

# KARL MARX AT HOME

The titan of the poor was a gentle, considerate father. Paul Lafargue, his son-in-law, describes some little known aspects of Marx's personality. His deep love for Engels.



Hugo Gellert

May 5 is the one hundred and twenty-third anniversary of the birth of Karl Marx, founder of scientific Communism and one of the titans of world history. On this occasion we are republishing a section of an article of personal recollections of Marx written in 1890 by his son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, who for many years before the World War was one of the leading figures of the French Socialist Party.—The Editors.

THOSE who would know the man's heart and love it, that heart which beat so warmly beneath the outer wrappings of the scholar, had to see Marx when his books and manuscripts had been thrust aside—in the bosom of his family, and on Sunday evenings in the circle of his friends. At such times he was a most delightful companion, sparkling with wit and bubbling over with humor, one whose laugh came from the depths. His dark eyes would twinkle merrily beneath his bushy eyebrows when he listened to some bright sally or apt rejoinder.

He was a gentle, tender, and considerate

father. A favorite phrase of his was: "Children must educate their parents." His daughters loved him ardently, and in the relationship between him and them there never lowered any shadow of paternal authority. He never ordered them about, being content to ask them to do him a favor, or to beg them not to do something which he would rather they left undone. Yet seldom was a father's counsel more gladly listened to than his. His daughters looked on him as their friend and playmate. They did not address him as "Father," but as "*Mohr*"—a nickname which had been given him because of his dark complexion and his ebony locks and beard. On the other hand, as far back as 1848 when he was not yet thirty, to his fellow members of the Communist League he was "Father Marx."

He would spend hours playing with his children. They still remember fierce sea fights. Having made whole fleets of paper boats, and put them to sail in a bucket, he would then—amid jubilation—set fire to his mimic warships. On Sundays the girls would not allow him to work; he was theirs for the day. When

the weather was fine, the whole family would go for a country walk, stopping at a wayside pub for a modest luncheon of bread and cheese with ginger beer. When the children were still quite small, he would shorten the miles for them by telling them stories without an end, fairy tales invented as he went along and spun out to fit the length of the tramp, so that his hearers forgot their fatigue. Marx had a fertile imagination, and his first literary ventures were poems. His wife treasured these youthful efforts, but would not let any one see them. Marx's parents had intended their son to become a man of letters or a university professor. In their view he degraded himself by adopting the career of socialist agitator, and by devoting himself to the study of political economy (a subject then little esteemed in Germany).

MARX ONCE PROMISED his daughters that he would write them a play about the Gracchi. Unfortunately this scheme never ripened. It would have been interesting to see what "the knight of the class war," as he was sometimes called, would have made of the theme—a dread and splendid episode in the class struggles of the antique world. This was but one of many plans that were never carried out. For instance, he designed to write a work on logic, and another on the history of philosophy, the latter having been one of his favorite studies in earlier days. He would have needed to live to a hundred to have a chance of writing all the books he had planned, and of presenting to the world a fair proportion of the wealth with which his mind was stored.

Throughout his married life, his wife was a companion in the fullest sense of the word. They had known one another in childhood, and had grown up together. Marx was only eighteen when they were betrothed. They had to wait seven years before their marriage in 1843, but thenceforward they were never separated until Frau Marx died, not long before her husband. Although she had come from a German noble family, no one could have had a more lively sense of equality than she. For her, social differences and class distinctions did not exist. In her house, at her table, workmen in their working clothes were welcomed with as much cordiality as if they had been dukes or princes of the blood royal. Many workers from all lands enjoyed her hospitality, and I am sure that none of those whom she received with such simple and unfeigned kindness ever dreamed that their hostess was descended in the female line from the dukes of Argyll, or that her brother had been Minister of State to the king of Prussia. Nor were these things of any moment to her. She had left them all to follow Karl Marx's

stormy fortunes; and she never regretted the step, not even in the days of their greatest poverty.

She had a serene and cheerful temperament. Her letters to her friends, effortless outpourings of her facile pen, were the masterly productions of a lively and original mind. Her correspondents regarded the days on which these letters arrived as days of rejoicing. Johann Philip Becker has published a number of them. Heine, the ruthless satirist, dreaded Marx's mockery, but he had a great admiration for the keen and sensitive intelligence of Frau Marx. When the pair visited Paris, he was a frequent guest in their house. Marx had so much respect for his wife's critical faculties that (as he told me in 1866) he submitted all his manuscripts to her, and greatly valued her judgment upon them. She copied his writings before they went to press.

Frau Marx had a good many children. Three of these died quite young during the phase of penury through which the family passed after the revolution of 1848, when they were refugees in London living in two small rooms in Dean St., Soho. When I got to know the family, they had only three children left, all girls. Then, in 1865, the youngest (now Mrs. Aveling) was a delightful child, more like a boy than a girl. Marx was wont to say that his wife had made a blunder about the sex when she gave Eleanor to the world. The two other daughters formed the most charming and harmonious contrast that can be conceived. The elder (now Madame Longuet) was of a swarthy complexion like her father, with dark eyes and raven locks; the younger (now Madame Lafargue) took after her mother, having a fair skin, rosy cheeks, and a wealth of curly hair, sun-kissed, with a golden sheen.

In addition to those already named, there was another important member of the Marx family, Helene Demuth by name. Of peasant birth, she had become a servant maid in the Westphalen family when quite young, long before Jenny von Westphalen married Karl Marx. When the marriage took place, Helene would not part from Frau Marx, but followed the fortunes of the Marx family with the most self-sacrificing devotion. She accompanied Marx and his wife in their wanderings, and shared in their various expulsions. The practical spirit of the household, she knew how to make the best of the most difficult situations. It was thanks to her orderliness, thrift, and mother-wit that the family never had to endure the worst extremity of destitution. A mistress of all domestic arts, she acted as cook and housemaid, and also cut out the children's clothes, stitching them with Frau Marx's help. She was simultaneously housekeeper and major-domo. The children loved her like a mother; and she, returning their love, wielded a mother's influence over them. Both Marx and his wife regarded her as a dear friend. Marx played chess with her, and sometimes got the worst of the encounter. Helene's love for the Marxes was uncritical. Everything they did was right, and could not be bettered; any one who found fault with them had to reckon with her. All the intimates of the household were mothered by her, for she had, so to say, adopted the family and its friends. Having survived Marx and his wife, she has now transferred her kindly attentions to the Engels' household. She had met Engels in youth, and became almost as fond of him and his as of the Marxes.

Besides, Engels might for practical purposes be looked upon as a member of the Marx family. The girls spoke of him as their second

father. He was Marx's alter ego. In Germany for years they were invariably spoken of together as "Marx and Engels," and history has united their names on the title pages of their joint works. In our modern age, Marx and Engels realized the ideal of friendship portrayed by the writers of classical antiquity. They had become acquainted in youth, had undergone a parallel development, had lived in the most intimate community of thoughts and feelings, had participated in revolutionary agitation, and had worked side by side as long as they could. Presumably they would have done so throughout life, had not circumstances forced them apart for twenty years. After the defeat of the revolution of 1848, Engels had to go to Manchester, while Marx was compelled to stay in London. Nonetheless they continued to share their intellectual life by means of an exchange of letters. Almost daily they wrote to one another about political and scientific happenings, and about the work on which they were respectively engaged. As soon as Engels could break the chains which fettered him to Manchester, he hastened to set up house in London only ten minutes' walk from his beloved Marx. From 1870 till Marx's death in 1883, hardly a day passed on which they did not see one another, either at Marx's or at Engels'.

DURING THE PERIOD of Engels' residence in Manchester, there were always great rejoicings in the Marx household when Engels announced his intention to visit London. The coming was a topic of conversation for days in advance; and when the time drew near, Marx was so impatient that he could not work. At length came the hour of reunion, and then the two friends would spend the whole night together, smoking over their beer, and talking of all that had happened since their last meeting.

Marx valued Engels' opinion more than any one else's. Engels was the man he deemed worthy to be his collaborator. In fact, Engels was for him a whole audience, a whole public. To convince Engels, to win Engels over to an idea, no labor seemed to Marx excessive. For instance, I have known him to re-read entire volumes in search of facts required to change Engels' opinion concerning some minor detail (I cannot now recall what it was) in the political and religious war of the Albigenes. To convince Engels was a triumph.

Marx was proud of Engels. He luxuriated in numbering off to me all his friend's moral and intellectual merits; and he made a special journey to Manchester in order to show Engels off to me. He admired the remarkable versatility of Engels' knowledge; and he was uneasy at the possibility of any accident that might befall his old companion. "I am terrified lest he should be thrown, on one of his mad cross-country gallops," Marx once said.

Marx was as good a friend as he was a loving husband and father. His wife, his daughters, Helene Demuth, and Friedrich Engels were beings worthy the love of such a man as himself. PAUL LAFARGUE.



*News Item: "There were severe criticisms of Sir Samuel Hoare, Britain's ambassador to Spain, but Mr. Churchill remained unmoved, paid tribute to Sir Samuel, saying that he had improved Anglo-Spanish relations."*



# MAY 1st: THE SUN OF TOMORROW

by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn

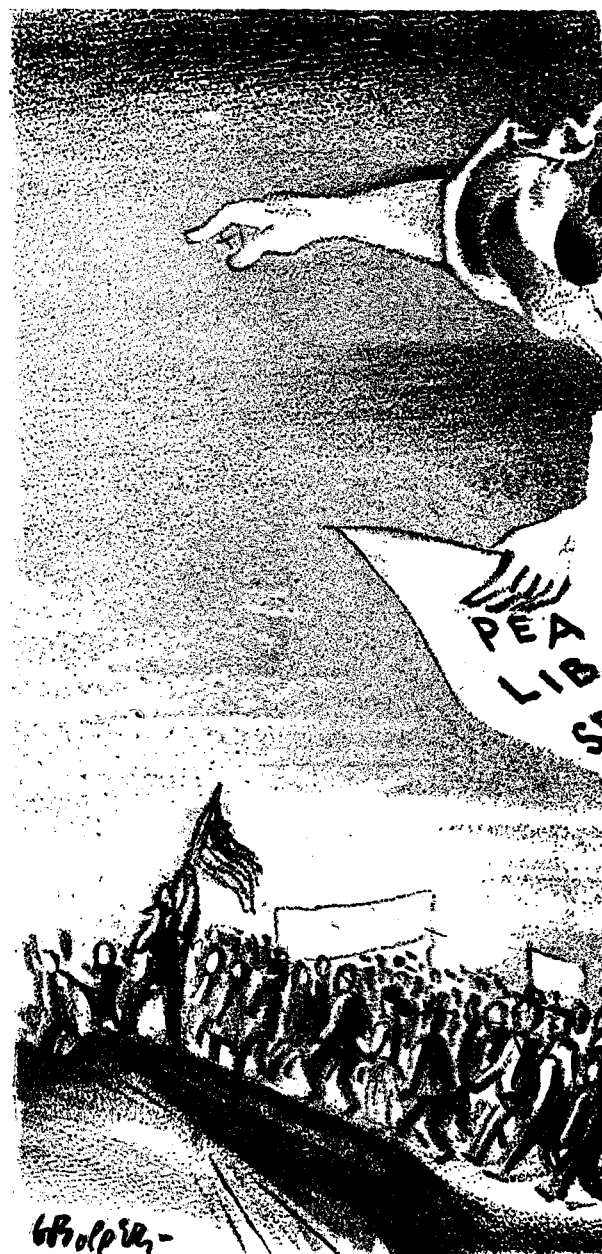
"PRIMO Maggio, il sole dell' Avvenire"  
—"May First, the sun of tomorrow!"  
as our Italian comrades so beautifully express it, is here again. It links ancient traditions, these modern times, and the future. Always a people's natural holiday, since time immemorial it was the occasion for the gathering of the poor and lowly for one gala day of festivity. For the last fifty-five years it has been universally recognized and cherished by workers around the world as an International Labor Holiday. It is actually the only holiday celebrated internationally. It obliterates all differences of race, creed, color, and nationality. It celebrates the brotherhood of all workers everywhere. It crosses all national boundaries, it transcends all language barriers, it ignores all religious differences. It makes sharp and clear, around the world, the impassable chasm between all workers and all exploiters. It is the day when the class struggle in its most militant significance is reaffirmed by every conscious worker.

This day is to the enlightened worker an augury of a new world, a classless world, a peaceful world, a world without poverty or misery. It is the glowing promise of socialism, the real brotherhood of mankind. On this day in 1941 the wise words of Lenin, "Life will assert itself. The Communists must know that the future at any rate is theirs," will light up the lonely jail cells of Browder and Thaelmann and countless others. Low-hummed snatches of revolutionary song will be heard in concentration camps. On the sea, in military barracks, in the forced labor of factory or mill, the hearts of the driven workers will beat in unison with those far away who parade joyously behind gleaming red banners, to stirring music on Moscow's Red Square. "Do your damndest to us!" they mutter between clenched teeth, the conscripts in European trenches, the prisoners in Franco's dungeons, in Hitler's hell holes, in Mussolini's prisons; "Your days are numbered. You can't stop the final victory of the people!"

International? That must be "foreign," many folks mistakenly infer. But what could be more international in its origin and population than these United States? Proudly we declare *May Day is American*. It is not a foreign idea. Many good ideas came from abroad, but this is an American idea exported to all other countries from America. May Day as an official labor holiday was born in the fierce struggles of the eighties to establish an eight-hour day. Workers of all nationalities, immigrants, political refugees, exiles, from every foreign land; native born grandsons of the American Revolution and Civil War veterans made a common, determined demand: "Eight hours shall constitute a legal day's work from and after May First, 1886." The Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada (later to become the American Federation of Labor) called upon the workers to down tools. Enthusiastic, they poured out in the first American general strike. It spread from city to city, over 3,000 miles. The whole continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, was astir: 192,000 won the demand.

The employing class, appalled at the solidarity of the workers, struck back viciously. Six workers were killed and many wounded at the McCormick Harvester Works in Chicago. May Day was baptized in the blood of American workers. A protest meeting on Haymarket Square May 4, 1886, resulted in another bloody battle and a bomb frameup. It caused the railroading to the gallows of Albert Parsons (whose ancestor had been at Valley Forge) and three of his comrades, Engel, Fischer, and Spies. "Let the voice of the people be heard!" cried Parsons, as the noose tightened around his neck. It has been, it ever will be on May Day, brave martyred hero of yesterday! This year the newly organized, victorious strikers of the International Harvester Works in Chicago will hallow your names on May first.

The struggle for the eight-hour day was renewed. The AFL decided to reinaugurate



it on May 1, 1890. To widen its effectiveness they sent delegates across the sea to Paris to the International Labor Congress. They proposed that May first be officially declared an international labor holiday. This was done, amid great enthusiasm, on July 14, 1889, the 100th anniversary of the Fall of the Bastille, after the delegates had heard recounted the struggles of the brave American workers. With the passing of the years the growing needs of international labor expanded the significance of May Day far beyond the eight-hour demand. Rosa Luxemburg, brave woman Socialist of Germany, who was later brutally murdered by the militarists, sounded the alarm against a World War in 1913. She called upon the workers to make May Day a mighty demonstration for peace and socialism. "Workers of the World, Unite!" became the insistent cry on May Day. Every vital issue was pressed, more and more militant slogans raised in each country and internationally.

Are you a bad member of your family because you go out of your home to be a good citizen of your state? Are you a traitor to



## WALTER RAUTENSTRAUCH

"Your many articles clarifying the issues which confront us today are helping to dispel the effects of the ignorance of a great number of people on the underlying political and social issues."

—Professor of Industrial Engineering, Columbia University.

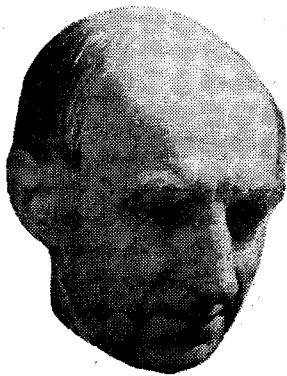
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## PAUL ROBESON

"I find NEW MASSES indispensable. Every progressive American must read a publication so necessary to a full understanding of our problems."

—World famous singer and actor.



## DR. HARRY F. WARD

"In the more than twenty years that I have been teaching in New York the NEW MASSES has been on the students' required reference list in a course that is based on journalistic sources. There are young preachers in several denominations scattered over this country whose eyes it has helped to open."

—Professor of Christian Ethics at Union Theological Seminary.



## EARL BROWDER

"NEW MASSES represents the great creative movement of the people in its broadest aspect."

—General Secretary of the Communist Party.



## RUTH MCKENNEY

"NEW MASSES is the one magazine in the United States that acts as an avenue between creative writers and their audience. For over thirty years it has been consistently for the people, and that is because the people own the magazine and have preserved it in their own image."

—Novelist, author of the best-selling "My Sister Eileen," "Industrial Valley."



## RICHARD WRIGHT

"During these days of war, NEW MASSES gives unique voice and utterance to the aspirations of peace-loving men."

—Novelist, author of "Native Son" and "Uncle Tom's Children."



## SEVEN PROMINENT AMERICANS GIVE THEIR POINT OF

You have read what these seven Americans feel about NEW MASSES.

And you agree with them. We are sure you must, for if you didn't, then NEW MASSES could not have remained alive as a champion of peace, of liberty, of democracy. It would have died years ago.

But you did stand with these seven, you did keep the magazine alive to fight in the front lines for these thirty years. It marched again this May Day in a thousand cities and villages of America where men voiced the ideas this magazine stands for.

You want to keep it marching; we know you do. But we must tell you the harsh truth that NEW MASSES is in the gravest crisis of its history.

Our business manager just reported on our financial status. The creditors will close the magazine down by May 15 if we do not have \$5,000 for them by that date.

We need not reiterate here that the magazine requires a \$25,000 drive every spring to pull through the year. We have not even reached the half-way mark. To date we have raised only \$12,426.

We believe this, know this: that if you, our readers, truly understood how critical matters were here, you would not hesitate. We would hear from you by return mail.

We know that your attention is taken, and justly so, by a dozen other calls. You are not rich people. But we emphasize this: can these other causes be successful if NEW MASSES dies? It is the fountainhead of many of them, a spokesman for all of them. We believe that all progressive life in America will suffer if there is no NEW MASSES to speak out.

You know that Mr. Knox, Secretary of the Navy (publisher of one of the country's biggest papers) will not speak for you. Nor will Roy Howard, nor Ralph Ingersoll, nor Col. Adler, nor any of the host of publishers who have just finished their annual meeting madly cheering Mr. Roosevelt's war song.

NEW MASSES alone remains the weekly organ of the people who dream of security, of freedom. And who work for these goals.

On this May Day seven prominent Americans have written us their opinion of NEW MASSES. They say this magazine must not die. We believe, we know, you agree with them.

But your regard, your love for this magazine, will not save it unless you are moved to immediate response.

THE EDITORS.

(Please turn to page 28)

"The most important magazine in the country, in my opinion, is NEW MASSES which has carried the banner for honesty in writing for some thirty years. I think it's putting up a damned good fight to keep America from sending another couple of million boys to be slaughtered off in a war that isn't ours."

**THEODORE DREISER**

—Dean of American letters, author of "An American Tragedy," "Sister Carrie," and many other best-sellers.

