

## Ghost of Karl Marx Still Speaks to Some 150 years after 'Manifesto,' admirers remain

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London — A century and a half ago this spring, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published the Communist Manifesto. The anniversary has sparked the usual batch of angry articles consigning Marx and Marxism to the junk heap of history. But ghosts of the past are not so easily laid to rest, especially at Highgate Cemetery in north London, where Marx is buried.

I spent the day there recently, talking to visitors who made their way along the leafy path to Marx' grave. Maybe it was the spring sunshine, but there was a steady stream of them that day, each with an engaging reason to be there.

"I try to come here every year with a group of students from my political theory class," said Dennis Dalton, a political science professor from Columbia University.

"My students only have to walk out of Columbia to see extreme poverty, and they are sensitive to the huge gap in America between the rich and the poor. I am not a Marxist, but I do believe Marx addressed the basic problem of disparity of income and the outrageous unfairness of it. My students appreciate that."

Walk 100 yards or so past the gates of Highgate, veering left, of course, along a shaded gravel path and there you are. It's an imposing monument: dull granite peaked by a bronze bust of Marx looking out at the world with stern, unforgiving eyes. Etched on the front is his famous exhortation, "Workers of All Lands Unite," the powerful last line of the Communist Manifesto.

When the Manifesto was first published, it was a little-read pamphlet sent only to a few hundred members of the Communist League and at the time was not even put on sale. Today you can get a glossy, coffee-table edition for about \$25.

"A specter is haunting Europe — the specter of Communism," it begins, and in fewer than 100 pages spells out a philosophy of history that was to shake the world.

"Some people say Marxism is dead, but I think it's an idea whose time is still coming. What we're seeing now is just a setback," said John Mendez, a morning visitor to the grave site. He is a minister from North Carolina on his fifth visit to the tomb.

It's often been noted that one of the more striking features of Marx' life is that he was incapable of making money. In his 30 years in London, Marx only once tried to find regular employment.

Marx' wife, Jenny, who is buried at his side in Highgate, endured years of bitter poverty, exile from much of the continent and the death of two of her five children in quick succession. Through it all she stood by as her husband wrote his agonizingly meticulous economic masterpiece, "Das Kapital," which took 18 years to compose.

She had to borrow money to bury her baby daughter and there were times when the family lived for weeks on nothing but potatoes and bread. Everything, including the children's shoes, was pawned to keep a roof over their heads and sometimes even that income wasn't enough.

In a moving letter to a friend, Jenny wrote: "... the [landlady] demanded five pounds, which we still owe her; and as we were unable to produce this sum at once, two bailiffs entered the house, took possession of all my little belongings: beds, linen, clothes, everything, even my poor baby's cradle, and the best toys that belonged to the little girls, who were standing by in bitter tears."

For Joe and Dottie Gutenkauf, retired teachers from Plainfield, N.J., Marx' shortcomings as a breadwinner have little bearing on his accomplish-



AP Photo

A granite monument and bronze bust mark the grave of communism's architect, Karl Marx, in London cemetery.

ments as a political philosopher and economist.

"His personal failures don't diminish his genius," said Joe as he peered at the inscription on the tomb. "We're American socialists, which these days isn't terribly fashionable. But I don't believe we're on the verge of extinction, and I don't believe Marx' ideas are no longer relevant. Some of his philosophy is obsolete, but many of us still share his values, for example his ideas of social justice."

The Manifesto's anniversary wasn't ignored at Highgate, according to the cemetery's custodian: Impromptu readings were held at the grave site through the spring. But a more formal gathering took place last month in London's Red Lion Square, where some of the city's more prominent leftists, including the recent Oscar nominee Julie Christie, showed up to celebrate.

"Moving On" was the theme of the evening, but few in the crowd offered much insight into how communism should evolve now that the Soviet Union has collapsed and revolutionary heroes like Che Guevara and Fidel Castro have lost their inspirational luster.

"For me, Marxism is relevant," insisted Columbia's Dalton, "in that it revives the old maxim [that] an unexamined life is not worth living. Marx was a devastating critic of capitalist society. We need to critique capitalism, not with the expectation of communist revolution but with an eye towards our own lives. How can we find work that isn't alienating labor, as Marx would put it, or how can we contribute to social justice?"

Alec Kirshner, a senior at Yale, and Richard Kruger, a senior at Wesleyan, made a pact to visit Highgate before leaving London. Asked if today's college students find much to attract them to Marx, Kirshner said: "Maybe some of the philosophy is whacked out, like the notion of historical materialism, but the basic sentiment behind it all is still true: that equality is essential."

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