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**Karl Marx** and **Friedrich Engels**

# **The Communist Manifesto**

Read by **Charles Armstrong** with **Roy McMillan**

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<b>1</b>	<b>Manifesto of The Communist Party by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels</b>	5:17
<b>2</b>	Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie...	5:25
<b>3</b>	The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement...	5:50
<b>4</b>	The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled...	5:35
<b>5</b>	But with the development of industry...	5:30
<b>6</b>	The 'dangerous class,' the social scum...	4:58
<b>7</b>	2. Proletarians and Communists	4:55
<b>8</b>	Let us now take wage-labour.	5:30
<b>9</b>	The selfish misconception that induces you to transform...	5:00
<b>10</b>	In proportion as the exploitation of one individual...	4:01
<b>11</b>	Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected...	3:21
<b>12</b>	3. Socialist and Communist Literature	3:54
<b>13</b>	Petty-Bourgeois Socialism	3:22
<b>14</b>	German, or 'True', Socialism	5:10
<b>15</b>	To preserve this class...	4:53

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16	Critical-Utopian Socialism and Communism	3:25
17	Hence, they reject all political...	3:27
18	4. Position of The Communists In Relation...	3:25
19	<i>Selections From The Writings of Karl Marx (1818–83)</i>	4:34
20	Do I obey economic laws...?	5:08
21	A house may be large or small...	4:12
22	The wealth of those societies...	4:19
23	In every stockjobbing swindle...	3:56
24	<i>Selections From The Writings of Friedrich Engels (1820–95)</i>	4:23
25	The materialist conception of history...	3:48

**Total time: 1:53:40**

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**Karl Marx**

**(1818–1883)**

and

**Friedrich Engels**

**(1820–1895)**

# **The Communist Manifesto**

*The Communist Manifesto* of 1848 demanded the overthrow of the empowered ruling classes by whatever means were required. This was declared necessary in order to free the workers from the slavish exploitation into which the existing social structures had forced them. This revolution, it argued, was as inevitable as it was desirable because the systems sustaining the capitalist world were collapsing. The manifesto is written with a passion that gives its rhetoric an enduring power that extends beyond the legitimacy of its argument. The clarity and strength of its phraseology have made it as memorable as it is significant; and it

is almost impossible to overestimate its significance.

There are very few texts of the last 600 years or so that have had such a profound effect, or been the springboard for such far-reaching social change. Luther's 95 articles might have a claim, as might Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* or Newton's *Principia Mathematica*. But even these could hardly claim to be the basis of political life for half the world's population, as Marxism was until the collapse of Communism. The problem for a modern reader is how to access the *Manifesto* without projecting forward to the murderous tyrannies of Russia

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and China. Once that distorted future echo is discounted, there may still be many elements of the original that are unappealing to a comfortable 21st-century lifestyle; but their continuing validity is born not just from their historical context but out of philosophical and ethical considerations that are still urgent concerns today.

Karl Marx was born in Germany to a successful lawyer, but he came from a long line of rabbis. His father accepted baptism into the Protestant Church as a means of avoiding the social stigma and consequent loss of business attendant on Jewishness. Marx studied law at the University of Bonn, and while there he became engaged to Johanna von Westphalen. She was a lifelong helpmate and companion to a man whose life was often lived in near-poverty and almost continual exile. Marx moved on to Berlin to continue his studies, and there he became involved with the intellectual movements of the time, discussing political, religious, philosophical and social change. Rather than going into law, he became a journalist and eventually an

editor, and his beliefs shifted towards what we now think of as Communism.

Marx could not stay in one place for long. This was not because of any constitutional restlessness: it was because almost as soon as he published anything, the authorities chased him out of the country. He had to leave Germany for France, France for Brussels and eventually emigrated to England for an exile that lasted the rest of his life. The decision to go to England was in part the result of his friendship with Friedrich Engels, whom he had met in Paris. Engels's family owned cotton mills in Manchester, and Engel's brief time managing them so shocked him that he wrote *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (the royalties from which he donated to Marx). He could have written it about every other industrialised nation.

By the 1840s the astonishing speed of industrialisation had drawn huge numbers of people into town and city factories. This work was demanding and dehumanising. The workers had no say in their conditions, and even less in the politics of their country, despite the French

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Revolution's promises and hopes for a change in the status of the working poor relative to the moneyed and empowered ruling class. For Marx and many others at the time, the commodification of the urban workforce was not merely unacceptable in humane terms but also indicated the last desperate attempts of an outmoded political system to impose itself against the will of the population; and against the march of history. The very basis of society was in need of rebuilding. Taking the power from those who had it, and who used it to exploit the workers, and transferring that power to the population as a whole was the next step, and for Marx it was an historical inevitability. He had been developing an economic, historic and politico-social argument to support his theory since the early 1840s, and his radical journalism on the subject was the reason he had to keep moving house.

This radicalism, this sense that the capitalist nations were, at an absolutely fundamental level, founded in an inequality that must be uprooted, was finding its various expressions in countries

throughout western and central Europe. The radicalism was fuelled by the ruling parties who repressed it, and was given an impetus to action by near-famine as a result of widespread crop failure in 1846–47. By this time, Marx and Engels were visiting London where they had joined the Communist League. This was itself a union of two other organisations, one of them Christian utopian, the other an international correspondence group trying to bring together Europe's various Communist writers and thinkers. At its founding Congress the League decided to adopt as its motto Marx's rousing 'Working men of all lands unite!'; and when it had its second Congress, in late 1847, Marx and Engels were asked to provide a manifesto.

Marx was a philosopher, historian, political theorist and analyst of economic detail, as his later, massive work, *Capital*, would show; Engels was much more the man to create accessible works that would stir the public. However, Engels always maintained that *The Communist Manifesto*, with its vigorous historical overview and powerful presentation

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of the status of the workforce, was overwhelmingly the work of Marx. Almost as it was being published in Germany, there were riots and rebellions in France, Italy, the German States, Poland, throughout the Hapsburg Empire, Denmark and elsewhere.

And then – nothing much. The neo-revolutions dwindled away and nothing seemed to have changed. What is now a crucial text to understanding the history of Western politics was largely forgotten and the League disbanded. Marx continued to live in penury, though he aspired to greater respectability; he continued to survive largely through the help and generosity of Engels. Even though Marx became the intellectual figurehead of the Communist movement through his ceaseless writings and active involvement in its worldwide development, only 11 people attended his funeral. Engels dedicated the rest of his life to seeing that Marx's works were published, going so far as to put together the third volume of *Capital* from the notes Marx left behind.

Marx believed that history was the story of class conflict rather than the

biographies of great men. It would be presumptuous to suggest that he was wrong; but equally wrong to suggest that they don't make a difference.

### **Notes by Roy McMillan**



**Charles Armstrong's** theatre work includes productions for the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre. He was in the West End production of *Round The Horne... Revisited*. His television and film credits include *Holby City*, *EastEnders*, *Head Over Heels*, *Poirot*, *The King's Speech* and *The Navigators*. He has also recorded numerous voiceovers and was part of the BBC Radio Repertory. His audiobooks include *Tony Blair – A Journey* and *Paradise News* by David Lodge.



**Roy McMillan** is a director, writer, actor and abridger. For Naxos Audiobooks he has read titles such as *Bulldog Drummond*, *The French Revolution – In a Nutshell*, *Cathedrals – In a Nutshell*, *A Dog's Heart* and the introductions to works by Nietzsche and the Ancient Greeks. He has directed readings of Hardy, Hopkins, Kipling, Milton and Blake; Austen, Murakami, Conrad and Bulgakov, among many others; and has written podcasts and sleevenotes, as well as biographies of Milton and Poe. He has also directed plays for BBC Radio 3 and Radio 4.

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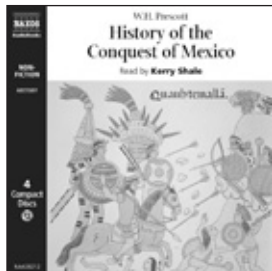
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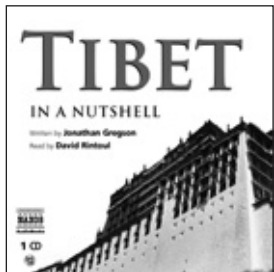
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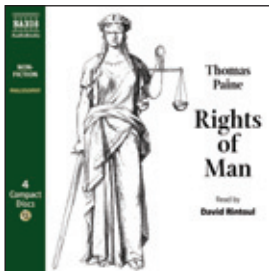
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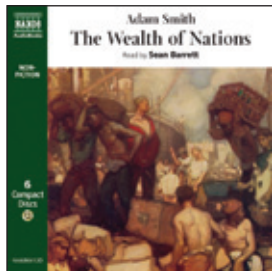
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**Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels**  
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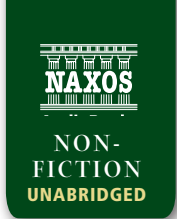
*'The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains.  
They have a world to win.*

*WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!'*

Without question one of the most significant books in modern history, *The Communist Manifesto* is a brief, populist pamphlet that distils the core ideas of Communism into accessible prose. Published just months before violent uprisings threatened to destabilise much of the European establishment, it outlines a view of history as a constant battle between the classes that will inevitably result in revolution. An angry call for a stateless world where the workers are no longer exploited, its depiction of the remorseless nature of modern capitalism is as alarming and striking now as it was in 1848.



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