

The Age of Realism: 1850-1871

Industrialization and Its Critics

As industrialization spread across Europe, many nations experienced considerable economic growth. Great Britain's growth began with its textile industry; the Continent's growth began with railroads. The rail industry, in turn, stimulated growth in iron and coal. Governments also helped encourage economic growth by eliminating trade barriers and promoting financial institutions that could provide the necessary capital for industrial growth.

Marx and Engels

As industrialization swept across Europe, critics of capitalism became more vocal. None were more influential than Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marx, a journalist, was forced to leave Germany after his newspaper was suppressed. While in Paris he met Engels, the son of a wealthy cotton manufacturer and author of *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*, an expose of industrial life. Marx and Engels collaborated on a treatise to promote a radical working-class movement. The *Communist Manifesto* was intended to stir workers into unified action. The proletariat, they wrote, would engage in a class struggle with bourgeois society in which the workers would prevail and form a classless society. Unlike socialists, communists did not believe that social change was possible within the framework of a democratic capitalist state.

The First International

After the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, Marx devoted the rest of his life to developing his ideas concerning history and society. *Das Kapital* examined the foundations of modern political economy. But many of his ideas never found a large audience because his all-consuming efforts to organize the working class left little time for writing. In 1864, he helped establish the International Working Men's Association, or "First International," which promoted the interests of the leading working-class organizations of the time. Dissension among member groups proved the undoing of the First International, and soon Marx's ideas were taken up by national socialist political parties across Europe that advocated planned economies rather than working-class revolution.