomplishment

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would prove more than enough to justify it in history. The previously quoted passage from de Man admits this postulation when he states, though with a different intention, that 'the essential thing in socialism is the struggle in its behalf', a phrase which is very much reminiscent of those in which Bernstein advised the socialists to busy themselves primarily with the movement and not with the movement's results, by which, according to Sorel, the revisionist leader expressed a much more philosophical meaning than what he himself might have suspected. De Man does not ignore the pedagogical and spiritual function of the trade union, though his own experience was inherently and mediocly social-democratic.

'The trade-union organizations,' he observes

contribute in a much greater measure than the majority of the workers suppose, and almost all of the employers, to binding together more vigorously the ties between the workers and their regular chores. They obtain this result almost without their knowing it, by trying to keep up qualification and efficiency and by developing industrial education, by organizing the right the workers have to

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union inspection and applying democratic norms to shop discipline by the system of delegates and sections, etc. In so doing, the union renders the worker a service a great deal less problematical, considering him a citizen of a future city, rather than seeking the remedy in the disappearance of all the psychological relations between the worker and the environment of the shop.

But the Belgian neo-revisionist, notwithstanding his idealistic protestations, discovers the advantage and merit of all this in the increasing attachment of the worker to his material well-being and in the measure in which the latter factor makes a Philistine of him. Paradoxes of petty-bourgeois idealism!

Anniversary and Balance Sheet*

José Carlos Mariátegui

With this issue, **Amauta** reaches its second birthday. Before its first birthday it was on the verge of going under with the ninth issue. Unamuno's warning—'a magazine that gets old degenerates'—would have been the epitaph for a vibrant but ephemeral work. But **Amauta** was not born to last for only one episode, but to be and to make history. If history is the creation of men and ideas, we can face the future with hope. Our strength comes from men and ideas.

The primary objective of all work that the likes of **Amauta** have imposed is this: to last. History is endurance. The isolated cry, no matter how large its echo, is not valid;

* 'Aniversario y Balance', **Amauta**, no. 17 (September 3, 1928); repr. in **Ideología y Política**, in **Obras Completas**, 18th ed. (Lima: Editorial Amauta, 1988), vol. 13, pp. 246–50. Reproduced here from **José Carlos Mariátegui: An Anthology**, ed. Harry E. Vanden and Marc Becker (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011), pp. 127–32.—Ed.

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the constant, continual persistent sermon is what matters. Ideas that are perfect, absolute, abstract, indifferent to the facts, to changing and moving reality do not work; ideas that are germinal, concrete, dialectic, workable, rich in potential and capable of movement do. **Amauta** is neither a diversion nor a game of pure intellectuals; it professes a historic idea, it confesses an active, mass-based faith, it obeys a contemporary social movement. In the struggle between two systems, between two ideas, it does not occur to us to feel like spectators or to invent a third way. Extreme originality is a literary and anarchic preoccupation. On our banner, we inscribe one great, simple word: socialism. (With this slogan we affirm our absolute independence from the idea of a nationalist party, petty bourgeois and demagogic.)

We have wanted **Amauta** to have an organic, autonomous, distinct, national development. Because of this we began by looking for a title in Peruvian tradition. **Amauta** should not be a plagiarized term or a translation. We took an Inca word to create it anew. So that Indian Peru, Indigenous America might feel that this magazine was theirs. And we presented **Amauta** as the voice of a movement and of a generation. In these two years, **Amauta** has

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been a magazine of ideological definition that has gathered in its pages the propositions of whoever has wanted to speak with sincerity and competency in the name of this generation and this movement.

To us, the work of ideological definition seems completed. In any case, we have already heard categorical and solicited opinions being expressed. All debate is opened up for those who opine, not for those who remain silent. **Amauta's** first act has concluded. In the second act, it does not have to call itself a magazine of the 'new generation', of the 'vanguard', of 'the left'. To be faithful to the Revolution, it is enough to be a socialist magazine.

'New generation', 'new spirit', and 'new sensibility' are all terms that have grown old. The same must be said of these other labels: 'vanguard', 'left', 'renovation'. They were new and good in their moment. We have made use of them to establish provisional demarcations, for reasons contingent on topography and orientation. Today they have already become too generic and dubious. Gross counterfeits enter under these labels. The new generation will not effectively be new unless it finally knows itself to be adult and creative.

In this America of small revolutions, the same word,

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revolution, frequently lends itself to misunderstanding. We have to reclaim it rigorously and intransigently. We have to restore its strict and exact meaning. The Latin American Revolution will be nothing more and nothing less than a stage, a phase of the world revolution. It will simply and clearly be the socialist revolution. Add all the adjectives you want to this word according to a particular case: 'anti-imperialist', 'agrarian', 'national-revolutionary'. Socialism, supposes, precedes, and includes all of them.

It is only possible to effectively oppose a capitalist, plutocratic, imperialist United States with a socialist Latin or Iberian America. The epoch of free competition in the capitalist economy has ended in all fields and all aspects. We are in the age of monopolies, that is to say, empires. The Latin American countries arrived late to capitalist competition. The first positions are already definitively assigned. In the capitalist order, the destiny of these countries is that of simple colonies. The tension between languages, races, spirits has no decisive meaning. It is ridiculous to still speak of the contrast between a materialist Anglo-Saxon America and an idealist Latin America, between a blond Rome and a pallid Greece. These are all definitively

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discredited topics. Rodó's myth* no longer touches souls in a useful or productive manner, nor has it ever done so. We inexorably discard all these caricatures and semblances of ideology and do a serious, frank accounting of reality.

Socialism is certainly not an Indo-American doctrine. But no doctrine, no contemporary system is or could be. And although socialism, like capitalism, may have been born in Europe it is not specifically or particularly European. It is a worldwide movement in which none of the countries that move within the orbit of Western civilization are excluded. This civilization drives towards universality with the force and means that no other civilization possessed. Indo-America can and should have individuality and style in this new world order, but not its own culture or fate that is unique. One hundred years ago we owed our independence as nations to the rhythm of Western history, whose compass has inexorably moved us since colonization. Liberty, Democracy, Parliament, Sovereignty of the People—all the great words that our men of that time pronounced, came

* Mariátegui here refers to the theories of José Enrique Rodó, as expressed in his eulogy of Latin America's blithe spirit, **Ariel**. See José Enrique Rodó, **Ariel** (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988).—Ed.

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from the European repertoire. History, however, does not measure the greatness of these men for the originality of these ideas, but for the efficacy and genius with which they served them. And the peoples who have marched farthest in the continent are those where these ideas took root best and most quickly. The interdependence, the solidarity of peoples and continents, however, was in that time much less than in this. Socialism, finally, is in the American tradition. The most advanced primitive communist organization that history records is that of the Incas.

We certainly do not want socialism in Latin America to be a copy or imitation. It should be a heroic creation. We have to give life to Indo-American socialism with our own reality, in our own language. Here is a mission worthy of a new generation.

In Europe, parliamentary degeneration and socialist reformism have imposed specific categories after the war. In those peoples where this phenomenon has not occurred because socialism appeared recently in the historic process, the old, great word conserves its greatness intact. It will maintain it in history, in the future, when the contingent, conventional demarcations that today separate practices

and methods have disappeared.

Capitalism or Socialism. This is the problem of our epoch. We do not anticipate the syntheses, the transactions that can only operate through history. We think and feel like Gobetti* that history is reformist on the condition that the revolutionaries act as such. Marx, Sorel, Lenin, these are the men who make history.

It is possible that many artists and intellectuals will note that we absolutely revere the authority of masters irrevocably involved in the process of '**la trahison des clercs**'.[†] We confess, without scruple, that we are in the domain of the temporal, the historic, and that we have no intention of abandoning them. We leave the spirits incapable of accepting and understanding their epoch to their sterile afflictions and tearful metaphysics. Socialist materialism

* Piero Gobetti, an influential Italian writer of the day who espoused a radical liberalism.—Ed.

† Julien Benda, **La trahison des clercs** (Paris: B. Grasset, 1927), available in English as Julien Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007). Benda was a French philosopher and novelist whose polemical work gained him notoriety for arguing that Europeans had lost the ability to reason dispassionately about political and military matters, instead becoming apologists for crass nationalism, warmongering, and racism.—Ed.

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encompasses all the possibilities of spiritual, ethical and philosophical ascension. And never have we felt more rabid, more efficacious and more religiously idealist than when we solidly place our ideas and our feet on that which is material.

Feminist Demands*

José Carlos Mariátegui

The first feminist concerns are gestating in Peru. There are some cells, some nuclei of feminism. The proponents of nationalism, of extremism, probably think: here is another exotic idea, another foreign idea that is injected into the Peruvian mind.

We reassure these apprehensive people a little. We must not see feminism as an exotic idea, a foreign idea. We must see it simply as a human idea. It is an idea that is characteristic of a civilization and peculiar to an era. And thus it is an idea with citizenship rights in Peru, as in any other segment of the civilized world.

Feminism has not appeared in Peru artificially or arbitrarily. It has appeared as a result of the new forms of

* **Mundial**, vol. V, no. 238 (December 19, 1924); repr. in **Temas de Educación**, in **Obras Completas** (Lima: Editorial Amauta, 1970), vol. 14, pp. 129–33. Reproduced here from **José Carlos Mariátegui: An Anthology**, pp. 367–72.—Ed.

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intellectual and manual labour of women. Women with real feminist alliances are women who work, women who study. The feminist idea thrives among women who do intellectual work and among women who do manual work: university professors, labourers. They find an environment conducive to feminism's development in the university classroom, which attracts a growing number of Peruvian women, and in the labour unions, which women from factories join and organize, enjoying the same rights and obligations as men. Apart from this spontaneous and organic feminism, which draws its adherents from the various categories of women's work, there is here, as elsewhere, a dilettante feminism, which is a bit pedantic and a bit mundane. Feminists in this category convert feminism into a simple literary exercise, a mere sport of fashion.

No one should be surprised that not all women unite in a single feminist movement. Feminism necessarily has different colours, different trends. One can distinguish three main trends in feminism, three substantive colours: bourgeois feminism, petty-bourgeois feminism, and proletarian feminism. Each of these feminisms made their demands in a different way. Bourgeois women are in feminist

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solidarity with the interest of the conservative class. The proletarian woman consubstantiates her feminism with a faith in the revolutionary masses to create a future society. The class struggle, made historical fact and not theoretical assertion, is reflected in feminist terms. Women, like men, are reactionary, centrist, or revolutionary. Thus they cannot fight the same battle together. In the current human panorama, class differentiates individuals more than sex.

But this plurality of feminism does not depend on the theory itself. Rather it depends on its practical distortions. Feminism, as a pure idea, is essentially revolutionary. The thinking and attitudes of women who feel at the same time feminist and conservative lack, therefore, a logical coherence. Conservatism works to maintain the traditional organization of society. The organization denies women the rights women want to acquire. The bourgeois feminists accept all the consequences of the existing order, less those that are opposed to women's demands. Tacitly, they argue the absurd thesis that the only reform society needs is a feminist reform. The protest of these feminists against the old order is too exclusive to be valid.

True, the historical roots of feminism are in the liberal

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spirit. The French Revolution contained the first seeds of the feminist movement. For the first time it raised, in precise terms, the question of the emancipation of women. Babeuf, the leader of the conspiracy of equals, asserted feminist demands.* Babeuf harangued his friends this way: 'Do not impose silence on this sex that does not deserve disdain. Enhance rather the most beautiful part of yourself. If you count for nothing to the women in your republic, you will make them little lovers of the monarchy. Their influence will be such that they will restore it. If, on the contrary, you count for something, you will make them Cornelius and Lucretius. They will give you Brutuses, Gracchi, and Scevolas.' Polemicizing with the anti-feminists, Babeuf speaks of 'the tyranny of sex that men have always wanted to annihilate, of this sex that has never been useless in revolutions'. But the French Revolution did not want to remind women of the equality and freedom advocated by these Jacobean or egalitarian voices. The Rights of Man, as I wrote once, could rather have been called Rights of the Male. Bourgeois

* Babeuf advocated an uprising of equals and was executed by his fellow French revolutionary leaders. He is credited with originating many of the egalitarian ideas that later influenced anarchist and communist thought.—Ed.

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democracy has been an exclusively male democracy.

Born in the liberal womb, feminism could not be started during the capitalist process. It is now, when the historical path of democracy comes to an end, that the woman acquires the political and legal rights of the male. And it is the Russian Revolution that has explicitly and categorically granted women the equality and freedom that for over a century the French Revolution, Babeuf, and egalitarian advocates have called for in vain.

But if bourgeois democracy has not achieved feminism, it has unwittingly created the conditions and assumptions for the moral and material premises of its realization. It has been valued as a productive element, an economic factor, by making use of women's work more extensively and more intensely every day. Work radically moves the feminine mentality and spirit. The woman acquires, by virtue of work, a new notion of herself. Formerly, the society destined the woman for marriage or concubinage. Presently, they are destined above all to work. This fact has changed and has raised the position of women in life. Those who challenge feminism and its progress with emotional or traditionalist arguments claim that women should be educated only for

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the home. But practically this means that women should only be educated for gendered roles as a female and mother. The defence of the poetry of the home is actually a defence of women's servitude. Instead of ennobling and dignifying the role of women, domesticity diminishes and decreases it. The woman is more than a mother and a female the way the man is more than a male.

The kind of woman to produce a new civilization must be substantially different from the one who formed the civilization that is currently in decline. In an article on women and politics, I have examined some aspects of this theme:

The troubadours and lovers of female frivolity are right to worry. The kind of woman produced by a century of capitalist refinement is doomed to decline and be left behind. An Italian scholar, Pitigrilli, classifies this type of modern woman as a type of 'luxury mammal'.

And thus, this luxury mammal will gradually be depleted. As the socialist system replaces the individualistic system, feminist luxury and elegance will decline. Paquin and socialism are incompatible enemies. Humanity will lose some luxury mammals,

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but it will gain many women. In the future, a woman's dresses will be less expensive and sumptuous, but the condition of the woman will be more dignified. And the axis of feminine life will move from the individual to the social. Fashion no longer consists of imitations of Mme. Pompadour adorned by Paquin. It will consist, perhaps, of an imitation of Mme. Kollontai. A woman, in sum, will cost less, but will be worth more.

The subject is vast. This brief article tries only to note the character of the first manifestations of feminism in Peru and presents a very brief and rapid interpretation of the appearance and spirit of the global feminist movement. This movement should not and cannot feel foreign to men who are sensitive to the great emotions of the time. The feminine question is a part of the human question. Besides, feminism seems to me also a more interesting and historically transcendent subject than a hairpiece. Although feminism has some significance, the wig is but anecdote.