



The Communist Manifesto

Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820 – 1895)

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“You pay us just enough so we don’t quit and we work just hard enough so you don’t fire us.” These words said by a sullen warehouse manager in 1992 struck me as a succinct definition of the class struggle first articulated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*. Commissioned and published in 1848 in London by the Communist League as a statement of its principles, the short pamphlet articulated Marx and Engels’ theories about class struggle in society and politics, the problems of capitalism, and how capitalism would eventually evolve into socialism. There are four sections. “Bourgeois and Proletarians” elucidates the materialist concept of history, in which an oppressed proletariat majority lives under the dominion of an oppressive bourgeois minority. “Proletarians and Communists” positions communists as advocates for the general will

of the working class and proposes the abolition of private property and the adoption of state-owned production, universal employment, free public education, centralized banking and credit, and nationalized communication and transportation. “Socialist and Communist Literature” distinguishes communism from other socialist doctrines of the time. “Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Opposition Parties” briefly discusses the struggles in specific countries, predicts a world revolution, and calls for unified international proletarian action. The Manifesto arose at the time of revolutions across Europe in 1848 and fell into obscurity until the Paris Commune of 1871, after which it grew in popularity along with the growth of social-democratic parties across Europe, culminating in the Russian Revolution in 1917.

Friedrich Engels (November 28, 1820 – August 5, 1895) was a German social scientist, author, political theorist, philosopher, and founder of Marxist theory, alongside Karl Marx. He was born the eldest son to a wealthy Prussian textile manufacturer; he was drawn more to the societal drawbacks than the products of industrialism. He was sent to work at the family factory in Manchester in 1842, where he first met Marx, took up with Mary Burns, a young radical worker, and wrote a series of articles on the slums and factories that were published in 1845 as *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. He collaborated with Marx on the *Communist Manifesto* and in other ways; he edited volumes II and III of *Capital* after Marx’ death. He remained at the family firm to provide funds for the cause, not least Marx, and is known for his works on *The Peasant War in Germany* and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

Karl Marx (May 5, 1818 – March 24, 1883) was a philosopher, sociologist, journalist and revolutionary who became one of the most influential figures in world history through his theories of society, economics, and society that constitute Marxism. He believed that states were run in the interests of the ruling class but promoted as being in the common interest, that history was a product of class struggle based on economic foundations, and that the inherent tensions in capitalism would lead to its self-destruction and give rise to socialism. Born in Prussia to a well-to-do middle class family, he studied philosophy in Bonn and Berlin, married a baroness, and became deeply involved in the radical political thinking of the day, writing and publishing articles that contributed to the social unrest, were frequently censored and got him banished from Germany and France. Essentially stateless, he lived in Brussels for a time before settling in London permanently. He is best known as co-author of the *Communist Manifesto*, the author of his massive masterpiece *Das Kapital*, and as a prolific journalist for the *New York Tribune* and other publications.