

[PDF] Karl Marx: A Life

Francis Wheen - pdf download free book

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Author: Francis Wheen

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Description:

Karl Marx, whose influence on modern times has been compared to that of Jesus Christ, spent most of his lifetime in obscurity. Penniless, exiled in London, estranged from relations, and on the run from most of the police forces of Europe, his ambitions as a revolutionary were frequently thwarted, and his major writings on politics and economics remained unpublished (in some cases until after the Second World War). He has not lacked biographers, but even the most distinguished have been more interested in the evolution of his ideas than any other aspect of his life. Francis Wheen's fresh, lively, and moving biography of Marx considers the whole man--brain, beard, and the rest of his body. Unencumbered by ideological point scoring, this is a very readable, humorous, and sympathetic account. Wheen has an ear for juicy gossip and an eye for original detail. Marx comes across as a hell-raising bohemian, an intellectual bully, and a perceptive critic of capitalist chaos, but also a family man of Victorian conformity (personally vetting his daughters' suitors), Victorian ailments (carbuncles above all), and Victorian weaknesses (notably alcohol, tobacco, and, on occasion, his housekeeper). But there is great pathos, too, as Marx witnessed the deaths of four of

his six children. For those readers who feel Marxism has given Marx a bad name, this is a rewarding and enlightening book. --*Miles Taylor, Amazon.co.uk*

From Publishers Weekly "It is time to strip away the mythology," writes Wheen, "and try to rediscover Karl Marx the man." In the first major biography of Marx since the end of the Cold War, Wheen does just that as he looks for the man lurking behind the myths of both enemies and disciples, the misinterpretations and the academic jargon. What he finds is somebody who will suit nobody's purposes--Marx, Wheen argues, lived his life messily. He was neither a clearheaded revolutionary nor an unrepentant hypocrite, but he wasn't the anti-Christ either. More or less incapable of holding down a steady, salaried job, he mooched off of his selfless wife, Jenny (an aristocrat fallen on hard times), and his well-to-do ideological partner, Friedrich Engels, and spent his time obsessively writing unreadable, unmarketable economics tracts. He also spent a good deal of time preaching the imminent revolution of the masses (with whom he appears to have had little affinity). Following Marx from his childhood in Trier, Germany, through his exile in London, Wheen, a columnist for the British Guardian, takes readers from hovel to grand house, from the International Working Man's Association to Capital, from obscurity to notoriety and back again. (Only 11 mourners attended Marx's funeral.) The narrative veers unsteadily from scorn to admiration for the bearded philosopher. Wheen begins by jeering at Marx's cantakerousness and ends by lauding him as a prophet and a brave survivor of poverty and exile. In the end, Wheen's breezy, colorful portrayal is as eccentric as its subject. 16 pages of illustrations not seen by PW.
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