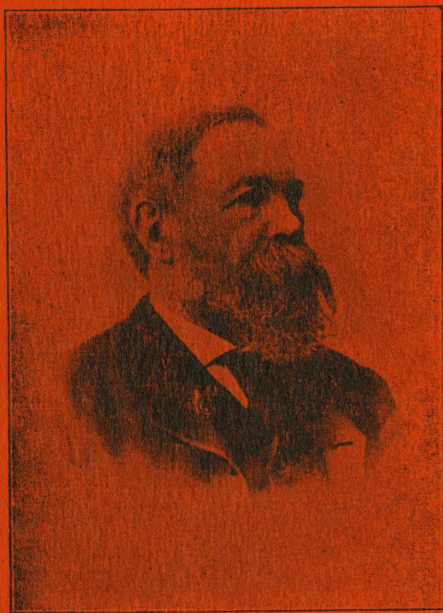


FREDERICK ENGELS

(November 1820—August 1895)

BY
JOHN KERACHER



Price 25 Cents

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JOHN KERACHER

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"How the Gods Were Made," Etc.*



CHICAGO

CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY

1946

Frederick Engels

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PRINTED IN U.S.A.

FOREWORD

In presenting this pamphlet on the life and work of Frederick Engels we believe it will fill a need for a short outline of the activities and role of Engels, the close associate and collaborator of Karl Marx, and about whom not enough is known, even by many who are more or less familiar with his writings.

However, it was written with the idea of interesting others, those not yet acquainted with his excellent contributions to the modern working class movement, with the idea of stimulating interest and causing more to take up a study of his revolutionary writings, such as his *Anti-Duhring*, or his *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, and his theoretical work in general.

The contents first appeared in the PROLETARIAN NEWS, September, October and November, 1945. It was written on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his death and the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of his birth.

As is here implied, this is but a short outline of Engels' life and work, a sort of introduction for those who desire to become better acquainted with what he wrote and what he did and with the hope that it will lead to a further and more extensive investigation of his life and work.

The Publisher

FREDERICK ENGELS

History records few examples of such lasting friendship and intellectual collaboration as that which prevailed between Frederick Engels and Karl Marx. The gigantic figure of the latter has more or less overshadowed Engels. This is not because of a vast difference in their intellectual stature but because of their closeness, and the interconnection of Engels' life-work with that of his great associate. He thoroughly understood Marx and correctly evaluated his genius and historic role. If he was content to "play second fiddle," as he expressed it, he fully realized that such was a part of no mean proportions.

The method of social analysis, the theoretical concepts and principles which characterize their joint work, rightfully bear the term Marxism. This term is inclusive of the brilliant writings of Frederick Engels who rendered invaluable assistance to Marx, and who for twelve years after the death of his friend continued to contribute, on the same high intellectual plane, an immense share of their life-work.

Frederick Engels was born at Barmen, in the German Rhineland, on the 28th of November, 1820. Therefore, November 28, 1945, was the 125th anniversary of his birth, and August 5, 1945, was the 50th anniversary of his death. He

was the elder son of Frederick Engels, industrial capitalist, engaged in cotton spinning. Engels senior was a real, hard-headed thrifty capitalist and a devout Christian. At an early age, his now famous son began to express opposition to the traditional thought and orthodox piety, so prevalent then in the Rhineland. This annoyed his father and brought anxiety to his mother.

The Engels family had been engaged in textile manufacture for decades. Originally they had been farmers around Wuppertal, but later took up cloth making. In 1837, this capitalist cotton spinner, in partnership with two brothers by the name of Ermen, started a cotton-mill at Manchester, England. Later, in 1841, they opened mills at Barmen and Engelskirchen, making use of the new machinery which had been invented in England.

Young Frederick attended school at Barmen until fourteen years of age. Then he went to high school at Elberfeld, which adjoined Barmen so closely that the name Barmen-Elberfeld was commonly used to include both towns. This boy, while still in his teens, was depressed by observing the poverty and misery which prevailed in their industrial community. He did not finish his schooling, probably due to his restlessness. At the age of seventeen he was taken into his father's office to be in-

structed in commercial methods. But business held no attraction for him. Right from the start he disliked the "penny-pinching" ways of early capitalism, and usually referred to it as a "dog's life."

Thus, as a young man Engels was in a state of rebellion against the narrow-mindedness of the community, and against the Christian yoke of his home life. His father was shrewd enough to recognize that his son had ability, if he could but break him to the ways of business, but their personal relations grew steadily worse. He was big and strong and full of energy. Therefore, despite the discipline and the drudgery he found time for much outdoor activity and a lot of reading. His studies did not meet with the approval of his business father. After about a year, at the age of eighteen, Frederick was sent to work as a clerk in an export office at Bremen. His new employer was a man of similar character as his father, a strict business man.

Engels' spirit was not broken by those experiences. On the contrary he got out and mixed with the younger people of Bremen and gave expression to his physical and mental faculties. He keenly indulged in his linguistic hobby by studying several languages, but the "dog's life" of business still oppressed him. His desire to become a writer found expres-

sion in letter writing and short articles for the newspapers. In the seaport of Bremen there was more to be seen than he had ever experienced, but not all that he observed was pleasing to him. By this time he was taking an interest in philosophy, particularly the philosophical idealism of Hegel.

The Hegelian school of philosophy had developed a left-wing, the Young Hegelians, which was critical of the inflexibility of the older concepts. One of their number, David Frederick Strauss, in 1835, created a sensation in philosophical circles by his *Life of Jesus*, wherein he showed that the Bible and Christianity were the products of history, and not the inspired work of a god.

This viewpoint came into conflict with Hegel's absolute idea, as applied to the State. If Christianity was a historical product, the outcome of social development and subject to historic changes, then the State, which Hegel had portrayed as the highest development of the human mind, the unfoldment of the absolute and eternal idea, also was a product of history, and subject to change.

This forced the Young Hegelians to turn to politics. They began to break away from the central principle of Hegelianism, the absolute-ness of the idea itself. However, the chief merit of Hegelianism, its dialectic method of ana-

lysis, was retained. Hegel's teaching that nothing is constant, that the world is in a state of flux, that nothing is absolute, that all is relative, had caught up with itself. His conception of the idea itself as absolute and eternal, stood exposed as a contradiction of his own teaching.

He Serves in the Army

Frederick Engels read Strauss' *Life of Jesus* and was much impressed. In 1841, after about two years in Bremen he was confronted by the military requirements of the Prussian state. Each young man was required to take a year's training in the army, but, if one volunteered in advance, it was permissible to choose the branch of the service preferred. Engels decided upon the artillery, because it would take him to Berlin.

He had a number of reasons for that course. First, it was a big city and the center of the German culture of that time, with which he desired to make closer contact. Second, he could spend a year away from the discipline of his father, and be free for that period from the "dog's life" of the business world. The discipline of the army seemed to have bothered him but little. The young soldier found time to meet and confer with kindred spirits. He associated with young men who, like himself, were in the process of breaking with the tra-

ditions of the past. To the press he wrote a series of articles, entitled *Letters from Wuppertal*, which he signed F. Oswald. The natives of Wuppertal were embarrassed by "Oswald's" exposure of their way of life, and his criticism of their narrow provincialism. He also began to write along philosophical lines.

In 1842, the *Rheinische Zeitung* (Journal of the Rhine) was launched by the liberal bourgeoisie of Cologne, with Karl Marx, a young Rhinelander (born at Treves, May 5, 1818), as its editor-in-chief. Marx was just twenty-four, but already recognized for his high scholarship. The *Zeitung* was an expression of political opposition, but because of the rigid censorship of the press in Prussia its articles were often couched in philosophical language. By that means it probably survived a few months longer than if it had been more plain spoken. To this periodical, Engels had sent contributions. Later, on his way to England, he called at Cologne and met Marx, but they did not then find an affinity of purpose. Neither, it appears, was very much impressed by the other.

Early in 1843, the *Rheinische Zeitung*, and also the *Hallische Jahrbucher*, the latter edited by Arnold Ruge, were suppressed by the Prussian government. Marx left for France. It was there in 1844, when Marx was living in Paris,

and associated with Arnold Ruge in the publishing of the *Deutsch-Franzoesischen-Jahrbucher* (German-French Annals), that Marx and Engels met and discovered that they had so much in common. By then they had both surmounted the narrowness of Hegelianism.

Goes to Live in England

Engels had been living in Manchester, where his father had sent him to work in the office of the spinning mills of Engels and Ermen, the business there being managed by one of the Ermen brothers. The banishment to Manchester was a further attempt of the elder Engels to fasten the business yoke upon his wayward son, who gladly had agreed to such an escape from under the tyranny of the paternal roof. Manchester, and England in general, worked wonders upon Frederick Engels, but not in the way his father had planned it. To the *Jahrbucher* at Paris, he had sent a "*Critical Essay of Political Economy*," the clarity and profundity of which so astonished Marx that he wrote to Engels and suggested that when he would next be going home to Barmen that he come by way of Paris, so that they could become better acquainted.

When Engels first sailed up the Thames toward London he was elated with the sight of the river traffic, and wrote that "all this is

so vast, so impressive, that a man cannot collect himself, but is lost in the marvel of England's greatness before he sets foot upon English soil." About fifty years later, in 1892, he said of his early statement: "This applies to the time of the sailing vessels. The Thames now is a dreary collection of ugly steamers."

At Manchester, because of his social position, the son of an industrial capitalist, Engels could have associated exclusively with the business people, but from the start, we find, he spent much time with the workers, exploring the industrial and slum districts of that great textile center of northern England. A young Irish girl, Mary Burns, with whom he had become acquainted, was frequently his companion on those many excursions. Through her he had much personal contact with working people. Mary Burns was his comrade and companion for many years. Although no legal marriage ceremony was performed she kept house for him up to the time of her death in 1863.

Engels' first real work was a book on *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, in which he had arrived at what he and Marx later called the *Materialist Conception of History*, although in an elementary form. This book was published in German in 1845, but was not translated into English until 1892.

Engels was the first to attempt a description of the plight of England's new industrial slave class, the proletariat, the product of the machine age. It was a vigorous exposure of British capitalism, in which he held up to scorn the rich captains of industry who sought, through philanthropy and various forms of charity, to wash their hands of the responsibility for the appalling slums of all the large cities, with their starvation, filth and crime. Ill clothed and ill fed, England's wage workers were crowded into houses whose dilapidated condition often beggared description. Such were the conditions Engels found in proud, progressive England, "the workshop of the world," as the capitalists liked to call it.

In 1844, he spoke of the "social war," and did not draw class lines so sharply as he and Marx did later in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848. Each individual, he contended, was in conflict with everyone else, yet he saw that capitalism was the main cause, that the owners of the new industrial machinery were enriched themselves, while their workers could hardly keep their heads above water when they had jobs, and were economically submerged when unemployed.

It was the period in which the great Liberal Party was born, and which posed as the vanguard of social progress. It was lead by men

who expounded what was sometimes called the "Manchester school" of political economy. Those political leaders pretended that the reforms they sought were intended to benefit the working class, but the young German from Barmen could clearly see through their political schemes. He wrote: "The English bourgeoisie is charitable out of self-interest; it gives nothing outright, but regards its gifts as a business matter * * * they continue to shriek to the workman that it is purely for the sake of the starving millions that the rich members of the Liberal Party pour hundreds and thousands of pounds into the treasury of the Anti-Corn Law League, while everyone knows that they are only sending the butter after the cheese, that they calculate upon earning it all back in the first ten years after the repeal of the Corn Laws."

While in this work Engels expressed many concepts which he and Marx later clarified, the astonishing thing is that he had already grasped so much, and saw social conditions so clearly. Also, there can be found terminology which later became familiar to millions of the world's workers through the pages of the *Communist Manifesto*.

Following his meeting with Marx in 1844, Engels spent several years on the Continent, in France, Belgium and Germany. He, for a

period, shook himself free from the business world and actively engaged in the working class movement and he took part in the Revolution of 1848, escaping into Switzerland when it became obvious that the workers were defeated and that the counter-revolution had triumphed.

The more one studies Marxism, the more one finds Frederick Engels. At Paris they had agreed to collaborate along socialist lines, but they had not then worked out their fundamental principles of Scientific Socialism. Their attacks were still centered upon the shortcomings of the Hegelian philosophy, which was then, after the death of Hegel, in the stage known as Neo-Hegelian philosophy. To a considerable extent the philosophy retained its old contradiction, recognition of the relativity of all things with the exception of the idea which was regarded as absolute.

In 1841 Ludwig Feuerbach of Bavaria, a disciple of Hegel, published his *Das Wesen des Christentums* (The Essence of Christianity). This work had greatly affected the young Hegelians. For Engels, it finished his vague belief in the supernatural, and carried him beyond idealism. Toward the end of his life, in 1888, he wrote of this experience in his *Ludwig Feuerbach, and the end of Classical German Philosophy*: "With one blow it smashed

the contradiction and, without evasion, placed materialism back upon the throne. Nature exists independently of all philosophies. It is the foundation upon which we human beings, ourselves products of nature, are developed. Outside of man and nature nothing exists, and the higher beings, which our religious imaginations have created, are, in essence, only the fantastic reflections of our individual selves.

“The spell was broken. The ‘system’ was exploded and discarded. The contradiction, shown to have existed only in our minds, was solved. One must himself have experienced the elevating effect of this book to get a full idea of it. The enthusiasm was universal, we were all for the moment followers of Feuerbach. How enthusiastically Marx greeted the new point of view and how much he was influenced by it—in spite of all critical reservations—one may read in *The Holy Family*.”

This book which bore Engels’ name as co-author was mostly the work of Marx, although its contents were in substance what they had jointly arrived at. He was displeased that his name should appear on a book of which he had written so little, and also at the title. *The Holy Family*, as a title, was a fling at the brothers Bauer, who were unable to make a clean break with Hegelian idealism. Its real title was to have been *A Critique of Critical Critique*. The

publisher, it appears, made use of what was to have been, at most, a sub-title.

A work in which Marx and Engels did collaborate fully was *The German Ideology*. It was not published during their lifetime. Their object was to portray their new concept of things in general, their dialectic approach to history from the new basis of materialism, in other words, historical materialism. Engels says of it: "The design was carried out in the form of a criticism of post-Hegelian philosophy." * * * "We postponed the publication of the manuscript indefinitely, all the more willingly, as we had attained our main object, an understanding of our own position."

While living in Brussels in 1847, Marx published his *Poverty of Philosophy*, which was a scathing exposure of the shallowness of the French socialist Proudhon, the author of a work on *The Philosophy of Poverty*. It was written in French. Engels wrote an introduction to the English translation of this book, which did not appear until 1884, after the death of Marx.

Engels lived in Brussels for a time. He went there in 1845 to again get away from the "dog's life" at Barmen. He had made some public addresses and attracted the attention of the police. His family feared that he might be arrested, and to avoid scandal at home, he

gladly consented to disappear into Belgium, where he could be with Marx and others whose company was more congenial.

The Break With Liberalism

It was during their stay in Brussels, following Marx's expulsion from France, that he and Engels arrived at the conclusion that the future belonged to the working class, that the modern proletariat was destined by historical development to take political power, and become the directive force in society. It was this conclusion which caused them to break their last ties with bourgeois liberalism, and to turn definitely to the working class, in whose midst they remained and worked until the time of their death.

Their first steps, taken in harmony with this decision, was the development of a Communist Correspondence Committee, which in 1847 began to wield some influence. In this work Engels played a substantial role, making the necessary contacts with the most advanced sections of the working class in a number of countries. A communist secret society, with revolutionary aims, was already in existence. This was the *League of the Just*. It had genuine proletarian roots, especially within the ranks of the German workers. Engels had become friendly with members of the *League*

some years earlier, but did not join because he disliked its rather crude principles. Both he and Marx believed that its underground character prevented it from attracting substantial numbers of workers, and tended to make it sectarian.

Now that they had concluded that a substantial organization was necessary, with periodicals expressive of communist ideas, their next step was to try to unite with this revolutionary vanguard and to work out a correct program, and publicly proclaim their aims and objectives. Thus, the *Communist Manifesto* came into being. They both became members of the *League of the Just*, with the understanding that the supporters of the Communist Correspondence Committee would join and that a scientific program would be worked out. Its name was changed to the *Communist League*.

The first conference was held in London in June, 1847. Engels was present, but not Marx. In November of the same year another conference was held in London. They were both present and to them was delegated the work of completing the writing of the program, based upon the recognized principles which had brought the gathering together, and upon which the conference had elaborated. That is why Marx and Engels wrote: "To this end, Communists of various nationalities have as-

sembled in London, and sketched the following manifesto, to be published in the English, French, German, Italian, Flemish and Danish languages."

Therefore, the organization was international in character from the start, and the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, written by Marx and Engels, provided the new party with an exceedingly advanced program. It was ready for publication, early in 1848, just prior to the outbreak of the revolution which shook western Europe, especially France, Austria and Germany, in that "mad year," although it in no way influenced the course of that struggle.

The Communist Manifesto

This famous manifesto was designed as a programmatic guide for the working class, and as an open declaration of Communist principles. It has been translated into practically all languages, and today is the most universally recognized program of the world's workers.

The starting point of the "Manifesto" was a proclamation of a new approach to history, a new method of historical analysis. "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles," it said.

In its outline sketch of world history, and especially the bourgeois epoch, it stresses the

changes in the mode of production and exchange as the most dynamic factor, and asserts the chief characteristic of the modern capitalist area, the simplification of the class struggle, as follows: "The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society, has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new forms of struggle in place of the old ones."

"Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature; it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat."

And further: "The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities, generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development."

The "Manifesto" goes on to trace the political consequences of this great economic advance of the capitalist class. The indus-

trial revolution, with its steam propulsion, the conquest of the world market and the transformation of backward nations into modern industrial ones, and how, on pain of death for the individual business man, competition forces the capitalists to constantly revolutionize their instruments of production. And, what this does to the more backward nations is eloquently described—"The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate."

The corresponding political development of the capitalist class is traced until, it "has conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." The real purpose of a Parliament (or a Congress) is here laid bare.

The effect of capitalist development upon the working class is ably set forth. The "Manifesto" shows how, as a result of inner struggles among the property owners them-

selves, they drag the working class into the political arena, and thus provide the workers with the means of taking independent political action. Says the "Manifesto": "The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie themselves. But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons—the modern working class — the proletarians." And again: * * * "What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable."

The concluding injunction of the "Manifesto," its clarion call to the world's workers, is known to millions, many of whom have never read the "Manifesto," "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!"

Engels' part in the "Communist Manifesto" is best described by himself. In an introduction to an edition published in January, 1888, five years after the death of Marx, he says: "The 'Manifesto' being our joint production, I consider myself bound to state that the fundamental proposition which forms its nu-

cleus, belongs to Marx. That proposition is: that in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; that the history of these class struggles forms a series of evolution in which, nowadays, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class—the proletariat—cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting ruling class — the bourgeoisie—without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinctions and class struggles.

“This proposition which, in my opinion, is destined to do for history what Darwin’s theory has done for biology, we, both of us, had been gradually approaching for some years before 1845. How far I had independently progressed towards it, is best shown by my ‘Conditions of the Working Class in Eng-

land' (1844). But when I again met Marx at Brussels, in spring, 1845, he had it ready worked out, and put it before me, in terms almost as clear as those in which I have stated here."

The Post-Revolutionary Period

When the counter-revolution had triumphed in western Europe, large numbers of workers left those countries to escape the reaction. This was especially true of the German workers who came to the United States in 1849, and all through the fifties. Gold had been discovered in California, and between that and the crushing of the European revolution, Marx and Engels came to the conclusion that capitalism was due for great expansion, and the proletarian movement for a period of stagnation.

How long this period would last they did not know. As a matter of fact it lasted, in the main, for about 20 years, until the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, and the Commune of Paris with which it culminated.

Engels had returned to the business world which he so much detested. Marx and his family had moved to London in the summer of 1849, when the French government informed them that they must leave Paris. They realized that while Marx would have

the opportunity, in London, to devote his time to his theoretical work, that he and his family would also be faced with poverty, the common lot of most of Europe's revolutionary refugees who took shelter in the comparative safety of England in those days.

It had been agreed upon between the two men that one of them must spend his entire life in research and writing for the revolutionary movement. Marx was the one who undertook the task. He was the most suitable for the work, but he had a family to maintain. Therefore, Engels undertook to render all the financial aid possible to their joint enterprise. Back in Manchester, he worked with a will and sent all the cash he could spare, but his father still held the purse string.

The years of poverty and suffering the Marx family endured in London were also years of joy, according to the testimony of Wilhelm Liebknecht, who spent some years of exile in London. Engels visited them often. He contributed much to Marx's theoretical work, especially to his *Capital*, for which he provided industrial information, statistics and such, and after the death of Marx he edited the manuscript which compose volumes II and III of *Capital*.

However, it must not be imagined that Marx

and Engels used their time exclusively for theoretical work. On the contrary, they were exceedingly active in practical organizational work.

When Engels first arrived in England he took steps to become acquainted with the leaders of the first political movement of the modern working class, the Chartists, and with some of them he maintained lasting friendship, especially George Julian Harney, the editor of *The Northern Star*, a paper for which Engels occasionally wrote.

From the time of the writing of the *Communist Manifesto* they saw the need for international cooperation of the vanguard organization of the workers of the different nations, but throughout the fifties, during the worst period of the reaction, they were just able to hold their contact and increase their influence with various groups in different countries.

The International

It was not until the sixties that they were able to launch their great organizational project which was intended as a permanent fighting force for the world's workers. This was the International Workingmen's Association, now commonly called The First International. It was given its start at a public meeting held in St. Martin's Hall, London, on September 28,

1864, but its form was not worked out until a year later, at its London Conference (first intended to be held at Brussels), September 25 to 29, 1865.

For some years there was developing much social unrest, labor was stirred by certain happenings. There was considerable reaction, especially in Britain, from the effects of the Crimean War, with its blunders and sufferings, and from the crisis which arose in the cotton industry due to its supply being shut off by the American Civil War.

These were the objective conditions when the International was launched. But what was expected of this organization did not fully materialize. It accomplished much but its permanency was killed by internal conflict between different factions which composed its ranks, chiefly the clashes between the petty-bourgeois ideas of the Anarchists and the proletarian concepts of the Marxists.

The General Council had its headquarters in London, and workers of various nationalities made up its membership. In July, 1876, the International Workingmen's Association was officially dissolved at Philadelphia. Its main office had been transferred to America with the object of preventing its falling into the hands of the Anarchist elements. It was partly the apathy of the working class, but mainly

the internal quarrels which brought about its demise.

The First International, despite its shortcomings, had lasting and beneficial effects for the world's workers. It paved the way for others, which lasted longer and accomplished more, especially keeping alive the principle of international working class solidarity.

Engels, in a letter to Frederick Sorge, the secretary of the I. W. A., after it was moved to America, wrote: "For ten years, the International Workingmen's Association dominated European history in one of its aspects, that which looks to the future. It can be proud of its achievements. . . . I think that the next International, after Marx's writings have exercised their influence for a few years more, will be definitely communist." Engels, however, was wrong in his prognosis. The Second International brought into being in 1889, turned away from Marxism. It gave a certain amount of lip-service to it, but in the main it turned its back upon revolutionary communism and adopted capitalist-reformism, and "gradualism," and most of its sections reverted to nationalism upon the outbreak of World War I.

Beginning in 1852, Marx wrote articles for the *New York Tribune* for about ten years. For those articles he received payment, but not of a very remunerative sort. Without the aid of

Engels his income would have been entirely inadequate, as it was he was continually in debt. Many of the *Tribune* articles, written at first by Marx in German, were translated into English by Engels and quite a number were written entirely by him when Marx was ill, or too busy with other work.

Engels' Revolutionary Activity

In addition to his cotton spinning business, he found time to carry on an extensive correspondence with active leaders of the revolutionary movement in several countries, and to respond to their many demands for advice. In that relation Engels wrote what was undoubtedly his greatest work. It was a request by his friends in Germany to reply to one Eugen Duhring, and entitled *Herr Eugen Duhring's Revolution in Science*, better known as the *Anti-Duhring*. In the late sixties, Duhring began to forge ahead as a writer on social questions. Then he announced his conversion to Socialism, but to his own conceptions of socialism. Being a scholar he was able to write voluminously and he won an extensive following among the German socialists, many of whom thought his ideas an advance from Marxism. Engels hated to undertake the work of replying because it involved writing so much in order to follow Duhring into the many

fields of knowledge, but once commenced, Engels did such a thorough job, that the reply to Duhring turned out to be an extensive treatise on modern socialism, that is, Marxism.

The *Anti-Duhring* has been translated into many languages, and countless volumes have been circulated. Next to Marx's *Capital*, it ranks as the greatest fundamental work on modern socialism. Three chapters taken from the work and published under the title *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, have met with a phenomenal circulation in many languages.

Engels says of his writing of *Anti-Duhring*: "I had to treat of all and every possible subject, from the concepts of time and space to bimetallism; from the eternity of matter and motion to the perishable nature of moral ideas; from Darwin's natural selection to the education of youth in a future society. Anyhow, the systematic comprehensiveness of my opponent gave me the opportunity of developing, in opposition to him, and in a more connected form than had previously been done, the views held by Marx and myself on this great variety of subjects. And that was the principle reason which made me undertake this otherwise ungrateful task."

He was, more or less, goaded into writing his great book. The pronounced drift away from what Marxism prevailed in the Social Democratic party of Germany, and his friends,

knowing that he was most fitted for the work, gave him no rest. The work appeared in *Vorwärts* in installments, commencing in 1876. This effort, and subsequent ones, to put the German party upon a Marxian basis failed, but *Anti-Duhring* was what the name implied, it finished the influence of Duhring.

However, the great merit of his book is its complete explanation of the principles of modern socialism. It has had a tremendous influence upon countless numbers of students of Marxism throughout the whole world.

Toward the end of 1870, Engels, who had sold his interest in the cotton spinning business at Manchester, went to reside in London. Therefore, for the last thirteen years of Marx's life the friends were closer than ever, and they were continually visited by the leaders of the movement of the various countries of Europe who conferred at length upon the many political problems which confronted them, and sought to profit from their vast experience and profound theoretical knowledge.

After the death of Marx, the work of Engels was not lessened, if anything it increased, but being economically independent, and having great endurance, he worked with a will and accomplished far more than he actually realized. When speaking at the graveside of Marx he said: "His name and his work will endure

throughout the ages," he probably did not realize that his name and work would endure along with that of Marx, because it is an integral part of that far reaching, world-shaking system of revolutionary thought and action, known the world over as Marxism.

In addition to the editing and preparing for publication of *Capital*, volumes II and III, Engels found time to write his "*Feuerbach* (1888), and his famous book on *The Origin of the Family; Private Property and the State*, which by most Marxians is considered next in importance to his *Anti-Duhring*. This splendid book is based upon the great ethnological discoveries of the American anthropologist, Lewis Henry Morgan, who in his most famous work *Ancient Society* (1877) had provided for the first time, as Engels expressed it, through his "finding in the sexual organizations of the North American Indian the key that opens all the unfathomable riddles of the most ancient Greek, Roman and German history. His book is not the work of a short day. For more than forty years he grappled with the subject, until he mastered it fully. Therefore his work is one of the few epochal publications of our time."

Engels was generous in more respects than one. He never withheld credit from others, wherever it was due, although he was capable

of a very healthy hatred for those who by their behavior had earned it. In his preface to the first edition of his *Origin of the Family*, he gives Morgan credit for independently, although unconsciously, discovering the Materialist Conception of History. He writes: "It was no less a man than Karl Marx who had reserved to himself the privilege of displaying the results of Morgan's investigations in connection with his own materialist conception of history—which I might call ours within certain limits. He wished thus to elucidate the full meaning of this conception. For in America, Morgan had, in a manner, discovered anew the materialist conception of history, originated by Marx forty years ago."

The Origin of the Family is not only an excellent introduction to a direct study of Morgan's *Ancient Society*, its greater merit is its tracing of the rise of the State in the Greek and Roman civilizations, and among the Germans. His comments upon the modern state, especially in its capitalist, parliamentary form, have been exceedingly helpful to the working class in its approach to political action. Lenin in his polemical writing quoted from Engels' works continually. Engels writes: "The possessing class rules directly through universal suffrage. For as long as the oppressed class, in this case the proletariat, is not ripe for its

economic emancipation, just so long will its majority regard the existing order of society as the only one possible, and form the tail, the extreme left wing, of the capitalist class. But the more the proletariat matures toward its self-emancipation, the more does it constitute itself as a separate class and elect its own representatives in place of the capitalists. Universal suffrage is the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It can and will never be anything else but that in the modern state. But that is sufficient. On the day when the thermometer of universal suffrage reaches its boiling point among the laborers, they as well as the capitalists will know what to do."

He concludes that, "We are now rapidly approaching a stage of evolution in production, in which the existence of classes has not only ceased to be a necessity, but becomes a positive fetter on production. Hence these classes must fall as inevitably as they arose. The state must irrevocably fall with them. The society that is to reorganize production on the basis of a free and equal association of producers, will transfer the machinery of the state where it will then belong; into the Museum of Antiquities by the side of the spinning wheel and the bronze axe."

As a writer, Engels had the ability to greatly simplify difficult questions and reduce them to

concrete form. In his *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, he not only traces the history of socialism from its utopian to its scientific stage, but he explains in simple language what is usually regarded as incomprehensible philosophical questions.

In no other work can we find so clear an explanation of the difference between idealism and materialism, between the metaphysical and dialectic approach to common everyday matters such as liberty, justice, reason, etc. For those seeking a simple explanation of the materialist conception of history, his chapter three is unsurpassed, and likewise for an understanding of the difference between socialism and state capitalism.

His introduction to an edition printed in April, 1892, is an excellent outline of materialist thought, what he calls historical materialism.

Before Marx published his volume I of *Capital* he had already written this entire work, but in rough draft form. Between 1867 and the time of his death in 1883 he worked at revising and preparing the balance of his material for the volumes which were to follow, but he was unable, through illness, to whip them into final form for publication.

From 1883 to 1894 Engels worked upon the manuscripts, editing and preparing them for

the publisher. Volume II made its appearance, in German, of course, in May, 1885, and Volume III in October, 1894. There was enough material left over for a fourth volume, but Engels realized he would not be able to complete it. This latter material he turned over to Karl Kautsky, then editor of *Die Neue Zeit*, and personally explained to him its substance and how it should be put into final form as Volume IV of *Capital*. Kautsky apparently was unable to carry out that request, but used the material as the basis of his work on *Theories of Surplus Value*. This latter, of course, was not published until long after the death of Engels, and is not yet translated into English.

Some people who seemingly failed to comprehend the interrelation of Marx and Engels' works have contended that Marx only wrote Volume I, that Volumes II and II were written by Frederick Engels, and that Marx only left behind a lot of incoherent notes. Such contentions are untrue and very stupid. They usually spring from faulty understanding of the contents of Volume I, and the belief that the latter volumes contradicted the thesis laid down in the first. They fail to see the continuity and completion of the thesis in the latter volumes.

Engels was too honest to write whole volumes of his own and pass them off as the work

of another, even that of his closest friend. But supposing the charges were true, has any man ever lived who was more competent to write on this great science in the spirit and with the understanding of Marx's economic work?

In his preface to Volume II, after an explanation of the state in which Marx left the manuscripts, Engels writes: "I have been content to interpret these manuscripts as literally as possible, changing the style only in places where Marx would have changed it himself and interpolating explanatory sentences or connecting statements only where this was indispensable, and where the meaning was so clear that there could be no doubt of the correctness of my interpretation. Sentences which seemed in the least ambiguous were preferably reprinted literally. The passages which I have remodeled or interpolated cover barely ten pages in print, and concern mainly matters of form." And in his preface to Volume III he makes a similar statement—"At last I have the pleasure of making public this third volume of the main work of Marx, the closing part of his economic theories. When I published the second volume in 1885, I thought that the third would probably offer only technical difficulties, with the exception of a few very important sections. This turned out to be so. But that these exceptional sections, which repre-

sent the most valuable parts of the entire work, would give me as much trouble as they did, I could not foresee at that time any more than I anticipated the other obstacles, which retarded the completion of the work to such an extent."

Not only have attempts been made to misrepresent Engels' work upon Marx's *Capital*, but also to represent him, especially in his latter years, as a sort of peaceful social-democratic parliamentary revolutionist, a social "gradualist." Engels undoubtedly erred in his judgment of the German Social Democratic party, but he never decended to its theoretical level, and, of course, he did not live to see it in its period of "revisionism," which one of his young friends, Eduard Bernstein, who as a young Marxian he had much pride in, finally helped to drag it.

Marx had spoken of the possibility of a peaceful revolution in England and some people sought to enlarge upon his statements. In his preface to the first English translation of Volume I (November, 1886), Engels writes: "Surely at such a moment, the voice ought to be heard of a man whose whole theory is the result of a life-long study of the economic history and condition of England, and whom that study led to the conclusion that, at least in Europe, England is the only country where the

inevitable social revolution might be effected entirely by peaceful and legal means. He certainly never forgot to add that he hardly expected the English ruling classes to submit, without a 'pro-slavery rebellion,' to this peaceful and legal revolution."

Here Engels is pointing out that, while Marx admitted the possibility that there might be a peaceful revolution in Britain, he also believed that in such an event the ruling classes would let loose a counter-revolutionary armed struggle.

In 1891, a new edition of Marx's *Civil War in France* was gotten out. It was the twentieth anniversary of the Paris Commune, and Engels wrote an introduction for the new edition. He concludes it with the following statements: "In reality, however, the State is nothing else than a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed no less so in the democratic republic than in the monarchy. At the best it is an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victorious struggle for class supremacy and whose worst features it will have to lop off at once, as the Commune did, until such time as a new generation, reared under new, free social conditions, will be in a position to rid itself of this State rubbish in its entirety. Of late the German philistine has again been thrown into wholesome paroxysms

by the expression 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat.' Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship of the proletariat looks like? Then look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

One might conclude that Engels worked night and day and without respite, but while he did work hard he also found time for enjoyment. He liked the out-of-doors, was a good horseman and a good walker, a jovial type who liked good company. At his home in Regent's Park Road he entertained his friends, usually on Sunday evenings. Then relaxation was the order of the day, with good food and drinks. It was a regular Mecca for rebels and refugees of various nationalities. Eduard Bernstein, who later abandoned Marxism for social-democratic *revisionism*, lived in England for many years during his exile from his native city of Berlin, and he tells us in his *My Life in Exile* about the many happy evenings spent in Engel's home, and of the great variety of revolutionists who were always welcome, so long as they were sincere rebels.

Visits America

In 1888, Engels, along with the scientist Karl Schorlemmer of Manchester, a friend of many years' standing, and Eleanor Marx and

her husband Edward Aveling, made a short visit to the United States and Canada. There was nothing formal about the visit. It was just a sightseeing trip, and to call upon some old friends, such as Frederick Sorge and George Julian Harney, who had settled on this side of the Atlantic. It was the year after the Haymarket executions in Chicago. The capitalist class and the forces of reaction in general had exploited the affair, and the labor movement was badly divided and demoralized.

He still had a number of years of good work ahead of him and that time was mostly given to the work on Volume III of *Capital*. During those last busy years he wrote a number of introductions to new editions of Marx's works which were appearing in different nations of Europe, besides various writings of his own. So many requests came for those introductions that it was said he was thankful he did not know more languages. Occasionally Engels had some illness, but in the main he enjoyed good health. His fatal illness did not strike until the summer of 1895. It was an internal cancer. Dr. Victor Adler, the Austrian social democrat who had on a number of occasions visited Engels in connection with the movement, and also checked on the state of his health, learned of the seriousness of the illness. He got time off from a prison sentence

he was serving to visit Engels. In consultation with other physicians he soon learned that the time of his old friend and comrade was short. He had to return two days before Engels' death, but the patient had already sunk into unconsciousness. Death occurred on August 20, 1895.

Engels had made the request that his body be cremated and his ashes thrown into the sea near his favorite holiday resort, Eastbourne. He only wanted a few close friends to attend his funeral. His wishes were carried out. Less than a hundred were present. They included Wilhelm Liebknecht, Bernstein, Bebel, Lafargue, Kautsky, Lessner and his old friend Samuel Moore, the English translator of the first volume of *Capital*. Some labor leaders, such as John Burns and Will Thorne were also present. The Avelings, Bernstein and a few others accompanied the ashes to Eastborne.

Frederick Engels, because of his modesty and high regard for the genius of Marx, devoted his greatest efforts to getting the latter's work into print in as many languages as possible, and thus held his own work more or less in the background. But, with the passing of time, its great merit and complimentary character, has placed it side by side with, or auxiliary to, the fundamental works of Karl Marx.

At his death he left an incompleated work of

a highly scientific character which has since been published under the title of *The Dialectics of Nature*.

Fifty years have passed since his death, and one hundred and twenty-five years since his birth, and today his work, like that of Marx, is more extensively circulated and appreciated than ever.

This short biographical sketch is not intended as a substitute for the reading of the excellent larger books written on the life and work of this great revolutionary champion of the modern proletariat. We simply offer it as a sort of introduction with the hope that it may reach larger numbers of workers and induce them to study Marxism, and which, we here wish to emphasize, is incomplete without a thorough study of the theoretical writings of Frederick Engels.

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To those who have formerly read the philosophy of Josef Dietzgen, it is not necessary to comment upon its merits, but to those who have not yet participated in this pleasure we wish to give here a brief outline of its content.

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