

Editor's Note

This double issue of the Marxist is dedicated to the 200th birth anniversary of Frederick Engels that falls on November 28, 2020. Under normal circumstances, without the raging pandemic, necessary precautions and the lockdown restrictions, the CPI(M) would have observed this event in a befitting manner like the Party observed Marx 200 in 2018-19.

Engels, independently and jointly with Marx, theoretical contributions to the evolution and elaboration of the Marxist world outlook is immensely significant and a rich source for understanding the unfolding of the dialectical method and the discovery of dialectics in every law that governs the material development of the universe and the development of life, its evolution and of human society. The celebration of his life and works should, normally, be accompanied by restudying all these contributions and the seminal impact they made on the advancement of human thought, intellect and civilization.

This is a very large canvass. Party shall continue to conduct, within the current existing limitations, year-long activities, till November 28, 2021, on all these aspects.

Marxism, as a school of thought, dialectically combining theory and practice is derived from the name of Karl Marx. Engels often, unfortunately, is considered to have played a secondary role. This is the most erroneous conclusion one can come to. The contrary is evident from his independent contributions and from the manner in which he extended and expanded the unfolding of dialectics in all spheres of material and social life in his works. Each one of them merits a proper re-reading in the current context of human civilizational advance and path-breaking newer scientific discoveries.

Prof. Irfan Habib writes on the writings of Frederick Engels regarding India. He brings out certain hitherto unknown aspects of these writings and points out those that were written by Engels in Marx's name in order to financially assist Marx in

his activities. He discusses Engels' investigations on the beginnings of surplus generation in primitive societies, since it is the production of surplus that gives rise to the development of classes and to class struggle which together with Marx he had noted in the Communist Manifesto as 'the history of all hitherto existing societies is a history of class struggle'. This drew him to study primitive societies and he in fact learnt Persian in order to explore ancient Persian texts about how States had evolved out of societies in Asia.

Studying ancient societies from Arabia, Persia, North West India and Tartary (today's Turkistan and Mongolia) he established that artificial irrigation was the first prerequisite for agriculture in this desert belt. Thus, State's had to maintain a public works department. This point was elaborated both by Marx and Engels subsequently. A great number of despotic governments arose and fell in Persia and India. But Engels notes that each was fully aware that its first duty was the general maintenance of irrigation.

Pre-colonial India had a high degree of urbanization and Engels commended the Afghan and Mughal rulers for the creation of giant cities. He did not believe that Asian societies were backward. The colonial conquest of India undertaken for procuring imports without need for exports led to the economic transformation of England and the industrial revolution. This process of primitive accumulation required that colonies be converted into markets for exports from the colonial rulers.

The 1857 Great Rebellion (our First War of Independence) was paid a lot of attention by both Marx and Engel. Engels was an expert in military aspects and Marx had asked him to write for him on this aspect of the Indian revolt. 11 articles on 1857 were penned by Engels in Marx's name.

Engels remained optimistic about a revolutionary transformation in India full 65 years before India's independence he displayed confidence of the success of Indian people's aspirations for freedom.

Prof. Habib appends extracts from the writings of Engels on India which have not been published earlier, thus completing a comprehensive collection of Engels' writings on India.

Prof. Prabhat Patnaik discusses the contribution of Engels on economic matters particularly the market question and ‘deindustrialisation’. He notes that while Marx was deep, thorough and rigorous, Engels was full of insight and originality, but is disappointed that he had little time to develop his own ideas on political economy.

On the market question, Prof. Patnaik notes three outstanding ideas that ran through Engels writings. First, was that the capitalist economy cannot do without access to an external market. The second, that this very process of creation of an external market leads also to the destruction of this market through the very process of acquiring it. The unity of agriculture and industry being a characteristic of the Asiatic Mode of production as noted by Karl Marx is destroyed by the expansion of capitalism that supplants pre-capitalist production, contributes to the process of ‘deindustrialisation’ with many other important implications.

The third major theme was concerning the new entrants into the capitalist system. The breaching of England’s monopoly over capitalism brought about conditions where the British working class which benefitted from this monopoly, though meagerly, was getting disenchanted with capitalism paving the way for rising of socialist ideas in England. This relationship that Engels drew between the developments in the economic realm and the rhythm of the revolution are significant.

As capitalism needs markets, it is also a fact that as production power increases, the growth of markets does not keep pace with it, which leads to a perpetual crisis in the system. And each crisis has a revolutionary potential. The overthrow of the capitalist system through an act of conscious praxis, thus, comes on to the agenda when the system gets embroiled in crisis and stagnation.

Prof. Patnaik begins his article by noting that of all the most consequential ideas in the works of Marx some can be traced to Engels writings as the “reserve army of labour” and about labour “becoming a commodity”.

Prof. K K Thekedath has written extensively on the life and work of Frederick Engels and also published a book on his contributions. Here he pays a bicentenary tribute. He establishes that Engels’ personal contribution to the writing of the Communist Manifesto cannot be underestimated as it is often done. He shows that Engels had independently made the transition from revolutionary democracy to proletarian revolution. This transition along with the transition from Hegelianism

to historical materialism and from philosophy to political economy was cemented by both Marx and Engels during the period 1843-45.

Prof. Theckedath discusses in some detail the contributions of Engels to the philosophy of dialectical materialism and its impact on science of his day and on modern science.

As **documents** we reproduce the landmark letter of Engels to Bloch that debunks the canard that Marxism is all about economic determinism.

We also reproduce a brief chronology of important events in the life and work of Frederick Engels.