

Karl Marx's grave desecrated by fascists

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The Socialist Equality Party denounces the cowardly act of vandalism against the grave of Karl Marx in London's Highgate Cemetery.

The granite plinth supporting a large bronze bust of Marx was daubed with anti-communist slogans on Friday night. It is the second attack by fascists in the past fortnight.

The slogans, including "Memorial to Bolshevik Holocaust," were painted in large red letters over the existing gold inscriptions featuring Marx's immortal words, "Workers of all lands unite" and "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point however is to change it."

The paint is being removed, but an earlier attack reported by gardeners tending the site on February 4 destroyed parts of the original gravestone. This was purchased by Marx for his beloved wife, Jenny von Westphalen, who died in 1881 and was set in place after his own burial in 1883. In 1954, Karl and Jenny's bodies were exhumed and moved to a more prominent location in the east cemetery. The headstone was incorporated into the current monument unveiled in 1956.

It is believed that a metal object or hammer had been taken to the marble headstone in the first attack, attempting to obliterate Marx's name. The chief executive of the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust, Ian Dungavell, said the memorial would "never be the same again," even with specialist repair.

No arrests have been made over these acts of cultural vandalism. There are no security cameras at the grave, which has been a Grade One listed historical building since 1999.

Highgate Cemetery branded the latest attack, "Senseless. Stupid. Ignorant." But more than that it is a politically-motivated crime, perpetrated by right-wing dregs who view Marx with such fear and hatred that even his grave is considered a target. The last major

attack occurred in the 1970s when a pipe bomb damaged the face of the bust, although a separate attempt to blow up the entire monument failed. Smaller acts of vandalism including graffiti and the daubing of swastikas have also taken place in recent decades.

The Highgate Cemetery outrage is only the latest example of how far-right forces have been whipped-up by an endless torrent of official anti-communist propaganda. A report on the attack in the far-right *Breitbart News*, for example, evoked a stream of filthy fascist replies from both the US and Britain.

The defacing of Marx's grave only confirms that political reactionaries the world over fear the ideas of the man whom Frederick Engels rightly described as the world's "greatest living thinker." This past week alone has seen major strikes erupt in Belgium, France, Portugal, South Africa, Germany and the United States.

As *World Socialist Web Site* International Editorial Board Chairman David North noted in an essay published in January 2018: "This new year of 2018—the bicentenary of Marx's birth—will be characterized, above all, by an immense intensification of social tensions and an escalation of class conflict around the world. For several decades, and especially since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the resistance of the working class to capitalist exploitation has been suppressed. But the essential contradictions of the capitalist system—between a globally interdependent economy and the archaic bourgeois nation-state system; between a worldwide network of social production, involving the labour of billions of human beings, and private ownership of the means of production; and between the essential needs of mass society and the selfish interests of individual capitalist money-making—are now rapidly approaching the point where the further suppression of mass working class opposition to capitalism is impossible."

Marx's prognosis is being vindicated in the living

struggles of millions. Once again, under conditions of capitalist breakdown, there is a resurgence of interest in his writings.

Marx placed socialism on scientific foundations, laying the political and intellectual foundation for a mass revolutionary movement of the international working class. In his famous funeral oration at Highgate Cemetery to his lifelong comrade and friend, Engels explained why Marx is so hated to this day by the ruling classes throughout the world:

“...Marx was before all else a revolutionist. His real mission in life was to contribute, in one way or another, to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the state institutions which it had brought into being, to contribute to the liberation of the modern proletariat, which he was the first to make conscious of its own position and its needs, conscious of the conditions of its emancipation. Fighting was his element. And he fought with a passion, a tenacity and a success such as few could rival...

“And, consequently, Marx was the best hated and most calumniated man of his time. Governments, both absolutist and republican, deported him from their territories. Bourgeois, whether conservative or ultra-democratic, vied with one another in heaping slanders upon him. All this he brushed aside as though it were a cobweb, ignoring it, answering only when extreme necessity compelled him. And he died beloved, revered and mourned by millions of revolutionary fellow workers—from the mines of Siberia to California, in all parts of Europe and America—and I make bold to say that, though he may have had many opponents, he had hardly one personal enemy.

“His name will endure through the ages, and so also will his work.”



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