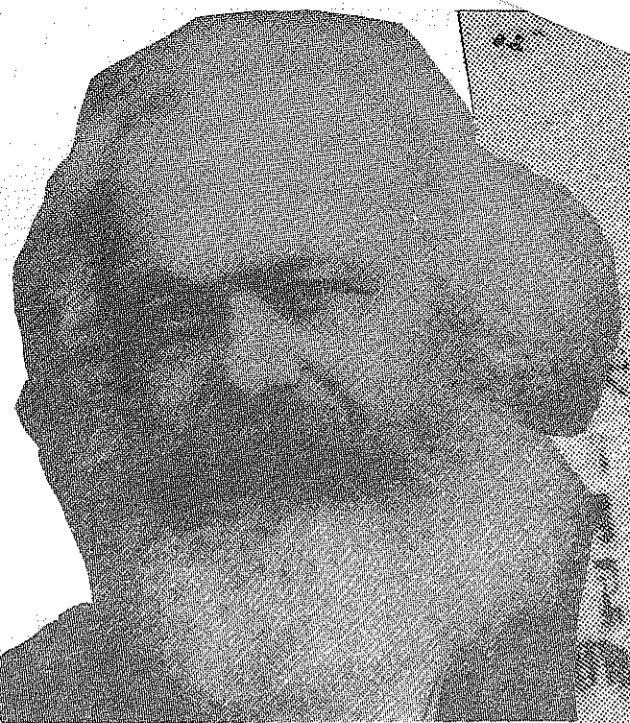


Issue  
**900**

# KARL

# MARX



Karl Marx in 1880, and (right) the Paris Commune when French workers stormed society.

**MILITANT PROUDLY** celebrates the publication of its 900th issue. Since 1964, we have been the standard bearer of the ideas first formulated by Karl Marx. It is fitting therefore that we commemorate our 900 issues with an edited transcript of a speech by **BRIAN INGHAM** at a recent Marx Memorial Meeting which paid tribute to the founder of scientific socialism.

**I**T WAS revealed recently that Ronald Reagan, the President of the greatest capitalist power, tries to look to the future with the aid of astrologers.

Karl Marx, the clearest and most far-sighted opponent of capitalism, looked to the future, not with his eyes on the stars, but with the compass of scientific socialism, that was at once a theory and a method of action.

Together with Frederick Engels, his lifetime collaborator and friend, Marx was second to none in the contribution he made to the international working class movement.

They brought together and developed all the best ideas of their day, on history, philosophy and economics. They produced a rounded-out scientific understanding that then became a weapon of action for working class militants the world over.

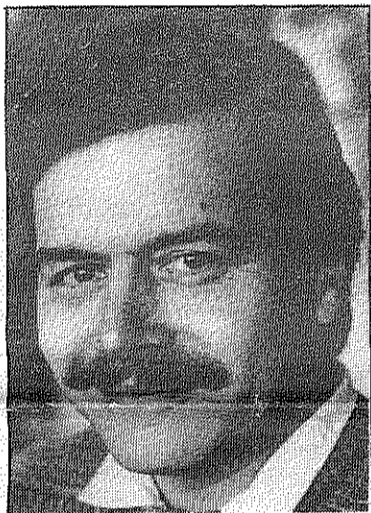
Together Marx and Engels bequeathed to the workers that understanding of the class dynamics of society and the special historic mission of the working class as gravedigger of capitalism and the bearer of a new socialist society.

**T**ODAY YOU get people who join the labour movement not for what they can give, but what they can get out of it. Marx came from a privileged background, but decisively broke with that background.

He put himself firmly on the standpoint of the working class and as a result suffered the most arduous penury. Three of his children died and he himself lived through terrible disease and poverty.

Throughout his life Marx was hounded and his ideas were derided. Since his death, countless academics have denigrated his ideas and tried to write them off as some quaint, old-fashioned nineteenth century phenomena which are not really relevant to the world in which we live today. There is a verse in the *Red Flag*: "It suits today the weak and base, whose minds are fixed on self and place, to cringe before the rich man's frown and haul the scarlet emblem down."

How many times have we heard Labour politicians at party conferences loftily dismiss Marxists when they speak from the rostrum, and then at the end of the conference sing this refrain,



Brian Ingham.

after they have spent all week prostrating themselves before the capitalist class, trying to show how respectable they are.

How different it was with Marx. Throughout his life he was a revolutionary fighter for socialism, taking part in some of the most monumental struggles of the British and international workers.

His motivation was not personal gain or some abstract, liberal 'good idea'. He was armed with a vision of a society free from tyranny and class oppression, where the mass of humanity could be developed to the full.

From his student days he fought for a socialist society where the wealth created by the labour of the workers would at last be owned collectively by the working class. Free from the anarchy of the capitalist market, it would then be planned and organised to meet the needs of the mass of people. In this way humanity would be put on an entirely new social foundation.

In 1848-49 a revolutionary wave spread throughout Europe. It had been foreshadowed by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*, written in 1847 for the organisation of which they were a part, the Communist League.

Already, in Britain and France, massive struggles had developed between the newly emerged working class and the capitalist class. But, in Germany and Italy, there was still a need to finish off feudal despotism and therefore to have an alliance with the emerging liberal capitalist class. That is what Marx attempted.

He was a leader of the movement in Germany as editor of the

## revolutionary fighter and socialist philosopher

*Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, which was established mainly with money from liberal capitalists.

They collaborated and put their money in, but proved in the course of that struggle, as in many revolutionary struggles since, absolutely contemptible allies even in their own revolution.

At every serious challenge from reaction they retreated. But as reaction became more and more triumphant, Marx held firm. He poured his own meagre savings into that journal to try and keep alive its revolutionary message and lead the movement back onto the offensive.

In the end he faced arrest and trial. But at his trial, so inspired were the jury by what he said and the way he conducted himself that he was acquitted and the foreman of the jury thanked him for his instructive remarks.

After that struggle Marx was again in exile, as he had already been before in France and Belgium. Now he made his way to England where he spent the greater part of the rest of his life.

In this country he collaborated with the emerging labour movement, particularly the Chartists, the first real Labour Party in the world. He worked above all with the revolutionary wing of the Chartists, which in 1852 established the *People's Paper*.

In 1864 Marx and Engels were the guiding hand and inspiration behind the establishment of the International Working Men's Association, now known as the First International. "For ten years," Engels commented, "the International dominated one side of European history, the side on which the future lies".

With Marx writing most of its



Marx as editor of *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*.

documents and manifestos, the International gathered together the growing and often sharply conflicting trends, tendencies and formations within the international labour movement—trade unionists in Britain and the followers of the anarchist Bakunin and many different trends and opinions.

There are people today claiming to be Marxists who operate by witch-hunts and expulsions when they cannot win an argument. Marx acted in a completely different fashion. When he was in a minority he explained his ideas patiently, absolutely confident

that with the march of time and events his ideas of scientific socialism would be triumphant.

The trade unions in Britain were directly affiliated to the International. That again gives the lie to that fanciful idea of the right wing that Marxism is somehow alien to the British working class and not part of its tradition. The thread of Marxism goes right through the history of the British labour movement.

At this time, with Marx working unobtrusively in the background, the International helped build solidarity for a number of key industrial struggles in Britain and internationally. It was also central in helping to form and direct the National Reform League, a mass movement of revolutionary proportions demanding the vote for the British working class.

Out of fear of this movement, the capitalist class in Britain granted partial electoral reform, mainly votes for the middle class and certain sections of the skilled workers. This was enough for the opportunist trade union leaders, with whom Marx was attempting to collaborate. They began to peel away.

But the real break with this weak wing of the International came with the crushing of the Paris Commune, where for the first time the working class seized control of society and we had the first glimpse of a workers' state.

It was mercilessly crushed by reaction. Revolutionaries throughout Europe were hounded, particularly the International that was seen to be behind the Commune. Marx and those who supported him suffered relentless persecution. It was then that the



faint hearts began to break ranks, away from the *International and Marx*.

Marx on the other hand stood his ground. He studied the Commune inside out. He was determined to learn from this rich experience, so that the next time the working class were storming society, they would be armed with its lessons.

He wrote the defiant defence of the Commune, *The Civil War in France*, which remains to this day an invaluable inspiration and source of guidance to the international working class movement.

His practical revolutionary activity gives the lie to the idea that Marx was some grey-haired recluse, locked away in the British Museum writing great tomes and tracts, totally divorced from reality. He was testing out his theories all the time in the living movement of the working class.

The *Militant* tendency alone in modern times has safeguarded and developed these ideas. For that reason, in recent years, as we have begun to have more influence in the labour movement in Britain and internationally, we have faced persecution.

These daily and ever more frenzied attacks upon the Marxists are themselves an eloquent answer to the idea that Marxism is obsolete and irrelevant.

**M**ARX EXPLAINED that in the struggle of the working class against the capitalists and the constant attempts to intensify their exploitation, the workers are forced to fight back.

Social being determines consciousness; what goes through the mind of a worker is not static. As the conditions around them change, so also you get sudden changes in thought. Somebody who might be a Tory today can be a socialist tomorrow, through a revolution in their life such as having a job one day and being thrown out the next.

Through each stage in the struggle, workers begin to form their own organisations—the trade unions, Labour Parties and at a certain stage international organisations.

In that process, as Marx said, from being a class in itself, the working class becomes more and more a class for itself, conscious of their class interest and the need to transform society.

Marx and Engels looked forward to the day when all the localised, individual struggles would be united in one common struggle. Marx explained that the working class has no country—'Workers of the World Unite' was the battle cry of the *Communist Manifesto*.

In the last analysis the capitalists themselves always unite when they face the threat of revolution. The workers have the same interest, internationally, in developing an international socialist commonwealth and getting the capitalist class off their backs.

Most workers are not allowed or encouraged to have any initiative—you go to work and get your pay at the end of the week—there is a generalised alienation from society.

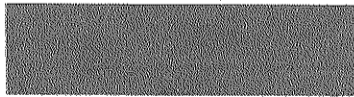
Imagine today if all that the working class has created through their energy, brain and muscle, such as microtechnology and new computers, were unleashed from the dead hand of capitalism and properly organised.

In a socialist society all that talent would be brought to bear, using all that is best within the brains of the working class—what a future could be developed!

The material base would be prepared for a classless society, where for the first time the mass of humanity would participate in arts, science, culture and government. Marx said that at that moment the real history of mankind develops, with people for the first time consciously in charge of their own destiny.

This is the future for which we, as bearers of the banner of Marxism in modern times, are struggling. It is not an easy struggle. We are up against a class that has countless times shown the brutali-

**On Marx's grave are the words: "The philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world; the point is to change it." Let us make sure that our generation is the generation that makes those words a living reality.**



ty with which they will fight to defend their profits, power and privileges.

But we have every justification for confidence in the future.

Look at the inspirational struggle of the working class in South Africa against one of the most bloodthirsty regimes the world has ever seen.

Look at the strike of the British miners, who fought to hold onto their jobs, to provide some future for their children and their communities. They put up a tremendous struggle against one of the most barbaric governments in the history of Britain, with the police mobilised as a military force against them in their communities.

**T**ODAY WE have those countries that parade themselves as 'socialist', but are horrible caricatures of all that Marx ever stood for—the regimes in Russian, Eastern Europe, China and other horribly deformed workers' states.

In 1917 the Russian revolution took place, the greatest event in human history, where downtrodden masses stepped onto the scene of history and took their destiny into their own hands. It was an inspiration to workers throughout the world.

That revolution was led by conscious Marxists, who, as Trotsky, one of the leaders of that revolution, explained, had learned as

Marx had hoped they would, the need for a steered, revolutionary party at the head of the working class.

Through preceding struggles they won the confidence of the workers. Then at the decisive moment of struggle they were able to lead the working class and successfully pursue the struggle to its final conclusion—the overthrow of capitalist society.

Tragically, because that revolution remained isolated in a backward, predominantly peasant country, it was usurped by a totalitarian bureaucracy.

Resting on the social gains of the revolution, this bureaucracy was able for a time to take production forward much further than would have been possible under capitalism. But this is no longer so. More and more the bureaucracy has become an absolute fetter on the further development of society.

**A**LL PARTS OF the world—the Stalinist states, the colonial world and the advanced capitalist countries—now face massive economic upheaval and crisis.

In America all the seeds are there for the helter-skelter development, in the next five, six or seven years, of a Labor Party, which could rapidly go to the left, with at least a large wing developing in a Marxist direction.

In all corners of the world the revolution is developing, politically in the Stalinist states, socially in the capitalist world.

Movements are on the order of the day that will dwarf anything that took place in Marx's life and anything that has taken place hitherto, even the Russian Revolution itself.

Marx explained that there is no final crisis of capitalism, and neither will there be a final crisis of the bureaucracy in the Stalinist world. There is always a way out at the expense of the working class.

If capitalism is not overthrown, at a time of very deep reaction some lunatic could get in charge of America and its nuclear arsenal. Then the question would be: socialism or nuclear annihilation?

That is not going to be posed at the moment. There will be three, four or five opportunities for the working class to transform society before then.

Will the chance be taken? It is our task to continue to work to build a movement worthy of the legacy of Marx, which can ensure that the coming revolutionary storms lead on to socialism.

There is one little difference now to the post war years. Marxism is no longer some small, minuscule, isolated tendency within the labour movement, that our opponents can afford simply to dismiss and ridicule.

This is the tendency that led the struggle in Liverpool, which attained worldwide significance and the admiration of all the best active layers within the working class.

Marxism was tested in practice. Now the workers in Liverpool can see the bricks, the homes, the monuments that have been left behind by Marxism and *Militant*.

Marxism proved its mettle in that struggle. There have been more and more struggles internationally also where Marxism has proved its mettle.

These are the people who when it comes to the crunch will struggle with you and are prepared to pursue the struggle against capitalism right to the very end in the interests of the working class.

Amongst the blacks, youth, women workers and in the trade unions, the left opposition everywhere are the Marxists gathered under the banner of *Militant*.

We have a long way to go, but we are living in what will prove to be one of the most dynamic periods in human history. What a privilege for us!

There will be moments of reaction and difficulty, but let us keep our faith in the working class and do what Marx did at each stage—deepen our understanding to prepare ourselves theoretically for the historic responsibilities that will increasingly bear down on us.

Today everything can seem quiet and placid, but the mole of revolution is burrowing away under the surface of society. Then suddenly it explodes—like the miners' strike and the seafarers' strike, which seemed to come out of nowhere. Tomorrow the Chilean revolution and the political revolution in Russia will come as from nowhere.

On Marx's grave are the words: "The philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world; the point is, however, to change it". Let us make sure that our generation is the generation that makes those words a living reality.

The greatest tribute we can pay to Marx is to rededicate ourselves to finish the task he started, and to which he devoted his entire adult life.

Let us bring an end to capitalism, to the exploitation of man by man. Let us build a society that can give a future to our generation and to our children's generation and to all the generations to come.