

Marx Dead 40 Years; but His Ideas Live On!

KARL MARX

May 5, 1818.....March 14, 1883

By **MAX SHACHTMAN.**

Karl Heinrich Marx was born in Treves, May 5, 1818, the son of a German-Jewish rabbi, who in 1842, embraced Christianity. Karl, the only child of the rabbi, who showed any genius, finished grammar school, spent a year of revelry in the University of Berlin (1836). He threw himself in his studies, made the acquaintance of Hegel's works, and of Bruno, Bauer, and Friedrich Koppen. In 1841, the degree of Doctor of Philosophy was conferred on him at Jena.

He hoped to obtain a professorship, but the Prussian universities were not tolerant of free opinions, and what remained was Journalism, his first venture into which was made by articles in the liberal Rheinische Zeitung. His essays attracted very much attention, and on the retirement in October 1842 of Dr. Rutenburg, the editor of the Zeitung, he assumed the chair, after having joined with the Left Wing Hegelians: Feuerbach, Arnold Ruge, Bauer, Strauss and Moses Hess.

After giving up the editorship, he moved to Paris, where he issued (1844) the first and only one of the Franco-German Year Books founded by Ruge. He was beginning to criticize the Jotopianism of Cabot, Weitling, Proudhon, and Dezamy. Engels was rescued by him from Owenism, and then formed a friendship which lasted with but few interruptions until Marx's death. The latter now began an exhaustive study of political economy, history and Socialism, with the result that in 'The Holy Family' he definitely broke with the Hegelian mysticism, demolished Bruno Bauer's "idealism" and, later, Arnold Ruge's disbelief in a proletarian revolution.

The activities of Marx were cut short by his expulsion from Paris, in January 1845, by the French Government at the instigation of Prussia. He left for Brussels, where, in 1847, he published his great criticism of Proudhon's shop-keeper's economies, "The Poverty of Philosophy", which resulted in a break with the historically reactionary philosophy of the "theoretician" of Anarchism. Marx's damning criticism was the preliminary to the Communist Manifesto.

The revolutionary wave of the '40s resulted in the transformation of the League of the Just, an organization of German workers with headquarters in London, to the League of Communists, at whose second congress (London, November-December, 1847) Marx and Engels commissioned to formulate a program. A comparison of Engel's draft of the Communist Manifesto (edited by Eduard Bernstein in his "Grundsätze des Kommunismus") with the actual manifesto, shows the immense intellectual superiority of Marx over Engels. The program was adopted, and soon after the French Revolution of

'48 broke out. Marx, on the invitation of Ferdinand Foa, left for Paris, but did not remain, for he took Engels and the members of the League of Communists into the Rhineland, and there established (June 1, 1848) the Neue Rheinische Zeitung. The articles he wrote in it have, as Max Beer says, supplied the Bolsheviks in their tactics. The financial strain and government persecution forced Marx to return to Paris in time to see the triumph of the counter-revolution and be banished to Brittany; he left, instead, for London where he remained to his last day.

The '50s were hard for Marx. His only source of regular income was a sovereign per article to Horace Greeley's New York Tribune. (Can you imagine Lenin as Moscow correspondent for the New York Times?) His happiest years were the '50s. He was eased by a legacy from Wilhelm Wolff, to whom he inscribed the first volume of "Das Kapital", and by Engels' generous support.

The International Working Men's Association was formed in London, September 1862, Marx delivering the Inaugural Address. He expected much from the International, writing to Engels that "in the next revolution, which is perhaps nearer than it seems, we (Marx and Engels) have this powerful machinery in our hands". The International, however, after passing from the hands of Proudhon to those of Marx, was split by the former's forces, and Marx exiled it to New York where it died meekly. Its back-bone had been broken by a dual organization formed by the Bakunists, who denounced Marx as a Pan-German, and were in turn called Pan-Slav. Neither side, of course, had any justification for that.

It is a sign of Marx's revolutionary spirit, altho he had described the idea of the establishment of the Paris Commune after Sedan, and strongly advised against such a step, when the Commune was declared, he became its most energetic supporter; and when it fell in its own blood, he wrote his magnificent "The Civil War in France, 1871" and, later, "Class Struggles in France", the epilogue of the Commune and the First International.

His last twelve years were filled with struggles against bodily disease. Even Karlsbad did not help. As he saw his principles taken up by Guesde, Hyndman, Liebknecht, Plechanov and the other pioneers, he became worse. Added to his bronchial Catarrh, inflammation of the lungs, liver troubles and spasmodic asthma, came the death of his wife and of his eldest daughter, Mme. Charles Longuet.

He died March 14, 1883, in the presence of his weeping friends, Engels and Liebknecht, who both spoke at his funeral three days later. Engels edited the two remaining volumes of "Das Kapital", and Kautsky the three volumes (not yet translated into English) of his historical studies on surplus value.

There is really no adequate biography of Marx in English. For a man who had and is still having such a gigantic influence on his times, they all seem insufficient. Spargo's is a joke; Loria's 'misrepresentations of his economic theories, as is Beer's, who is, however, much better informed; Liebknecht's is merely re-

miniscense, while Lafargue's is still untranslated.

Marx has the misfortune of all great revolutionaries. His "followers" have grown respectable and are uneasy at some of the more bold words of the master. The Critique of the Gotha Program, though printed in the United States ten or twenty years ago, is ignored; his remarkable address to the League of Communists on revolutionary tactics, is comparatively unknown; his numerous articles, pamphlets, correspondence and essays are known only to Germans, in the Franz Mehring collection.

Yet, despite the renegade disciples, despite the innumerable professors from Bernstein to Tugan-Baranowsky, who have "disproved and demolished" Marxism, despite the fact that his grave at Highgate Cemetery is overgrown with weeds, the ideas of Marx manifest themselves in the irresistible, inevitable march of the proletariat towards Communism. The entire philosophical system of Karl Marx belongs to the last oppressed class of History. It is their key to the future.

What Books Do You Read?

WHAT SHOULD I READ—is a question which perplexes the man and woman whose reading time is limited. The average worker has little time to devote to study, even the study of his own union and class problems. All the more reason that such time should be devoted to the best literature on the labor question. The books listed below fill the need of the busy worker who knows the value of correct theory and knowledge of labor's problems.

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