Eleanor Marx 1883

Karl Marx.

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There is no time perhaps so little fitted for writing the biography of a great man as that immediately after his death, and the task is doubly difficult when it falls to one who knew and loved him. It is impossible for me to do more at present than give the briefest sketch of my father's life. I shall confine myself to a simple statement of facts, and I shall not even attempt an exposition of his great theories and discoveries; theories that are the very foundation of Modern Socialism — discoveries that are revolutionising the whole science of Political Economy. I hope, however, to give in a future number of *Progress* an analysis of my father's chief work — "Das Kapital," and of the truths set forth in it.

Karl Marx was born at Trier, on May 1818, of Jewish parents. His father — a man of great talent — was a lawyer, strongly imbued with French eighteenth-century ideas of religion, science, and art; his mother was the descendant of Hungarian Jews, who in the seventeenth century settled in Holland. Amongst his earliest friends and playmates were Jenny — afterwards his wife — and Edgar von Westphalen. From their father, the Baron von Westphalen — himself half a Scot — Karl Marx imbibed his first love for the "Romantic" School, and while his father read him Voltaire and Racine, Westphalen read him Homer and Shakespere. These always remained his favorite writers. At once much loved and feared by his school-fellows — loved because he was always in mischief, and feared because of his readiness in writing satirical verse and lampooning his enemies, Karl Marx passed through the usual school routine, and then proceeded to the Universities of Bonn and Berlin, where, to please his father, he for a time studied law, and to please himself he studied history and philosophy. In 1842 he was about to habilitate himself at Bonn as "Privat Dozent," but the political movement arisen in Germany since the death of Frederick William III. in 1840, threw him into another career. The chiefs of the Rhenish Liberals — Kamphausen and Hansemann — had founded the *Rhenish Gazette* at Cologne, with the co-operation of Marx, whose brilliant and bold criticism of the provincial Landtag created such a sensation, that, though only twenty-four years old, he was offered the chief editorship of the paper. He accepted it, and therewith began his long struggle with all despotisms, and with Prussian despotism in particular. Of course the paper appeared under the supervision of a censor — but the poor censor found himself powerless. The *Gazette* invariably published all important articles, and the censor could do nothing. Then a second, a "special" one was sent from Berlin, but even this double censorship proved of no avail,

and finally in 1843 the government simply suppressed the paper altogether. In the same year, 1843, Marx had married his old friend and playfellow, to whom he had been engaged for seven years, Jenny von Westphalen, and with his young wife proceeded to Paris. Here, together with Arnold Ruge, he published the *Deutsche Französische Jahrbücher*, in which he began the long series of his socialist writings. His first contribution was a critique on Hegel's "Rechts-philosophie;" the second, an essay on the "Jewish Question." When the *Jahrbücher* ceased to appear, Marx contributed to the journal Votwärtz, of which he is usually said to have been the editor. As a matter of fact, the editorship of this paper to which Heine, Everbeck, Engels, etc., contributed, seems to have been carried on in a somewhat erratic manner, and a really responsible editor never existed. Marx' next publication was the "Heilige Familie" written together with Engels, a satirical critique directed against Bruno Bauer and his school of Hegelian idealists.

While devoting most of his time at this period to the study of Political Economy and of the French Revolution, Karl Marx continued to wage fierce war with the Prussian government, and as a consequence, this government demanded of M. Guizot — it is said through the agency of Alexander von Humboldt,who happened to be in Paris — Marx' expulsion from France. With this demand Guizot bravely complied, and Marx had to leave Paris. He went to Brussels, and there in 1846 published, in French, a "Discours sur la libre échange." Proudhon now published his "Contradictions Economiques ou Philosophie de la Misère," and wrote to Marx that he awaited his *"férule critique*." He did not wait long, for in 1847 Marx published his " Misère de la Philosophie, reponse à la Philosophie de la Misère de M., Proudhon" and the "*férule*" was applied with a severity Proudhon had probably not bargained for. This same year Marx founded a German Working-Man's Club at Brussels, and, what is of more importance, joined, together with his political friends, the "Communistic League," The whole organisation of the league was changed by him; from a hole-and-corner conspiracy it was transformed into an organisation for the propaganda of Communist principles, and was only secret because existing circumstances made secrecy a necessity. Wherever German working-men's clubs existed the league existed also, and it was the first socialist movement of an *international* character, Englishmen, Belgians, Hungarians, Poles, Scandinavians being members; it was the first organisation of the Social Democratic Party. In 1847 a Congress of the League was held in London, at which Marx and Engels assisted as delegates; and they were subsequently appointed to write the celebrated "Manifesto of the Communist Party" — first published just before the Revolution of 1848, and then translated into well nigh all European languages. This manifesto opens with a review of the existing conditions of society. It goes on to show how gradually the old feudal division of classes has disappeared, and how modern society is divided simply into two classes — that of the capitalists or bourgeois class, and that of the proletariat; of the expropriators and expropriated; of the bourgeois class possessing wealth and power and producing nothing, of the labor-class that produces wealth but possesses nothing. The bourgeoisie after using the proletariat to fight its political battles against feudalism, has used the power thus acquired to enslave the proletariat.

To the charge that Communism aims at “abolishing property,” the manifesto replied that Communists aim only at abolishing the bourgeois system of property, by which already for nine-tenths or the Community property *is* abolished; to the accusation that Communists aim at “abolishing marriage and the family” the Manifesto answered by asking what kind of “family” and “marriage” were possible for the working men, for whom in all true meaning of the words neither exists. As to “abolishing father-land and nationality,” these *are* abolished for the proletariat, and, thanks to the development of industry, for the bourgeoisie also. The bourgeoisie has wrought great revolutions in history; it has revolutionised the whole system of production. Under its hands the steam-engine, the self-acting mule, the steam-hammer, the railways and ocean-steamers of our days were developed. But its most revolutionary production was the production of the proletariat, of a class whose very conditions of existence compel it to overthrow the whole actual society. The Manifesto ends with the words:

> “Communists scorn to conceal their aims and views. They declare openly that their ends are only attainable through the violent overthrow of all existing conditions of society. Let the governing classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The Proletarians have nothing to lose by it but their chains. They have a world to win. Proletarians of all countries, unite!”

In the meantime Marx had continued in the *Brüsseler Zeitung* his attack on the Prussian government, and again the Prussian government demanded his expulsion — but in vain, until the February revolution caused a movement among the Belgian workmen, when Marx, without any ado, was expelled by the Belgian government. The provisional government of France had, however, through Flocon, invited him to return to Paris, and this invitation he accepted. In Paris he remained some time, till after the Revolution of March, 1848, when he returned to Cologne, and there founded the *New Rhenish Gazette* — the only paper representing the working class, and daring to defend the June insurgents of Paris. In vain did the various reactionary and Liberal papers denounce the *Gazette* for its licentious audacity in attacking all that is holy and defying all authority — and that, too, in a Prussian fortress! In vain did the authorities by virtue of the State of Siege suspend the paper for six weeks. It again appeared under the very eyes of the police, its reputation and circulation growing with the attacks made upon it. After the Prussian coup d'état of November, the *Gazette*, at the head of each number, called on the people to refuse the taxes, and to meet force by force, For this, and on account of certain articles, the paper was twice prosecuted — and acquitted. Finally after the May rising (1849) in Dresden, the Rhenish Provinces, and South Germany, the *Gazette* was forcibly suppressed. The last number — printed in red type — appeared on May 19th, 1849.

Marx now again returned to Paris, but a few weeks after the demonstration of June 13th, 1849, the French government gave him the choice of retiring to Brittany or leaving France. He preferred the latter, and went to London — where he continued to live for over thirty years. An attempt to bring out the *New Rhenish Gazette* in the form of a

review, published at Hamburg, was not successful. Immediately after Napoleon's coup d'état, Marx wrote his "18th Brumaire de Louis Bonaparte," and in 1853 the "Revelations Concerning the Cologne Trial." — in which he laid bare the infamous machinations of the Prussian government and police.

After the condemnation at Cologne of the members of the Communist League, Marx for a time retired from active political life, devoting himself to his economical studios at the British Museum, to contributing leading articles and correspondence to the *New York Tribune*, and to writing pamphlets and fly-sheets attacking the Palmerston *régime*, widely circulated at the time by David Urquhart.

The first fruits of his long, earnest studies in Political Economy appeared in 1859, in his "Kritik zur Politischer Economie" — a work which contains the first exposition of his Theory of Value.

During the Italian war, Marx, in the German piper *Das Volk,* published in London, denounced the Bonapartism that hid itself under the guise of liberal sympathy for oppressed nationalities, and the Prussian policy that under the cloak of neutrality, merely sought to fish in troubled waters. On this occasion it became necessary to attack Carl Vogt, who in the pay of the "midnight assassin" was agitating for German neutrality, nay sympathy. Infamously and deliberately calumniated by Cart Vogt, Marx replied to him and other gentlemen of his ilk in "Herr Vogt," 1860, in which he accused Vogt of being in Napoleon's pay. Just ten years later, in 1870, this accusation was proved to be true. The French government of National Defence published a list of the Bonapartist hirelings and under the letter V appeared: *Vogt,* received August,[1] 1859, 10,000:francs." In 1867 Marx published at Hamburg his chief work "Das Kapital,"[2] to a consideration of which I shall return in the next number of *Progress*.

Meanwhile the condition of the working men's movement had so far advanced that Karl Marx could think of executing a long-cherished plan — the establishment in all the more advanced countries of Europe and America of an International Working Men's Association. A public meeting to express sympathy with Poland was held in April, 1864. This brought together the working men of various nationalities, and it was decided to found the International. This was done at, a meeting (presided over by Professor Beesley) in St. James' Hall on September 28, 1864. A provisional general council was elected, and Marx drew up the Inaugural Address and the Provisional Rules. In this address, after an appalling picture of the misery of the working classes, even in years of so-called commercial prosperity, he tells the working men of all countries to combine, and, as nearly twenty years before in the Communist Manifesto, he concluded with the words: "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" The "Rules" stated the reasons for founding the International:

"CONSIDERING,

"That the emancipation of the working classes insist be conquered by the working classes themselves; that the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties, and the abolition of all class rule;

"That the economical subjection of the man of labor to the monopoliser of the means of labor, that is, the sources of life, lies at the bottom of servitude in all its forms of social misery, mental degradation, and political dependence;

"That the economical emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means;

"That all efforts aiming at that great end have hitherto failed from the want of solidarity between the manifold divisions of labor in each country, and front the absence of a fraternal bond of union between the working classes of different countries;

"That the emancipation of labor is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all countries in which modern society exists, and depending for its solution on the concurrence, practical and theoretical, of the most advanced countries

"That, the present revival of the working classes in the most industrious countries of Europe, while it raises a new hope, gives solemn warning against a relapse into the old errors, and calls for the immediate combination of the still disconnected movements

"FOR THESE REASONS

"The International Working Men's Association has been founded."

To give, any account of Marx' work in the International would be to write a history of the Association itself — for, while never being more than the Corresponding secretary for Germany and Russia, he was the leading spirit of all the general councils. With scarcely any exceptions the Addresses — from the Inaugural one to the last one — on the "Civil War in France " were written by him. In This last address Marx explained the real meaning of the Commune — "that sphinx so tantalizing to the bourgeois mind." In words as vigorous as beautiful he branded the corrupt government of "national defection that betrayed France into the hands of Prussia," he denounced the government of such men as the forger Jules Favre, the usurer Perry, and the thrice infamous Thiers, that monstrous gnome" the "political shoe-black of the Empire." After contrasting the horrors perpetrated by the Versaillists and the heroic devotion of the Parisian working men, dying for the preservation of the very republic of which M. Perry is now Prime Minister, Marx concludes:

> “Working men’s Paris with its Commune will be for ever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators’ history is already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them.”

The fall of the Commune placed the International in an impossible position. It became necessary to remove the General Council from London to New York, and this, at Marx’ suggestion, was done by the Hague Congress in 1873. Since then the movement has taken another form; the continual intercourse between the proletarians of all countries — one of tho fruits of the International Association — has shown that, there no longer exists the necessity for a formal organisation. But whatever the form, the work is going on, must go on so long as the present conditions of society shall exist.

Since 1873 Marx had given himself up almost entirely to his work, though this had been retarded, for some years by ill-health. The M.S. of the second. volume of his chief work will be edited by his oldest, truest, and dearest friend, Frederick Engels. There are other MSS., which may also be published.

I have confined myself in strictly historical and biographical details of the MAN. Of his striking personality, his immense erudition, his wit, humour, general kindliness and ever-ready sympathy it is not for me to speak. To sum up all -

> “the elements
> So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up,
> And say to all the world, “This was a Man!”

Eleanor Marx.

II

David Ricardo begins his great work, “Principles of Political Economy and Taxation,” with these words: “The value of a commodity, or the quantity of any other commodity for which it will exchange, depends upon the relative quantity of *labor* necessary for its production, and not on the greater or less *compensation* which is paid for that labor.” This great discovery of Ricardo’s, that there is but *one* real standard of value, *labor*, forms the starting-point of Marx’ “Das Kapital." I cannot enter here into a detailed account of the way in which Marx completes, and partly corrects, Ricardo’s theory of value, and develops, out of it, a theory of that fearfully contested subject, *currency*, which by its clearness, simplicity, and logical force, has carried conviction even into the heads of many political economists of the ordinary stamp. I must confine myself to the mode, based upon his theory of value, by which Marx explains the origin and the continued accumulation of capital in the hands of a, thereby, privileged class.

Suppose all exchanges of commodities to be entirely fair; suppose that every buyer gets the full value in goods for his money, and that every seller receives in money the full value of the necessary labor invested in his produce. If, then, as political economists are in the habit of assuming, every producer sells that which he does not want, and buys with the money thus obtained that which he does want, but which he does not himself produce, then all things are for the best in this best of economical worlds; but the formation of Capital — this word taken, for the present, in its usual meaning — is impossible. A man may save money, or store up goods, but he cannot, as yet, use them as Capital, except perhaps by lending the money on interest. But that is,, though a very ancient, yet a very subordinate and primitive form of Capital. The making of profits is impossible on the basis supposed above.

And yet, we see every day that profits, and very large profits, are made by some people. In order to account for this, let its begin by looking at the *form* of the transaction which produces profits. Hitherto we have dealt with independent producers, who, under a system of social division of labor, sell what they do not want, and buy what they do want for their own use. But now the producer appears as a man who enters the market, not with produce, but with money, and who buys, not what he wants, but what he does *not* want for his own use. He buys, in one word, in order to re-sell what he has bought. But to buy 20 tons of pig-iron, or 10 bales of cotton for £100, and to re-sell them for £100 would be an absurdity. And indeed we find our businessman does not commit such an absurdity. He buys his commodities, say for £100, and re-sells them, on an average, say for £110. But how is this possible?' We still assume that all commodities are bought and sold at this full labor-valve. Then no profit can come out of any amount of such buying and selling. A change in the value of the commodity bought and hold, for instance, the rise in cotton in consequence of the American Civil War, may explain how profits arise in a few solitary instances. But commodities do not always rise in value, they generally fluctuate about a certain average value and price. What is gained now is lost hereafter. With our supposition of equal exchanges, profits are impossible.

Very well. Suppose now, exchanges were not equal — suppose every seller to be able to sell his article 10 per cent. above its real value. Then, what every one of them gains as a seller, he loses again as a buyer. Again, let every buyer buy at 10 per cont. below the value of the article bought. What he gains as a buyer, leaves his hands again as soon as he turns seller.

Suppose, finally, profits to be the result of cheating. I sell you a ton of iron for £5, while it is worth no more than £3. In that case, I am £2 richer, and you are £2 poorer. Before the bargain you had £5 in money and I had £3 in value of iron — together £8. After the bargain you hold £3 in iron and I £5 in gold — together again £8. Valve has changed hands, but it has not been created, and profits to be real must be value newly created. It is self-evident that the totality of the capitalist class of a country cannot cheat itself.

Thus if equivalents are exchanged, profits are impossible; and if non-equivalents are exchanged, profits are equally impossible. Yet they exist. How is this economical enigma to be solved?

Now it is evident that the increase or value which appears in the re-sale as profits, and which transforms money into capital, cannot arise from that money, for both in the buying and in the selling the money merely represents the value of the commodity bought and sold (we assume here again all exchanges to be exchanges of equivalents). Nor can it arise from the value of the commodity which is supposed to be bought and sold at its full value, neither more nor less. The increase of value can, therefore, arise only out of the *actual use* of the commodity in question. But how can new value arise from the use, the consumption of a commodity? This would only be possible if our businessmen had the good luck to find in the market a commodity endowed with the special quality that its consumption would be, *ipso facto*, a creation of wealth.

And that commodity exists in the market. That commodity is called by economists *Labor* but Marx, more correctly, calls it *Labor-power*, and this expression I shall use here.

The existence of Labor-power as a commodity in the market, pre-supposes that it is sold by its owner, and, therefore, that the latter is a free agent, who sells his Labor-power to another free agent, both dealing with each other voluntarily and on an equal footing. It presupposes, moreover, that the sale is for a limited time only, as otherwise the seller, from a free agent, would become a slave. And, finally, it presupposes that the owner of the labor-power, the future laborer, is not in a position to sell commodities, the produce of his own labor, but that he is compelled to sell, instead, his capacity to labor. Thus, our businessman lives in a society where he meets the free laborer in the market — free not only to dispose as a free agent of his labor-power, but free also from the possession of all means by which he himself could transform the labor-power into actual labor, into work. A free man — but free also from the ownership of victuals, of raw material, and of tools, unless, perhaps, the simplest and cheapest.

That our two “free agents” are enabled to meet each other in the market, is evidently not a phenomenon produced by simple nature. It is the result of a long historical process, the result of many previous revolutions of society. And, indeed, it is only since the latter half of the fifteenth century that we find the mass of the population being gradually turned into such “free” sellers of their own labor-power.

Now labor-power, as a saleable commodity, has a value and a price like other commodities. Its value is determined, as in all other cases, by the labor necessary for its production, and therefore its reproduction. The value of labor-power is the value of the necessaries of life required to keep the laborer in a state fit for his work, and, as he is subject, to natural decay and death, to reproduce and to continue the race of sellers of labor-power. The extent and composition of these necessaries of life varying very much

for different epochs and countries, are yet more or less fixed for a single country, and a given period. The standard of life established there among the working class settles it.

Let us now see how our business-man consumes the labor-power he has bought. Suppose the work to be done is cotton-spinning. The hired laborer is introduced into the factory and there finds all the requisites for his work: cotton in the state of preparation which renders it fit for spinning into yarn, machinery, etc. Suppose the normal production of' a spinier per hour to be one and two-third pounds of yarn, for which one and two-thirds pounds of cotton are required (leaving unavoidable waste out of the question). Then in six hours our spinner will turn 10 lbs. of cotton into 10 lbs. of yarn. If the value of the cotton be 1s. per lb. the 10 lbs. of yarn will represent in value of cotton 10s. Assuming the wear and tear of machinery, oil, coal, etc., during these six hours to represent a value of 2s., that will raise the value of the yarn to 12s. There remains to be known how much is added to its value by the labor of' the spinner.

Suppose the value of labor-power for one day, that is to say the value of the necessaries of life required to maintain the laborer for one day to be 3s. Suppose, again, that this sum of necessaries, or the 3s. representing it in money, are equivalent to, or embody the labor of one worker for six hour's. Our spinner, then, at the end of six hours work has added a value of 3s. to the yarn, so that its total value is I5s. Our businessman, now a master cotton-spinner, has in his yarn the full equivalent of his outlay: 10s. for cotton, 2s. for wear and tear, etc., 3s. for labor-power employed — total 15s. He is repaid in the value of' his yarn for every fraction of a farthing he has advanced.

But there, is no margin for any profits. But our master cotton-spinner or would-be capitalist very soon informs us that this is not the way at all in which *he* understood his bargain. If six hours' labor suffice to *keep* the laborer for a full day, including the night, that is no reason why the laborer should not *work* a whole day. He, the master, has hired the man's labor-power for a day. He, therefore, is entitled to have a full day's work out of him. The value of the labor-power and the value of the labor it is capable of performing may be different things. If they are, then the worker is entitled to have the first and the employer is equally entitled to pocket the second. Labor is not only the source of wealth, and of value, but it is also the source of more value than that of the labor-power required to perform that labor. And that is the very reason why the employer has hired the laborer.

Instead of discharging his workman after the six hours he makes him work say another six hours, twelve in all (we will not at present mind the Factory Acts). Then after twelve hours' work we have the following result:

20 lbs. of cotton at	1s. £1 0 0
Wear and tear twelve hours, twice	2s 4 0
Labor added in twelve hours	6 0
Value of 20 lbs. of yarn	£1 10 0
OUTLAY OF EMPLOYER:	

20 lbs. of cotton, as above,	£1 0 0
Wear and tear	4 0
Wages paid to spinner	3 0
Margin for profit	3s

The enigma is solved, the possibility of profits explained. Money has been transformed into capital.

The above simple transaction between employer and workman not only explains the genesis of capital, but it forms the groundwork of' our whole system of production (called by Marx *capitalist production*). It forms the gist of Marx' whole book, and is at this moment perfectly understood by the Socialists of the Continent, especially by those of Germany and Russia.

I said the 3s. were not profit, but a *margin* for profit. The sum thus entering the pocket of the capitalist Marx calls *surplus value*. It is not all profit, but it includes the employer's profit. He has to share it with others: with the Government in the shape of rates and taxes, with the landlord for rent, with the merchant, etc. The laws that regulate this repartition will be explained in the third book (2nd volume) of "Das Kapital," which, together with the second, the author has left in manuscript. It will be published in German as soon as possible.

Thus, all classes of society not composed of actual and immediate producers of wealth (and these, in England at least, are almost exclusively wages-laborers), all classes, from kings and queens to music-masters and greengrocers, live upon their respective shares of this surplus-value. In other words, they live upon the net produce of the surplus labor which the capitalist extracts from his workpeople, but for which he does not pay. It matters not whether the share of surplus-labor falling to each member of society not actually a producer is granted as a gift by Act of Parliament from the public revenue, or whether it has to be earned by performing some function not actually productive. There is no other fund out of which they can be paid, but the sum total of the surplus value created by the immediate producers, for which they are *not paid*.

Eleanor Marx.

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1. "Vogt — il lui a été remis en Aout, 1859 ... 10,000 francs" is the literal text.

2. A second edition appeared in 1872, and a third is about to be published. Translations in French and Russian were made in the seventies, and condensations or extracts of the hook have appeared in most European languages.
