



On the 200th Anniversary of the birth of Karl Marx Statement by the International Section Workers Party of Ireland

Karl Marx was born on 5th May 1818, in Trier in the Rhineland of Prussia and spent the first 17 years of his life there. He attended Bonn University from 15th October 1835 to 22nd August 1836 and later attended university in Berlin. He commenced his lifelong political struggle as a writer for the *Rheinische Zeitung* in 1842, honing his journalistic and political skills. In 1843 he married Jenny von Westphalen, a childhood friend.

The suppression of *Rheinische Zeitung* in 1842 did not deter the militant Marx who moved to continue his study and revolutionary activities in exile in Paris where he was active in the revolutionary clubs. In the period 1844-1848 Marx and his friend, Frederick Engels, elaborated the theoretical principles of the scientific world outlook and the necessity for the establishment of a workers' party.

'Capital'

Expelled from France in 1845, Marx moved to Brussels before moving to London where his home became a centre and meeting place for revolutionaries and prominent figures in the workers' movement from many countries. During this time Marx and his family lived continually under the threat of poverty, assisted by funding from his friend, Engels. It was in London that Marx threw himself into a serious study of the political economy of the capitalist system which culminated in the publication of *Capital*.

Marx was a key figure and was present at the inaugural meeting of the First International at St. Martin's Hall in London in September 1864. It was Marx who set out the programme of the International and who defined its tactics and tasks.

Marx and Engels viewed the proclamation of the Paris Commune on 28th March 1871 as the outworking of the International and devoted great efforts to supporting the Communards who were, as they saw it, "*storming heaven*". Although the Commune was short-lived and was brutally suppressed and finally murderously eliminated at the Pere Lachaise Cemetery, where the bullet holes can be seen to this day, it raised the workers' movement to a new level and facilitated the elaboration of a radical theory based on class struggle, revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Scientific Socialism

In a number of works, Marx defended and elaborated the principles of his revolutionary doctrine and his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* became a programmatic document of scientific socialism where he warned of the dangers of opening the door to opportunists and opportunism.

Marx recognised that the dynamic of historical progress is provided by the development of productive forces and the changes in property relations that this requires. He demonstrated that the basic structure of a society depends on people's relations to each other in the process of producing everything which is used or consumed. He viewed history as a series of dialectical conflicts.

Communist Manifesto

In *The German Ideology* Marx traced the origin of the state to the division of labour setting out clearly that in the course of history each method of production gave rise to a political organisation furthering the interest of the economically dominant class, a view which he summarised in *The Communist Manifesto* by stating that "*the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the bourgeoisie*".

The sheer scope of his work was immense, ranging across philosophy, political economy, history, social criticism, anthropology and revolutionary theory and practice. His unsurpassed critique of capitalist society, his analysis of class struggle and proletarian revolution laid the ground work for the growth and development of revolutionary movements.

Revolutionary transformation

Karl Marx's vision has withstood the test of time. His legacy endures. His powerful analysis and writings influenced political movements and Marxism, further developed and elaborated by Lenin in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, witnessed the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 and the creation of the first workers' state, giving rise to the emergence of a socialist world system and laying the foundations for the revolutionary transformation of society under the banner of Marxism-Leninism.

The influence of Karl Marx remains boundless. As a revolutionary thinker he continues to inspire workers across the world, offering hope to the poor, exploited and oppressed with the message of liberation and emancipation.

The Workers Party of Ireland is proud to be part of the celebrations around the world today commemorating the 200th anniversary of his birth. As his loyal friend Engels stated after the death of Marx: "*His name will endure through the ages, and so also will his work.*"

Workers of All Countries, Unite!

5th May 2018