KARL MARX

1818-1883

For the anniversary of his death March 14, 1883

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Extracts from Reminiscences of Marx
by Wilhelm Liebknecht and
Paul Lafargue

Four Letters of Engels on
the Death of Marx

Engels' Speech
at the Graveside of Marx

For the Anniversary
of Marx's death, 14 March 1883

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

On March 17, 1883, when Karl Marx was buried in Highgate cemetery, only a handful of friends were gathered there to honour him. His name was unknown to the London working class. The International Workingmen's Association, founded and led by him, had ceased to exist eleven years before and was forgotten by the British trade unions which had once supported it. The only English organization which was to some extent influenced by his teaching did not as yet call itself Socialist: another year passed before it adopted the title, Social Democratic Federation. The one completed volume of Marx's greatest work, *Capital*, published sixteen years before his death, had never been translated into English.

But there was no hesitation in the words spoken at the graveside by Frederick Engels: 'On the 14th of March, at a quarter to three in the afternoon, the greatest living thinker ceased to think'. 'His name will endure through the ages, and so also will his work.' (page 27).

Engels spoke with the authority and confidence born of forty years' closest friendship and intellectual intimacy, during which he had grasped, as no other man had, the full significance of Marx's teachings. His estimate of their value to the world was that of a fellow scientist and revolutionary comrade-in-arms; and history has proved that he was right.

Today it is no longer a handful of people who honour Marx's memory. In spite of every effort of calumny and distortion by bourgeois intellectuals and working-class renegades, growing numbers of people in every country of the world recognize in Marxism the science of the present and the future. This recognition has not been easily won. At each stage it has been fought for by the ablest and most courageous men and women in the working-class movement, but there have been periods in the history of every country—not least in Britain, where Marx spent the greater part of his life—when the revolutionary content of his teaching has been almost extinguished.

Today it burns bright and inextinguishable. The mighty beacon of the Soviet Union draws the attention of the whole

world; and daily more men and women, workers by hand and by brain, are coming to understand that the heroism of the Soviet people is no accident of race and historical chance, but derives from the force and truth of Marx's revolutionary teaching. For it was the Russian people who, under the leadership of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party which he formed, first carried the revolutionary theory of Marx into triumphant practice. For nearly twenty-five years, from November 7, 1917 to June 22, 1941, they have been engaged in the mightiest work of construction that history has known: Stalin, Lenin's greatest disciple, led the Russian workers and peasants forward to Socialism, the first stage on the way to Communism, that future world society which Marx foretold with the confidence of a scientist and for which he strove with the passion of a great revolutionary. Today, when together with the common people of the whole world they are threatened by the scourge of fascism, it is Stalin and the Army of the Socialist State who are leading the forces of liberation in the struggle for the future of humanity.

The personal reminiscences of Marx included in this pamphlet are taken from those of Paul Lafargue, published in the NEUE ZEIT, September 1890, and from Wilhelm Liebknecht's Reminiscences, published in 1896.

Those whose first introduction to Marx comes through the following pages will want to read his works for themselves. They should consult the bibliography on page 29.

I

MARX AT WORK

THE first time I ever saw Karl Marx was in February 1865. The International had been founded on September 28th, 1864, at a meeting in St. Martin's Hall. I came from Paris to bring him news of the progress made there by the young organization. Monsieur Tolain, now a senator of the bourgeois republic and one of its representatives at the Berlin Conference, had given me a letter of introduction.

I was twenty-four years old. Never in my life shall I forget the impression made on me by my first visit. Marx was in poor health at the time, and was hard at work upon the first volume of *Capital* (published two years later, in 1867). He was afraid he might be unable to finish it, and he gladly received young people, 'for,' he used to say, 'I must train up men who will continue the communist propaganda after I am gone'.

Karl Marx was one of those rare men who are fitted for the front rank both in science and in public life. So intimately did he combine these two fields that we shall never understand him unless we regard him simultaneously as man of science and as socialist fighter. While he was of the opinion that every science must be cultivated for its own sake and that when we undertake scientific research we should not trouble ourselves about the possible consequences, nevertheless, he held that the man of learning, if he does not wish to degrade himself, must never cease to participate in public affairs—must not be content to shut himself up in his study or laboratory, like a maggot in a cheese, and to shun the life and the social and political struggles of his contemporaries.

'Science must not be a selfish pleasure. Those who are so lucky as to be able to devote themselves to scientific pursuits should be

the first to put their knowledge at the service of mankind.' One of his favourite sayings was, 'Work for the World'.

Though he deeply sympathized with the suffering of the working class, what had led him to the communist standpoint was not any sentimental consideration, but the study of history and political economy. He maintained that every unprejudiced person, uninfluenced by private interests and not blinded by class prejudices, must perforce come to the same conclusion. But if he studied the economic and political development of human society without any preconceived notions, he wrote only with the definite intention of spreading the results of his studies, and with the firm determination to provide a scientific foundation for the socialist movement, which down to his day had been lost in utopian mists. As far as public activity was concerned, he took part in this only in order to work on behalf of the triumph of the working class, whose historic mission it is to establish communism as soon as it has attained to the political and economic leadership of society. In like manner the mission of the bourgeoisie as soon as it rose to power was to break the feudal bonds which hampered the development of agriculture and industry: to inaugurate free intercourse for commodities and human beings, and free contact between employers and workers: to centralize the means of production and exchange: and to prepare the material and intellectual elements of communist society.

Marx did not restrict his activities to the land of his birth. 'I am a citizen of the World,' he would say, 'and I work wherever I happen to be'. In actual fact, he played a prominent part in the revolutionary movements that developed in the countries (France, Belgium, England) to which events and political persecutions drove him.

But at my first visit, when I saw him in his study in Maitland Park Road, he appeared before me, not as the indefatigable and unequalled socialist agitator, but as the man of learning. From all parts of the civilized world, party comrades flocked to his study in order to consult the master of socialist thought. This room has become historical. Anyone who wants to realize the intimate aspects of Marx's intellectual life must become acquainted with it. It was situated on the first floor, well lighted by a broad

window overlooking the park. On both sides of the fireplace and opposite the window were crowded bookshelves, on the top of which packets of newspapers and manuscripts were piled up to the ceiling. On one side of the window stood two tables, likewise loaded with miscellaneous papers, newspapers and books. In the middle of the room, where the light was best, was a small and plain writing table, three feet by two, and a wooden armchair. Between this chair and one of the bookshelves, facing the window, was a leather-covered sofa on which Marx would occasionally lie down to rest. On the mantelpiece were more books, interspersed with cigars, boxes of matches, tobacco jars, paperweights, and photographs of his daughters, his wife, Frederick Engels and Wilhelm Wolff. Marx was a heavy smoker. '*Capital* will not bring in enough money to pay for the cigars I smoked when I was writing it,' he told me. But he was still more spendthrift in his use of matches. So often did he forget his pipe or his cigar that he had constantly to be relighting it, and would use up a box of matches in an incredibly short time.

He would never allow anyone to arrange (really, to disarrange) his books and papers. The prevailing disorder was only apparent. In actual fact, everything was in its proper place, and without searching he could put his hand on any book or manuscript he wanted. Even when conversing, he would often stop to show a relevant passage or figure in the book itself. He was at one with his study, where his books and papers were as obedient to his will as were his own limbs.

He took no account of external symmetry when arranging his books. Quarto and octavo volumes and pamphlets were placed side by side: he arranged his books not according to size but according to content. To him books were intellectual tools, not luxuries. 'They are my slaves,' he would say, 'and must serve my will.' He had scant respect for their form, their binding, the beauty of paper or printing: he would turn down the corners of the pages, underline passages, and cover the margins with pencil marks. He did not make notes in his books, but could not refrain from a question mark or a note of exclamation when an author kicked over the traces. His system of underlining enabled him to re-find with great ease any desired passage. He had the habit, at intervals of some years, of re-reading his notebooks and the

marked passages in the books he had read, in order to refresh his memory—which was extraordinarily vigorous and accurate. From early youth he had trained it in accordance with Hegel's advice of memorising verses in an unfamiliar tongue.

He knew Heine and Goethe by heart, and would often quote them in conversation. He read the poets constantly, selecting authors from all the European languages. Year after year he would read Aeschylus again in the original Greek, regarding this author and Shakespeare as the two greatest dramatic geniuses the world had ever known. He had made an exhaustive study of Shakespeare, for whom he had an unbounded admiration, and whose most insignificant characters even, were familiar to him. There was a veritable Shakespeare cult in the Marx family, and the three daughters knew much of Shakespeare by heart. Shortly after 1848, when Marx wished to perfect his knowledge of English (which he could already read well), he sought out and classified all Shakespeare's characteristic expressions: and he did the same with some of the polemical writings of William Cobbett, for whom he had a great esteem. Dante and Burns were among his favourite poets, and it was always a delight to him to hear his daughters recite Burns' satirical poems or sing Burns' love songs. . . .

Marx rested himself by pacing up and down the room, so that between door and window the carpet had been worn threadbare along a track as sharply defined as a footpath through a meadow. Sometimes he would lie down on the sofa and read a novel: he often had two or three novels going at the same time, reading them by turns—for, like Darwin, he was a great novel reader. He had a preference for eighteenth-century novels, and was especially fond of Fielding's *Tom Jones*. The modern novelists who pleased him best were Paul de Koch, Charles Lever, the elder Dumas and Sir Walter Scott, whose *Old Mortality* he considered a masterpiece. He had a predilection for tales of adventure and humorous stories. The greatest masters of romance were for him Cervantes and Balzac. *Don Quixote* was for him the epic of the decay of chivalry, whose virtues in the newly rising bourgeois world became absurdities and follies. His admiration for Balzac was so profound that he had planned to write a criticism of *La Comédie Humaine* as soon as he should have finished

his economic studies. Marx looked upon Balzac, not merely as the historian of the social life of his time, but as a prophetic creator of character types which still existed only in embryo during the reign of Louis Philippe, and which only reached full development under Napoleon III, after Balzac's death.

Marx could read all the leading European languages, and could write in three (German, French and English) in a way that aroused the admiration of all who were well acquainted with these tongues; he was fond of saying, 'A foreign language is a weapon in the struggle of life.' He had a great talent for languages, and this was inherited by his daughters. He was already fifty years old when he began to learn Russian. Although the dead and living languages already known to him had no close etymological relation to Russian, he had made such progress in six months as to be able to enjoy reading in the original the works of the Russian poets and authors whom he especially prized: Pushkin, Gogol and Schedrin. His reason for learning Russian was that he might be able to read certain official reports of investigations—which the government had suppressed because the revelations they contained were so appalling. Some devoted friends had managed to procure copies for Marx, who was certainly the only economist of western Europe who had cognizance of them.

Besides the reading of poetry and novels, Marx had recourse to another and very remarkable means of mental relaxation, *viz.*, mathematics, of which he was exceedingly fond. Algebra even gave him moral consolation: and he would take refuge in it during the most painful moments of a storm-tossed life. In the days of his wife's last illness, he found it impossible to go on in the usual way with his scientific work, and his only escape from the thought of her sufferings was to immerse himself in mathematics. At this period of spiritual agony he wrote an essay upon the infinitesimal calculus, which, according to the reports of mathematicians who know it, is of the first importance, and is to be published in his collected works. In the higher mathematics he could trace the dialectical movement in the most logical, and at the same time in its simplest form. According to his way of thinking, a science was only really developed when it had reached a form in which it could make use of mathematics.

Marx's library, comprising more than a thousand volumes laboriously collected in the course of a lifetime of research, was insufficient for his needs: and for many years he was a regular attendant at the British Museum Reading Room, whose catalogue he greatly prized. Even his opponents are compelled to admit that he was a man of profound and wide erudition: and this not merely in his own speciality of economics, but also in history, philosophy and literature of all countries.

Although he invariably went to bed very late, he was always afoot between eight and nine in the morning. Having drunk a cup of black coffee and read his newspapers, he would go to his study and work there till two or three next morning—breaking off only for meals, and (when the weather was fine) for a walk on Hampstead Heath. In the course of the day he slept for an hour or two on the sofa. As a young man he had had the habit of spending whole nights at work. For Marx, work had become a passion, and one so absorbing that it was apt to make him forget his meals. Not infrequently he had to be summoned again and again before he would come down to the dining room: and hardly had he finished the last mouthful before he was on his way back to his desk. He was a poor eater, and even suffered from lack of appetite, which he tried to combat by the stimulus of highly seasoned food, such as ham, smoked fish, caviare and pickles. His stomach had to pay for the colossal activity of his brain, to which, indeed, all his body was sacrificed. Thinking was his supreme enjoyment. I have often heard him quote from Hegel, the master of the philosophy of his youthful days, the saying: 'Even the criminal thought of a scoundrel is grander and more sublime than the wonders of the heavens.'

He must undoubtedly have had a very strong constitution, for otherwise he could never have endured so unusual a way of living or such exhausting intellectual labours. He was, in fact, very powerfully built. A man above the average height, he had broad shoulders and a deep chest, and his limbs were well proportioned on the whole, though his legs were rather too short for his body (as is often the case among members of the Jewish race). If he had practised gymnastics in his youth, he would have become an extremely powerful man. The only physical exercise he took was walking. He could walk for hours, and even climb hills,

talking and smoking the whole time, without showing a sign of fatigue. It may be said that he did his work while walking in his study. Only for short intervals would he sit down at his desk in order to commit to paper what he had thought out while pacing the floor. He was fond, too, of conversing while thus engaged in walking, only pausing in his walk from time to time, when the discussion became lively or the conversation especially important.

For years it was my custom to join in his evening strolls on Hampstead Heath, and it was during these walks through the fields that I acquired through him my education in economics. Without noticing it himself, he developed in these walks with me the whole of the first volume of *Capital* as he was writing it at the time. As soon as I got home I would, to the best of my ability, jot down the substance of what I had heard: but at first I found it very difficult to follow Marx's profound and complicated thought process. Unfortunately I lost these invaluable notes, for after the Commune my papers in Paris and Bordeaux were seized and burnt by the police. Especially do I regret the loss of the notes made one evening when Marx, with a characteristic abundance of proofs and reflections, had been expounding his brilliant theory of the development of human society. It was as if a veil had been lifted from my eyes. For the first time I clearly grasped the logic of universal history, and became able to refer to their material causes the phenomena of the evolution of society and ideas—phenomena which to outward seeming are so contradictory. . . .

Marx's brain was armed with an incredible quantity of historical and scientific facts and philosophical theories, and he was amazingly skilled in making use of all this knowledge and observation which he had gathered during lengthy intellectual labour. At any time, and upon any conceivable topic, he could, supply the most adequate answer anyone could possibly desire to any enquiry, an answer always accompanied by philosophical reflections of general significance. His brain resembled a warship which lies in harbour under full steam, being ready at a moment's notice to set forth into any of the seas of thought. Indubitably. *Capital* discloses to us a mind remarkable for its energy and rich in knowledge. But for me, as for all who have known Marx well, neither *Capital* nor any of his other writings exhibit the full extent

of his knowledge or the full grandeur of his genius and knowledge. The man towered high above his writings.

I worked with Marx. I was nothing more than the writer to whom he dictated, but this gave me the opportunity of observing how he thought and wrote. For him, work was at once easy and difficult. It was easy because, whatever the theme, the apposite facts and reflections surged up in his mind in abundance at the first impulse: but this very abundance made the complete exposition of his ideas laborious and difficult.

Vico wrote: 'Only for God, who knows all, is the thing a substance; for man, who knows externals merely, it is nothing more than a surface.' Marx grasped things after the manner of the God of Vico; he did not see the surface only, but penetrated into the depths, examining all the constituent parts in their mutual interactions, isolating each of these parts and tracing the history of its development. Then he passed on from the thing to its environment, watching the effect of each upon the other. He went back to the origin of the object of study, considering the transformations, the evolutions and revolutions through which it had passed, and tracing finally even the remotest of its effects. He never saw a thing-by-itself, out of touch with its setting: but an extremely complicated world in continual movement.

His aim was to expound all the life of this world, in its manifold and incessantly changing actions and reactions. The writers of the school of Flaubert and De Goncourt complain of the difficulty of giving an accurate account of what we see: and yet that which they wish to describe is nothing more than the surface of which Vico spoke, nothing more than the impression they receive. Their literary task was child's play compared with that undertaken by Marx. He needed quite exceptional powers of thought to comprehend the reality; and not less exceptional talent for exposition, if he was to make intelligible to others what he saw and wanted them to see. He was never content with what he wrote, altering it again and again, and he always felt that the presentation remained inadequate to the idea.

* * *

Marx always worked with extreme conscientiousness. He never gave facts or figures which he could not substantiate from the

best authorities. In this matter he was not content with second-hand sources, but went always to the fountain head, however much trouble it might entail. Even the verification of some subsidiary item he would pay a special visit to the British Museum. That is why his critics have never been able to convict him of an error due to carelessness, or to show that any of his demonstrations were based on facts which could not stand severe examination. His habit of consulting original sources led him to read the least-known authors, who were quoted only by him. *Capital* contains such a number of quotations from unknown writers that it might be supposed they were introduced to make a parade of learning. But Marx was moved by a very different impulse. He said: 'I mete out historical justice, and render to each man his due'. He considered it his duty to name the author, however insignificant and obscure, who had first expressed a thought, or had expressed it more precisely than anyone else.

His literary conscience was no less strict than his scientific conscience. Not merely would he never rely on a fact about which he was not quite sure, but he would not speak on a topic at all unless he had made a thorough study of it. He would not publish anything until he had worked over it again and again, until what he had written obtained a satisfactory form. He could not bear to offer half-finished thoughts to the public.

LAFARGUE

* * *

. . . how few of the young literary men who fasten themselves on to the Party give themselves the trouble to study economics, the history of economics, the history of trade, of industry, of agriculture, of the forms of Society. . . . It often seems as if these gentlemen think anything is good enough for the workers. If these gentlemen only knew how Marx thought his best things were still not good enough for the workers, and how he regarded it as a crime to offer the workers anything less than the very best! (ENGELS TO CONRAD SCHMIDT, 5 AUG. 1890.)

II

MARX THE TEACHER

My first more lengthy conversation with Marx took place the day after our encounter at the . . . country outing of the Communist Workers' Educational Union. Then there was naturally no opportunity for any detailed talk and Marx invited me to come the following day to the meeting place of the Union when Engels would probably also be present. I came a little before the appointed time, Marx was not yet there; but I found several old acquaintances and was in the midst of a lively conversation when Marx clapped his hand on my shoulder, greeting me in a very friendly way. Engels, he said, was in the private parlour, where we would be more alone. I did not know what a private parlour was, and it occurred to me that I was now about to face the 'big' examination; however, I followed trustingly. Marx, who made the same sympathetic impression on me as the day before, had the property of inspiring confidence. He took me by the arm and led me into the private parlour, i.e. the private room of the landlord—or was it a landlady?—where Engels, who had already provided himself with a pewter pot full of dark brown stout, immediately received me with merry joking. In a moment we had ordered from Amy (or 'Emma' as she had been rechristened in German by the refugees, an account of the similarity of sound), the nimble waitress, 'stuff' to eat and drink —among us refugees the stomach question played an important rôle. In a moment the beer arrived and we sat down, I on one side of the table, Marx and Engels opposite me. With the massive mahogany table, the shining pewter mugs, the foaming stout, the appearance of the genuine English beefsteak and trimmings, the long clay pipes which invited one to smoke them—it was all so

comfortable that I was vividly reminded of a picture in the English illustrations to 'Boz'. But all the same it was an *examination*! . . .

I was suspected by my two examiners of petty bourgeois 'democracy' and 'South German exuberance of feeling' and many judgments which I pronounced on men and things met with very sharp criticism. On the whole, the examination passed off not unfavourably and the conversation gradually assumed a wider scope. Soon we were in the sphere of *natural science*, and Marx made fun of the victorious reaction which imagined that it had stifled the revolution and did not suspect that natural science was preparing a new revolution.

King Steam, who had revolutionized the world in the previous century, was coming to the end of his reign and another incomparably greater revolutionary would take his place, the *electric spark*. And then Marx related to me, full of fire and enthusiasm, that for the last few days there had been exhibted in Regent Street the model of an electrical machine which pulled a railway train. 'Now the problem has been solved—the consequences are unpredictable. The economic revolution must be followed by a political one, for the latter is only the expression of the former.'

In the manner in which Marx discussed this progress of science and mechanics, his conception of the world, and especially what has been termed the *materialist conception of history*, was so clearly expressed that certain doubts which I had hitherto still maintained melted away like snow in the sunshine of spring. *That evening* I never came home at all—we spoke and joked and drank until late the next morning, and the sun was already high in the heavens when I went to bed. But for a long time I could not sleep. My head was too full of everything that I had heard. At length, my thoughts, roving hither and thither, drove me out again and I hurried to Regent Street in order to see the model, this modern Trojan Horse, which bourgeois society in suicidal fascination had introduced with rejoicing into their Ilion, as once the Trojan men and women had done with theirs, and which would bring about their certain destruction: the day will come when holy Ilion will be destroyed.

A dense crowd indicated the show window behind which the model was exhibited. I pressed my way through and, correctly

enough, there was the locomotive and the train—and both of them were running merrily round.

It was then the beginning of July 1850.*

* * *

In the years 1850 and 1851, Marx gave a *Course of Lectures on Economics*. He only decided on it unwillingly; but after he had given a few private lessons to a small circle of friends, he allowed himself after all to be persuaded by us to give instruction to a larger circle. In this course, which was a great pleasure for all who had the good fortune to take part in it, Marx already unfolded completely the basic features of his system as it is to be found in *Capital*. In a crowded hall of the *Communist League*, or the Communist Workers' Educational Union, which was then situated in Great Windmill Street—in the same hall where two-and-a-half years before *The Communist Manifesto* had been decided on—Marx demonstrated his remarkable talent for popularization. Nobody hated vulgarization more than he did; that is to say the falsification of science, making it shallow and uninspired. No one, however, possessed in a higher degree the capacity of expressing himself clearly. Clarity of speech is the fruit of clarity of thought; clear thinking necessarily determines a clear form of expression.

Marx proceeded methodically. He put forward a sentence, as short as possible, and then he explained it in a longer exposition, taking the greatest care to avoid using any expressions which would not be understood by the workers. Then he called upon the listeners to put questions to him. If he did not get any, he began to examine and did this with such pedagogical skill that not a single gap or misunderstanding escaped him. I learned, on expressing my admiration at his skill, that Marx had already delivered lectures on political economy in the Workers' Union at *Brussels*. In any case he had the makings of an excellent teacher. In teaching he also used a blackboard on which he wrote out the formulæ—including those familiar to all of us from the early part of *Capital*.

* 'Communism is the Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country . . . Only when the country has been electrified, when industry, agriculture and transport have been placed on the technical basis of modern large-scale industry, only then shall we be finally victorious.'

(LENIN, 1920, *Selected Works VIII*, p. 276)

He demanded *much*. As soon as he discovered a gap in our knowledge, he insisted strongly that it must be filled—for which purpose he suggested the necessary measures. If one was alone with him, one went through a regular examination. And his examinations were no joke. Marx was not to be deceived into taking an X for a Y. And if he noticed that it all bore no fruit, then friendship also came to an end. It was an honour for us to have him as a 'schoolmaster'. I was never with him without learning. . . .

At that time it was only a tiny minority in the working class that had raised itself to socialism; and among the Socialists themselves those who were Socialists in the scientific sense of Marx—in the sense of *The Communist Manifesto*—were only a minority. The mass of the workers, in so far as they had at all awakened to political life, remained stuck in the fog of sentimental democratic wishes and phrases such as characterized the movement of '48 and its prelude and aftermath. The applause of the crowd, popularity, was for Marx the proof that one was on the wrong path, and his favourite quotation was the proud verse of Dante: '*Segui il tuo corso, e lascia dir le genti*'. (Follow your path and let people say what they will.)

How often he quoted this verse to us, which also comes at the conclusion of the Preface to *Capital*. No one is entirely insensitive to thrusts, blows, gnat bites and bug bites, and Marx as he followed his path, attacked from all sides, worried by cares for his daily bread, misunderstood, indeed often rudely rebuffed by the mass of the working people for whose struggle for emancipation he was forging the weapons in the stillness of the night, while they were running after glib-tongued windbags, dissembling traitors, even open enemies. Marx must often have encouraged himself in the loneliness of his poor, genuinely proletarian study room with the words of the great Florentine and drawn fresh energy from them.

He did not allow himself to be led astray. Unlike the prince of the *Thousand and One Nights*, who lost the victory and the reward of victory because he was enticed by the noise and the terrible pictures around him to look anxiously back, Marx strode forward, his eyes always looking ahead, fixed on the shining goal—he 'let people say what they would' and even if 'the earth had collapsed

in ruins' he would not have been held back from his path. And the victory has been awarded to him. Though not indeed the reward of victory.

Before all-conquering death mowed him down, he lived to see that the seed which he had sown had sprung up in glorious fashion and was ripening for the sickle of the reaper. Yes, his was the victory—and we have the reward of victory.

If he hated popularity, he had a holy anger against popularity-seeking. Smooth-tongued speakers were an abomination to him and woe to those who gave way to phrases. Then he was inexorable. '*Phraseur*' (phrasemonger) was in his mouth the most severe blame possible, and if he had once recognized someone to be a *phraseur* then he was finished with him. Logical thinking and clear expression of thoughts—that is what he instilled into us 'young fellows' on every occasion and compelled us to study.

At about that time the magnificent Reading Room of the British Museum, with its inexhaustible book treasures, had been built, and to this, where he used to spend every day, Marx also drove us. Learn! Learn! That was the categorical imperative which he often enough cried loudly to us, and which was also evident from his example, indeed from the mere sight of his ever powerfully working intellect.

While other refugees made plans for the overthrow of the world, and day by day and evening after evening intoxicated themselves with the hashish draught of thinking that 'tomorrow it will begin', we, the 'incendiaries', the 'bandits', the 'scum of humanity', sat in the British Museum and endeavoured to educate ourselves and to prepare weapons and munitions for the future struggles.

Frequently one had had nothing to eat, but that did not prevent one from going into the Museum—there, at any rate, one had comfortable chairs to sit on and a pleasant warmth in winter —which was lacking at home, if one had anything like a 'home' at all.

Marx was a stern teacher: he not only forced one to learn but he also convinced himself whether one had learned. . . .

As a teacher, Marx had the rare quality of being stern without being discouraging.

And Marx had still another excellent qualification as a teacher:

he compelled us to exercise *self-criticism* and did not tolerate that one should rest satisfied with what had been achieved. With the whip of his mockery he cruelly lashed the easy-going flesh of speculativeness.

* * *

Politics for Marx was a *study*. Empty political talk and talkers he hated like poison. And in fact can one imagine anything more stupid? *History* is the product of all the forces acting in mankind and in nature, the product of human thought, of human passions, of human needs. Politics, however, is *theoretically*—the *knowledge* of these millions and billions of factors working at the 'loom of time', and *practically*—the action determined by this knowledge. Politics is therefore both a *theoretical and an applied science.*

How angry Marx could become when he spoke of the empty heads who settled matters with a few stereotyped phrases and who, taking their more or less confused desires and notions for facts, decided the fate of the world at the café table, in newspapers or popular meetings or parliaments. It is fortunate that the world does not take any notice of them. Among the 'empty heads' were included very famous, much celebrated 'great men'.

LIEBKNECHT

III
MARX'S PERSONAL LIFE

MARX was the biggest-hearted and most just of men, where it was a question of appreciating the merits of others. He was too big for envy and jealousy, as for vanity. Only for false greatness, artificial renown in which incapacity and meanness spread themselves, had he a deadly hatred—as for everything false and falsified.

Marx was one of the few men among the big, little and mediocre personalities known to me who was not vain. He was too big for that, and too strong—and certainly also too proud. He never posed and was always himself. He was as incapable as any child of wearing a mask or disguising himself. Except where it was necessary on social or political grounds, he expressed his thoughts and feelings in full and without reservations, and they were to be seen in his face. And if it was necessary to keep anything back, he exhibited what I might almost call a childish awkwardness which often amused his friends.

There never was a more truthful person than Marx—he was the very embodiment of truth. On looking at him, one knew at once where one stood. In our 'civilized' society, with its permanent state of war, one cannot, of course, always tell the truth—that would be to deliver oneself into the hands of the enemy or to become a social outlaw—but if one often cannot tell the truth one does not need for that reason to tell an untruth. I cannot always say in words what I am feeling and thinking, but that does not mean that I must or should say what I do *not* feel and think. The one is wisdom, the other is hypocrisy. And Marx was never hypocritical. He was simply incapable of it—exactly like an unspoiled child. Indeed, his wife often called him 'my big child'. And no one has understood him and known him better than she —not even Engels. It is a fact that when he came into 'Society'—

in quotation marks—where great attention was paid to externals and one had to exercise restraint, then our 'Moor' was in fact a big child and he could become embarrassed and red like a little child.

LIEBKNECHT

* * *

Those who would know the man's heart and love it, that heart which beat so warmly beneath the outer wrappings of the scholar, had to see Marx when his books and manuscripts had been thrust aside—in the bosom of his family, and on Sunday evenings in the circle of his friends. At such times he was a most delightful companion, sparkling with wit and bubbling over with humour, one whose laugh came from the depths. His dark eyes would twinkle merrily beneath his bushy eyebrows when he listened to some bright sally or apt rejoinder.

He was a gentle, tender and considerate father. A favourite phrase of his was: 'Children must educate their parents.' His daughters loved him ardently, and in the relationship between him and them there was never a trace of paternal authority. He never ordered them about, being content to ask them to do him a favour, or to beg them not to do something which he would rather they left undone. Yet seldom was a father's counsel more listened to than his. His daughters looked on him as their friend and behaved to him as to a playmate. They did not address him as 'Father', but as 'Moor'—a nickname which had been given him because of his dark complexion and his ebony locks and beard. On the other hand, as far back as 1848, when he was not yet thirty, to his fellow members of the Communist League he was 'Father Marx'.

He would spend hours playing with his children. They remember to this day the sea-fights and burning of whole fleets of paper boats, which he made for them and which he would then —amid jubilation—set fire to in a large bucket of water. On Sundays the girls would not allow him to work; he was theirs for the whole day. When the weather was fine, the whole family would go for a country walk, stopping at a wayside 'pub' for a modest luncheon of bread and cheese with ginger beer. When the children were still quite small, he would shorten the miles for them by telling them stories without end, fantastic fairy tales

invented as he went along and spun out to fit the length of the walk, so that his hearers forgot their fatigue. LAFARGUE

* * *

Engels was, so to say, also a member of the Marx family. The girls spoke of him as their second father. He was Marx's *alter ego*. In Germany for many years their names were invariably coupled together, and history will always record their names together in its pages. In our modern age, Marx and Engels realized the ideal of friendship portrayed by the writers of classical antiquity. They had become acquainted in youth, had undergone a parallel development, had lived in the most intimate community of thoughts and feelings, had participated in the same revolutionary agitation, and had worked side by side as long as they could remain together. Presumably they would have done so throughout life, had not circumstances forced them apart for twenty years. After the defeat of the Revolution of 1848, Engels had to go to Manchester, while Marx was compelled to stay in London. None the less they continued to share their intellectual life by means of an exchange of letters. Almost daily they wrote to one another about political and scientific happenings, and about the work on which they were engaged. As soon as Engels could free himself from his work in Manchester, he hastened to set up house in London, only ten minutes' walk from his beloved Marx. From 1870 till Marx's death in 1883, hardly a day passed on which they did not see one another, either at the one house or the other.

There were always great rejoicings in the Marx household when Engels announced his intention of coming over from Manchester. The coming visit was a topic of conversation for days in advance and on the day of his arrival, Marx was so impatient that he could not work. At length came the hour of reunion, and then the two friends would spend the whole night together, smoking and drinking, and talking of all that had happened since their last meeting.

Marx valued Engels' opinion more than that of anyone else. Engels was the man he deemed worthy to be his collaborator. In fact, Engels was for him a whole public. To convince Engels, to win Engels over to an idea, no labour seemed to Marx excessive. For instance, I have known him re-read entire volumes in search

of facts required to change Engels' opinion concerning some minor detail (I cannot now recall what it was) in the political and religious war of the Albigenses. To win over Engels' opinion was a triumph for him.

Marx was proud of Engels. He recounted to me with pleasure all his friend's moral and intellectual merits; and he made a special journey to Manchester in order to show Engels to me. He admired the remarkable versatility of Engels' knowledge; and he was uneasy at the possibility of any accident that might befall him. 'I was always terrified lest he should be thrown on one of his mad cross-country gallops,' said Marx to me one day.

LAFARGUE

* * *

And now a word about our mother. She lay dying during a whole month and suffered all the terrible tortures which cancer brings with it. Yet her good spirits, her inexhaustible wit, which you know very well, never deserted her for an instant. She inquired as impatiently as a child for the results of the elections then being held in Germany (1881), and how she rejoiced at our victories. Up to her death, she remained cheerful and tried by joking to relieve our anxiety about her. Yes, in spite of her frightful suffering, she joked—she *laughed*—she laughed at the doctor and all of us because we were so serious. She remained fully conscious until almost the last moment, and when she could not speak any more—her last words were addressed to 'Karl'—she pressed our hands—and tried to smile.

As far as Moor is concerned, you know that he went from his bedroom into the study in Maitland Park, sat in the armchair and tranquilly went to sleep.

This armchair the 'General' kept until his death and I have it now.

If you write about Moor, don't forget Lenchen. I know you will not forget mother—Helene* was to a certain extent the axis around which everything in the house turned. The best, truest friend. Therefore be sure not to forget Helene, if you write about Moor. (*Eleanor Marx, Marx's youngest daughter, to Liebknecht.*)

*Helene Demuth, 'Lenchen', came to Marx and his wife (Jenny von Westphalen) when they were first married and never left them; she is buried with them in the grave at Highgate.

IV
LETTERS OF ENGELS

Engels to Johann Phillip Becker

London, March 15, 1883

My dear old fellow,

Be thankful that you saw Marx last autumn, for you will never see him again. Yesterday afternoon at 2.45, after leaving him alone for less than two minutes, we found him peacefully asleep in his armchair. The greatest mind in our Party had ceased to think, the strongest heart that I have ever known had ceased to beat. It was in all probability a case of internal hemorrhage.

You and I are now almost the last of the old guard of 1848. Well, we'll remain in the breach. The bullets are whistling, our friends are falling round us, but this is not the first time we two have seen this, and if a bullet hits one of us, let it come—I only ask that it should strike fair and square and not leave us long in agony.

Your old comrade-in-arms,

F. ENGELS

Engels to Wilhelm Liebknecht

London, March 14, 1883

Dear Liebknecht,

Although I saw him this evening laid out on his bed, the rigidity of death in his face, I cannot fully realize that that brilliant mind has ceased to impregnate the proletarian movement of both worlds with its mighty thoughts. We all owe what we are to him; and the movement as it is today is the creation of his theoretical and practical work. If it had not been for him, we should all still be groping in a maze of confusion.

Yours,

F. ENGELS

Engels to Eduard Bernstein

London, March 14, 1883

Dear Bernstein,

You will have got my telegram by now. It all happened terribly suddenly. When our hopes were at their highest, his strength suddenly failed him and this afternoon he simply passed away in sleep. In two minutes this brilliant mind had ceased to think, and just when the doctors had encouraged us with every hope for his recovery. What the worth of this man was, both in theory and in practice too when great decisions had to be made, only one who has long been associated with him can realize. His mighty vision will be buried with him for years to come. It was something of which we others are not capable. The movement will go on, but it will lack that calm timely guidance of a superior mind which has saved it from so many tedious errors in the past.

More later on. It is now midnight, and I have been writing letters and running about doing all sorts of things all the afternoon and evening.

Yours,

F. ENGELS

Engels to Friedrich Anton Sorge

London, March 15, 1883

Dear Sorge,

Every morning for the last six weeks I had a terrible feeling of dread that I might find the blinds down when I turned the corner of the street. Yesterday afternoon at 2.30—which is the best time for visiting him—I arrived to find the house in tears. It seemed that the end was near. I asked what had happened, tried to get to the bottom of the matter, to offer comfort. There had been only a slight hemorrhage, but suddenly he had begun to sink rapidly. Our good old Lenchen, who had looked after him better than a mother cares for her child, went upstairs to him and then came down. He was half asleep, she said, I might come in. When we entered the room he lay there asleep, but never to wake again. His pulse and breathing had stopped. In those two minutes he had passed away, peacefully and without pain.

All events which take place by natural necessity bring their own consolation with them, however dreadful they may be. So in this

case. Medical skill might have been able to give him a few more years of vegetative existence, the life of a helpless being, dying—to the triumph of the doctors' art—not suddenly, but inch by inch. But our Marx could never have borne that. To have lived on with all his uncompleted works before him, tantalized by the desire to finish them and yet unable to do so, would have been a thousand times more bitter than the gentle death which overtook him. 'Death is not a misfortune for him who dies, but for him who survives' he used to say, quoting Epicurus. To see that mighty genius lingering on as a physical wreck to the greater glory of medicine and to the scorn of the Philistines whom in the prime of his strength he had so often put to rout—no, it is better, a thousand times better, as it is—a thousand times better that we shall in two days' time carry him to the grave where his wife lies at rest.

After all that had gone before, about which the doctors do not know as much as I do, there was in my opinion no other alternative.

Be that as it may, mankind is shorter by a head, and the greatest head of our time at that. The proletarian movement goes forward, but gone is its central figure to which Frenchmen, Russians, Americans and Germans spontaneously turned at critical moments to receive always that clear incontestable counsel which only genius and a perfect understanding of the situation could give. Local lights and lesser minds, if not actual humbugs, will now have a free hand. The final victory is certain, but circuitous paths, temporary and local errors—things which even now are so unavoidable—will become more common than ever. Well, we must see it through. What else are we here for?

And we are not losing courage yet.

Yours,

F. ENGELS

ENGELS' SPEECH OVER THE GRAVE OF MARX

Delivered at Highgate Cemetery, London, March 17, 1883

ON the fourteenth of 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 an armchair, peacefully gone to sleep—but for ever.

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

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

But that is not all. Marx also discovered the special law of motion governing the present-day capitalist method of production and the bourgeois society that this method of production has created. The discovery of surplus value suddenly threw light on the problem in trying to solve which all previous investigators, both bourgeois economists and socialist critics, had been groping in the dark.

Two such discoveries would be enough for one life-time. Happy the man to whom it is granted to make even one such discovery. 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 discoveries.

This 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 a quite other kind of joy when the discovery involved immediate revolution in industry and in the general course of history. For example, he followed closely the discoveries made in the field of electricity and recently those of Marcel Deprez.

For Marx was before all else a revolutionary. His real mission in life was to contribute in one way or another to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the forms of government which it had brought into being, to contribute to the liberation of the present-day proletariat, which he was the first to make conscious of its own position and its needs, of the conditions under which it could win its freedom. 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 Brussels *Deutsche Zeitung* (1847), the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (1848–9), the New York *Tribune* (1852–61), and in addition to these a host of militant pamphlets, work in revolutionary clubs in Paris, Brussels and London, and finally, crowning all, the formation of the International Workingmen's Association —this was indeed an achievement of which Marx might well have been proud, even if he had done nothing else.

And consequently Marx was the best hated and most calumniated man of his time. Governments, both absolutist and republican, deported him from their territories. The bourgeoisie, whether conservative or extreme democrat, vied with one another in heaping slanders upon him. All this he brushed aside as though it were cobweb, ignoring them, answering only when necessity compelled him. And now he has 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 many opponents he has hardly one personal enemy.

His name and his work will endure through the ages!

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