

KARL MARX

By LUDWIG LORE

In the midst of the bloodiest slaughter the world has ever seen we have celebrated the centenary of the birth of the man who hurled the words "Workers of all countries, unite," into the world.

And yet we know that the teachings of Karl Marx are not forgotten. Marxian ideas influence the whole civilized world, their truths are becoming apparent even to those who formerly looked upon them with doubt and unbelief.

How times have changed since that 14th of March 1883, when Karl Marx closed his eyes forever. A small group of intimate friends and supporters stood about his bier. Small was the number of those who recognized his theoretical teachings. The world knew, it is true, that the spiritual leader of the General Council of the International Workmen's Association was a prominent scientist and a remarkable thinker. But it had little or no understanding of the ideas he had created. Even of those who fought under his banner, few had more than a very incomplete and superficial conception of their import.

How could it have been otherwise? This lack of clearness was, after all, simply the reflex of the movement that he served. The downfall of the Paris Commune, the dissolution of the International Workmen's Association, the socialist exception laws in Germany and the severe industrial crisis in the seventies had vitally impaired the working class movement. There were Socialists in every civilized country, but the movement everywhere bore the marks of inner chaos. Only here and there the movement had succeeded in concentrating into a real social-democratic party. The struggle for the political enfranchisement of labor had only just begun; independent political working class action in the sense of the Social-Democracy was still in embryo. Referring to the Reichstag elections of October 27, 1881, Friedrich Engels wrote to Edward Bernstein on Nov. 30,

of the same year, "If ever an outward event has been capable of restoring Marx to his former vigor, it has been done by these elections." True, the number of socialist votes had fallen from 493,000 in 1877 and 437,000 in 1878, to 312,000. But the result filled Marx and his intimate followers with rejoicing. That it was possible to emerge from the elections with this comparatively small loss of votes, at a time when the heaviest political and economic pressure rested upon the people was, to them, encouraging proof of the power of resistance of the German working class. "Never has a proletariat responded so splendidly," continued Engels in his letter. And truly, the German working class showed more firmness and more unity, particularly in the large cities and industrial centers, than any other working class in the world. Little Denmark excepted, the movement everywhere stood on the verge of dissolution, where it had not, indeed, already fallen to pieces.

Out of these weak beginnings a socialist movement has developed that is today a power in the world.

Disheartening as the outlook today may be, there is not a country in the civilized world in which the socialist movement, in one form or another, has not become a decisive factor in political and economic life.

* * *

In every age of human progress in the history of every great idea, one may observe the same phenomena. The new idea, the outgrowth of existing historic and social conditions, slumbers in the unconscious masses of humanity until it becomes embodied as it were in a few particularly sensitive, great and active minds. But seldom has the embodiment of a new idea found such complete expression in *a single* person, as when modern Socialism received its first concrete expression in the life, thought and work of Karl Marx.

In 1842 Marx first stepped into the arena of public life, as fighter in the radical wing of the bourgeoisie. Two years later, he turned toward Socialism. In 1845 and 1846, together with Engels, he was working out his socialist teachings, and came