Marxism is the system of the views and teachings of Marx.

Karl Marx was not the first Socialist but he was the first to put Socialism on a scientific basis. Many of the finest minds of humanity have looked beyond their time and dreamed of a future Socialist Society. In this country Sir Thomas More wrote his famous Utopia away back in the 16th century. Over a century ago Robert Owen, the inspirer of the Co-operative movement, father of the Factory Acts and founder of many early Trade Unions, had put forward his picture of a Socialist society. But Karl Marx, together with his lifelong companion-in-arms, Frederick Engels, was the first to show the path to that Socialist society and how the workers could get there. He taught the working class “the conditions under which it could win its emancipation.”

THINKER, FIGHTER, LEADER

Marx was not only a thinker but was at the same time a fighter and the leader of the International Labour movement. Founder of Scientific Socialism, he was the greatest thinker and the greatest revolutionary in the history of mankind. Every section of the working class owes a debt of gratitude to Karl Marx—a debt best repaid by careful study of his teachings and by faithfully carrying them out in practice.

In that country where the teachings of Marx were better understood and more consistently applied in practice than in others there is now a Socialist society—in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Those who admire the Red Army and the peoples of the U.S.S.R., who acknowledge the greatness of Lenin (the founder of the Soviet State) and of Stalin, should never forget that the Soviet people and the Red Army have been trained in the teachings of Marx, that Lenin was the greatest follower of Marx, and that Stalin has spoken of himself “as a faithful disciple of Lenin.”

Marxism and U.S.S.R.

“Our successes are due to the fact that we have worked and fought under the banner of Marx, Engels and Lenin.” —Stalin.

If only for this reason (but there are many others) the people of this country, in the midst of the many and complicated problems of the war against Fascism, should get to know more about Karl Marx and his teachings.

STRUGGLE AGAINST PRUSSIAN DESPOTISM

Karl Marx was born 125 years ago on May 5th, 1818, in the city of Trier in the Prussian Rhineland. He died in London on March 14th, 1883, and this year marks the 60th anniversary of his death.

Marx came of a well-to-do Jewish family (his father was a lawyer) which adopted Protestantism while he was still a child. After completing his studies in Philosophy and Law, Marx at the age of 24 became editor of the Rhenish Gazette and carried on in the columns of this paper a revolutionary-democratic struggle against the despotic Prussian monarchy. The paper was subjected to double and treble censorship and finally, just 100 years ago, it was completely suppressed.
It was as a fighter for democracy that Marx first entered politics, and his struggle for democracy went on throughout the rest of his life. Ten years ago, just 90 years after Marx had first appeared as a revolutionary-democrat, the books of this great thinker and leader of the working class were burned in bonfires by the Nazis in the squares of Berlin and other towns. The Nazis, who are seeking to arrest and turn back the development of mankind, directed their fire against the memory and teachings of Marx. In speech after speech Hitler described Marxism as his most dangerous enemy. When, during the war in Spain, Hitler turned his speeches against the democracy of France, Britain and the U.S.A. it was because he knew that Marxism and democracy were closely linked together. For 10 years the name of Marx has been heard publicly in Germany only in terms of abuse in the foul mouths of Goebbels, Hitler and Goering. All the more reason for us to celebrate the 100 years struggle of Marxism under the banner of democracy and to hurl back in the teeth of Hitler our pride in the name and teachings of Marx.

Germany in the 1840's was still a feudal despotism and Marx was forced to live abroad. In the autumn of 1843 he went to Paris, but in 1845—on the insistence of the Prussian Government—Marx was banished from Paris as a dangerous revolutionary.

Marx moved to Brussels where, together with Engels, he joined the Communist League, at the request of which he wrote the famous Communist Manifesto, which appeared in January, 1848. Immediately thereafter Marx was banished from Belgium.

The Communist Manifesto

"With the clarity and brilliance of genius, this work outlines a new conception of the world."—Lenin.

This was the famous year of revolution in nearly all countries of Western Europe. In Britain the Chartists launched their great campaign for the People's Charter. It became possible for Marx to return to Germany, where he edited in Cologne the New Rhenish Gazette, the most famous German newspaper of the year of revolution. With the decline of the revolution he was banished from Germany and went to Paris, from which within a few weeks he was again banished. In the summer of 1849 he came to London, where he lived to the end of his days.

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

The life of a revolutionary emigrant was hard. Marx and his wife and family lived in appalling poverty. But for the self-sacrifice of Engels during those years Marx "would not only have been unable to complete 'Capital' but would have inevitably have perished under the pressure of want." (Lenin).

The revolutionary movement of 1848-49 had been crushed but within a few years there was a revival of the democratic movements, which brought Marx once more into the forefront of political activity.

In 1861 Civil War broke out in the United States between the upholders of Slavery in the Southern States and the people of the Northern States led by Abraham Lincoln, as President. Marx used his powerful pen against the Slaveholders of the South and in an article written in November, 1861, he said: "the present struggle between the South and the North is nothing but a struggle between two social systems, between the system of slavery and the system of free labour." A few weeks later he wrote admiringly of the British workers, whose opposition to intervention by the British Government on the side of
the slave states, favoured by their rulers, gave "a new brilliant proof of the indestructible excellence of the English popular masses, of that excellence which is the source of England's greatness."

Two years later, in co-operation with the Trade Unions in London and the London Trades Council, Marx helped to found and become the leader of the International Working Men's Association—the famous First International—founded in London on September 28th, 1864. Drawing upon all the experiences—errors as well as triumphs—of the Labour Movement of the various countries, Marx hammered out the policy, the strategy and tactics of the International as the leadership of the working-class struggle.

The rules of the First International, drafted by Marx, laid it down that "the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves."

The Rules then go on to describe what must be the aims of the workers as a class: "the economical emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means."

For the achievement of these aims unity is essential: "all efforts aiming at that great end have hitherto failed from want of solidarity between the manifold divisions of labour in each country, and from the absence of a fraternal bond of union between the working classes of different countries."

In the First International, Trade Unionists and Socialists of all kinds worked together. Under the leadership of Marx the working class learned the need of unity of the Labour Movement. Now, when the movements in each country have grown far larger and wider and have passed through a variety of greater and more terrible experiences, the need for unity within each country is of the same importance as the unity of the Allied Nations and is more necessary than ever.

THE TEACHINGS OF MARX

Thirty years ago Lenin wrote an article in which he used the following remarkable words about Marx and his teachings:

"The greatness of Marx lies precisely in the fact that he gave a reply to questions which the most advanced thought of mankind had already raised. His teachings arise as a direct and immediate continuation of the teachings of the greatest representatives of Philosophy, Political Economy and Socialism."

"The teachings of Marx are omnipotent because they are true."

"They are complete and cast in one piece and give man a complete world outlook which cannot be reconciled with superstition, reaction or defence of bourgeois oppression."

The world outlook which Marx developed has been outlined with the utmost clearness by Joseph Stalin in the chapter, Dialectical and Historical Materialism, which he wrote for The History of the C.P.S.U. (B) five years ago. This masterpiece, now printed separately in The Little Stalin Library as a sixpenny booklet, should be read widely in this country. It sets forth Marx's world outlook and the application of that outlook to social life; it brings out the greatness of Lenin who practised and developed the teachings of Marx; and finally, it is a book which will enable everyone to understand why Stalin is not only "a great Warrior" but the worthiest successor of Marx, Engels and Lenin in theory as well as in action.

The study of Marx's scientific socialism and the later developments of Marx's teachings by Lenin and Stalin, is not—as is sometimes mistakenly thought—a diversion from practical work and leadership. The "practical" worker or leader who neglects the study of theory is condemned to grope in the dark, to lag behind events
instead of being on top of them, to be constantly "taken by surprise" at decisive moments in history; and to being wise "after the event" instead of shaping the course of events.

The effort needed to master Marxism is the one way of ensuring that the aims, direction and character of everyday activities and leadership in the Labour movement conform at all times to the fundamental interests of the working class in the midst of an ever-changing—and ever more rapidly changing—situation.

The Power of Marxist Theory

"... it, and it alone, can give the movement confidence, the power of orientation, and an understanding of the inherent connection between surrounding events; for it, and it alone, can help practice to discern not only how and in what direction classes are moving at the present time, but also how and in what direction they will move in the near future."—Stalin.

With the Communist Manifesto and his later writings Marx made history and politics into a science. Because of their mastery and development of this science, Stalin and the leaders of the Bolshevik Party were able to foresee the coming of the present war many years ago and to begin their preparations in good time—

with results that we can now see.

In his writings on Political Economy, Marx revealed the secrets of the capitalist mode of production, and traced the path of its development. Every worker should read and study Wage, Labour and Capital and Value, Price and Profit. The correctness of the Marxist analysis of capitalist production and the superiority of socialist over capitalist economy which they predict, have alike been proven by the history of recent years.

Marx’s teachings on the theory of the State, on the dictatorship of the proletariat as the path to a classless Communist society, have been elaborated by Lenin and Stalin and confirmed in the building of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.

The historical and theoretical writings of Marx abound with lessons for the people of every country today. It was Marx who taught that “a people that oppresses another cannot themselves be free.” This saying of Marx should be in the minds of everyone in this country when they consider the situation of India, particularly in relation to the problems of the present war of liberation!

On the right of nations to self-determination, on the necessity of democracy, on the leading part to be played by the working class within democracy, on the need for unity in the Labour movement, on the necessity of organisation, on the combination of theory and practice, on all these things we can learn, today lessons from the work of Marx.

Every Trade Unionist, every Co-operator will play a better part in the struggle of today if they carry on their work in the light of Marx’s teachings.

Not only the organised working class but every democrat will have a deeper understanding of democracy and know better how to fight for it against the forces of Fascism if they do so in the light of Marx’s teachings.

SUGGESTED READING

What is Marxism? By Emile Burns. Gollancz. 2/-.

The Communist Manifesto. By Marx and Engels. Lawrence and Wishart. 4d.

Dialectical and Historical Materialism. By Stalin. Lawrence and Wishart. 6d.


The Teachings of Karl Marx. By Lenin. Lawrence and Wishart. 6d.

Selected Works of Marx. 2 Vols. (Vol. 1, 8/6; Vol. 2, 10/6). Lawrence and Wishart.

Marx House Study Syllabus Series. Study Courses on Aspects of Marxism. Full list sent free on application. Enclose stamped, addressed envelope for reply.

Published by A. Massie for Marx House, 1 Doughty Street, W.C. 1, and printed by the Euston Press, London, N.W 1.