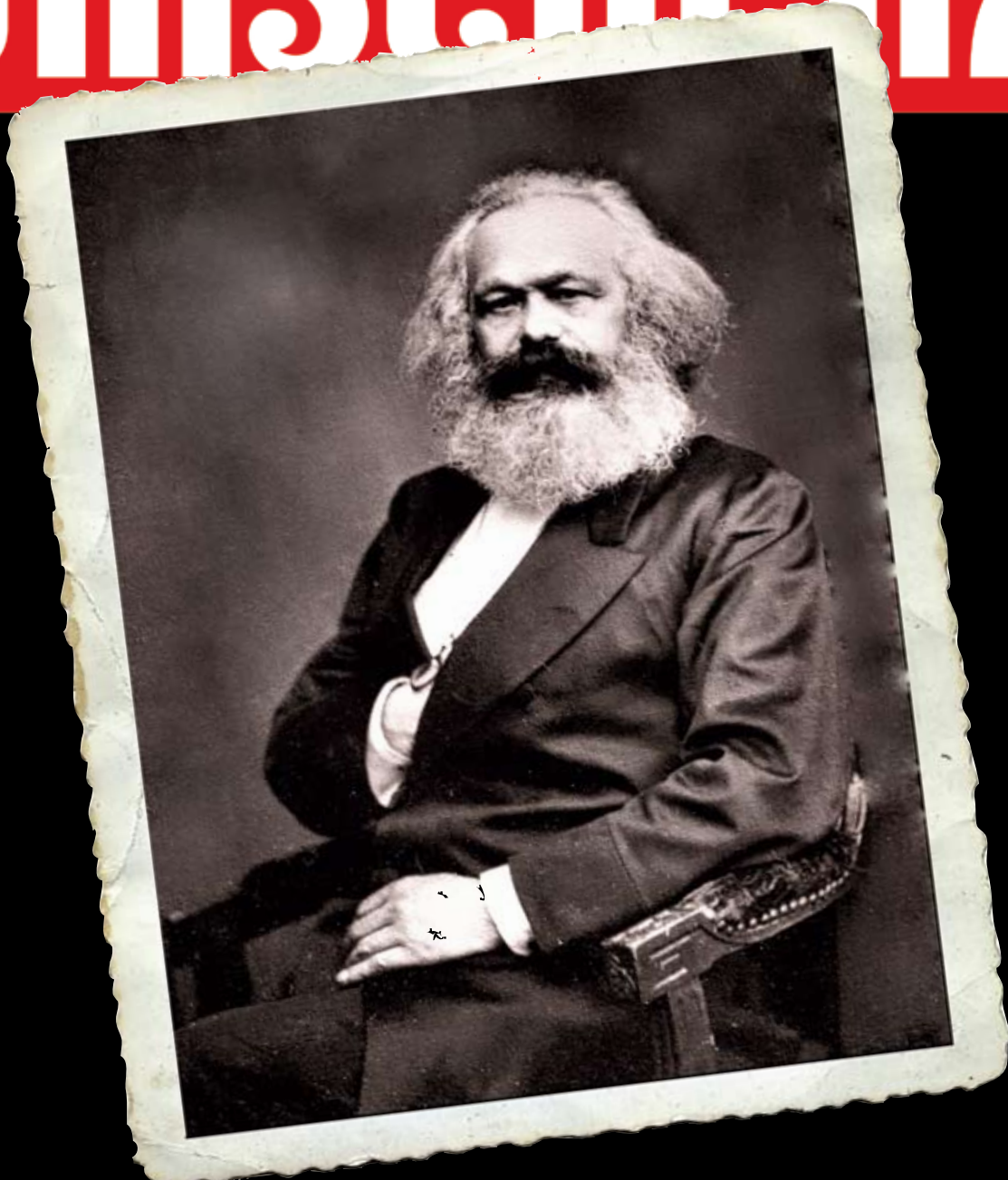


**SPECIAL BICENTENARY ISSUE**

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**Umsebenzi**



**KARL MARX**

**1818-2018**

# MARX AND SOUTH AFRICA

## CLASS, COLONIALISM AND LAND EXPROPRIATION

### UMSEBENZI EDITORIAL COMMENT

In the course of Marx' life-time (1818 – 1883), South Africa did not yet exist as a distinct political entity. That was only to happen with the formation of a British dominion under white minority rule in 1910, as the Union of South Africa. But Marx followed events that were happening in this part of the world. He and his life-long comrade, Friedrich Engels, for instance, noted with admiration the astonishing Zulu victory, armed just with spears and shields, over the mightiest army of the day, the British army, at Isandlwana in 1879.

After Marx' death, and from the early 20th century onward, his work, with its class-analysis of capitalist society, began to have a growing impact on South African affairs.. Socialist ideas of varying degrees of radicalism travelled to South Africa from Europe, largely through workers and trade union activists drawn to the newly expanding gold fields of the Rand.

The International Socialist League (ISL), a radical breakaway from the South African Labour Party and the direct predecessor of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), was formed in 1915. Its internationalism was a deliberate response to the colonial chauvinism of the reformist South African Labour Party. In proclaiming internationalism, the ISL was consciously advancing Marx' call for "workers of the world" (regardless of nationality or race) "to unite" against a common oppressor.

However, in the first decades of the 20th century, the overwhelming majority of black workers in South Africa were migrants, living briefly in mine compounds and dockyard hostels as super-exploited workers, and then returning

to rural peasant homesteads. They were people of two worlds. A strong proletarian consciousness had not yet developed. The ISL and, in its first two or three years, the CPSA (launched in 1921), were constituted largely of white workers and revolutionaries. Although at least one African comrade, TW Thibedi, was an active member of both the ISL and CPSA from the outset.

Through the 1920s there was increasing African urbanisation. The early black townships around Durban, Cape Town and other port cities and those outside Potchefstroom and Germiston became centres of struggle. The CPSA held meetings around these townships, agitating against pass laws, curfews, forced removals and the thousand and one racist persecutions that Africans daily confronted. White and black revolutionaries were frequently beaten up by the police, and by white hooligans and black stooges at these meetings. Black and white comrades were often sentenced to prison terms of hard labour. This reinforced the

sense of a non-racial class solidarity. Soon hundreds of African recruits were joining the CPSA. They were to constitute the core of an emerging communist cadre – Thomas Mbeki, Gana Makabeni, Johannes Nkosi, Moses Kotane, Josie Mpama, Edwin Mofutsanyane, Albert Nzula, and many more.

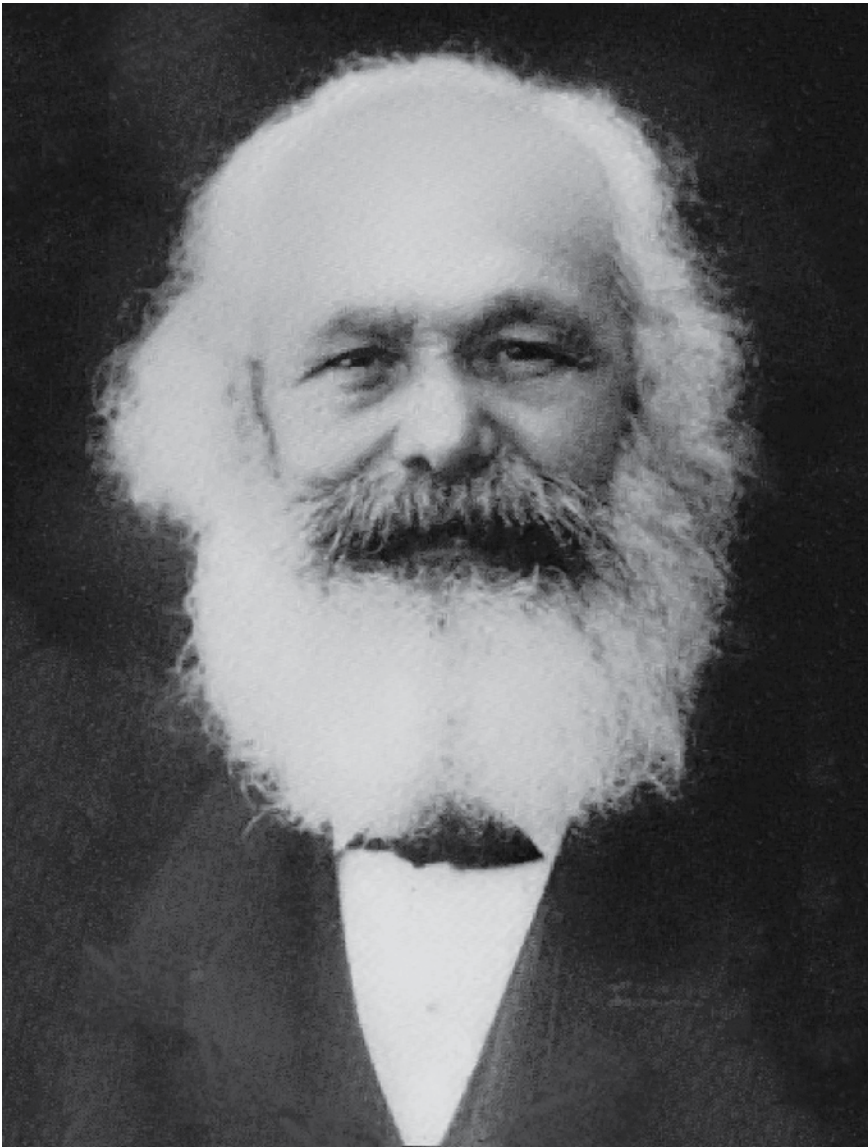
The Marxist idea of a shared working class solidarity in the face of capitalist exploitation was a critical factor in these developments. It is not accidental that it was the Communist Party in South Africa that was the real pioneer of non-racialism, not just in theory, but also in militant practice.

For much of the 20th century, the Communist Party was the only political formation that called for one-person, one-vote. By contrast, in the late 1920s, for instance, one member of the ANC's Upper House of Traditional Leaders remarked that there was no way he would support universal suffrage and be ruled by "the man who milked his cows". While the liberal predecessors of today's DA, for instance, timidly extended their liberal "colour-blindness" to a call for the franchise to be allowed for "civilised" (i.e. "Westernised") and "propertied" blacks. (These are liberal reservations that live on in the DA – see, for instance, their ambivalence on affirmative action measures and their notion of an "equal opportunity" – but not an egalitarian - society).

The tradition of non-racialism was a key adaptation to the South African reality of the "internationalism" central to Marx' world-view and the inspiring clarion call at the end of the Communist Manifesto – "Workers of the World Unite! You have Nothing to Lose but your Chains!"

But was (and is) working class unity between black and white workers in South Africa a realistic possibility? And

**Cde Mark Waller coordinated this Marx bicentenary edition of Umsebenzi. All quotes in this issue are courtesy of the Marxists' Internet Archive**



**Karl Marx in his late 50s - *Capital I* had been published but, with a world yet to win, he was still hard at work**

if so is it an overriding political priority? This was a sharp debate that unfolded within our Party in the late-1920s and early 1930s when the Communist International insisted that the CPSA should adopt the slogan of a “Black Republic with equal rights for minorities”. In effect, this was a call for the Party to adopt a national democratic revolutionary (NDR) strategy as the most effective route to socialism in South Africa. However, back then, some comrades felt that the idea of a “Black Republic” would put off potentially progressive white workers.

In subsequent decades, the NDR strategy has been criticised by some leftists as a “betrayal” of the working class, and as “un-Marxist”. But this criticism is itself based on a shallow reading of Marx. Marx was, in fact, a pioneer of the anti-

colonial struggle.

In particular Marx followed very closely the intensified colonial oppression of Ireland that was unfolding in his life-time. In November 1867 he wrote to Engels: “The Irish Viceroy [the English colonial governor in Ireland]...has ‘cleared’ his estate of thousands within recent weeks by forcible evictions.

**“Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they make it under circumstances ... transmitted from the past”**

– The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, 1852

**“His name will endure through the ages, and so also will his work”**

– Frederick Engels in his eulogy at Marx’ funeral

Among the evicted are well-to-do farmers whose improvements and capital investments are confiscated in this fashion! There is no other European country in which foreign rule takes this direct form of native expropriation.”

While in the Cape the British army was expropriating (also without compensation) African people on the “eastern frontier”, an equally merciless and intensified colonial expropriation was being unleashed against the native population of Ireland. It resulted there, as in southern Africa, in mass famines and forced migration.

In a follow-up letter to Engels a few weeks later, Marx notes that this vicious expropriation process underway in Ireland is giving rise to a nationalist movement (“Fenianism”), which, precisely because of its popular and lower class character, is “characterised by socialist tendencies”. Marx concludes this letter: “What the Irish need is: (1) Self-government and independence from England. (2) An agrarian revolution...”

Marx is effectively calling for a national democratic revolution for 19th century Ireland. What should be the political line in addressing English workers? Speaking to the General Council of the International in London, Marx said the task was to “awaken the consciousness of the English working-class to the notion that, for them, the national emancipation of Ireland is not a question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment, but the first condition of their own social emancipation.”

Marx was born 200 years ago. These words are coming to us from nearly a century and a half in the past. It is a tribute to Marx’ incredible scientific endeavours and his deep appreciation of the struggles of the oppressed everywhere that their relevance remains so striking for our own South African reality. ●

# MARX ON PATRIARCHY

'BOURGEOIS IDEA OF THE FAMILY IS CLAPTRAP'

There's much interest in Marx and gender, particularly with the rise of successive waves of feminism since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and the foregrounding of the gender equality struggle in politics and society in practically every country.

Marx did not write extensively on gender and the situation of women but, contrary to some claims, he did not merely reflect the mainstream ideology of 19<sup>th</sup> century patriarchy.

Perhaps his biggest contribution to gender studies and women's empowerment struggles comes through his dialectical method and articulation of the decisive role of class struggle.

Marx's dialectical analyses of society rested on the notion of change as a permanent force. This view was, and still is, wholly anathema to bourgeois ideology, with its presuppositions of the immutable and sacrosanct patriarchal family structure.

*The Communist Manifesto* dismissed bourgeois notions of the family as "claptrap", because the bourgeoisie maintains the nuclear family structure only for itself, while destroying the family ties of

proletarians. And within its concept of family, "the bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production", referring to the social reproduction of the bourgeois family.

With the proletariat, women and children are useful for the bourgeoisie because they can be brought into the industrial production process, Marx wrote in *Capital Vol 1*: "The labour of women and children was, therefore, the first thing sought for by capitalists who used machinery. That mighty substitute for labour and labourers was forthwith changed into a means for increasing the number of wage-labourers by enrolling, under the direct sway of capital, every member of the workman's family, without distinction of age or sex. Compulsory work for the capitalist usurped the place, not only of the children's play, but also of free labour at home within moderate limits for the support of the family."

In his earlier writings, Marx was also attuned to the oppressive nature of patriarchal family relations and their ruinous impact on women. In *The Holy Family* (1845), Marx took a particularly sympa-

thetic view of the plight of working class women, in his criticism of the moralistic attitude of the writer Eugène Sue in his treatment of a story about a Paris prostitute.

In his 1846 translation of part of a work by Jacques Peuchet, examining cases of women driven to suicide by male cruelty, Marx highlighted the point that revolutionary change would extend to overturning oppressive family relations.

Heather A Brown (author of *Marx on Gender and Family – a critical study*) writes that here, as well as in many of his writings for the *New York Daily Tribune*, Marx looked at the "unique ways in which economics and the specifically capitalist form of patriarchy interact to oppress women".

Marx' works have spawned whole branches of Marxist women's studies, which not only draw on Marx' method and notions of revolutionary transformation, but also evaluate the work of early feminist pioneers, including Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and revolutionary feminists such as Clara Zetkin and Alexandra Kollontai. ●

## DIGITAL MARX

EVERYTHING YOU NEED ON WWW.MARXISTS.ORG

The best place for ready access to the works of Marx and Engels is the internet, and particularly the Marxists Internet Archive (MIA) – [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org).

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union and other socialist states in Eastern Europe, it was possible to get cheap and reasonably well-produced print editions of the works of Marx and Engels, issued by Progress Publishers (although not in South Africa at the time, where most Progress Publisher titles were banned).

Nowadays there are a few hard copy publishers that include Marx and Engels work in their catalogue. Lawrence and Wishart publishers in the UK, for instance, has produced the collected works of Marx and Engels, which runs to 50 volumes and costs about R30 000.

The advantage of MIA is that party members and others interested in Marx and Engels can easily locate the works or the parts of them they want.

All the works cited in this *Umsebenzi*, including the three volumes of *Capital*, can be downloaded from MIA as e-books. Volume 1 of *Capital*, *The Communist Manifesto*, and the pamphlet *Wage, Labour and Capital* are also available in audio format. The site also contains a detailed biographical timeline of Marx' life, which includes brief summaries of his main works and links to them. The Marx and Engels Archive is a separate department of MIA, and has indexes to the works arranged by date and subject.

MIA is run by 70 volunteers in 33 countries as a non-profit public online library, fulfilling an invaluable role in making

available the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and more than 800 other Left and revolutionary writers in 63 languages. The archive is constantly being updated. In 2016 the site had 2,1-million visits and more than 12-million downloads every month.

As interest in Marxist and other Left literature around the world has mushroomed in recent years, so too have the amount of cyber attacks on MIA by anti-Left interests. Since 2007 – at about the onset of the still-continuing global capitalist crisis – MIA started experiencing sustained 'denial of service' attacks that have sometimes crippled its server. MIA volunteers have worked intensively to ensure the service remains available.

The entire archive can be obtained on a 1TB USB hard drive for less than US \$100. ●

# MARX: A WORLD TO WIN

## INTERNATIONALISM THE FIRST ORDER OF STRUGGLE

**“Proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains ... they have a world to win” – *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848**

**M**arx’ focus on anti-feudal and, out of that, anti-capitalist revolutionary activity in Europe in the 1840s meant that his analyses predominantly centre on Europe.

They are not Eurocentric: capitalist industry was taking shape mainly in Europe, creating the proletariat Marx recognised as the motive force of revolutionary transformation.

But Marx’ observations on class struggle, the relationship between the working class and capitalism, and the fight against class oppression were, as he, Engels and others saw them, emerging global phenomena. Internationalism was the first order of struggle. Workers have no country, Marx and Engels asserted in *The Communist Manifesto* – “We cannot take from them what they do not have”. But they recognised the relationship between national emancipatory struggle and the call “workers of the world unite!”

Marx’ grasp of the dialectical relationship between the progressive influence of the rise of capitalism and the murderous exploitation it institutes across the world, has led some writers to accuse him of being soft on colonialism.

What they fail to see (and Marx clearly *did* see), is that the course of capitalism embraces both progressive change and the worst degradation of workers and the poor. And it is the exploited who carry the potential to rid us of capitalism.

Marx never missed an opportunity to vent his sarcasm on capitalism’s busy, onward and upward march to higher profits and deeper expropriation, and he clearly saw the ruin this imposed in Europe’s colonies: “The



**Inspired by Marx: Josina Machel, a combatant in Frelimo’s guerrilla army and Samora Machel’s first wife**

discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal

population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black skins, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation. On their heels treads the commercial war of the European nations, with the globe for a theatre” (*Capital Vol I*).

And even before *Capital*, Marx was clearly aware of the impact of racial and colonialist dynamics on class consciousness, writing to his son-in-law François Lafargue on the US working class: “Labour in white skin cannot emancipate itself, where black skin is branded (enslaved).”

Marx’ thinking played and continues to play a massive role in the ideas of revolutionaries across Africa, Asia and Latin America, as we see in the remarks of leading revolutionaries on the following three pages ●

## LIBERATION LEADERS INSPIRED BY MARX

**T**he selection of revolutionaries quoted on the next three pages comprises the first generation of national liberation fighters of the anti-colonial struggle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and for whom Marx was a major influence. Former ANC president and South Africa’s first democratic president, Cde Nelson Mandela, acknowledged the appeal of Marxist analysis to freedom fighters - including himself.

National liberation leaders for whom Marx was a major influence include: **Fidel Castro** (1926 – 2016), commander in chief of the Cuban revolution and prime minister and then president of Cuba; **Hugo Chavez** (1954-2013), leader of the Bolivarian Revolution, President of Venezuela from 1999-2013; **Ho Chi Minh** (1890 – 1969), leader of the Workers’ party of Vietnam, first President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam; **Amilcar Cabral** (1924-1973), leader of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde; **Agostinho Neto**

(1922-1979) leader of the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), first President of Angola; **Patrice Lumumba** (1921 – 1961), leader of the Congolese National Movement and first Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo; **Kwame Nkrumah** (1909 – 1972), first Prime Minister and President of Ghana (the first African colony to gain independence) and co-founder of the Organisation of African Unity; **Samora Machel** (1933 – 1986) leader of Frelimo (the Mozambique Liberation Front) and first President of Mozambique; **Walter Rodney** (1942 – 1980) Guyanese activist and historian, author of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*; **Ahmed Sékou Touré** (1922 -1984) leader of the PDG (Democratic Party of Guinea) and first Prime Minister of Guinea; **Frantz Fanon** (1925 – 1961), psychiatrist, philosopher and writer from Martinique, author of *The Wretched of the Earth*; **Thomas Sankara** (1949 – 1987) first President of Burkina Faso. ●

# MARX & THE EARLY ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLE



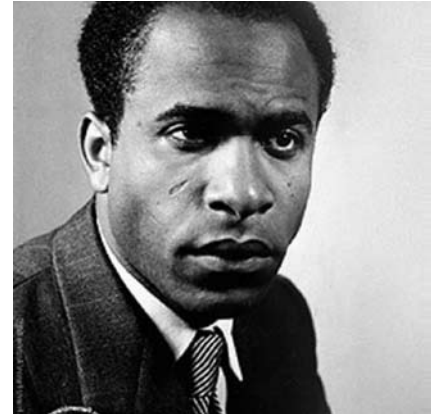
## Fidel Castro

"It is true that there are groups of industrial bourgeoisie that are against, at times very much against, imperialism, because of competition. But these same groups hate the workers even more, for class reasons. Between US monopolies and national bourgeoisies there can be temporary conflicts and skirmishes, not a true, all-out struggle. There is no historical incompatibility between them. Our national bourgeoisie here at home is complacent and coward, and always ready to concede to imperialism which is conclusion keeps it alive and gives it help and arms to be used against social revolutions"



## Amilcar Cabral

"Moving from the realities of one's own country towards the creation of an ideology for one's struggle doesn't imply that one has pretensions to be a Marx or a Lenin or any other great ideologist, but is simply a necessary part of the struggle. I confess that we didn't know these great theorists terribly well when we began. We didn't know them half as well as we do now. We needed to know them, as I've said, in order to judge in what measure we could borrow from their experience to help our situation"



## Frantz Fanon

"We have said that the native bourgeoisie which comes to power uses its class aggressiveness to corner the positions formerly kept for foreigners...The fact is that such action will become more and more tinged by racism, until the bourgeoisie bluntly puts the problem to the government by saying 'we must have these posts'. They will not stop their snarling until they have taken over every one"



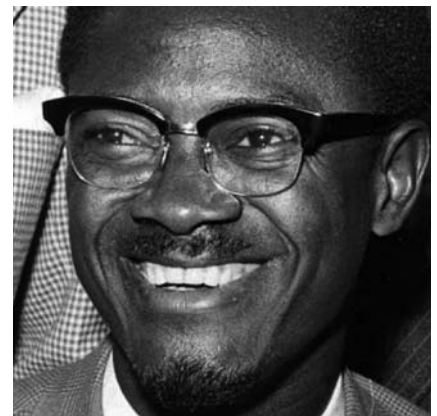
## Agostinho Neto

"Our struggle is not an isolated struggle in the world. It is part of a global struggle by humanity to bring an end to the exploitation of man by man, and it is within this framework that we must view our struggle - outside the narrow limits of racial prejudice"



## Hugo Chavez

"Every day I become more convinced, there is no doubt in my mind, and as many intellectuals have said, that it is necessary to transcend capitalism. But capitalism can't be transcended from within capitalism itself, but through socialism, true socialism, with equality and justice"



## Patrice Lumumba

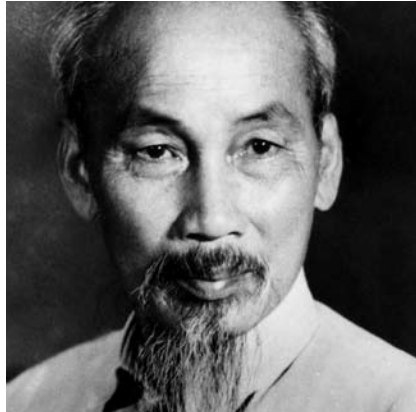
"The colonialists care nothing for Africa for her own sake. They are attracted by African riches; their actions are guided by the desire to preserve their interests in Africa against the wishes of the African people. For the colonialists all means are good if they help them to possess these riches"

# IN AFRICA, ASIA & LATIN AMERICA



## Samora Machel

"For the oppressed peoples and classes, for the peoples and workers who have taken control of their destiny, Marxism is a shining path, a sun of hope and certainty that never sets, a sun that is always at its zenith. **Marxism, the science of revolution, is the fruit of practice, of mankind's struggle for a better future and so is renewed and developed through human practice. The experience of revolutionary struggle of the Mozambican people provides an illustration of this principle"**



## Ho Chi Minh

"The mutual ignorance of the two proletariats gives rise to prejudices. The French workers look upon the native as an inferior and negligible human being, incapable of understanding and still less of taking action. The natives regard all the French as wicked exploiters. Imperialism and capitalism do not fail to take advantage of this mutual suspicion and this artificial racial hierarchy to frustrate propaganda and divide forces which ought to unite"



## Ahmed Sékou Touré

"In the realm of thought, man may claim to be the brain of the world; but in real life where every action affects spiritual and physical existence, the world is always the brain of mankind; for it is at this level that you will find the sum total of the powers and units of thought, and the dynamic forces of development and improvement; and it is there that energies are merged and the sum of man's intellectual values is finally added together"



## Thomas Sankara

"Inequality can be done away with only by establishing a new society, where men and women will enjoy equal rights, resulting from an upheaval in the means of production and in all social relations. Thus, the status of women will improve only with the elimination of the system that exploits them"



## Walter Rodney

"It is significant that a question as seemingly abstract as that of the value of Marxism to the African revolution has recently been revived among African students on the continent and activists in the black movement in America. It is a recognition of the fact that, as oppressed people, we cannot afford to overlook any weapon which could contribute to our liberation"



## Kwame Nkrumah

"Marx had argued that the development of capitalism would produce a crisis within each individual capitalist state because within each state the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' would widen to a point where a conflict was inevitable and that it would be the capitalists who would be defeated... World capitalism has postponed its crisis but only at the cost of transforming it into an international crisis"



Political victory: Mandela addresses supporters in 1990

## ‘MUSIC TO MY EARS’

### NELSON MANDELA ON MARXISM’S CALL TO REVOLUTIONARY ACTION

Carde Nelson Mandela wrote in his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* of his early opposition to Marxism and communism, and how in the late 1940s this started to break down. His friendships with people such as Moses Kotane, Ismail Meer and Ruth First made it difficult, he wrote, to justify his prejudice against the Party. He decided to get serious about investigating Marxism and the communist idea.

“I acquired the complete works of Marx and Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tse-Tung (Zedong) and others, and probed the philosophy of dialectical and historical materialism. I had little time to study these works properly. While I was stimulated by *The Communist Manifesto*, I was exhausted by *Das Kapital (Capital)*. But I found myself strongly drawn to the idea of a classless society which, to my mind, was similar to traditional African culture where life was shared and communal. I subscribed to Marx’s basic dictum, which

had the simplicity and generosity of the Golden Rule: ‘From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs’.

“Dialectical materialism seemed to offer both a searchlight illuminating the dark night of racial oppression and a tool that could be used to end it. It helped me to see the situation other than through a prism of black and white relations, for if our struggle was to succeed, we had to transcend black and white. I was attracted to the scientific underpinnings of dialectical materialism, for I am always inclined to trust what I can verify. Its materialistic analysis of economics rang true to me. The idea that the value of goods was based on the amount of labour that went into them seemed particularly appropriate for South Africa. The ruling class paid African labour a subsistence wage and then added value to the cost of the goods, which they retained for themselves.

“Marxism’s call to revolutionary ac-

tion was music to the ears of a freedom fighter. The idea that history progresses through struggle and that change occurs in revolutionary jumps was similarly appealing. In my reading of Marxist works, I found a great deal of information that bore on the types of problems that face a practical politician. Marxists gave serious attention to the national liberation movements, and the Soviet Union in particular supported the national struggles of many colonial peoples. This was another reason why I amended my view of communists and accepted the ANC position of welcoming Marxists into its ranks.

“A friend once asked me how I could reconcile my creed of African nationalism with a belief in dialectical materialism. For me, there was no contradiction. ... I found that African nationalists and African communists generally had far more to unite them than to divide them ...” – *Long Walk to Freedom*, pages 112 -113. ●

# THE YOUNG MARX

BY 24, HIS PEN HAD  
BECOME A WEAPON

**K**arl Marx was born in 1818, in Trier, a small town in Prussia, part of what is now Germany. His parents, originally Jewish, had converted to Protestantism before Karl was born, in the wake of anti-Jewish legislation – embracing the faith over Catholicism for its greater intellectual freedom. His father was a successful lawyer and hoped that Karl would follow suit.

He didn't, and while a university student became increasingly interested in philosophy. It was at university in Berlin, which he started in 1835, that he became involved with radical idealist disciples of GWF Hegel (1770-1831), drawing on Hegel's ideas to criticise the absolutist, feudal Prussian system and its rigid religious order.

These "Young Hegelians" included people Marx was to interact with, often highly contentiously, among them Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach.

Aspects of Hegel's philosophy that attracted the Young Hegelians concerned how he saw the reality of the world as shaped by human ideas that are constantly in dynamic motion, surpassing and annulling more refined and complex levels to reach new ones. This fitted in with the bourgeois progressive notions of the time about how society and religion should progress.

But Marx increasingly saw that economic hooks and triggers told an altogether different reality. His journalism, for the *Rheinische Zeitung*, of which he became editor at 24 in 1843, analysed the oppressive machinery of the state, such as press censorship.

In his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* he analyses Hegel's work on the in-



Coming of age: Marx at 21

ternal constitution of the state. In doing so he examines existing political institutions and their relationship to political and economic aspects of society. It is here we find his incisive comments on religion, a central element in his emerging philosophy of historical materialism and criticism of the ruling order.

The next year, 1844, Marx started work on what were later simply called *Economic and Political Manuscripts*. Here,

he focussed for the first time on bourgeois political economy and the mechanisms of capitalist exploitation – a line of enquiry that was to develop apace for the rest of his life.

In 1844 too, Marx wrote about the militant uprising of the textile weavers in Silesia (now in southwest Poland), an event that impressed on him the power of organised labour. In that year he also met Friedrich Engels in Paris. They worked together on a searing critique of the whole Young Hegelian phenomena that set the course for much of their future work.

Increasingly, in his early years and already prodigious writings, we see Marx turning the whole system of Hegelian-inspired idealism on its head. ●

**"The primary freedom  
of the press lies in not  
being a business"**  
*Reinische Zeitung, 1842*

# THE NEXT STEP – HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

LIFE IS NOT DETERMINED BY CONSCIOUSNESS,  
BUT CONSCIOUSNESS BY LIFE

Marx's criticism of the idealism of the Young Hegelians, together with his deepening understanding of the economic forces at work in the relations between capital and labour, led him to develop the concept of historical materialism. He expounded on these in two works published in the mid-1840s – the pithy *Theses on Feuerbach* and the more detailed *The German Ideology*, the latter written with Engels.

Marx does not place materialism as a dull counter to the idealist fancy of the Hegelians, but rather as the grounded, intertwined reality that outdistances the dogmas of idealism. In it “reality, sensuousness” are not objects of disinterested contemplation but were wholly shaped by our practical activity in the world.

Materialism, as Marx conceives it, was infinitely more subtle and holistic than idealism. The “human essence” is not separate from the historical process, does not presuppose an “abstract – isolated – human individual”, but rather sees us as intricately involved in the world of practical reality that we – and no other force – makes.

“Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life,” wrote Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*. Morality, religion, metaphysics and all other ideology are not ‘out there’, independent of us. They have no history of development other than people “developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter(ing), along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking”.

People's economic behaviour – their material existence – is the starting point for social life, ideas and forms of social consciousness or the dominant ways of thinking we find all around us. The ideas of the ruling class are therefore the dominant ideas in society, and so: “The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production.”



At his height: Marx in his mid-30s

This materialist conception of history is one of the key pillars of Marxism. Engels placed it, together with the theory of surplus value, as one of Marx's greatest contributions as a political philosopher and revolutionary.

*The German Ideology* incorporates many of Marx's economic ideas on the development of productive forces in ancient, feudal and capitalist settings. The work is complex and penetrating – though very readable – and does not go

**“Labour cannot emancipate  
itself in white skin,  
where in black skin it is  
branded (enslaved)”**

*Capital*, 1876

in for simplistic formulas (determinism), even when it discusses how our material existence gives rise to our social and spiritual contexts.

Marx found it impossible to get the work published due to the censorship laws in Germany. It was only in 1932 that it was first published, in the Soviet Union. The work contains much on the rise of political systems and classes, impelled by the development of their forces of production. By 1846, when he completed *The German Ideology*, Marx had written extensively on economics, capital and labour, and on materialism.

During the second half of the 1840s, Europe was entering a new revolutionary period. Marx and Engels put all the tenets of their revolutionary philosophy into the defining declaration of these years, *The Communist Manifesto*. ●

# THEN ON TO DIALECTIC MATERIALISM

TO THE BOURGEOISIE, 'A SCANDAL  
AND ABOMINATION'

**D**ialectics is the interaction between two or more opposing forces that produces change.

Perhaps the best example of this in Marx is contained in the opening sentence of *The Communist Manifesto*: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."

Marx' dialectic approach was greatly influenced by that used by the philosopher GW Hegel.

Hegel saw our influence in the world as determined by ideas, by *Spirit*, working in constant motion, going beyond and negating more complex levels to reach an ultimate one. It was in many ways the bourgeois view of human progress encapsulated in the new thinking of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and essentially influenced by the revolutionary changes of the Age of Enlightenment, of which the French Revolution of 1789 was part.

Marx took Hegel's dialectical approach and stood it on its head – it was not ideas that influenced peoples material conditions, but the material conditions of their lives that determines what they are able to make and do, and how they interpret the world.

The dynamic of the Hegelian dialectic remains the same, but the preconditions are material, grounded in hard reality.

The dialectical approach has been crudified by efforts to reduce it to formulae, most infamously: thesis, antithesis, synthesis (formalised under Joseph Stalin). Marx himself never used this formula other than to mock the idea.

The point of Marxist dialectics is that it doesn't end in a neat 'synthesis' out of previously opposing forces. Instead it recognises that the dynamics of opposites produces changes in material circumstances, and the relative strengths and nature of the opposites, in turn change the dynamics of the dialectic relation-



**The Marxes in London - Karl Marx and Jenny von Westphalen**

ship in a perpetual progression.

This approach allows us to better understand the inner relations of phenomena like capitalism, to get beneath surface appearances, and detect inherent tendencies and outcomes. Marx' approach is termed dialectical materialism, though neither he nor Engels used the term. The socialist philosopher Joseph Dietzgen coined it in 1887.

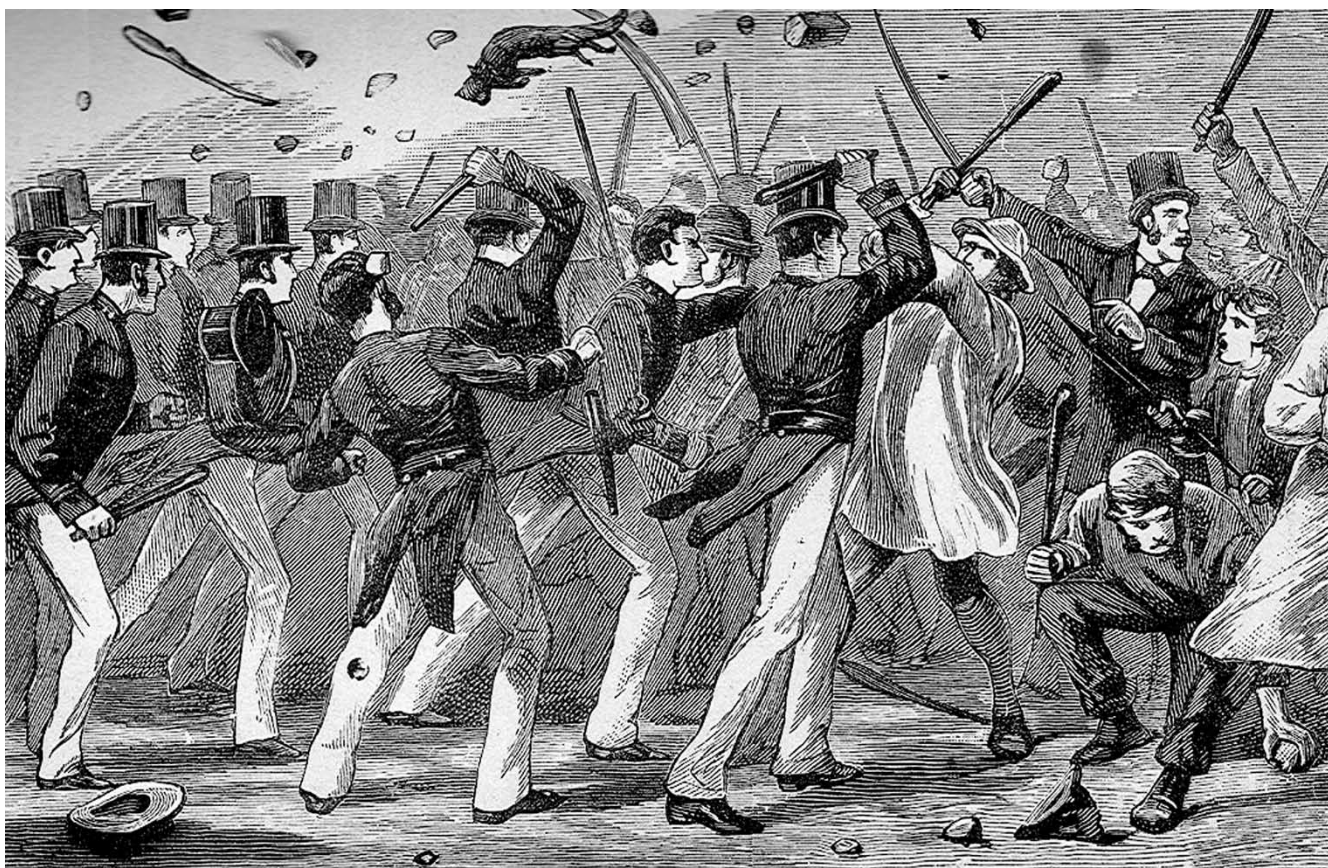
Marx wrote in 1873 that in its "rational form", meaning materialist not idealist form, dialectical thinking "is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom", because "it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence... and is in its essence critical and revolutionary." ●



Marx has uncovered the modern working class as historical category, that is, as a class with particular historical conditions of existence and laws of motion.

A mass of wage-workers, who were led to solidarity by the similarity of their social existence in bourgeois society and looked for a way out of their condition and partly for a bridge to the promised land of socialism, arguably existed in capitalist countries before Marx. Marx was the first who elevated workers to the working class by linking them through the specific historical task of conquering political power in the socialist revolution"

– Rosa Luxemburg,  
*Marxist Theory and the Proletariat* (1903)



Marx was in regular contact with the Chartists, a British movement campaigning for universal franchise – seen here clashing with police in Bingley, Yorkshire in mid-1848

# MARX – THE POLITICAL ACTIVIST

HE THREW HIMSELF INTO THE TASKS OF INTERPRETING  
THE WORLD – AND CHANGING IT

**W**e often think of Marx as a theoretician because of the enormous quantity of his writings (Marx and Engels' collected works run to 50 volumes). But like Engels and Lenin he was also an unstoppable political activist, playing a critical role in the early struggles and organisational work of the communist movement. It was also as a writer of agitational political pamphlets and articles that his activism found particular expression. There was nothing dry and academic about his output.

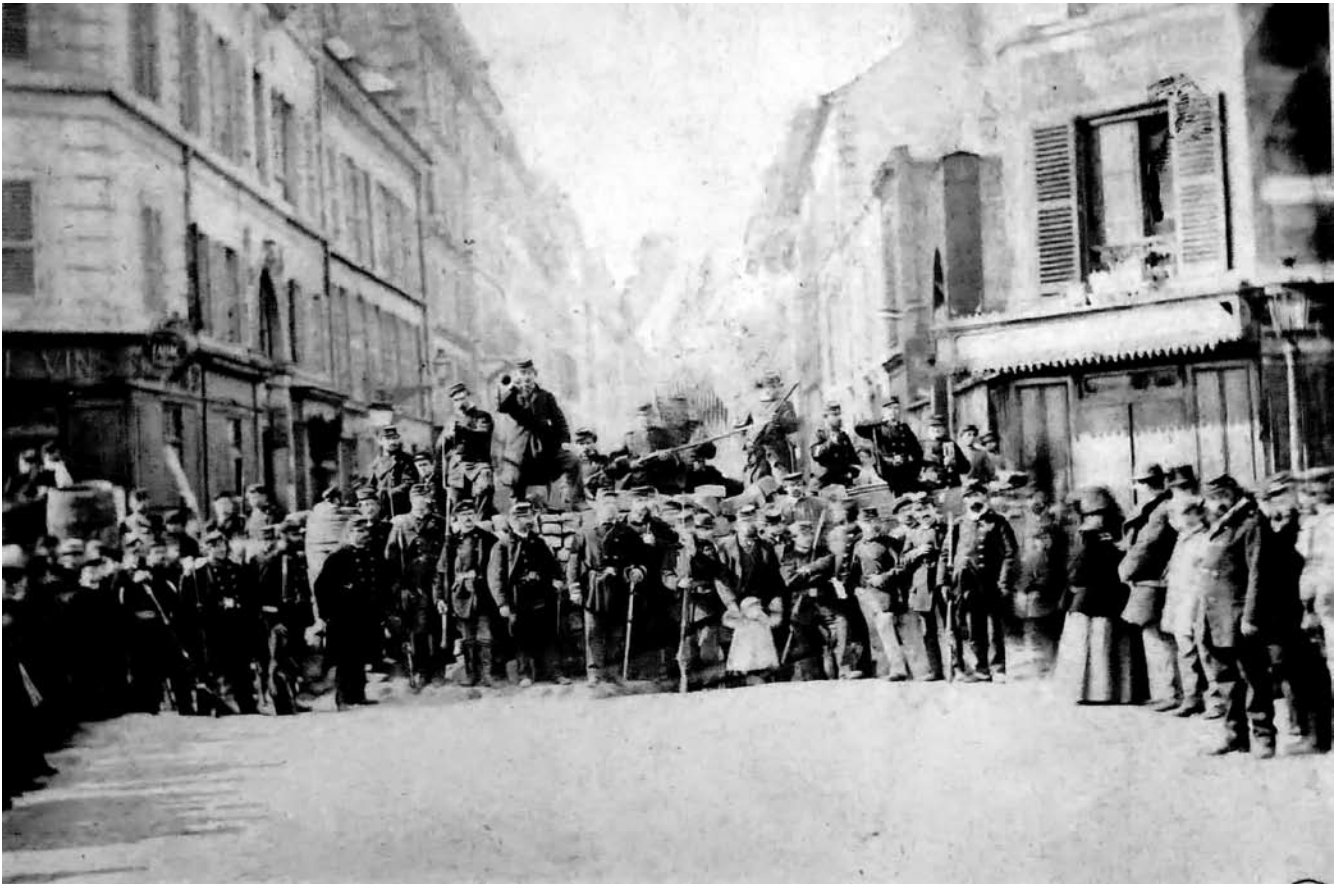
Much of Marx' activism was as a radical journalist (see *Journalism for revolution*, page 14, beginning in 1842 when, at

the age of 24, he started writing for, and soon to be editor of, the *Rheinische Zeitung*. His scathing criticism of the authoritarian Prussian authorities on issues such as press censorship led to a government banning the paper in 1843. The 1840s saw him most on the move as a revolutionary because of the intensity of class struggle then taking place in Europe.

Marx and his wife Jenny moved from Prussia to Paris, where he started studying the history of the French Revolution and the work of English and French economists. He also got in touch with exiled German communists in the underground League of the Just and with clandestine

French workers' societies.

Under pressure from Prussia, the French authorities expelled Marx for his journalistic and political activities. It was in France that he teamed up with Friedrich Engels. Marx then went to neighbouring Belgium, staying in Brussels. There, Marx and Engels set up the Communist Correspondence Committee, in part composed of exiled German communists. The aim was to ideologically and organisationally unite socialists and the more politically aware workers in nearby countries. This work – nowadays it would be called networking – included creating contacts with the working class rights Chartist move-



National Guardsmen loyal to the Paris Commune occupy a barricade in central Paris. In his *Civil War in France*, Marx described the commune as an example of the dictatorship of the proletariat

ment in Britain, and with individuals and groups from the workers' movement in Germany, France and Belgium.

Marx and Engels were asked in early 1847 by the London committee of the League of the Just to join the league and help with its reorganisation by drawing up a new programme for it. The conference of the League of the Just, held in mid-1847 in London, changed its name to the Communist League, and Marx and Engels suggested the slogan for it: *Workers of All Countries Unite!*

Revolution was in the air throughout Europe, capitalism was in crisis, and the organisation of workers was growing stronger. Worsening labour conditions had been exacerbated by a severe famine that swept the continent in 1846, driving up prices amidst worsening unemployment.

Back in Brussels, on Marx' initiative district and community organisations of the Communist League were set up. And, with Engels, Marx worked to bring together the large numbers of German working-class refugees, resulting in the creation of the German Workers' Society. Marx also helped set up, and later became vice-president of, the Brussels Democratic Association, which united a broad church

of proletarian revolutionaries and bourgeois and petty-bourgeois democrats.

The second congress of the Communist League, in November 1847, instructed Marx and Engels to draw up a manifesto for the League. *The Communist Manifesto* was published in London at the end of February 1848, in the wake of the insurrection in Paris that overturned the monarchy and set up a provisional government.

On behalf of the Brussels Democratic Association, Marx signed a letter of greetings to the provisional government in Paris. Enraged by this and Marx' other high profile political activity in Belgium, and fearful of the spread of revolution, the King of Belgium ordered Marx to leave the country. He returned to Paris in March 1848, where on the instructions of

**“Great social revolutions are impossible without female ferment. Social progress may be measured precisely by the social position of women”**

**Letter to Ludwig Kugelmann  
(1868)**

the Communist League he set up a local chapter of the organisation.

Revolutionary uprisings were breaking out in Austria, Hungary and Germany. Marx and Engels then went to Germany to take part in the unfolding revolution. They launched a daily paper, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, which they used to campaign for a unified democratic German state and support the peasants' and workers' struggle locally and in other countries. The paper became a rallying point for efforts to oppose counter-revolution, which was quickly gaining ground.

Marx returned to France, where a new revolutionary uprising was anticipated, but its failure led to Marx being ordered to leave the country. He and his family next went to London, where they stayed permanently and where Marx produced the bulk of his writings on the experiences of the proletarian revolutionary movements, theory of revolution and, most famously, on capital. But here too, Marx was fully engaged with political struggle and played a key role in the creation of the First International and crisscrossed Europe in promoting it and taking part in its congresses. ●



**“The proletarians  
have nothing to lose  
but their chains. They  
have a world to win.  
Workers of all  
countries unite!”**



**Karl Marx 1848**

# THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CHAINS.  
YOU HAVE A WORLD TO WIN

The *Communist Manifesto* is a summary of the communist vision of history, the class struggle and rise of the bourgeoisie, and the mission of the working class to end capitalism and take society forward to communism.

In November 1847, the Communist League, based in London, gave Marx and Engels the task of producing a “confession of faith”, a basic document outlining the aims of the communist movement. At the time, capitalism in Europe was in turmoil and working class militancy was gathering strength. Revolutionary expectations were high.

The main work on the *Manifesto* was done in December 1847 and January 1848. But it dragged on until the end of February – the League executive warned Marx that there would be “further measures” if he continued to miss the deadline – by which time revolutionary insurrection had broken out in France.

Marx was responsible for the main drafting of the *Manifesto*, and drew heavily on Engels’ initial, much longer draft, called *The Principles of Communism*.

The *Manifesto* is divided into four sections. The first, titled “Bourgeois and Proletarians”, analyses the course of class struggle in line with the materialist view of history that Marx and Engels produced in *The German Ideology*. This section gives a compelling account of the rise of the bourgeoisie and the impact of capitalism, and the consequent rise of the proletariat as a self-aware and organised entity and the “constant battle” it has with the bourgeoisie. It also puts in a nutshell the economic relations underpinning this battle.

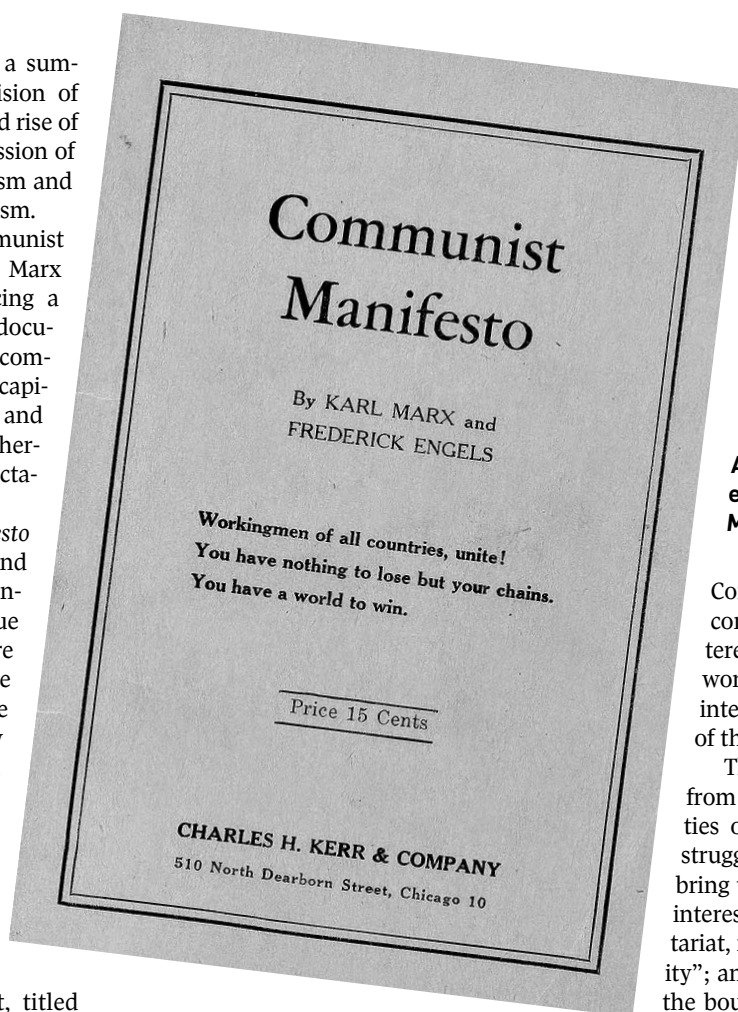
“The essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois

class, is the accumulation of wealth in the hands of private individuals, the formation and augmentation of capital: the condition for capital is wage labour.”

The second section, “Proletarians and

**“Labour cannot emancipate  
itself in white skin,  
where in black skin it is  
branded (enslaved)”**

*Capital, 1876*



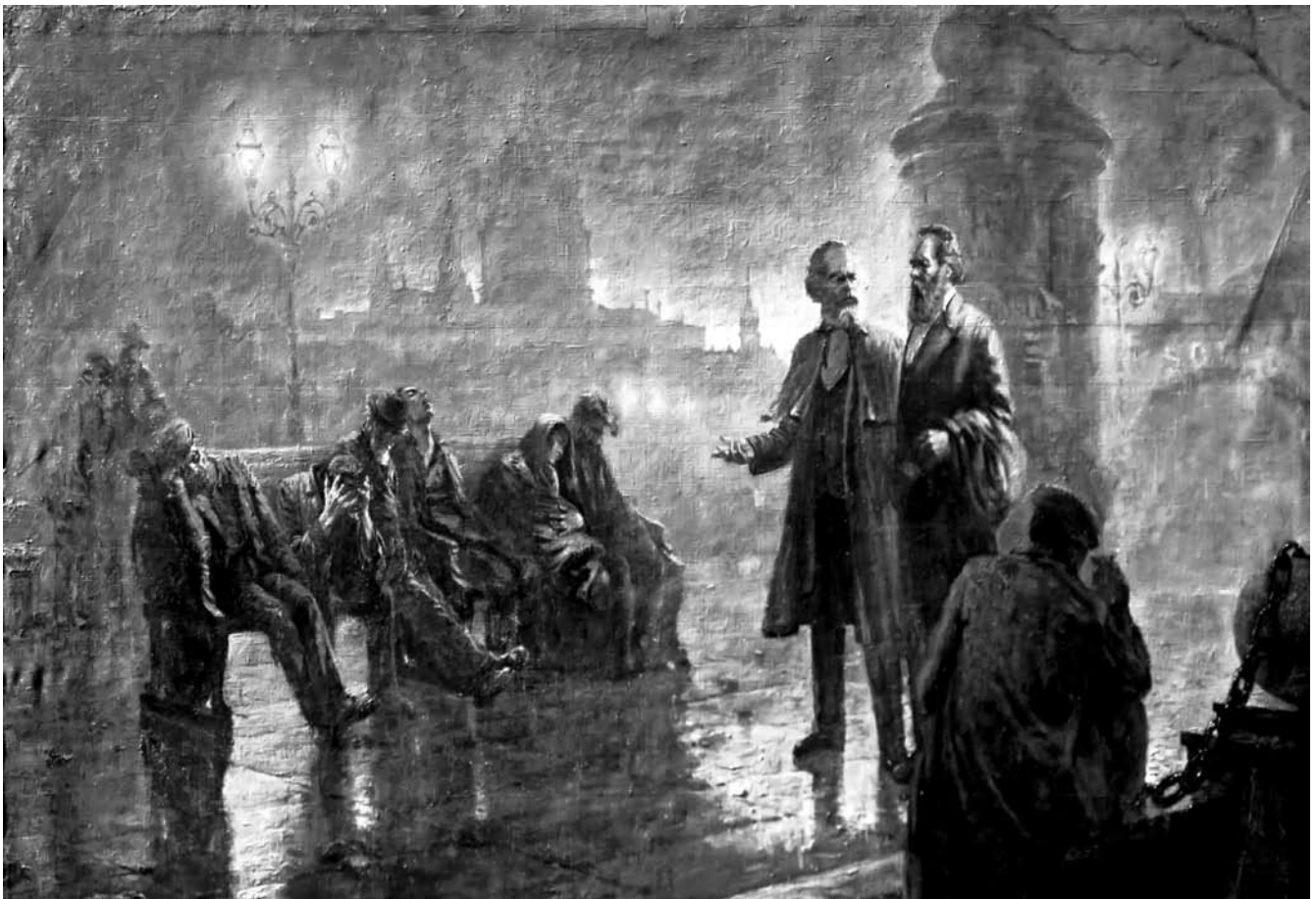
An early American edition of *The Communist Manifesto*

Communists”, explains that communists have no interests separate from other working class parties and no interest separate from those of the proletariat as a whole.

They are distinguished from other working class parties only in that, in national struggles, they “point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independent of nationality”; and in the struggle against the bourgeoisie “they represent in interests of the whole movement”. The internationalism of communists is the primary defining feature of their activity.

The section rebuffs common objections to communism and gives a 10-point programme for change that would be “generally applicable” in the most “advanced countries” of the day.

The third section of the *Manifesto*, titled “Socialist and Communist Literature”, defines the position of the Communist League in relation to rival socialist positions: reactionary socialism, bourgeois socialism, and utopian



Soviet artist Mikhail Dzhnanashvili's painting *Before the Sunrise*, shows Marx and Engels walking in London at night



A plaque commemorating this as the Marxes home in Dean Street, Soho, London

socialism.

The brief fourth section, clearly hastily written under pressure of a deadline stretched taut, deals with the position of communists in relation to various opposition parties. It asserts communist support for “every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things” and that communists “labour everywhere for the union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries”. And it closes with the famous words: “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They

have a world to win. Workers of all countries unite!”

Engels wrote in the preface to the 1888 edition of the *Manifesto* that while the work was a joint effort with Marx, the fundamental proposition of the tract belongs to Marx: the materialist view of historical development, the class struggle arising from this development, and the impossibility of the working class emancipating itself without also emancipating the whole of society from exploitation.

Modern editions of the *Manifesto* include all the seven prefaces written by

Marx and Engels to different national editions of the tract. They point out that some of the content of the manifesto that addressed the situation at the time it was written had become out-dated, but point out: “However much the state of things may have altered during the last 25 years, the general principles laid down in this Manifesto are, on the whole, as correct today as ever.”

Marx and Engels wrote this in 1872. In 2018, the only quibble with that pronouncement is with the number of years mentioned. ●

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E Capiro's painting of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the printing house of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* newspaper published in Cologne at the time of the revolution of 1848-1849

# JOURNALISM FOR REVOLUTION

## IS THE PRESS FREE IF IT DEGRADES ITSELF INTO A BUSINESS?

**M**arx was a prolific journalist for much of his adult life and valued journalism and a free press as vital channels for analysing events for workers and revolutionaries.

His massive journalistic output started when he was just 24, in 1842, and only wound down in the 1860s when he began devoting more time to completing his work on political economy (*Capital*).

His early journalism was for the *Rheinische Zeitung* (Rhenish Newspaper), in Rhineland in south-western Germany. The Rhineland was then the only industrialised region in an otherwise backward rural country made up of feudal kingdoms and duchies, of which Prussia was the biggest.

Crucially, the Rhineland area had a growing industrial proletariat and a largely progressive bourgeoisie. Marx started writing for the paper in 1842 and took over its editorship the same year,

transforming it from a pro-government organ to one that championed workers' rights and took a stand against government press censorship. Marx was a fierce exponent of press freedom, opposing government efforts to control "the highest interest of the citizens – their minds".

The Prussian government clamped down on dissent in the Rhineland, including by imposing stringent censorship on *Rheinische Zeitung*, forcing its closure. When Marx moved to Paris in 1843, he set up publication of a new journal, the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (*German-French Annals*). In it, Marx published his essay *On The Jewish Question* and the introduction to the manuscript *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Friedrich Engels also submitted articles to the journal. The paper was discontinued due to problems smuggling copies of it to Germany, where the Prus-

sian authorities had indicted Marx for high treason.

In 1844, Marx started writing in Paris for the German language paper *Vorwärts!* and increasingly took on the paper's editorial work. It was the King of Prussia's complaints to the French king about the "outrageous insults and libels" published by Marx in his pieces analysing Prussian rule that led to Marx's expulsion from France in 1847.

He moved to Belgium, where he started writing for the *Deutsche-Brüsseler-Zeitung* (German-Brussels Newspaper), which became a major platform for organising workers, and was essentially the voice of the Communist League. Marx was expelled from Belgium amid the revolutionary uprisings in 1848 and decided, with Engels, to return to Germany to continue revolutionary work, and there to relaunch the *Rheinische Zeitung* as the *Neue* (New) *Rheinische Zeitung*.

Marx was the paper's editor in chief and Engels its managing editor. The paper played a major role in organising and mobilising for the revolutionary upsurge taking hold in Germany – a rallying point against the counter-revolution that prevailed in November 1848.

He wrote with bitter acumen: "The bourgeoisie in Germany meekly joins the retinue of the absolute monarchy and of feudalism before securing even the first conditions of existence necessary for its own civic freedom and its rule... History presents no example of greater wretchedness than that of the German bourgeoisie."

*Neue Rheinische Zeitung* was hauled before the courts in early 1848, and Marx and Engels were charged with insulting the authorities. They acted as their own defence during the trial and argued for press freedom and the right to publish their paper. The jury found them not guilty and they were released.

But government pressure on the

paper continued, and the paper was forced to end publication in May 1849. Marx explained: "Some time ago Berlin demanded that the local authorities reintroduce a state of siege in Cologne. They intended to use martial law to suppress the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, but met with unexpected resistance. The municipal authorities of Cologne then turned to the judiciary here in order to achieve the same purpose by arbitrary arrests. But this failed on account of the legal scruples of the judiciary, just as it had failed twice before on account of the common sense of the Rhenish juries. There was nothing for it but to resort to

**"Censorship is a most reasonable means of hindering the human race from coming of age."  
*Reinische Zeitung, 1842***

a police ruse, and this, for the time being, has achieved its purpose. The *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* ceases publication for the present."

But in 1850, and now based in London, Marx and Engels published six issues of the paper, retitled the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung Politisch-ökonomische Revue* (Political-Economic Revue), which included their hefty analyses of the revolutions and subsequent class struggles.

In 1851 Marx began writing in English for the *New York Daily Tribune* as its London-based European correspondent, a position he held for the next 11 years. Engels also wrote regularly for the paper. Marx covered a vast range of topics, including regular analyses of British colonialism in India and China, and social and economic developments throughout Europe. He wrote nearly 500 articles for the paper, and his and Engels contributions to it make up nearly seven volumes of the 50-volume edition of their collected works. ●



## THE GENTLEST OF FATHERS

Right: The Marxes – daughter Laura (left) and Jenny, with their parents Jenny and Karl, and Friedrich Engels in London in the 1850s. A contemporary Prussian intelligence report noted: "As a husband and father, Marx ... is the gentlest and mildest of men". The fourth Marx daughter, Eleanor (above), played in Marx's study while he was writing *Capital*. "She and *Capital* grew up together" wrote her biographer. She, too, was a lifelong socialist activist and militant feminist – joining Britain's first socialist political party, the Social Democratic Federation, shortly after its formation – and edited several of her father's works.



# ON REVOLUTION

## EXPROPRIATING THE EXPROPRIATORS

**M**arx saw revolution as the inevitable outcome of class struggle, arising out of the inherent contradictions in society between oppressor and oppressed.

The bourgeois revolutions that swept away feudalism did so on a wave of combating feudal oppression and tyranny. They overturned the feudal systems that suppressed the bourgeois compulsion to free capital into a “constantly expanding market for its products”.

Bourgeois society is attracted to the idea that the process stops there, that essentially history ends, as Francis Fukuyama famously declared in 1989. But for Marx, the dynamics of class struggle not only persist in bourgeois society and its capitalist system; they become exacerbated. “Expropriating the expropriators” and abolishing bourgeois relations of production can only be effected by revolution.

The vast fault line running through capitalism is its reliance on exploitation to maintain itself, on the extraction of surplus value from the labour power of the working class through wage labour, and the class antagonisms that this generates. Capitalism creates the proletariat, which becomes, owing to its lynchpin position, the only truly revolutionary class capable of overthrowing the capitalist class.

So capitalism generates its own greatest source of insecurity and instability. It also compounds this by its accelerating, all-consuming drive for profit. Capitalist production, as Marx and Engels realised almost a century before the rise of environmental movements, not only exploits the worker; it destroys, as Marx wrote in *Capital* (Vol 1), the “metabolic interaction between man and the earth”.

The proletarian revolution is the unavoidable outcome of the contradictions – the mushrooming dysfunction – of capitalism. But Marx did not take a mechanistic view of the process. Class struggle could equally result in the mutual destruction of the contending interests, something we see today in the global arms race and its various destructive regional flashpoints.

Much of Marx’ analysis of the revolu-



Cast in stone: A granite memorial to Marx and Engels in Budapest in Hungary

tions of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and of the 1871 Paris Commune was devoted to developing a theory of revolution. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) he dissected the characteristics of bourgeois revolutions and the nature of the bourgeois state following the coup

**“The bourgeoisie screams: Communists would introduce community of women ... the real point is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production”**

d’état and assumption of dictatorial powers by Louis Napoleon.

In the *Civil War in France*, on the lessons of the Paris Commune, Marx pointed out the necessity of replacing organs of bourgeois state power with those of the people. “The working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.” Thus the standing army was replaced by the National Guard – the people armed. Lenin was to expand on this point in his *State and Revolution*, written in August 1917.

In Marx, revolution, as the word implies, denotes society turning full circle, not back where it started but forward into a wholly new state of affairs neces-

sarily borne out of what went before.

In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx counterposes the revolutionary transition of capitalism to communism to the reformism of the draft programme of the Socialist Workers Party of Germany.

He wrote: “Between capitalist and communist society there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*.”

The Gotha programme (so named after the town in which the programme was drawn up) posited, Marx wrote, “nothing beyond the old democratic litany familiar to all: universal suffrage, direct legislation, popular rights, a people’s

militia, etc” – demands that had already been realized by more advanced bourgeois states. Marx’ criticism was that the programme simply wasn’t revolutionary, meaning that it did not point the way towards a wholly new society that eliminated class oppression.

Today we may baulk at the word “dictatorship”, given the rise of fascism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but what Marx meant was what the Italian communist leader Antonio Gramsci later called “hegemony”.

So for Marx, the dictatorship or hegemony of the bourgeoisie, which is what we have under capitalism, would be replaced by the hegemony or dictatorship of the working class.

This is not to say that Marx did not see the revolutionary value and potential of certain reforms, particularly those that took the form of gains – such as the 10

hours law in England limiting the working day – exacted from the bourgeois establishment by workers. But they would not in themselves constitute revolutionary change. There had to be a greater tipping point.

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx’ uses dialectics in describing the potential outcome of proletarian revolution: “If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.” ●

# DEMYSTIFYING THE MACHINERY OF CAPITALISM

## PROFIT, WAGE LABOUR AND ALIENATION

Marx’ studies of political economy encompass the integrated analysis of economics, society and politics, which are seen as integrated elements.

The vast bulk of his and Engels’ work – from their critiques of the Young Hegelians to their differences with utopian socialists and anarchists – in part amounts to a great effort to demystify the reality of ideology, capitalism, class struggle and revolutionary change.

This demystification was nowhere more necessary than in the area of economics, a field shot through with bedazzling jargon and suppositions only equalled by the magnitude of the scandalous reality they concealed. The target was classical political economy, the relations of production in bourgeois society as depicted by bourgeois economists and ideologists.

In his early economic writings, which were really notebooks compiled in 1844 and only published in the 1930s, Marx focussed on the alienating effects of capitalist relations of production. Alienation is the dislocation of people from what they do and how they do it.

Workers are alienated from the things they make and the work they do in four ways: Alienation from the products they produce; from the labour they carry out, which becomes impersonal; from nature and self; and from other human beings.

Money, that all-determining power of whether people are worthwhile or useless (today called “winners” and “losers”), is the supreme currency of alienation. Instead of representing the value of things we possess and use (and of the labour undertaken to produce them), it becomes value in itself.

For Marx, alienation reached its peak when it became wage labour. His later work on capitalist economics looks at the relationship between wage labour and capitalist activity. Bourgeois economics told us, and still tries to, that the value of products reflects the value of the labour put into it.

But capitalist profit is based on the surplus value produced by workers’ labour power, reflected in money that the capitalist firm pays its bosses and shareholders. The mansions that mine owners and mining shareholders inhabit, for instance, are built from the surplus value

extracted from mineworkers. The mineworkers’ shacks and four-room houses are part of the subsistence level of living that the capitalist owners are by necessity forced to fork out to maintain the existence of the people who sell them their labour power.

This dynamic in generating surplus value is the core of capitalist exploitation and the class antagonism it produces. Added to it is the systemic contradiction of capitalism, the boom-bust pattern of cyclical over-production with ever-diminishing profits, followed by the manic destruction of infrastructure, commodities, and workers’ jobs and livelihoods, which is in turn followed by a short-lived, regenerative upturn.

These periodic capitalist crises are jumping-off points for revolutionary change, depending on the stage of development and level of self-awareness of the proletariat.

Marx’ major work on all this – in addition to the pamphlets (such as *Wage Labour and Capital*) and lectures he produced to help explain it – is the *Critique of Political Economy* (the three-volume series titled *Capital*). ●

# TAKING IT EASY

'WITH MARX, THE FINEST TEACHER OF THE PROLETARIAT'

**F**riedrich Engels seems, at first glance, an unlikely revolutionary.

He loved the good life; regarded "jollity" ("partying" in today's parlance) as his favourite characteristic; said his personal motto was "take it easy"; hosted regular Sunday parties until two or three on Monday mornings; and shared with the English aristocracy and upper classes a passion for fox-hunting.

And when, at 29, he finally put his mind to succeeding in capitalist enterprise, he proved to be an accomplished business executive – in just 20 years he rose from being a humble office clerk to part owner of the business, able to retire at just 49 with a considerable fortune.

He then used this to support himself and Marx for rest of their lives (19 years in Marx' case, 31 in Engels').

They were years in which he and Marx produced some of their most enduring socialist revolutionary contributions – most notably *Capital*, to which Engels contributed directly, and, after Marx' death, collated and edited *Capital II* and *Capital III* for publication. In this period Engels also produced some his own most profound work, including *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

In those years he also wrote *Anti-Dühring* (and the spin-offs *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, and *Dialectics of Nature*), and worked tirelessly to ensure publication of *Capital* and Marx' other works (with some time presumably set aside for jollity).

Even during his 20-year climb up the corporate ladder, his contribution was prodigious. Under permanent Eng-



Friedrich Engels at about the time of his retirement from the textile industry to concentrate fulltime on his studies and writing



Mary Burns, Engels' life partner and ideological kindred spirit

lish police surveillance because of his radical profile, he lived a double life – formally as an increasingly successful executive in the textile industry, but spending much of his life in a covert house in working class Manchester with his working class life partner Mary Burns (they used fake identities to avoid police surveillance), from where he communicated daily by post with Marx. He still found time to produce one of his major works, *The Peasant War in Germany*, on the peasants' 1525 insurrection that catapulted Martin Luther's protestant doctrine into a major religious movement. Engels said he wrote the book "to prove that the political and religious theories were not the causes ... but the result of that stage of development of agriculture, industry, land ... commerce and finance ..."

And Marx' work in that period is dotted with indications of Engels' contribution and influence – the title *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, to use just one example, is taken from Engels' light-



In Manchester, researching *The Condition of the Working Class in England*

hearted reference (in one of his 2 000-plus letters to Marx) to the date under the French Revolutionary calendar (18th Brumaire) on which Louis Napoleon's forebear, Napoleon Bonaparte, seized power in a similar coup. In the article itself, Marx' reference to history repeating itself, "once as a tragedy and secondly as farce", draws heavily on Engels characterisation in the same letter.

By the time Engels opted to take his commercial day job more seriously, he could already claim an impressive revolutionary CV. Born two years after Marx in an industrial town not far from Marx' birthplace, he dropped out of school at 17 to work as an office clerk, but spent much of his time as a part-time journalist – focusing on the circumstances of the German working class in articles written for *Reinische Zeitung* – and fraternising with the Young Hegelians.

Hoping to return Engels to the bourgeois fold, his parents shuffled him off at 22 to a textile company part-owned by his father in England. But he spent

most of his time on his journalism, writing a savage, three-part critique of the circumstances of the working-class in Manchester – helped in his research by Mary Burns. They became life partners but never married, sharing the view that state and church-regulated marriage was a form of class and gender oppression – a view on which Engels would expand in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

The series was published in *Rheinische Zeitung* and, when that was banned, in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*. While in Manchester Engels also wrote for several radical English and North American newspapers, and expanded his three-part series into a book, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. His view on bourgeois capitalism is perfectly encapsulated in a question he asks in the book: "A class which bears all the disadvantages of the social order without enjoying its advantages ... Who can demand that such a class respect this social order?"



Soviet stamp commemorating Engels, 1970

In 1844, he returned to Germany, stopping off in Paris to meet Marx, where the two became close friends and immediately began the collaboration that would last until Marx' death, co-writing *The Holy Family*, an attack on the Young Hegelians.

Following Marx' expulsion from France, Engels joined him in Brussels, staying for three years, first to collaborate on *The German Ideology*; to jointly organise Brussel's exiled German workers; and to join (and increasingly lead) the underground German Communist League. The league commissioned Marx to write *The Communist Manifesto*, in which Marx drew on Engels' earlier *Principles of Communism*.

Popular uprisings throughout Europe in 1848 persuaded both Engels and Marx to return to Germany, to establish the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*.

Democratic revolutions swept across individual states of the German Confederacy. Marx was expelled from Germany as Prussian-led military intervention – effectively a coup against the newly-elected parliaments – triggered armed democratic resistance. Engels joining the struggle and was one of the last militia volunteers to escape across the Swiss border before Prussian troops crushed the resistance. He made his way back to England to re-join the textile industry and ensure financial support for his and Marx' revolutionary work.

On his death, Lenin wrote: "After his friend Marx ... Engels was the finest scholar and teacher of the modern proletariat in the whole world." ●

# THE LIFE OF KARL MARX – A TIMELINE

"In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all"  
– *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848

**1818**

- RSA: Britain launches Fifth War of Dispossession against AmaXhosa, seizing all lands between Fish & Keiskamma Rivers

**Marx born**

**1820**

- RSA: British '1820 settlers' begin arriving to occupy 'new' territory

**Engels born**

**1822**

- American Colonisation Society occupies Liberia as territory for emancipated slaves

**1824**

- RSA: King Moshoeshoe establishes the Kingdom of Lesotho

**1825**

- RSA: Uprising of slave and Khoikhoi labourers against their owners the Worcester district

**1828**

- RSA: King Shaka assassinated

**1830**

- Great Reform Bill

**Marx begins high school**

**1833**

- British Parliament abolishes slavery in the British Empire

**1834**

- RSA: Great Trek' begins in response to abolition of slavery in Cape Colony
- Britain seizes more land in the Sixth War of Dispossession

**1835**

**Marx enters University of Bonn**

**1836**

**Marx enters University of Berlin**

**1837**

- RSA: Boers establish Republic of Natalia, occupying central KZN
- RSA: British seize Port Natal

**1838**

- Rise of Chartism in Britain
- RSA: Boer forces defeat AmaZulu at Battle of Blood River

**Marx' father, Heinrich Marx dies**  
– Doctoral thesis *On the Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature*

**1841**

**Doctorate conferred. Marx moves to Bonn**

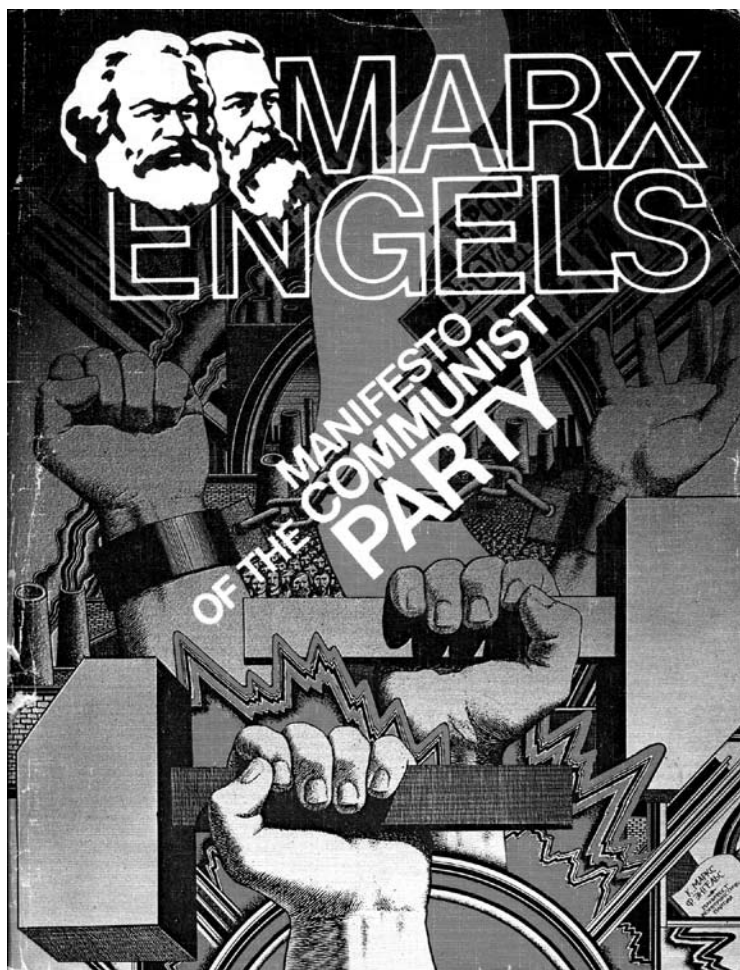
**1842**

**Baron von Westphalen dies, Marx moves to Cologne as editor of *Rheinische Zeitung***  
– Articles for *Rheinische Zeitung*

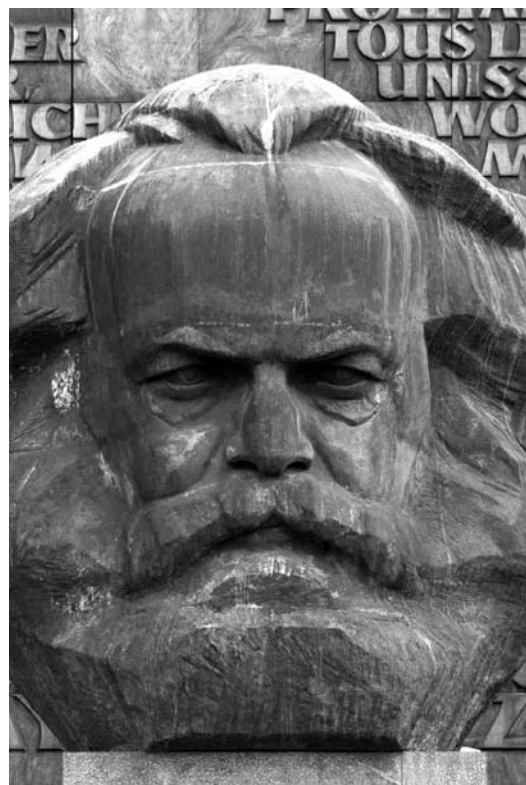
**1843**

- RSA: British annex Natalia

**Marx marries Jenny von Westphalen, leaves for Paris**  
– *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*  
– *On the Jewish Question*



Still in demand 170 years on (left) - a recent edition of *The Communist Manifesto*, and (below) the Marx Memorial in Chemnitz, Germany by Soviet sculptor Lew Kerbel. The text behind Marx' bust reads, in German: Workers of all countries, unite!



**1844**

- Silesian weavers' revolt

**Birth of Jenny Marx (May); meets Friedrich Engels (Sept)**  
 – *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction*  
 – *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*  
 – *Critical notes on The King of Prussia and Social Reform*  
*The Holy Family*

**1845**

**Marx moves to Brussels; visits England;**  
 – Birth of Laura Marx

**1846**

**Marx sets up Correspondence Committee for German exiles**  
**Birth of Edgar Marx**

**1847**

- RSA: War of the Axe: Britain seizes all land West of Kei River

**Marx joins Communist League (January)**  
 – *The Poverty of Philosophy*

**1848**

- Year of Revolutions

**1849**

**Marx moves to Paris and then to Cologne as editor of *Neue Rheinische Zeitung***  
 – *Speech on Free Trade*  
 – *The Communist Manifesto*  
 – *Demands of the Communist Party in Germany*  
 – About 80 articles for *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*

**Marx moves to Paris then to London, where they remain; birth of son Guido Marx**  
 – *Wage, Labour and Capital*  
 – About 20 articles for *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*

**1850**

- Ten Hours Act limits work hours in Britain
- Eight War of Dispossession begins

**Death of Guido (September)**  
 – *Addresses of the Central Committee to Communist League*  
 – *Articles in Neue Rheinische Zeitung-Revue,*  
 – *The Class Struggles in France*

## "Philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it"

– *Theses on Feuerbach*, 1845 (published 1888)

1851	Birth of daughter Franziska Marx	1860	● American Civil War begins – <i>Herr Vogt</i>
1852	<b>Death of Franziska (April); Communist League dissolved (November)</b> – Articles for <i>New York Herald Tribune</i> [1852-62], – <i>The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte</i> , – <i>The Great Men of Exile</i>	1861	● Serfdom abolished in Russia; Britain occupies Lagos to begin colonising Nigeria – 15 articles for <i>Die Priesse</i>
1853	– <i>The Cologne Communist Trial</i> , – <i>Palmerston: The Knight of the Noble Conscience</i>	1862	– <i>Theories of Surplus Value</i> – 30 articles for <i>Die Priesse</i> – <i>Manuscripts on Polish Question</i>
1854	● Crimean War – <i>Palmerston and Russia</i>	1863	<b>Marx to Trier</b> <b>Death of Mary Burns (January); Death of Marx's mother</b> – <i>First draft Capital Vol. II</i>
1855	● Ras Kassa establishes modern Ethiopia (as Emperor Tewodros II) <b>Birth of daughter Eleanor Marx (January)</b> <b>Death of son Edgar Marx (April)</b> – About 100 articles for <i>Neue Oder Zeitung</i>	1864	● First International ● Former slave Samuel Crowther becomes the first African Anglican bishop (in Nigeria) – <i>Inaugural Address of First International</i> – <i>First draft Capital Vol. III</i>
1856	– <i>Revelations about the Diplomatic History of the Eighteenth Century</i> – <i>Preface to a Critique of Political Economy</i> – <i>Critique of Political Economy Articles for Das Volk</i> – Articles for <i>People's Paper</i> and <i>Free Press</i>	1865	– <i>Value, Price and Profit</i> – <i>On Proudhon</i>
1857	● Indian Mutiny – <i>General Introduction</i>	1866	● Austro-Prussian War – <i>Programme for First Congress of the International</i>
1858	● RSA: First Free State-Basotho War – <i>Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy (Grundrisse)</i> – Articles for <i>New American Encyclopaedia</i>	1867	● RSA: Diamonds discovered in South Africa ● Marx to Hamburg for Capital (April/May) – <i>Publication of Capital Vol I</i>
1859	● Britain & France begin construction of Suez Canal ● RSA: Natal colony legislates import of indentured Indian labourers – <i>Preface to a Critique of Political Economy</i> – <i>Critique of Political Economy Articles for Das Volk</i>	1868	● Social Democratic Party founded in Germany ● RSA: Gold discovered in South Africa <b>Marx to Hamburg for Capital (April/May)</b> <b>Engels retires</b>
		1869	● Franco-Prussian War ● Paris Commune; German Empire <b>Engels moves to London</b> – <i>Two addresses of Franco-Prussian War</i> – <i>The Civil War in France</i>



**A statue of Marx and Engels in the Marx-Engels-Forum in central Berlin, the capital of Germany, commemorates possibly the most influential partnership in history**

**1872**

- Hague Congress of International

– *Alleged Splits in International*  
 – *Preface to Second Edition of Communist Manifesto*  
 – Amsterdam speech

**1873**

– *Preface to Second German edition of Capital Vol. I*

**1874**

– Remarks on Bakunin's Statism and Anarchy

**1875**

- Gotha Congress

– *Critique of the Gotha Programme*  
 – *French Edition of Capital Vol. I*

**1877**

- Russo-Turkish War

– *Contribution to Anti-Diihring*

**1878**

- Anti-Socialist laws in Germany

**1879**

- RSA: Zulu army defeats British at Isandlwana
- RSA: Battle of Ulundi: Britain occupies all KZN

**1880**

- RSA: First Anglo-Boer War

– *Introduction to French Workers' Programme*

**1881**

- Mahdi Revolt under Muhammad Ahmad begins in Sudan

**Marx to Argenteuil**  
**Death of wife Jenny Marx**

**1882**

- Britain gains control over Egypt from Turkish Ottoman Empire

**Marx to Algiers, Monte Carlo**

– *Preface to second Russian edition of Communist Manifesto*

**Death of daughter Jenny**  
**Death of Marx**  
**(14 March)**

# HIS NAME AND HIS WORK WILL ENDURE

'HE WAS BEFORE ALL ELSE A REVOLUTIONIST: HIS MISSION WAS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE OVERTHROW OF CAPITALIST SOCIETY'

*Just 11 people gathered in London's Highgate Cemetery on 17 March 1883 to hear this graveside eulogy by Frederick Engels on his great friend and collaborator, Karl Marx*

On 14 March, at a quarter to three in the afternoon, the greatest living thinker ceased to think. He had been left alone for scarcely two minutes, and when we came back we found him in his armchair, peacefully gone to sleep – for ever.

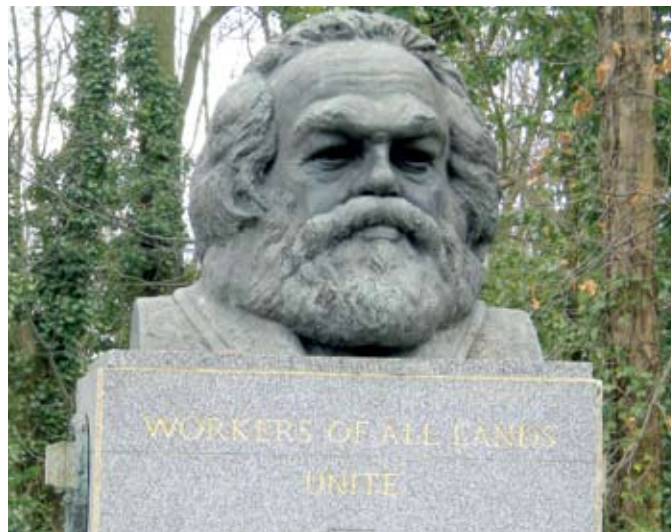
An immeasurable loss has been sustained both by the militant proletariat of Europe and America, and by historical science. The gap that has been left by the departure of this mighty spirit will soon enough make itself felt.

Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history: the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc.; that therefore the production of the immediate material means, and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch, form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, art, and even the ideas on religion, of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which they must, therefore, be explained, instead of vice versa, as had hitherto been the case.

But that is not all. Marx also discov-

ered the special law of motion governing the present-day capitalist mode of production, and the bourgeois society that this mode of production has created. The discovery of surplus value suddenly threw light on the problem, in trying to solve which all previous investigations, by both bourgeois economists and socialist critics, had been groping in the dark.

Two such discoveries would be enough for one lifetime ... But in every single field which Marx investigated – and he investigated very many fields, none of them superficially – in every field, even in that of mathematics, he made independent



**Marx' tombstone in London's Highgate cemetery**

discoveries.

Such was the man of science. But this was not even half the man. Science was for Marx a historically dynamic, revolutionary force. However great the joy with which he welcomed a new discovery in some theoretical science whose practical application perhaps it was as yet quite impossible to envisage, he experienced quite another kind of joy when the discovery involved immediate revolutionary changes in industry, and in historical development in general.

For Marx was before all else a revolutionist. His real mission in life was to contribute ... to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the state institutions which it had brought into being, to contribute to the liberation of the modern proletariat, which he was the first to make conscious of its own position and its needs, conscious of the conditions of its emancipation. Fighting was his element. And he fought with a passion, a tenacity and a success such as few could rival. His work on the first *Rheinische Zeitung* (1842), the *Paris Vorwärts* (1844), the *Deutsche Brusseler Zeitung* (1847),

the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (1848-49), the *New York Tribune* (1852-61), and a host of militant pamphlets, work in organisations in Paris, Brussels and London, and finally, crowning all, the formation of the great International Working Men's Association – this alone was an achievement of which its founder might well have been proud.

Consequently Marx was the best hated and most calumniated man of his time. Governments, both absolutist and republican, deported him from their territories. Bourgeois, whether conservative or ultra-democratic, vied with one another in

heaping slanders upon him. All this he brushed aside as though it were a cobweb, ignoring it, answering only when extreme necessity compelled him. And he died beloved, revered and mourned by millions of revolutionary fellow workers – from the mines of Siberia to California, in all parts of Europe and America – and I make bold to say that, though he may have had many opponents, he had hardly one personal enemy.

His name will endure through the ages, and so also will his work. ●