



V. I. LENIN

KARL MARX

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*(A Brief Biographical Sketch  
with an Exposition of Marxism)*

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS  
PEKING 1967

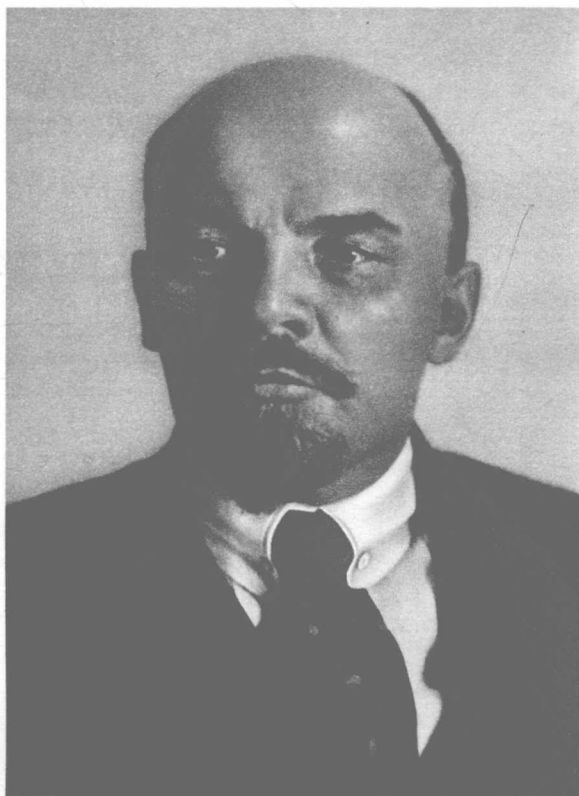
First Edition March 1967

### PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The present English translation of V. I. Lenin's *Karl Marx — a Brief Biographical Sketch with an Exposition of Marxism* is reprinted, with a few changes, from Lenin's *Marx, Engels, Marxism*, English edition, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1951. The "Bibliography" has been translated from V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Russian edition, Vol. XXI, pp. 63-74. The notes at the end of the book are also based on those given in the Russian edition.

*Printed in the People's Republic of China*

**WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!**



*Vladimir Lenin*

## PREFACE

The article on Karl Marx now appearing in a separate printing was written by me in 1913 (as far as I can remember) for the *Granat Encyclopaedia*. A rather detailed bibliography of literature on Marx, mostly foreign, was appended at the end of the article. This has been omitted in the present edition. The editors of the *Encyclopaedia*, on their part, cut out, for censorship reasons, the end of the article on Marx, namely, the section in which his revolutionary tactics were explained. Unfortunately, I am not in a position to reproduce that end here, because the rough draft remained in my papers somewhere — in Cracow or in Switzerland. I only remember that in that concluding part of the article I quoted, among other things, the passage from Marx's letter to Engels of April 16, 1856, in which he wrote: "The whole thing in Germany will depend on the possibility to back the proletarian revolution by some second edition of the Peasant War. Then everything will be splendid." That is what our Mensheviks, who have now sunk to utter betrayal of socialism and to

desertion to the side of the bourgeoisie, failed to understand in 1905 and after.

*N. Lenin*

Moscow, May 14, 1918

Published in 1918  
in the pamphlet:  
N. Lenin, *Karl Marx*,  
*Priboi* Publishers, Moscow

Printed according to  
the manuscript

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**K**ARL Marx was born May 5, 1818, in the city of Trier (Rhenish Prussia). His father was a lawyer, a Jew, who in 1824 adopted Protestantism. The family was well-to-do, cultured, but not revolutionary. After graduating from the gymnasium in Trier, Marx entered university, first at Bonn and later at Berlin, where he studied jurisprudence and, chiefly, history and philosophy. He concluded his course in 1841, submitting his doctoral dissertation on the philosophy of Epicurus. In his views Marx at that time was a Hegelian idealist. In Berlin he belonged to the circle of "Left Hegelians" (Bruno Bauer and others) who sought to draw atheistic and revolutionary conclusions from Hegel's philosophy.

After graduating from the university, Marx moved to Bonn, expecting to become a professor. But the reactionary policy of the government — which in 1832 deprived Ludwig Feuerbach of his chair and in 1836 refused to allow him to return to the university, and in 1841 forbade the young professor Bruno Bauer to lecture at Bonn — forced Marx to abandon the idea of pursuing an academic career. At that time the views of the Left Hegelians were developing very rapidly in Germany. Ludwig Feuerbach, particularly after 1836, began to criticize theology and to turn to materialism,

which in 1841 gained the upper hand in his philosophy (*The Essence of Christianity*); in 1843 his *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* appeared. "One must himself have experienced the liberating effect" of these books, Engels subsequently wrote of these works of Feuerbach. "We" (i.e., the Left Hegelians, including Marx) "all became at once Feuerbachians." At that time some Rhenish radical bourgeois who had certain points in common with the Left Hegelians founded an opposition paper in Cologne, the *Rheinische Zeitung* (the first number appeared on January 1, 1842). Marx and Bruno Bauer were invited to be the chief contributors, and in October 1842 Marx became chief editor and removed from Bonn to Cologne. The revolutionary-democratic trend of the paper became more and more pronounced under Marx's editorship, and the government first subjected the paper to double and triple censorship and then decided to suppress it altogether on January 1, 1843. Marx had to resign the editorship before that date, but his resignation did not save the paper, which was closed down in March 1843. Of the more important articles contributed by Marx to the *Rheinische Zeitung*, Engels notes, in addition to those indicated below (see *Bibliography*), an article on the condition of the peasant winegrowers of the Moselle Valley. His journalistic activities convinced Marx that he was not sufficiently acquainted with political economy, and he zealously set out to study it.

In 1843, in Kreuznach, Marx married Jenny von Westphalen, a childhood friend to whom he had been engaged while still a student. His wife came from a reactionary family of the Prussian nobility. Her elder brother was Prussian Minister of the Interior at a most reactionary period, 1850-58. In the autumn of 1843 Marx went to Paris

in order, together with Arnold Ruge (born 1802, died 1880; a Left Hegelian; in 1825-30, in prison; after 1848, a political exile; after 1866-70, a Bismarckian), to publish a radical magazine abroad. Only one issue of this magazine, *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, appeared. It was discontinued owing to the difficulty of secret distribution in Germany and to disagreements with Ruge. In his articles in this magazine Marx already appears as a revolutionary; he advocates the "merciless criticism of everything existing," and in particular the "criticism by weapon,"<sup>2</sup> and appeals to the *masses* and to the *proletariat*.

In September 1844 Frederick Engels came to Paris for a few days, and from that time forth became Marx's closest friend. They both took a most active part in the then seething life of the revolutionary groups in Paris (of particular importance was Proudhon's doctrine, which Marx thoroughly demolished in his *Poverty of Philosophy*, 1847), and, vigorously combating the various doctrines of petty-bourgeois socialism, worked out the theory and tactics of revolutionary *proletarian socialism*, or communism (Marxism). See Marx's works of this period, 1844-48, in the *Bibliography*. In 1845, on the insistent demand of the Prussian government, Marx was banished from Paris as a dangerous revolutionary. He removed to Brussels. In the spring of 1847 Marx and Engels joined a secret propaganda society called the Communist League; they took a prominent part in the Second Congress of the League (London, November 1847), and at its request drew up the famous *Communist Manifesto*, which appeared in February 1848. With the clarity and brilliance of genius, this work outlines the new world conception, consistent materialism, which also embraces the realm of social life, dialectics, as the most comprehensive and profound

doctrine of development, the theory of the class struggle and of the world-historic revolutionary role of the proletariat — the creator of a new, communist society.

When the Revolution of February 1848 broke out, Marx was banished from Belgium. He returned to Paris, whence, after the March Revolution, he went to Cologne, Germany. There the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* appeared from June 1, 1848, to May 19, 1849; Marx was the chief editor. The new theory was brilliantly corroborated by the course of the revolutionary events of 1848-49, as it has been since corroborated by all proletarian and democratic movements of all countries in the world. The victorious counter-revolution first instigated court proceedings against Marx (he was acquitted on February 9, 1849) and then banished him from Germany (May 16, 1849). Marx first went to Paris, was again banished after the demonstration of June 13, 1849, and then went to London, where he lived to the day of his death.

His life as a political exile was a very hard one, as the correspondence between Marx and Engels (published in 1913) clearly reveals. Marx and his family suffered dire poverty. Were it not for Engels's constant and self-sacrificing financial support, Marx would not only have been unable to finish *Capital* but would have inevitably perished from want. Moreover, the prevailing doctrines and trends of petty-bourgeois socialism, and of non-proletarian socialism in general, forced Marx to carry on a continuous and merciless fight and sometimes to repel the most savage and monstrous personal attacks (*Herr Vogt*). Holding aloof from the circles of political exiles, Marx developed his materialist theory in a number of historical works (see *Bibliography*), devoting his efforts chiefly to the study of

political economy. Marx revolutionized this science (see below, "The Marxist Doctrine") in his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) and *Capital* (Vol. I, 1867).

The period of revival of the democratic movements at the end of the fifties and in the sixties recalled Marx to practical activity. In 1864 (September 28) the International Workingmen's Association — the famous First International — was founded in London. Marx was the heart and soul of this organization; he was the author of its first Address and a host of resolutions, declarations and manifestoes. By uniting the labour movement of various countries, by striving to direct into the channel of joint activity the various forms of non-proletarian, pre-Marxist socialism (Mazzini, Proudhon, Bakunin, liberal trade unionism in England, Lassallean vacillations to the Right in Germany, etc.), and by combating the theories of all these sects and schools, Marx hammered out a uniform tactic for the proletarian struggle of the working class in the various countries. After the fall of the Paris Commune (1871) — of which Marx gave such a profound, clear-cut, brilliant, *effective* and revolutionary analysis (*The Civil War in France*, 1871) — and after the International was split by the Bakunists, the existence of that organization in Europe became impossible. After the Hague Congress of the International (1872) Marx had the General Council of the International transferred to New York. The First International had accomplished its historical role, and it made way for a period of immeasurably larger growth of the labour movement in all the countries of the world, a period, in fact, when the movement grew in *breadth* and when *mass* socialist labour parties in individual national states were created.

His strenuous work in the International and his still more strenuous theoretical occupations completely undermined Marx's health. He continued his work on the reshaping of political economy and the completion of *Capital*, for which he collected a mass of new material and studied a number of languages (Russian, for instance); but ill-health prevented him from finishing *Capital*.

On December 2, 1881, his wife died. On March 14, 1883, Marx peacefully passed away in his armchair. He lies buried with his wife in the Highgate Cemetery, London. Of Marx's children some died in childhood in London when the family lived in deep poverty. Three daughters married English and French socialists: Eleanor Aveling, Laura Lafargue and Jenny Longuet. The latter's son is a member of the French Socialist Party.

## THE MARXIST DOCTRINE

*Marxism* is the system of the views and teachings of Marx. Marx was the genius who continued and completed the three main ideological currents of the nineteenth century, belonging to the three most advanced countries of mankind: classical German philosophy, classical English political economy, and French socialism together with French revolutionary doctrines in general. The remarkable consistency and integrity of Marx's views, acknowledged even by his opponents, views which in their totality constitute modern materialism and modern scientific socialism, as the theory and programme of the labour movement in all the civilized countries of the world, oblige us to present a brief outline of his world-conception in general before proceeding to the exposition of the principal content of Marxism, namely, Marx's economic doctrine.

### PHILOSOPHICAL MATERIALISM

From 1844-45, when his views took shape, Marx was a materialist, in particular a follower of Ludwig Feuerbach, whose weak sides he even later considered to consist exclusively in the fact that his materialism was not consistent

and comprehensive enough. Marx regarded the historic and "epoch-making" importance of Feuerbach to be that he had resolutely broken away from Hegelian idealism and had proclaimed materialism, which already "in the eighteenth century, especially in France, had been a struggle not only against the existing political institutions and against... religion and theology, but also... against all metaphysics" (in the sense of "intoxicated speculation" as distinct from "sober philosophy"). (*The Holy Family*, in the *Literarischer Nachlass*.) "To Hegel..." wrote Marx, "the process of thinking, which, under the name of 'the Idea,' he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos (the creator, the maker) of the real world.... With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought." (*Capital*, Vol. I, Afterword to the Second Edition.) In full conformity with this materialist philosophy of Marx's, and expounding it, Frederick Engels wrote in *Anti-Dühring* (which Marx read in the manuscript): "The unity of the world does not consist in its being.... The real unity of the world consists in its materiality, and this is proved... by a long and tedious development of philosophy and natural science...." "Motion is the mode of existence of matter. Never anywhere has there been matter without motion, or motion without matter, nor can there be.... But if the... question is raised what thought and consciousness really are and where they come from, it becomes apparent that they are products of the human brain and that man himself is a product of nature, which has developed in and along with its environment; hence it is self-evident that the products of the human brain, being in the last analysis also products of nature,



do not contradict the rest of nature's interconnections but are in correspondence with them." "Hegel was an idealist, that is to say, the thoughts within his mind were to him not the more or less abstract images (*Abbilder*, reflections; Engels sometimes speaks of "imprints") of real things and processes, but, on the contrary, things and their development were to him only the images made real of the 'Idea' existing somewhere or other already before the world existed." In his *Ludwig Feuerbach* — in which he expounds his and Marx's views on Feuerbach's philosophy, and which he sent to the press after re-reading an old manuscript written by Marx and himself in 1844-45 on Hegel, Feuerbach and the materialist conception of history — Frederick Engels writes: "The great basic question of all philosophy, especially of more recent philosophy, is that concerning the relation of thinking to being... the relation of spirit to nature... which is primary, spirit or nature.... The answers which the philosophers gave to this question split them into two great camps. Those who asserted the primacy of spirit to nature and, therefore, in the last instance, assumed world creation in some form or other... comprised the camp of idealism. The others, who regarded nature as primary, belong to the various schools of materialism." Any other use of the concepts of (philosophical) idealism and materialism leads only to confusion. Marx decidedly rejected not only idealism, always connected in one way or another with religion, but also the views, especially widespread in our day, of Hume and Kant, agnosticism, criticism, positivism in their various forms, regarding such a philosophy as a "reactionary" concession to idealism and at best a "shamefaced way of surreptitiously accepting materialism, while denying it before the world." On this question, see, in addition to the above-mentioned works of Engels and