

Founding Fathers of Sociology: Karl Marx.

Karl Heinrich Marx, b. May 5, 1818, d. Mar. 14, 1883, was a German economist, philosopher, and revolutionist whose writings form the basis of the body of ideas known as MARXISM.

With the aid of Friedrich ENGELS he produced much of the theory of modern SOCIALISM and COMMUNISM. Marx's father, Heinrich, was a Jewish lawyer who had converted his family to Christianity partly in order to preserve his job in the Prussian state. Karl himself was baptised in the Evangelical church. As a student at the University of Berlin, young Marx was strongly influenced by the philosophy of G. W. F. HEGEL and by a radical group called Young Hegelians, who attempted to apply Hegelian ideas to the movement against organised religion and the Prussian autocracy. In 1841, Marx received a doctorate in philosophy.

In 1842, Marx became editor of the Rheinische Zeitung in Cologne, a liberal democratic newspaper for which he wrote increasingly radical editorials on social and economic issues. The newspaper was banned by the Prussian government in 1843, and Marx left for Paris with his bride, Jenny von Westphalen. There he went further in his criticism of society, building on the Young Hegelian criticism of religion.

Ludwig FEUERBACH had written a book called *The Essence of Christianity* (1841; Eng. trans., 1854), arguing that God had been invented by humans as a projection of their own ideals. Feuerbach wrote that man, however, in creating God in his own image, had "alienated himself from himself." He had created another being in contrast to himself, reducing himself to a lowly, evil creature who needed both church and government to guide and control him. If religion were abolished, Feuerbach claimed, human beings would overcome their ALIENATION.

Marx applied this idea of alienation to private property, which he said caused humans to work only for themselves, not for the good of their species. In his papers of this period (published in 1959 English translation as *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*), he elaborated on the idea that alienation had an economic base. He called for a communist society to overcome the dehumanising effect of private property.

In 1845, Marx moved to Brussels, and in 1847 he went to London. He had previously made friends with Friedrich Engels, the son of a wealthy textile manufacturer who, like himself, had been a Young Hegelian. They collaborated on a book, The Holy Family (1845; Eng. trans., 1956), which was a criticism of some of their Young Hegelian friends for their stress on alienation. In 1845, Marx jotted down some notes, *Theses on Feuerbach*, which he and Engels enlarged into a book, The German Ideology (1932; Eng. trans., 1938), in which they developed their materialistic conception of history.

They argued that human thought was determined by social and economic forces, particularly those related to the means of production. They developed a method of analysis they called DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM, in which the clash of historical forces leads to changes in society.

In 1847 a London organisation of workers invited Marx and Engels to prepare a program for them. It appeared in 1848 as the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO. In it they declared that all history was the history of class struggles.

Under CAPITALISM, the struggle between the working class and the business class would end in a new society, a communist one. The outbreak of the REVOLUTIONS OF 1848 in Europe led Marx to return to Cologne, where he began publication of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, but with the failure of the German liberal democratic movement he moved permanently (1849) to London. For many years he and his family lived in poverty, aided by small subventions from Engels and by bequests from the relatives of Marx's wife. From 1851 to 1862 he contributed articles and editorials to the *New York Tribune*, then edited by Horace Greeley. Most of his time, however, was spent in the British Museum, studying economic and social history and developing his theories.

Marx's ideas began to influence a group of workers and German émigrés in London, who established (1864) the International Workingmen's Association, later known as the First International (see INTERNATIONAL, SOCIALIST). By the time of the brief COMMUNE OF PARIS in 1871, Marx's name had begun to be well known in European political circles. A struggle developed within the International between Marx and the Russian anarchist Mikhail BAKUNIN, whom Marx eventually defeated and expelled, at the cost of the destruction of the International.

In 1867, Marx published the first volume of Das KAPITAL (Eng. trans., 1886). The next two volumes, edited by Engels, were published after Marx's death. The fourth volume was edited by Karl KAUTSKY.

Marx's last years were marked by illness and depression. Marx continued to write treatises on socialism, urging that his followers disdain soft-hearted bourgeois tendencies. He took this stand, for example, in *The Gotha Program* (1891; Eng. trans., 1922). His wife died in 1881, and his eldest daughter in 1883, shortly before his own death.

At Marx's funeral in Highgate Cemetery in London, Engels spoke of him as "the best-hated and most-calumniated man of his time." The importance of Marx's thought, however, extends far beyond the revolutionary movements whose prophet he became. His writings on economics and sociology are still influential in academic circles and among many who do not share his political views.