

A Political Timeline



- 1837**—Marx joins the Young Hegelians in Berlin. After the death of German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in 1831, some young followers built upon his dialectic theory that change was inevitable and began arguing for political and social reform. These Young Hegelians were based in Berlin.
- May 1842**—Marx begins writing for *Rheinische Zeitung* in Cologne. The opposition newspaper was established in the most economically and intellectually advanced city in the Rhineland and backed by a spectrum of opposition figures, from middle-class businessmen seeking economic advances to socialists. Marx was made editor in October 1842.
- February 1844**—Marx edits the first and only issue of the *Deutsche-Französische Jahrbücher* newspaper in Paris. Marx and Jenny had moved to Paris to join Arnold Ruge's newspaper, which was to give voice to French and German opposition writers. The newspaper failed to attract French writers, was banned in Germany, and resulted in arrest warrants for high treason in Prussia against Marx and three others associated with the paper.
- Spring 1844**—Marx is introduced to the League of the Just in Paris. The secret conspiracy-propaganda society was formed there in 1836 by mostly German artisan refugees who adopted the principles of French worker communism espoused by Auguste Blanqui and Armand Barbes in their secret Société des Saisons.
- August 1844**—Marx begins writing for *Vowarts!* in Paris. The weekly was known as the only uncensored opposition German-language newspaper in Europe. It was considered so radical that its editor was imprisoned and staff members, including Marx, were expelled from France.
- Summer 1845**—Marx and Engels travel to England, meet League of the Just members and Chartists. Some German league members had fled Paris in 1839, after a failed revolt by French colleagues, and established a branch of the secret organization in London, along with a public recruiting tool called the German Workers' Educational Association. Marx and Engels also associated with veterans of the English reform movement, Chartism, which was looking for continental support.
- January 1846**—Marx, Engels, and Philippe Gigot form the Communist Correspondence Committee in Brussels. The committee's goal was to acquaint workers and socialists throughout Europe with events of mutual interest in order to prepare for and coordinate a future revolution. It was the first international organization Marx tried to form.
- February 1847**—Marx accepts an invitation to join the London-based League of the Just and opens a branch in Brussels. Marx and Engels agreed to join the league after its London leaders admitted they needed the younger men's help in attracting workers. It was the first proletariat organization Marx joined.
- June 1847**—League of the Just changes its name to the Communist League. Its members met in London to chart a new course. Under Marx and Engels's guidance, the league became the first international communist organization in history.
- July 1847**—Marx and Engels form a branch of the secret Communist League in Brussels and a public German Workers' Association. After the London Communist League meeting, Marx and Engels began recruiting members for a Brussels branch but were frustrated by a lack of participation by actual

workers. They launched an educational and social society to attract workers for their clandestine group.

November 1847—Marx becomes vice president of the International Democratic Association in Brussels. The association was formed by professional men to counter Marx and Engels's influence among German refugees and Belgian radicals, but Engels managed to get Marx elected the group's vice president and make it yet another of his organizational tools.

February 1848—Marx and Engels's *Manifesto of the Communist Party* is published in London. Marx and Engels had been asked by the Communist League to produce a document to be used to recruit members. Engels and several other league members wrote versions, but Marx's is the one that came off the press in London in 1848. It was called by one colleague the most revolutionary document the world had ever seen.

March 1848—Communist League Central Authority is transferred to Paris. In 1848 Europe erupted in revolt from Berlin to Sicily, but its epicenter was Paris. Marx and his family moved there after he was expelled from Belgium amid heightened tensions over the presence of foreign radicals in Brussels. Marx forms German Workers' Union in Paris. Paris was awash in refugee groups organizing to stir revolts in their own countries. Marx's union was to be an army of propagandists, not soldiers, who would secretly return to Germany to strengthen the burgeoning opposition there.

June 1848—Marx's *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* newspaper is published in Cologne. Marx and his colleagues reconstituted his earlier Cologne newspaper as a democratic organ reporting on previously secret government activities throughout the German Bund and on uprisings throughout Europe.

Marx dissolves the Communist League. After the brutal June Days uprising in Paris, in which counterrevolutionary forces battled civilians, Marx decided a secret society like the league was no longer necessary, because the fight could take place in plain sight and in the pages of his newspaper. The league leadership, nearly all in Cologne with Marx, voted to disband.

September 1848—Marx and Engels help form a Committee of Public Safety in Cologne. Tensions in Catholic Cologne, which was occupied by mostly Protestant Prussian troops, boiled over. Citizens, convinced the troops were their enemy, decided to form a militia to protect themselves, without the sanction of the government.

April 1849—Marx cuts ties with democratic associates in the Rhineland Democratic Union. By 1849's counterrevolution, Marx felt middle-class democrats had betrayed the working class to protect their interests. After 1849, Marx would never again work politically with the bourgeoisie.

May 1849—*The Neue Rheinische Zeitung* folds. The increasingly radical tone of Marx's newspaper resulted in an order for his expulsion from Prussia. The newspaper's final edition was printed in red ink.

September 1849—The Communist League is reconstituted in London, along with the German Workers' Educational Society. After the 1848 uprisings in Europe were quashed, political refugees from around the Continent descended on London. Among them were Marx and the league members, who reactivated the group and its recruiting tool.

Committee for the Assistance of German Political Refugees is established. Marx was elected to a committee that assisted the hundreds of German refugees streaming into London without food, shelter, or money. The committee was an offshoot of the German Workers' Educational Society, and as such was also used to attract members for the Communist League.

Early 1850—Marx and Engels join the Universal Society of Revolutionary Communists in London. The French-dominated, extreme radical group was composed mostly of followers of Auguste Blanqui, who was jailed in France for his role in the 1848 uprising.

March 1850—Marx's *Neue Rheinische Zeitung, Politisch-ökonomische Revue* is published in Hamburg. The German-language opposition newspaper was written in London by Marx and his colleagues in an effort to keep the 1848 revolt alive, at least in print. Due to a lack of money and what Marx called "official harassment" in Germany, the paper survived for only six issues.

September 1850—The Communist League Central Authority is moved to Cologne. Divisions arose among German refugees in London over whether they should support immediate revolution or, as Marx suggested, educate the workers to prepare for a changed state in the future. Marx bested his rivals by moving the Central Authority out of London and subsequently having his rivals ejected from the league. Marx and Engels break with the Universal Society of Revolutionary Communists. While Marx supported Blanqui, he thought his followers reckless and feared they might provoke a revolt that would end in defeat for workers. He, Engels, and George Julian Harney quit the group.

August 1851—Marx begins writing for the *New York Daily Tribune*. Editor Charles Dana invited Marx to be a European correspondent for his liberal U.S. newspaper, submitting articles but also "leaders," or editorials. Marx could not write in English until 1852, so Engels penned his initial articles.

December 1851—Marx and his followers, calling themselves "the synagogue," begin meeting in London. The men around Marx distanced themselves from the rest of the German refugees and spent their time in the British Museum Reading Room and at "synagogue" meetings, drinking and discussing political economy and social theory.

November 1852—Marx disbands the Communist League. The arrest and trial of eleven league members in Cologne and the imprisonment of seven of them, in addition to the counterrevolutionary climate in Europe, led Marx to the conclusion that it was no longer productive to have a secret society, and he retreated into newspaper and theoretical work.

May 1859—Marx begins working with the German Workers' Educational Society's London newspaper, *Das Volk*. He dismissed the émigré newspaper as a rag, but used it to vent his anger against his rivals during the disappointing period surrounding the publication of his work on political economy.

June 1859—Marx's *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* is published in Berlin. His friends and followers had long anticipated that the book would be his major political economic work, but it baffled and disappointed them, and went unnoticed in the press.

March 1860—Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* begins to sell in Russia, and a University of Moscow professor lectures on it. While the *Critique* was virtually ignored by Marx's target audience in Germany, the translation found a receptive audience in Russia, which was experiencing a rare burst of liberalism under Czar Alexander II.

March 1862—The *New York Daily Tribune* ends its relationship with Marx, saying it no longer needs the services of its London correspondent. As news of Abraham Lincoln's election as president and the subsequent Civil War dominated U.S. newspapers, the *Tribune* gradually eliminated its foreign coverage to focus on domestic turmoil.

May 1863—Ferdinand Lassalle founds the General Union of German Workers. In the early 1860s throughout Europe, workers had begun to recognize their strength. In Germany, Lassalle tried to organize them by publishing a pamphlet called *Workers' Program*, seen by many as the first step toward a modern German workers' movement. He next inaugurated a workers' political party.

July 1863—European workers come together in London to support an uprising in Poland. After Russia ended serfdom in 1861, Poles protested for more rights and, when their requests went unanswered, eventually revolted. European governments did not come to their aid, but workers expressed solidarity. They also decided to form an international society of workers to confront future challenges.

September 1864—The inaugural meeting of the International Working Men's Association is held in

London. The First International was formed in St. Martin's Hall when English, Italian, French, Irish, Polish, and German opposition figures met to create an organization to counter the combined and growing power of government and business. Marx wrote the group's "Address to the Working Classes." Though his official role was merely correspondence secretary for Germany, he became the IWMA's leader.

September 1867—Marx's great book *Capital, Volume I* is published. The political economy Marx began working on in 1851 (if not 1844) finally appeared. Though Marx and Jenny both expected it to land like a "bomb" on the public and atone for all their sacrifice, it, like Marx's other economic works, was initially met with silence.

September 1868—Marx receives a request to allow *Capital, Volume I* to be translated into Russian. Economist and writer Nikolai Danielson alerted Marx that St. Petersburg publisher N. Polyakov wanted to publish a translation of *Capital*. It would be the first translation of *Capital* from the German.

August 1869—The Social Democratic Workers' Party is formed. Marx's friend Wilhelm Liebknecht and his colleague August Bebel formed the workers' party during a congress in Eisenach, Germany. It represented 150,000 people and adopted the International's rules as its own.

November 1869—Marx begins lobbying the International General Council to demand the release of Irish political prisoners and support Irish independence. He argued that in order to accelerate social change in Europe, one had to start in England, and that the key to change there lay in Ireland. English delegates to the International objected to his position, and the political challenge to the English government raised concerns about the IWMA and caused a crackdown on its members in France.

September 1870—France declares a Republic after Napoleon III is captured by the Prussians during the Franco-Prussian War. French IWMA members were involved in the political maneuvering to establish a provisional Government of National Defense in France and continue the battle against the Prussians as a republican army. The International members believed, however, that the new government was populated with the same bourgeoisie who had abandoned the working class in the past and would do so again.

March 1871—Parisians vote to elect their own government, a commune. National elections in February had resulted in a French government dominated by conservatives who approved a costly armistice with Prussia. Parisians, who had been under siege since August, felt betrayed and elected their own government of leftists—including members of the International—to ready a fight against French forces.

Marx is accused in press reports of orchestrating the Paris International and by extension the Commune. After French troops showed that they were reluctant to fight fellow Frenchmen, the government sought to make the Commune appear to be the work of foreigners. Topping the list of baleful influences was Marx, who was repeatedly identified in the press as the red puppet-master behind the Paris revolt.

May 1871—Marx gives the IWMA General Council his thirty-five-page pamphlet called *The Civil War in France*. Before the Paris Commune, Marx was virtually unknown, but afterward, due in large part to his pamphlet praising the Parisians, he became known as the Red Terrorist Doctor, the evil architect of revolt, and was vilified in the press from Chicago to Vienna.

July 1872—The New Madrid Federation is founded in Spain, the first Marxist organization in that country. Paul Lafargue's work there produced few results except the founding of a Marxist group in Madrid that became the parent of the still extant Spanish Socialist Party.

March 1872—The Russian edition of *Capital, Volume I* is published. Russian censors allowed *Capital* to circulate because, they said, it was so difficult to understand that no one would buy it. The first print run of three thousand copies sold out in less than two months.

September 1872—The Fifth Annual Congress of the International meets in The Hague. Marx had never

before attended an International Congress outside London, but he used the event to facilitate his retirement by maneuvering to have the General Council moved to New York, essentially ending his leadership of the group.

Marx gives his last public address in a speech to the Amsterdam IWMA local. The speech was later regarded as one of his most controversial, because it fueled debate about whether Marx was a pacifist at heart or an advocate of violent revolution.

March 1875—The Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (SAPD) is formed in Gotha. German workers and socialists decided they would have more clout if they combined the two main workers' parties—the Lassallean General Union of German Workers, and Bebel and Liebknecht's Social-Democratic Workers' Party—into one organization. In 1890 it became the still extant Social Democratic Party of Germany.

November 1875—The French edition of *Capital, Volume I* is published. This translation sold through its first run of ten thousand copies quickly. Not only was the French-language version accessible to a wider audience than the German, but Marx had significantly reworked the book since its difficult first German edition.

July 1876—The First International is disbanded in Philadelphia. After the International was moved to America, its influence waned and splits began occurring throughout the organization. Its remaining ten members disbanded the IWMA to form their own groups, one of which would become the U.S.-based Socialist Labor Party.

October 1878—Anti-socialist laws are passed in Germany. Two assassination attempts on Emperor Wilhelm gave Chancellor Bismarck the support he needed for laws to curb the growing political power of the SAPD in Germany. As a result of the bill, Marx and other socialists could not publish their work in Germany.

October 1879—Jules Guesde establishes a French workers' party. The French left was split after the Commune, in part because its leadership was exiled. In Marseilles, socialist Guesde tried to form a party to unite laborers of all political affiliations. In 1880 it became the French Workers' Party, the first French Marxist party.

June 1881—Henry Hyndman forms the Democratic Federation in London and publishes *England for All*. Hyndman was one of the earliest British "Marxists." His group was vaguely socialist, and said to be composed of workers and for workers. His book borrowed liberally from *Capital* at a time when Marx's work was not available in English, and Marx stopped just short of publicly accusing Hyndman of plagiarism.

March 14, 1883—Marx dies. His death, at his home in London, left the bulk of his life's work, *Capital*, unfinished, and his theories known and understood by very few people. Eleven mourners attended his funeral.

January 1884—The Fabian Society of middle-class intellectual socialists is formed. The group was derived from Hyndman's Democratic Federation and an earlier organization called the Fellowship of the New Life. Their approach to social reform was gradual. Their motto: "For the right moment you must wait, as Fabius did, most patiently."

March 1884—London Commemoration on the first anniversary of Marx's death. As many as six thousand people gathered in London to march to Highgate Cemetery to mark the first anniversary of Marx's death and the thirteenth anniversary of the Paris Commune.

August 1884—Hyndman changes his organization's name to the Social Democratic Federation. The new name indicated a shift in emphasis. The group went from being strictly a workers' organization to being a socialist association inspired by Marx. It was the first important British socialist group since the

1820s.

December 1884—Eleanor Marx and others leave the SDF to form the Socialist League. Claiming that the SDF was among other things too autocratic, some members formed a rival socialist organization to teach and organize along Marxist principles.

January 1885—*Capital, Volume II* goes to the press (eighteen years after Marx promised it to the publisher). In the period after Marx's death, Engels edited hundreds of pages of manuscript to produce the second volume of Marx's political economy, this one on the circulation of capital. He dedicated the book to Jenny Marx.

July 1886—Socialist leaders in France, Germany, and England begin discussing the creation of a Second International. The pace of capitalist expansion had accelerated in the 1880s, as did the expansion of state-business empires into colonies. Some socialists believed an international organization was needed to protect workers in this new and more threatening environment.

September 1886—Eleanor Marx Aveling, Edward Aveling, and Wilhelm Liebknecht tour the United States to promote socialism. The group traveled for twelve weeks, visiting thirty-five towns and cities as far west as Kansas City, and speaking at nearly every stop, sometimes at four different events each.

January 1887—The English edition of *Capital, Volume I* is published. British barrister Samuel Moore and Eleanor Marx's common-law husband, Edward Aveling, translated Marx's work, making it more widely available at a time of heightened labor tensions.

July 1889—The Second International Working Men's Association is inaugurated in Paris. French socialists hosted a congress that brought together 391 international socialists and trade union members, effectively launching the successor to Marx's First International. The event, also known as the Socialist International, called for the first global May Day demonstration in support of labor the following year.

August 1889—London dockworkers strike in an unprecedented action by organized labor and socialists. Sixty thousand dockworkers, among the most downtrodden and powerless laborers in England, brought the port of London to a standstill for the first time in a century. The strike lasted until mid-September, when they returned to work having won most of their demands.

May 1890—The first global May Day demonstration in support of labor. Rallies were held around Europe and in North and South America, calling for an eight-hour workday and labor rights. The largest demonstration occurred in London, where three hundred thousand people filled Hyde Park in a show of strength for workers, trade unions, and socialists.

July 1892—Three workingmen take their seats in the British Parliament. John Burns, J. Havelock Wilson, and Keir Hardie are elected to Parliament, the first workers to become members of the House of Commons.

January 1893—The Independent Labour Party of Britain is formed. Edward Aveling was on the committee to form the group and had Engels's approval for the endeavor. The ILP platform read as if Marx himself had written it: "collective ownership and control of the means of production, distribution and exchange" and an eight-hour day. Scottish miner Keir Hardie was made chairman of what would one day help form Britain's Labour Party.

May 1894—*Capital, Volume III* is sent to the publisher. For ten years Engels edited Marx's manuscripts for the third volume to produce a work on monopoly capital and the creation of the world market—and, most significantly, its downfall.

1894—Vladimir Lenin joins a Marxist group in St. Petersburg and travels to western Europe. Lenin set out to meet with Georgy Plekhanov, who spent much of his time in Zurich and London. Plekhanov had founded the first Marxist organization in Russia, the Emancipation of Labor group. Lenin also had a first encounter with Lafargue in Paris, where the young Russian surprised Marx's son-in-law with his

knowledge of Marxist theory.

August 5, 1895—Engels dies at his home. Like Marx, Engels left much work unfinished, and though he had selected Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein (as well as Marx's daughters), as his successors in editing Marx's works, battles over myth and theory began almost immediately among Marx's and Engels's followers.

January 1905—Rebellion erupts in Russia after the military opens fire on a workers' demonstration in St. Petersburg, killing about two hundred people. As in western Europe in 1848, an alarming uprising by the working class caused officials to promise concessions, including a legislative Duma, but as in 1848, the offers were hollow and meant only to calm the situation, not produce social reform.

Summer 1910—Lenin visits Paul and Laura Lafargue in Draveil. After participating in the 1905 revolt in Russia, Lenin, his wife, and his mother-in-law lived in western Europe. In Paris he spent his time studying and writing, and traveled to see Marx's daughter and son-in-law to discuss Marx's work.

December 1911—Socialist and workers' party leaders from France, Germany, England, Spain, and Russia pay last respects to Paul and Laura Lafargue. A who's who of twentieth-century socialist and communist leaders attended and addressed the Paris funeral of the Lafargues, who died in an apparent suicide pact in November. Among the mourners was Vladimir Lenin, who predicted that the triumph of the proletariat was near.

November 1917—Lenin and his Bolshevik followers seize power in Russia. Lenin had returned to Russia from exile in April 1917, after Czar Nicholas II abdicated in March and a provisional government was formed. He and his Bolshevik followers, determining not to support it, seized public buildings in November and arrested leaders of the provisional government who did not manage to escape. In January, Lenin declared a "revolutionary dictatorship."