

## A Manifesto on the "Manifesto"

Written by Paul Kengor  
Tuesday, 04 May 2010 05:40

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I knew the time would come. America's public schools and ideologically monolithic universities have spawned a generation woefully uninformed in the most elementary facts about free markets, socialism, and communism. Personally, after teaching this material for years, I'm getting an inordinate number of questions about communism in particular, as that word is bandied about like crazy -- the result of America's decisive lurch leftward since the election of November 2008.

There's so much to say, especially about communism in practice, where the story is unprecedented misery: a death toll of 100 million to 140 million human beings since 1917. That's twice the combined corpses of World War I and World War II.

But what about communism *as a theory*?

We constantly hear the claim: *Communism in theory is not as bad as communism in practice. If you read Marx, you'll see that communism promotes sharing, equality, love of man*

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In truth, this is arrant nonsense. When I hear it, I know the person has never read Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, a plainly awful book, packed with hatred and, frankly, stupidity. But rather than just say this, I thought I'd attempt a public service by laying out key facts on the *Communist Manifesto* -- another teachable moment. So, here we go.

First off, Marx's *Manifesto* is very brief and inexpensive, leaving no excuse for someone with a strong opinion to not read it. Originally published in 1848, there are several recent editions, small enough to fit in your pocket. Most have decent introductions by some recognized authority. Here, I'll refer to a 1998 edition by Penguin's Signet Classics (\$5.95), with an introduction by the outstanding scholar Martin Malia, a Harvard Ph.D. and UC-Berkeley professor. This edition contains several earlier prefaces, with the actual *Manifesto* covering 42 pages.

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Marx's writing was painfully ambiguous, though certain identifiable elements emerge, from his [revulsion of religion](#)

to disgust of traditional morality and the family. (

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for my 2007 lecture on the communist war on religion.) Yet Marx's common thread, which we need to remember, was his contempt for private property. On page 67, he emphasized something all Americans should know, particularly students suffering the perverse professor who somehow admires communism. Stated Marx: "The theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property."

That's the essence of communism, which Marx returned to repeatedly, including in the final paragraph of the *Manifesto*.

Of course, on this point, a first grader -- let alone a grown adult -- ought to immediately recognize that Marxism can't work. Abolishing private property is completely contrary to human nature, violating the most innate precepts of all peoples, from the cave to the courthouse. It shatters Judeo-Christian thinking, Western philosophy, the ancient and modern worlds, Cicero, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Locke, Jefferson, Old Testament, New Testament, Moses, Jesus, you name it. Only a fool would not instantly, intuitively realize that implementing this vision would generate mass bloodshed.

This is why, I imagine, most Marxist professors dare not have students read the *Communist Manifesto*.

In another illuminating section (page 75), Marx interrupted his meandering sophistries with a 10-point program of specific policy recommendations. I'm not going to shy from stating the obvious: Marx's list is chillingly similar -- in some respects, certainly not all -- to what the American left has pushed for decades, from progressive income taxes to inheritance taxes to centralization and nationalization. Here they are, in direct quotation:

1.

Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.

2.

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A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.

3.

Abolition of all right of inheritance.

4.

Confiscation of all property of emigrants and rebels.

5.

Centralization of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly.

6.

Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state.

7.

Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state; the bringing into cultivation of waste lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.

8.

Equal obligation of all to work ... .

9.

... gradual abolition of all the distinction between town and country by a more equitable distribution of the population over the country.

10.

Free education for all children in public schools ... .

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That's what the *Communist Manifesto* really says, and, worse, desired for not one country but the whole world (page 91). It's a prescription for despotism, as Marx himself conceded, prefacing his 10 points: "Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads."

Marxism wasn't hijacked by despots; Marxism demanded despots.

Communism is not a good idea, in theory or practice, and likewise for its ugly stepsister: socialism. Both are about statism, collectivism, redistribution, nationalization, appropriation, excessive taxation, the inane assertion that public services are "free" services, and, overall, government control. They -- along with modern progressivism -- differ in degree.

Americans must understand this. They must in order to know what not to support, and, most important, whom not to vote for.

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