

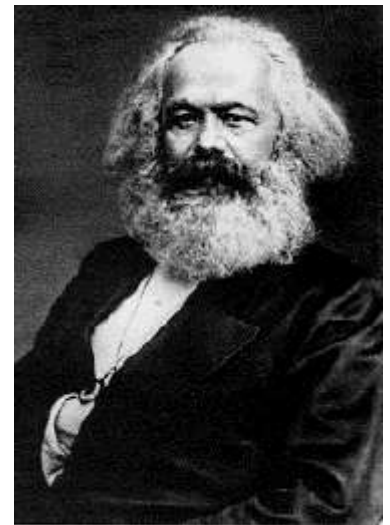
## Marx-Engels Internet Archive

# Interview with Karl Marx

by H.

## *Chicago Tribune, January 5 1879*

*London, December 18 [1878]* – In a little villa at Haverstock Hill, the northwest portion of London, lives Karl Marx, the cornerstone of modern socialism. He was exiled from his native country – Germany – in 1844, for propagating revolutionary theories. In 1848, he returned, but in a few months was again exiled. He then took up his abode in Paris, but his political theories procured his expulsion from that city in 1849, and since that year his headquarters have been in London. His convictions have caused him trouble from the beginning. Judging from the appearance of his home, they certainly have not brought him affluence. Persistently during all these years he has advocated his views with an earnestness which undoubtedly springs from a firm belief in them, and, however much we may deprecate their propagation, we cannot but respect to a certain extent the self-denial of the now venerable exile.



Our correspondent has called upon him twice or thrice, and each time the Doctor was found in his library, with a book in one hand and a cigarette in the other. He must be over seventy years of age.<sup>[18]</sup> His physique is well knit, massive, erect. He has the head of a man of intellect, and the features of a cultivated Jew. His hair and beard are long, and iron-gray in color. His eyes are glittering black, shaded by a pair of bushy eyebrows. To a stranger he shows extreme caution. A foreigner can generally gain admission; but the ancient-looking German woman [[Helene Demuth](#)] who waits upon visitors has instructions to admit none who hail from the Fatherland, unless they bring letters of introduction. Once into his library, however, and having fixed his one eyeglass in the corner of his eye, in order to take your intellectual breadth and depth, so to speak, he loses that self-restraint, and unfolds to you a knowledge of men and things throughout the world apt to interest one. And his conversation does not run in one groove, but is as varied as are the volumes upon his library shelves. A man can generally be judged by the books he reads, and you can form your own conclusions when I tell you a casual glance revealed Shakespeare, Dickens, Thackeray, Moliere, Racine, Montaigne, Bacon, Goethe, Voltaire, Paine; English, American, French blue books; works political and philosophical in Russian, German, Spanish, Italian, etc., etc. During my conversation I was struck with

**His Intimacy with American Questions** which have been uppermost during the past twenty years. His knowledge of them, and the surprising accuracy with which he criticized our national and state legislation, impressed upon my mind the fact that he must have derived his information from inside sources.<sup>[19]</sup> But, indeed, this knowledge is not confined to America, but is spread over the face of Europe. When speaking of his hobby – socialism – he does not indulge in those melodramatic flights generally attributed to him,

but dwells upon his utopian plans for “the emancipation of the human race” with a gravity and an earnestness indicating a firm conviction in the realization of his theories, if not in this century, at least in the next.

Perhaps Dr. Karl Marx is better known in America as the author of *Capital*, and the founder of the International Society, or at least its most prominent pillar. In the interview which follows, you will see what he says of this Society as it at present exists. However, in the meantime I will give you a few extracts from the printed general rules of **The International Society** published in 1871, by order of the General Council, from which you can form an impartial judgment of its aims and ends. The Preamble sets forth “that the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves; that the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties, and the abolition of all class rule; that the economical subjection of the man of labor to the monopolizer of the means of labor – that is, the sources of life – lies at the bottom of servitude in all its forms, of all social misery, mental degradation, and political dependence; that all efforts aiming at” the universal emancipation of the working classes “have hitherto failed from want of solidarity between the manifold divisions of labor in each country,” and the Preamble calls for “the immediate combination of the still-disconnected movements.” It goes on to say that the International Association acknowledges “no rights without duties, no duties without rights” – thus making every member a worker. the Association was formed at London “to afford a central medium of communication and cooperation between the workingmen’s societies in the different countries,” aiming at the same end, namely: “the protection, advancement, and complete emancipation of the working classes.” “Each member,” the document further says, “of the International Association, on removing his domicile from one country to another, will receive the fraternal support of the associated workingmen.”

**The Society Consists** of a general Congress, which meets annually, a general Council, which forms “an international agency between the different national and local groups of the Association, so that the workingmen in one country can be constantly informed of the movements of their class in every other country.” This Council receives and acts upon the applications of new branches or sections to join the International, decides differences arising between the sections, and, in fact, to use an American phrase, “runs the machine.” The expenses of the General Council are defrayed by an annual contribution of an English penny per member. Then come the federal councils or committees, and local sections, in the various countries. The federal councils are bound to send one report at least every month to the General Council, and every three months a report on the administration and financial state of their respective branches. whenever attacks against the International are published, the nearest branch or committee is bound to send at once a copy of such publication to the General Council. The formation of female branches among the working classes is recommended.

**The General Council** comprises the following: R. Applegarth, M.T. Boon, Frederick Bradnick, G.H. Buttery, E. Delahaye, Eugene Dupont (on mission), William Hales, G. Harris, Hurliman, Jules Johannard, Harriet Law, Frederick Lessner, Lochner, Charles Longuet, C. Martin, Zevy Maurice, Henry Mayo, George Milner, Charles Murray, Pfander, John Pach, Ruhl Sadler, Cowell Stepney, Alfred Taylor, W. Townshend, E. Vaillant, John Weston. The corresponding secretaries for the various countries are: Leo Frankel, for Austria and Hungary; A. Herman, Belgium; T. Mottershead, Denmark; A. Serrailier, France; Karl Marx, Germany and Russia; Charles Rochat, Holland; J.P. McDonell, Ireland; Frederick Engels, Italy and Spain; Walery Wroblewski, Poland; Hermann Jung, Switzerland; J.G. Eccarius, United States; Le Moussu, for French branches of United States.

During my visit to Dr. Marx, I alluded to the platform given by J.C. Bancroft Davis in his official report of 1877 as the clearest and most concise exposition of socialism that I had seen.<sup>[20]</sup> He said it was taken from the report of the socialist reunion at [Gotha](#), Germany,

in May, 1875. The translation was incorrect, he said, and he **Volunteered Corrections** which I append as he dictated:<sup>[21]</sup>

First: Universal, direct, and secret suffrage for all males over twenty years, for all elections, municipal and state.

Second: Direct legislation by the people.<sup>[22]</sup> War and peace to be made by direct popular vote.

Third: Universal obligation to militia duty. No standing army.

Fourth: Abolition of all special legislation regarding press laws and public meetings.

Fifth: Legal remedies free of expense. Legal proceedings to be conducted by the people.

Sixth: Education to be by the state – general, obligatory, and free. Freedom of science and religion.<sup>[23]</sup>

Seventh: All indirect taxes to be abolished. Money to be raised for state and municipal purposes by direct progressive income tax.

Eighth: Freedom of combination among the working classes.

Ninth: The legal day of labor for men to be defined. The work of women to be limited, and that of children to be abolished.

Tenth: Sanitary laws for the protection of life and health of laborers, and regulation of their dwelling and places of labor, to be enforced by persons selected by them.

Eleventh: Suitable provision respecting prison labor. In Mr. Bancroft Davis' report there is

**A Twelfth Clause**<sup>[24]</sup>, the most important of all, which reads: "State aid and credit for industrial societies, under democratic direction." I asked the Doctor why he omitted this, and he replied:

"When the reunion took place at [Gotha, in 1875](#), there existed a division among the Social Democrats. The one wing were partisans of Lassalle, the others those who had accepted in general the program of the International organization, and were called the Eisenach party. The twelfth point was not placed on the platform, but placed in the general introduction by way of concession to the Lassallians. Afterwards it was never spoken of. Mr. Davis does not say that it was placed in the program as a compromise having no particular significance, but gravely puts it in as one of the cardinal principles of the program."<sup>[25]</sup>

"But," I said, "socialists generally look upon the transformation of the means of labor into the common property of society as the grand climax of the movement."

"Yes; we say that this will be the outcome of the movement, but it will be a question of time, of education, and the institution of higher social status."

"This platform," I remarked, "applies only to Germany and one or two other countries."

"Ah!" he returned, "if you draw your conclusions from nothing but this, you know nothing of the activity of the party. Many of its points have no significance outside of Germany. Spain, Russia, England, and America have

platforms suited to their peculiar difficulties. The only similarity in them is the end to be attained.”

“And that is the supremacy of labor?”

“That is the **Emancipation of Labor**”

“Do European socialists look upon the movement in America as a serious one?”

“Yes: it is the natural outcome of the country’s development. It has been said that the movement has been imported by foreigners. When labor movements became disagreeable in England, fifty years ago, the same thing was said; and that was long before socialism was spoken of. In America, since 1857, only has the labor movement become conspicuous.<sup>[26]</sup> Then trade unions began to flourish; then trades assemblies were formed, in which the workers in different industries united; and after that came national labor unions. If you consider this chronological progress, you will see that socialism has sprung up in that country without the aid of foreigners, and was merely caused by the concentration of capital and the changed relations between the workmen and employers.”

“Now,” asked our correspondent, “what has socialism done so far?”

“Two things,” he returned. “Socialists have shown the general universal struggle between capital and labor – **The Cosmopolitan Chapter** in one word – and consequently tried to bring about an understanding between the workmen in the different countries, which became more necessary as the capitalists became more cosmopolitan in hiring labor, pitting foreign against native labor not only in America, but in England, France, and Germany. International relations sprang up at once between workingmen in the three different countries, showing that socialism was not merely a local, but an international problem, to be solved by the international action of workmen. The working classes move spontaneously, without knowing what the ends of the movement will be. The socialists invent no movement, but merely tell the workmen what its character and its ends will be.”

“Which means the overthrowing of the present social system,” I interrupted.

“This system of land and capital in the hands of employers, on the one hand,” he continued, “and the mere working power in the hands of the laborers to sell a commodity, we claim is merely a historical phase, which will pass away and give place to **A Higher Social Condition**.

We see everywhere a division of society. The antagonism of the two classes goes hand in hand with the development of the industrial resources of modern countries. From a socialistic standpoint the means already exist to revolutionize the present historical phase. Upon trade unions, in many



countries, have been built political organizations. In America the need of an independent workingmen's party has been made manifest. They can no longer trust politicians. Rings and cliques have seized upon the legislatures, and politics has been made a trade. But America is not alone in this, only its people are more decisive than Europeans. Things come to the surface quicker. There is less cant and hypocrisy that there is on this side of the ocean."

I asked him to give me a reason for the rapid growth of the socialistic party in Germany, when he replied:

"The present socialistic party came last. Theirs was not the utopian scheme which made headway in France and England. The German mind is given to theorizing, more than that of other peoples. From previous experience the Germans evolved something practical. This modern capitalistic system, you must recollect, is quite new in Germany in comparison to other states. Questions were raised which had become almost antiquated in France and England, and political influences to which these states had yielded sprang into life when the working classes of Germany had become imbued with socialistic theories. therefore, from the beginning almost of modern industrial development, they have formed an **Independent Political Party**.

They had their own representatives in the German parliament. There was no party to oppose the policy of the government, and this devolved upon them. To trace the course of the party would take a long time; but I may say this: that, if the middle classes of Germany were not the greatest cowards, distinct from the middle classes of America and England, all the political work against the government should have been done by them."

I asked him a question regarding the numerical strength of the Lassallians in the ranks of the Internationalists.

"The party of Lassalle," he replied, "does not exist. Of course there are some believers in our ranks, but the number is small. Lassalle anticipated our general principles. When he commenced to move after the reaction of 1848, he fancied that he could more successfully revive the movement by advocating cooperation of the workingmen in industrial enterprises. It was to stir them into activity. He looked upon this merely as a means to the real end of the movement. I have letters from him to this effect."<sup>[27]</sup>

"You would call it his nostrum?"<sup>[28]</sup>

"Exactly. He called upon Bismarck, told him what he designed, and Bismarck encouraged Lassalle's course at that time in every possible way."

"What was his object?"

“He wished to use the working classes as a set-off against the middle classes who instigated the troubles of 1848.”

“It is said that you are the head and front of socialism, Doctor, and from your villa here pull the wires of all the associations, revolutions, etc., now going on. What do you say about it?”

The old gentleman smiled: “I know it.”

“**It Is Very Absurd** yet it has a comic side. For two months previous to the attempt of Hoedel, Bismarck complained in his *North German Gazette* that I was in league with Father Beck, the leader of the Jesuit movement, and that we were keeping the socialist movement in such a condition that he could do nothing with it.”

“But your International Society in London directs the movement?”

“The International Society has outlived its usefulness and exists no longer.<sup>[29]</sup> It did exist and direct the movement; but the growth of socialism of late years has been so great that its existence has become unnecessary. Newspapers have been started in the various countries. These are interchanged. That is about the only connection the parties in the different countries have with one another. The International Society, in the first instance, was created to bring the workmen together, and show the advisability of effecting organization among their various nationalities. The interests of each party in the different countries have no similarity. This specter of the Internationalist leaders sitting at London is a mere invention. It is true that we dictated to foreign societies when the Internationalist organization was first accomplished. We were forced to exclude some sections in New York, among them one in which Madam Woodhull was conspicuous.<sup>[30]</sup> that was in 1871. there are several American politicians – I will not name them – who wish to trade in the movement. They are well known to American socialists.”

“You and your followers, Dr. Marx, have been credited with all sorts of incendiary speeches against religion. Of course you would like to see the whole system destroyed, root and branch.”

“We know,” he replied after a moment’s hesitation, “that violent measures against religion are nonsense; but this is an opinion: as socialism grows, **Religion Will Disappear.**

Its disappearance must be done by social development, in which education must play a part.”

“The Reverend Joseph Cook,<sup>[31]</sup> of Boston – you know him –”

“We have heard of him, a very badly informed man upon the subject of socialism.”

“In a lecture lately upon the subject, he said, ‘Karl Marx is credited now with saying that, in the United States, and in Great Britain, and perhaps in France, a reform of labor will occur without bloody revolution, but that blood must be shed in Germany, and in Russia, and in Italy, and in Austria.’”

“No socialist,” remarked the Doctor, smiling, “need predict that there will be a bloody revolution in Russia, Germany, Austria, and possibly Italy if the Italians keep on in the policy they are now pursuing. The deeds of the French Revolution may be enacted again in those countries. That is apparent to any political student. But those revolutions will be made by the majority. No revolution can be made by a party, **but By a Nation**”.

“The reverend gentleman alluded to,” I remarked, “gave an extract from a letter which he said you addressed to the Communists of Paris in 1871. Here it is:

‘We are as yet but 3,000,000 at most. In twenty years we shall be 50,000,000 – 100,000,000 perhaps. Then the world will belong to us, for it will be not only Paris, Lyon, Marseilles, which will rise against odious capital, but Berlin, Munich, Dresden, London, Liverpool, Manchester, Brussels, St. Petersburg, New York – in short, the whole world. And before this new insurrection, such as history has not yet known, the past will disappear like a hideous nightmare; for the popular conflagration, kindled at a hundred points at once, will destroy even its memory!’

Now, Doctor, I suppose you admit the authorship of that extract?”

“I never wrote a word of it. I never write **Such Melodramatic Nonsense**.

I am very careful what I do write. That was put in *Le Figaro*, over my signature, about that time. There were hundreds of the same kind of letters flying about them. I wrote to the *London Times* and declared they were forgeries; but if I denied everything that has been said and written of me, I would require a score of secretaries.”

“But you have written in sympathy with the Paris Communists?”

“Certainly I have, in consideration of what was written of them in leading articles; but the correspondence from Paris in English papers is quite sufficient to refute the blunders propagated in editorials. The Commune killed only about sixty people; Marshal MacMahon and his slaughtering army killed over 60,000. There has never been a movement so slandered as that of the Commune.”

“Well, then, to carry out the principles of socialism do its believers advocate assassination and bloodshed?”

“No great movement,” Karl answered, “has ever been inaugurated **Without Bloodshed**.

“The independence of America was won by bloodshed, Napoleon captured France through a bloody process, and he was overthrown by the same means. Italy, England, Germany, and every other country gives proof of this, and as for

assassination,” he went on to say, “it is not a new thing, I need scarcely say. Orsini tried to kill Napoleon; kings have killed more than anybody else; the Jesuits have killed; the Puritans killed at the time of Cromwell. These deeds were all done or attempted before socialism was born. Every attempt, however, now made upon a royal or state individual is attributed to socialism. The socialists would regret very much the death of the German Emperor at the present time. He is very useful where he is; and Bismarck has done more for the cause than any other statesman, by driving things to extremes.”

I asked Dr. Marx **What He Thought of Bismarck.**

He replied that “Napoleon was considered a genius until he fell; then he was called a fool. Bismarck will follow in his wake. He began by building up a despotism under the plea of unification. his course has been plain to all. The last move is but an attempted imitation of a *coup d’etat*; but it will fail. The socialists of Germany, as of France, protested against the war of 1870 as merely dynastic. They issued manifestoes foretelling the German people, if they allowed the pretended war of defense to be turned into a war of conquest, they would be punished by the establishment of military despotism and the ruthless oppression of the productive masses. The Social-Democratic party in Germany, thereupon holding meetings and publishing manifestoes for an honorable peace with France, were at once prosecuted by the Prussian Government, and many of the leaders imprisoned. Still their deputies alone dared to protest, and very vigorously too, in the German Reichstag, against the forcible annexation of French provinces. However, Bismarck carried his policy by force, and people spoke of the genius of a Bismarck. The war was fought, and when he could make no conquests, he was called upon for original ideas, and he has signally failed. The people began to lose faith in him. His popularity was on the wane. He needs money, and the state needs it. Under a sham constitution he has taxed the people for his military and unification plans until he can tax them no longer, and now he seeks to do it with no constitution at all. For the purpose of levying as he chooses, he has raised the ghost of socialism,<sup>[32]</sup> and has done everything in his power **To Create an Emeute.**”

“You have continual advice from Berlin?”

“Yes,” he said; “my friends keep me well advised. It is in a perfectly quiet state, and Bismarck is disappointed. He has expelled forty-eight prominent men – among them Deputies Hasselman and Fritsche and Rackow, Bauman, and Adler, of the *Freie Presse*.<sup>[33]</sup> These men kept the workmen of Berlin quiet. Bismarck knew this. He also knew that there were 75,000 workmen in that city upon the verge of starvation. Once those leaders were gone, he was confident that the mob would rise, and that would be the cue for a carnival of slaughter. The screws would then be put upon the whole German Empire; his petty theory of blood and iron would then have full sway, and taxation could be levied to any



extent. So far no *emeute* has occurred, and he stands today confounded at the situation and the ridicule of all statesmen.”

H.<sup>[34]</sup>

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## **Marx/Engels Media Interviews**