

LARS K. CHRISTENSEN

*When  
Europe  
became  
modern*

EIGHT ESSAYS FROM  
"EUROPE MEETS THE WORLD"



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# A WORLD OF KNOWLEDGE IN ONE BOOK

For almost 30 years, Denis Diderot worked on the publication of *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Encyclopedia or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts and Crafts). The result was 28 volumes, of which the first was published in 1751 and the last in 1772.

In common parlance the work is often referred to as The Great French Encyclopedia – or just The Encyclopedia. It was not the first of its kind, but it was by far the largest and the most ambitious. Diderot was not alone in its production. Mathematician Jean le Rond d’Alembert was his co-editor, and France’s most prominent experts and intellectuals – scientists, economists, theologians and philosophers – contributed articles. The reason it took so long to write, edit and print The Encyclopedia was not only 18th century graphic technology, which required everything to be written, edited, and printed by hand. It was also because the authors were exceptionally thorough.

It was intended that the finished encyclopedia should contain a complete and systematic account of human achievements, not

just in science and art, but also economics, trade and industry. Diderot carried out the latter part of the task by personally visiting a large number of craft and trade workshops and carefully studying their methods. Then artists were sent to the same places. The final 11 volumes of *The Encyclopedia* consist, therefore, of beautiful copper engravings showing tools and methods used in the crafts and trades.

Another important reason for the work taking so long was ecclesiastical and political opposition. While the editors aimed to keep the articles about science in an objective tone, the philo-

Fig. 1. | *The Great French Encyclopedia* was published in 1751-72, originally in 28 volumes. In this edition from 1780 the work is divided over 39 volumes. *Danish Modern History*.





sophical articles were more opinionated. For example, in the article about “Political authority”, it could be read that:

*No man has received from nature the right to command others. Liberty is a gift from heaven, and each individual of the same species has the right to enjoy it as soon as he enjoys the use of reason. (...) Power that is acquired by violence is only usurpation and only lasts as long as the force of the individual who commands can prevail over the force of those who obey.*

At the time and in a country where all power was held by an autocratic king answerable only to God, it is no wonder that such texts prompted discussion. Opponents also managed on several occasions to have the French king intervene and halt the project. But the editors also had friends, even at court, and finally it proved possible to renew the king’s permission for the publication.

There were also internal differences of opinion. Voltaire, one of the more impatient contributors, believed that the idea of Enlightenment should be made yet clearer. He complained that, as a writer, he had to “*join beggar’s fustian to your cloth-of-gold*” in order to avoid the censor. Despite these problems, Diderot and his associates completed the project. And for posterity, The Encyclopaedia stands not only as an editorial achievement, but also as a monument to the Age of Enlightenment and its ideas.

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Fig. 2. | Denis Diderot (1713-84) was the tireless editor of *The Encyclopaedia*. Oil painting, Louis-Michel van Loo. Louvre, Paris.





# DÉCLARATION DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DU CITOYEN.

Décrité par l'Assemblée Nationale dans les séances des 20, 21  
22, 24, 26 août 1789. Acceptés par le Roi

## PRÉAMBULE

LES représentants du peuple François, constitués en assemblée nationale, considérant que l'ignorance, l'oubli ou le mépris des droits de l'homme sont les seules causes des malheurs publics et de la corruption des gouvernements ont résolu de proclamer dans une déclaration solennelle, les droits naturels, inaliénables et sacrés de l'homme; afin que cette déclaration, constamment présente à tous les membres du corps national, leur rappelle sans cesse leurs droits et leurs devoirs; que les actes du pouvoir législatif et ceux du pouvoir exécutif, pouvant être à chaque instant comparés avec le but de toute institution politique, en soient plus respectés; afin que les réclamations des citoyens, fondées désormais sur des principes simples et incontestables, touchent toujours au maintien de la constitution et du bonheur de tous.

En conséquence, l'assemblée nationale reconnaît et déclare, en présence et sous les auspices d'Élieu suprême les droits de l'homme et du citoyen.

### ARTICLE PREMIER.

Tous hommes naissent et demeurent libres et égaux en droits; les distinctions sociales ne peuvent être fondées que sur l'utilité commune.

#### II.

Le but de toute association politique est la conservation des droits naturels et imprescriptibles de l'homme; ces droits sont la liberté, la propriété, la sûreté, et la résistance à l'oppression.

#### III.

Le principe de toute souveraineté réside essentiellement dans la nation; nul corps, nul individu peut exercer d'autorité qui n'en émane expressément.

#### IV.

La liberté consiste à pouvoir faire tout ce qui ne nuit pas à autrui; tout l'exercice des droits naturels de chaque homme n'a de bornes que celles qui assurent aux autres membres de la société la jouissance de ces mêmes droits; ces bornes ne peuvent être déterminées que par la loi.

#### V.

Nul n'a le droit de défendre que les actions nuisibles à la société. Tout ce qui n'est pas défendu par la loi ne peut être puni; ce qui n'est pas puni ne peut être considéré comme un crime.

#### VI.

## VII.

NUL homme ne peut être accusé, arrêté ni détenu que dans les cas déterminés par la loi, et selon les formes qu'elle a prescrites; ceux qui sollicitent, exécutent ou font exécuter des ordres arbitraires, doivent être punis; mais tout citoyen appelé ou saisi en vertu de la loi, doit obéir à l'instant, il se rend coupable par la résistance.

## VIII.

LA loi ne doit établir que des peines strictement et évidemment nécessaires; et nul ne peut être puni qu'en vertu d'une loi établie et promulguée antérieurement au délit, et légalement appliquée.

## IX.

TOUT homme étant présumé innocent jusqu'à ce qu'il ait été déclaré coupable, s'il est jugé indispensable de l'arrêter, toute rigueur qui ne serait pas nécessaire pour s'assurer de sa personne doit être sévèrement réprimée par la loi.

## X.

NUL ne doit être inquiété pour ses opinions, mêmes religieuses pourvu que leur manifestation ne trouble pas l'ordre public établi par la loi.

## XI.

LA libre communication des pensées et des opinions est un des droits les plus précieux de l'homme; tout citoyen peut donc parler, écrire, imprimer librement; sauf à répondre de l'abus de cette liberté dans les cas déterminés par la loi.

## XII.

LA garantie des droits de l'homme et du citoyen nécessite une force publique; cette force est donc instituée pour l'avantage de tous, et non pour l'utilité particulière de ceux à qui elle est confiée.

## XIII.

Pour l'entretien de la force publique, et pour les dépenses d'administration, une contribution commune est indispensable; elle doit être également répartie entre les citoyens en raison de leurs facultés.

## XIV.

LES citoyens ont le droit de constater par eux-mêmes ou par leurs représentants, la nécessité de la contribution publique, de la consentir librement, d'en suivre l'emploi, et d'en déterminer la quotité, l'assiette, le recouvrement et la durée.

## XV.

# BUT JUST WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT?

This question was posed by German philosopher Immanuel Kant in 1784. He also gave the answer: *Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity*. Kant believed that one was immature if one did not follow one's own reason rather than the decisions of others. This immaturity was self-imposed when not due to a lack of reason but a lack of the will to make use of it. The motto of Enlightenment, writes Kant, is therefore: *Have the courage to use your own intelligence!*

To promote maturity was the common aim of the rather mixed band of men – and a few women – now known as “the Enlightenment Philosophers”. The Age of Enlightenment had its heyday in the middle of the 18th century, with figures such as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) in Prussia, Denis Diderot (1713-84), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) and Voltaire (1694-1778) in France, David Hume (1711-76) in Scotland and American Benjamin Franklin (1706-90).

The idea of Enlightenment did not come out of the blue; it had its roots in the scientific advances of the 17th century. These led to established, partly religiously-founded and speculative perceptions of the Universe and nature being gradually replaced by new theories, based on observation, experiment and logic.

In 1687, Isaac Newton published his *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy), in which he presented a mathematically founded description of the laws controlling the movements of the celestial bodies. The new science's presentation of the Universe as a machine, the function of which could be investigated and rationally described, was an important precondition for the Age of Enlightenment.

In the view of the Enlightenment Philosophers logic should rule, not just in science but also in human relationships. How this was to be achieved, however, was not necessarily something they agreed upon. This resulted in part from the different political situations prevailing in the countries where the philosophers were active. Britain, where the power of the monarchy was limited by a parliament, constituted rather the exception. Almost all of Europe was ruled by autocratic kings and princes who, in principle, had unlimited powers. There were, however, differences between these autocratic states. In the otherwise thoroughly militarised state of Prussia, Frederick the Great, who ruled from 1740 to 1786, showed interest in the new philosophical ideas. Immanuel Kant, who was radical in his belief in reason but politically rather conservative, identified Frederick as a model, because as long as there was a great mass of unthinking people he believed full political freedom would only be detrimental. Enlightened autocracy was a better solution.

France, on the contrary, had not only an autocratic monarchy. The powerful Catholic Church also fought a relentless battle against every form of religious deviation. When Voltaire published his *Treaty on Tolerance* in 1763, it was inspired by the execution of a protestant convicted of murdering his own son in order to prevent him from converting to Catholicism. This was very probably a miscarriage of justice but it suggests that there was religious fanaticism on both sides.

Many of the ideas and values for which the Enlightenment Philosophers took up the fight are today so widespread and commonly accepted that it is difficult to understand that they



Fig. 1. | In 1789, *The French Revolution* adopted *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, with the famous words: *Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. The idea of universal human rights was created in the Age of Enlightenment.* Oil painting, Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier. Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

were so very controversial back then. This applies for example to tolerance, considered by most people today as a positive value. But during the 17th century, the Church actually preached intolerance as a positive value: Those who showed tolerance towards non-believers must expect the wrath of the Church. However, as early as 1689, Englishman John Locke published



Fig. 2. | *In the Agricultural Society's plough trials of 1770, the swing plough, shown here as a reconstruction, proved to be significantly better than the previously employed and heavier wheel plough. The dissemination of new rational agricultural techniques was also enlightenment. Danish Modern History.*

*A Letter Concerning Toleration*, in which he argued that the authorities did not have the right to intervene in situations pertaining to an individual's salvation and, as a consequence, the state should show religious tolerance. In Britain there was leeway for a slightly freer debate than in Europe, as Voltaire himself experienced when he lived there for three years in exile. In France, on the other hand, criticising the Church was still risky, but when the criticism finally did break out, it was all the stronger.

In their criticism of the status quo, the Enlightenment Philosophers often argued on the basis of human nature. John Locke thought accordingly that humans were by nature created free individuals. To prevent some from using their freedom to repress others, humans have entered into a "social pact". Through authority and legislation it is society's task to ensure the individual's original right to freedom. The term "social pact" is also used by Rousseau, for whom the original natural state does not

appear as positive as it does for Locke. Rousseau sees the natural state more as “all pitched against all and”, in his view, actual freedom can only be created in a society where individuals are prepared to sacrifice their individual rights in the interests of the common good, i.e. government by an enlightened majority.

The very subject of an individual’s freedom relative to the interests of the community was to become a recurrent theme in the political discussion for many years to come. But despite their differences, Locke and Rousseau both represent the view that humans are born with special rights by virtue of nature. Natural right would prove to be a potent argument against the prevailing perception that rulers and monarchies could rule as they saw fit, answerable only to God. The perception of human nature in the Age of Enlightenment led to the view that there are universal human rights, i.e. rights that apply to everyone regardless of social status.

Not just freedom to believe, but also freedom of speech and of the press, equality before the law and the right of the people to rebel against injustice and tyranny are ideas born or at least given their substance during the Age of Enlightenment. But the philosophy of Enlightenment has also left its mark on posterity at a more practical level. In the wake of its worship of reason and rationality, societies emerged all over Europe aimed at promoting agriculture and production through information on new improved methods. The first of these was the *British Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce*, founded in 1753. In Denmark, the corresponding *Kongelige Danske Landhusholdningsselskab* began its activities in 1769. This society informed and lobbied with respect to new crops such as clover and potatoes, held competitions for the best type of plough etc.

From great discussions of human nature to quite literally more down to earth problems, the Age of Enlightenment left an indelible mark on Europe.

# FREEDOM TO POWER – POWER TO FREEDOM?

One morning in 1789, a group of armed Parisians stormed the city's old prison, killed the governor and liberated prisoners. "The Storming of the Bastille" has gone down in history as the beginning of the French Revolution, and the date on which it took place, 14th July, is still France's national day.

In truth, by then the Revolution had already started. A couple of weeks earlier, in Versailles just outside Paris, representatives of the so-called "Third Estate", i.e. citizens and peasants, had formed a National Assembly with the aim of writing a new French constitution. King Louis XIV threatened to break up this assembly by force and it was in this situation that the Storming of the Bastille gained its crucial historic significance. It was the starting signal for the formation across the entire country of armed civil groups, National Guards, which took over in town after town. The National Assembly gained power in support of its intentions and could continue its work. As peasants also rebelled in many places across the country, events suddenly moved quickly in the direction of abolishing the nobility's established special rights and privileges.

The National Assembly also approved the famous *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, the first paragraph of which states: "*Men are born and remain free and*



*Fig. 1. | French cap and sash in blue, white and red tricolore, the colours of the French Revolution. A young woman of the Copenhagen bourgeoisie wore the sash during a dinner party in 1793. Danish Modern History.*

*equal in rights*". However, there was not complete agreement among the revolutionaries on what freedom and equality actually meant. The National Assembly was dominated by the middle class and the constitution approved in 1791 aimed specifically at introducing a liberal market economy. Not only was virtually all regulation of industry and trade abolished, it was also forbidden for workers to form trade unions. Those who had taken to the streets and fought for the Revolution were, however, mostly small shopkeepers, craftsmen and workers. They did not necessarily feel that their demands for more social justice had been met.



Fig. 2. | *The French queen Marie-Antoinette on her way to her execution. The guillotine can be seen in the background. Copper engraving, 1793. Danish Modern History.*

In April 1792 France declared war on Austria, and for the next 23 years the country was at war with shifting coalitions involving most other major European powers. There were several motives for war: Leading politicians hoped that a war could overshadow internal disagreements and perhaps even benefit the economy. There was, in broad terms, a revolutionary fervour and a view that it was France's duty to fight for freedom, and against tyrants in neighbouring countries. Finally, there was a fear that foreign powers would support a counter-revolution in France.

However, the war was a catastrophe and soon German troops had advanced far into French territory. This led to radicalisation of the Revolution: The King and Queen were arrested and later executed, the ruling National Assembly was deposed and a new constitutional assembly summoned. Power shifted to the Jacobins, a group based primarily on the petite bourgeoisie of Paris and other large cities.

With the Jacobins, “Brotherhood” was added to the original revolutionary slogan of “Freedom and Equality”. France became a republic with equal franchise for all men, the right to work was written into the constitution and slavery in the colonies abolished. But posterity would remember the Jacobins for the ruthlessness with which they achieved their aims. The years 1793-94 are known as “la Terreur” (the Terror). The guillotines operated almost around the clock, executing enemies of the Revolution – both real and imagined.

It did, however, prove possible to turn the war to France’s advantage. Mobilisation took place across the country and after the aristocratic officers had deserted, the army became an organisation in which anyone with courage and talent could progress. An almost arrogant belief in France’s revolutionary mission in Europe made up for the lack of formal discipline.

Under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte, the army won a number of battles and now it was France who conquered territory in surrounding countries.

However, with time the Jacobins made enemies of all the other political groups and, as a consequence, weakened their own power base. On 28th July 1794 it was over: The leader of the Jacobins, Robespierre, ended up under the guillotine on Place de la Révolution. Power was again taken by the representatives of the high bourgeoisie. Their strength was not so much in their own support but in the weakness of others. They had increasingly to make use of the army to counter opposition. The more desperate the government became, the clearer it was that the army was actually in charge. In 1799, General Napoleon struck and seized power in a military coup.

Seen in detail, the French Revolution is a story of idealism, but also of power struggles, fanaticism and political violence. Seen in an historical perspective, it changed the world by fixing a new society, based on economic and political freedom, as its aim. Modern bourgeois society was born in Paris on 14th July 1789.

# CITY LIGHTS

In 1802, the world's first public gasworks was established in London, and the new technology spread quickly to other European towns, large and small. In 1853, the first Danish works was founded in Odense. With gas, towns could be lit; streets, squares and – for the wealthy – also private homes. Later came electricity, which was expensive at first and was mostly used in public buildings. With time electricity gained ground, partly at the expense of gas, although gas street lighting continued well into the 20th century.

Towns and cities were not just lit in a physical sense. City lights also came to symbolise the compelling effect urban centres had on those living in small towns or the country. At the beginning of the 19th century there were few great cities in Europe. Only London had a population in excess of 1 million and only ten cities numbered more than 100,000 inhabitants. This situation changed drastically: By 1900 over 100 cities had a population of this size or more. London was joined by Berlin, Moscow, Paris, St Petersburg and Vienna in passing the one million mark. Equally astonishing was the emergence of places



Fig. 1. | *This magnificent gas chandelier lit the home of a Copenhagen pharmacist. Danish Modern History.*



Fig. 2. | *Citizens stroll along the Parisian boulevards*. Oil painting, Gustave Caillebotte, 1877. The Art Institute of Chicago.

like Tyneside in Northern England and the Ruhr in Germany, where small towns and heavy industry grew together to form huge conurbations.

Europe's population increased through the 19th century. Mechanisation resulted in a reduced labour requirements in rural areas, but industrialisation created many new jobs in towns. By 1851, there were already more English people living in towns than in the country; urban dwellers became the majority in Germany just before 1900. But other areas, especially in Southern and Eastern Europe, saw much slower development and most people still lived and worked in the country.

Urban growth created a need for planning and development. For example, Paris underwent massive restructuring in the mid-19th century under the direction of Baron Haussmann: Some quarters were torn down and winding medieval streets were replaced by long straight boulevards. Monumental buildings

such as a new opera house were built and along the boulevards came rows of neo-classical facades. The modern bourgeois city was created.

For hundreds of thousands of Europe's new urban dwellers life differed radically from that in the country. Many were packed tightly into tenement buildings in working class districts of large towns, although towns also had beautiful mansions, wide streets and new department stores. It was here that people were first with the latest in fashion, entertainment or politics. Life in towns ran quite simply in a higher gear than that people had been used to for centuries in the country. Tradition was replaced by change and progress.

The city lights prompted both concern and enthusiasm. In 1886, the Danish psychiatrist Knud Pontoppidan published *Neurasthenien. Bidrag til en skildring af vor Tids Nervøsitet*. The book was a contribution to an international debate on how modern hectic urban life led to nervousness and neurasthenia. In 1900, another author and later Nobel Prize winner Johannes V. Jensen visited the World Fair in Paris. He was not nervous but deeply fascinated by the great city with its swarms of people and machines. Sitting up in the exhibition's landmark, the Ferris wheel (Grande Roue de Paris), he wrote:

*Hear how this city, how this mighty city down there sings!  
There are verses of iron, rhymes of steel and stone, and rhythms  
to the Heavens (...) The twentieth century soars overhead. I  
profess to reality, I profess.*

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# A SLOW REVOLUTION

It started with something not evidently very explosive: cotton yarn. During the 18th century cotton textiles, imported from India, became popular in England. In an effort to protect domestic textile production these imports were gradually banned, creating a market for cotton yarn among English weavers.

In both India and England cotton was spun and woven by hand, a slow process, and there was a great demand for yarn. This prompted Richard Arkwright in 1771 to build a new kind of cotton spinning mill. The innovation was that machines were not driven by hand but by water power. Power from a large mill wheel was transferred by axles and belt drives to the many carding and spinning machines. Arkwright had built the first modern factory. This proved to be such a good idea that it was soon copied elsewhere.

But factories would also prove to have other advantages. Previously, production of textiles had been spread out among numerous small craftsmen, many of whom were also small-scale farmers. Merchants and their agents had a constant battle to ensure that work they had ordered was actually delivered.

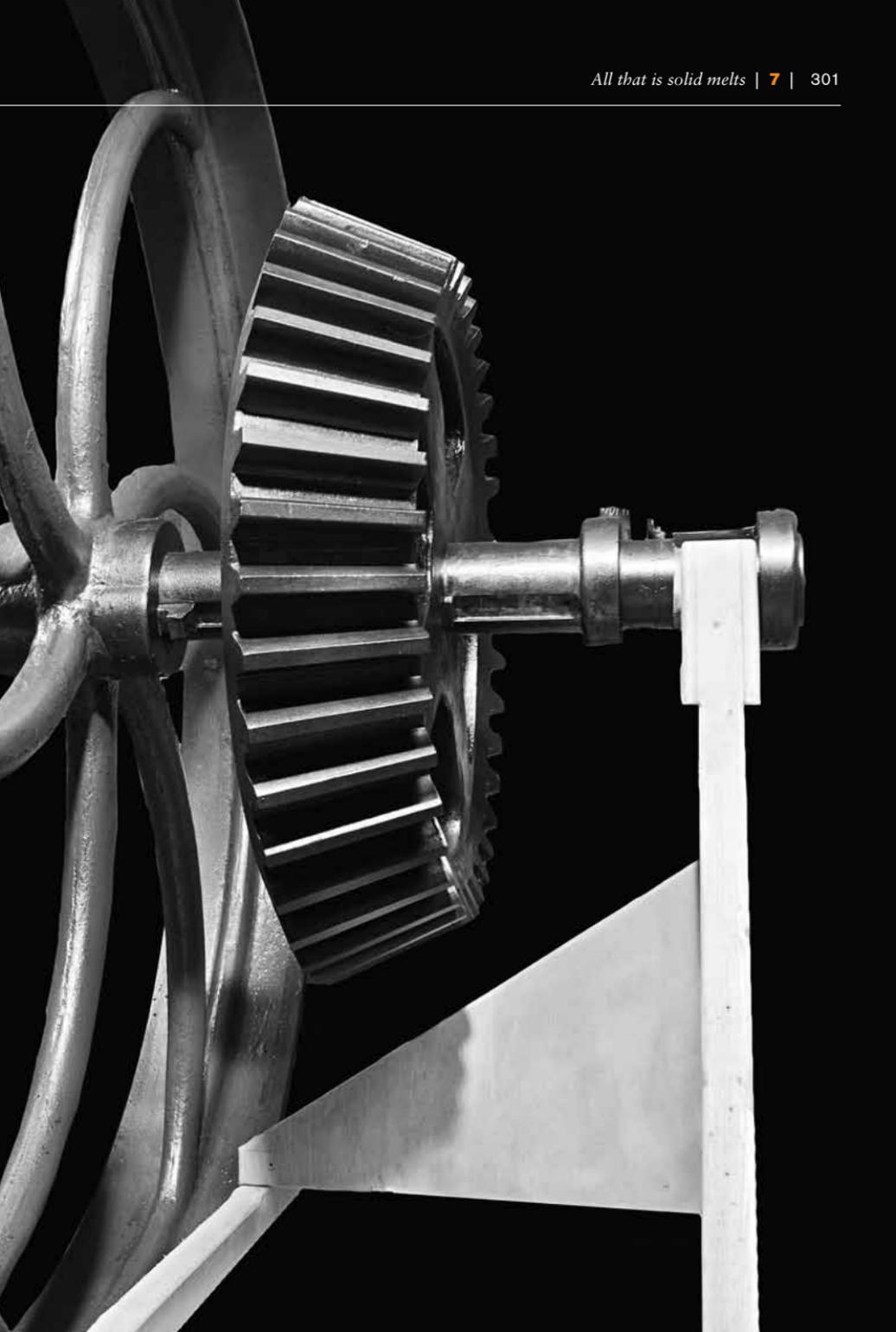




Fig. 1. | *Rubens Dampvæveri (Steam Weaving Mill), Frederiksberg, 1890. With its c. 270 female and 80 male workers, it was Denmark's largest employer of women. Watercolour, Rasmus Christensen. Danish Modern History.*

In a factory it was different: The workers had either to arrive on time and work the 10-12 hour day they had agreed to – or stay away. The factory proved to be an effective instrument in disciplining the workforce.

New technologies did not come out of the blue. As a rule they were developed in response to actual problems, such as bottlenecks in production, and sometimes over a long time. For example, mechanisation of spinning mills solved the yarn shortage. In fact, there was now so much yarn available that weavers had difficulty in keeping up. The answer was the mechanical loom, invented in 1785, but first developed in a practical form in the early 19th century.

The steam engine, which for posterity became the very symbol of the Industrial Revolution, also started out as a solu-

tion to a concrete problem: keeping mine shafts free of water. Primitive steam engines had already been built for this purpose in England early in the 18th century. Towards the end of the century James Watt improved the original design on several counts: The engine became more energy-efficient and from just being able to move a piston up and down in a pump, its power could now be converted to rotary movement. Instead of just

Fig. 2. | *Fly wheel from a steam engine produced by the engineering works Atlas A/S, 1899. Danish Modern History.*



being applicable to mines, steam power could now be used as the driving force for all kinds of factories.

With steam power it was no longer necessary to site factories by a river. Industry could be located where it was most appropriate: close to labour, raw materials or access to transport. The latter also developed enormously when, after 1800, steam engines could be made smaller yet more efficient. Steam could now be used to power railways and ships. Industrialisation had become a self-reinforcing process, whereby new markets created demands for new technologies which in turn opened up further new markets.

Earlier in history there had been examples of something resembling industry, for example in Renaissance North Italy. However, these remained isolated initiatives, which never really took off and developed into an actual industrial revolution. What made late 18th century Manchester and its surroundings so very different that changes which began here spread and became a self-reinforcing process that ultimately changed the whole of Europe – and the rest of the world?

It was down to an interaction between technology and markets. English agriculture was already engaged in a transition from self-sufficiency to market economy and, as a result of extensive colonial trade, British towns were larger and more numerous than their European counterparts. Consequently, there was a domestic market for industrially-produced goods – especially if produced cheaply. Britain was the largest colonial power of the time and had the world's mightiest navy. It was therefore in a position actively to create new markets, such as when imports of cotton textiles from India were forbidden in order to promote domestic industry. The new industrial goods could be produced so cheaply that they could subsequently be exported to India, where they effectively out-competed local production. Development in Britain was partially achieved on the basis of under-development in the colonies.

The factors leading to the Industrial Revolution are both numerous and ambiguous, but its effects on almost all areas of



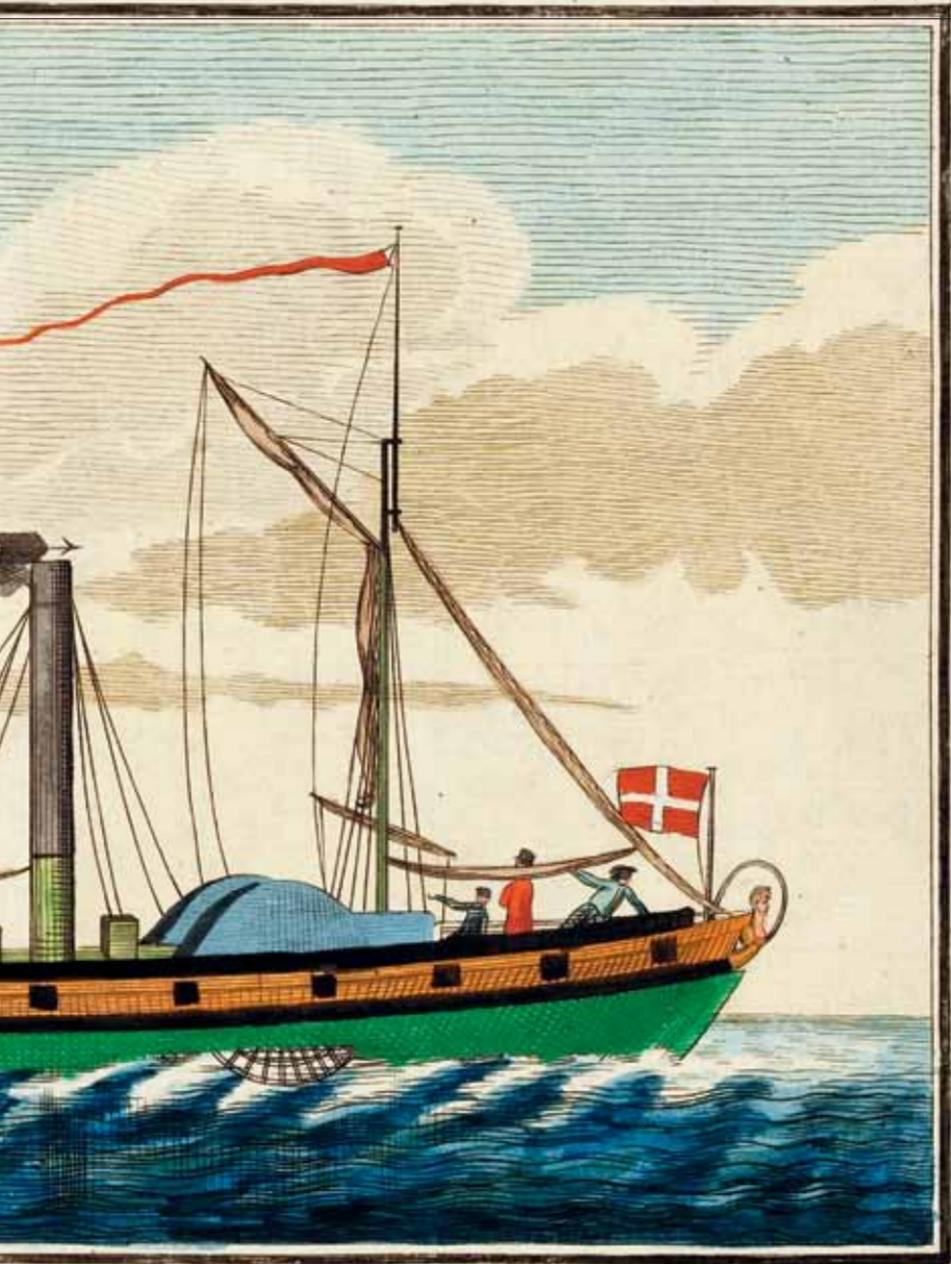
Fig. 3. | *Telegraph equipment from the Store Nordiske Telegraf-Selskab. Starting in 1869 from a base in Copenhagen, Store Nordiske established telegraph lines across half the globe. Danish Modern History.*

life were clear. First and foremost it changed the working life of the many thousands recruited to work in the factories. They had to labour from morning to evening, six days a week, often in poorly-lit, dusty and hot conditions. Many moved to the towns where they had to live in wretched conditions in small tenement rooms.

But industrialisation also brought improvements, although these were slow. Towards the end of the 19th century economic growth took off in earnest. Simultaneously, in the leading industrial countries such as Britain, France and Germany –



*Dampskibet*



*Caledonia.*



Fig. 4. | In 1819, Caledonia, as the first steam ship in Denmark, entered regular service on the route Copenhagen-Kiel. Coloured engraving. Danish Modern History.

and even in Denmark – a strong trade union movement was formed. In conjunction, these developments led to a marked improvement in the standard of living of many industrial workers.

The Industrial Revolution brought many new commodities and technologies which directly changed daily life. The railways resulted in journeys that previously took days being achieved in hours. Gas lamps lit streets, homes and workplaces. The rotary press was one of several new graphical technologies which changed books and newspapers from luxury goods into mass media. At the end of the 19th century industry had taken hold across most of Europe, although with a centre of gravity in the north-west. Germany and – outside Europe – America challenged Britain as the leading industrial nation. Germany

was, in particular, a leader in the new branches of industry, for example the chemical and electro-technical industries.

In 1851 *The Great Exhibition of Works and Industry of all Nations* opened in London. It was not the first of its kind but was much more grandiose than those which preceded it and is considered to be the first of the great world exhibitions. These were where European nations and America celebrated progress by each displaying their finest and most impressive craft and industrial products.

The 19th century started with war and destruction across almost all of Europe. The French army advanced all the way to Moscow before being defeated and the Napoleonic Wars of 1804-15 are estimated to have cost between 3.5 and 6.5 million lives. The end of the war coincided with a depressed and inwardly-looking atmosphere in many countries. Conversely, at the end of the century, competition between European nations was primarily in the fields of economy, industry and technology. The time was now one of outward-looking optimism and a belief that technology would lead to yet further progress. But behind the optimism were the stirrings of incipient doubt: Could things continue this way?

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# THE SPECTRE THAT BECAME A REALITY

*“A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of Communism”*. So reads the first sentence of a small pamphlet issued in 1848. Its title was *The Communist Manifesto* and it was written by an exiled German philosopher and social critic by the name of Karl Marx, together with his good friend Friedrich Engels.

It was no coincidence that the pamphlet was issued in 1848. In this and the following year rebellion and social unrest surged through Europe. Population growth and early industrialisation had not just created increasing social contrasts; it had also made the bourgeoisie richer and more self-aware. Many felt it was time for the dominant autocratic forms of government to be replaced by more democratic systems.

In February 1848 a social revolt broke out in Paris. The disturbances spread to Germany and Italy, where they quickly became linked with calls for the unification of the many small kingdoms and principalities to form nation states. In Hungary, demands were made for independence from Austrian supremacy. In Denmark, accounts of revolutionary events around Europe led to the king, without any resistance, accepting the call

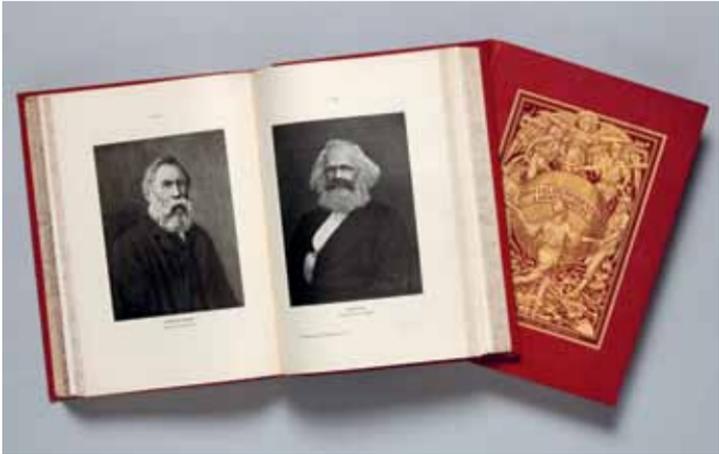


Fig. 1. | *Portraits of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in Socialdemokratiets Aarhundrede, published by the Danish Social Democratic Party in 1904. Danish Modern History.*

for a constitution and democratic government. In most countries, however, the 1848 revolutions ended in failure, without demands being met.

At the forefront of most rebellions were the nationally- and liberally-oriented middle-classes. Workers were also represented but they rarely formulated their own demands, for example for greater social justice. Nevertheless, the ruling powers employed insults such as anarchists and communists in reference to their opponents. It was this scare campaign to which Marx referred when he wrote of the communist spectre.

Even though Marx was able to support the liberals' demand for democracy, he believed more to be necessary. As long as ownership of agricultural land, factories and other means of production was concentrated in a few private hands, social and political inequality would remain. He argued that workers must unite and fight for a society in which there was a collective ownership of the means of production. His call did not, how-



*Fig. 2. | In August 1910, almost 900 delegates gathered for the 8th International Socialist Congress in Copenhagen. The participants included prominent European socialists such as Kier Hardie, Jean Jaurès, V.I. Lenin, Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Thorvald Stauning. The Workers' Museum.*

ever, receive much direct support, partly because there were as yet few workers in most European countries and partly because the existing preliminary stirrings of a working class movement were heavily divided along internally conflicting lines.

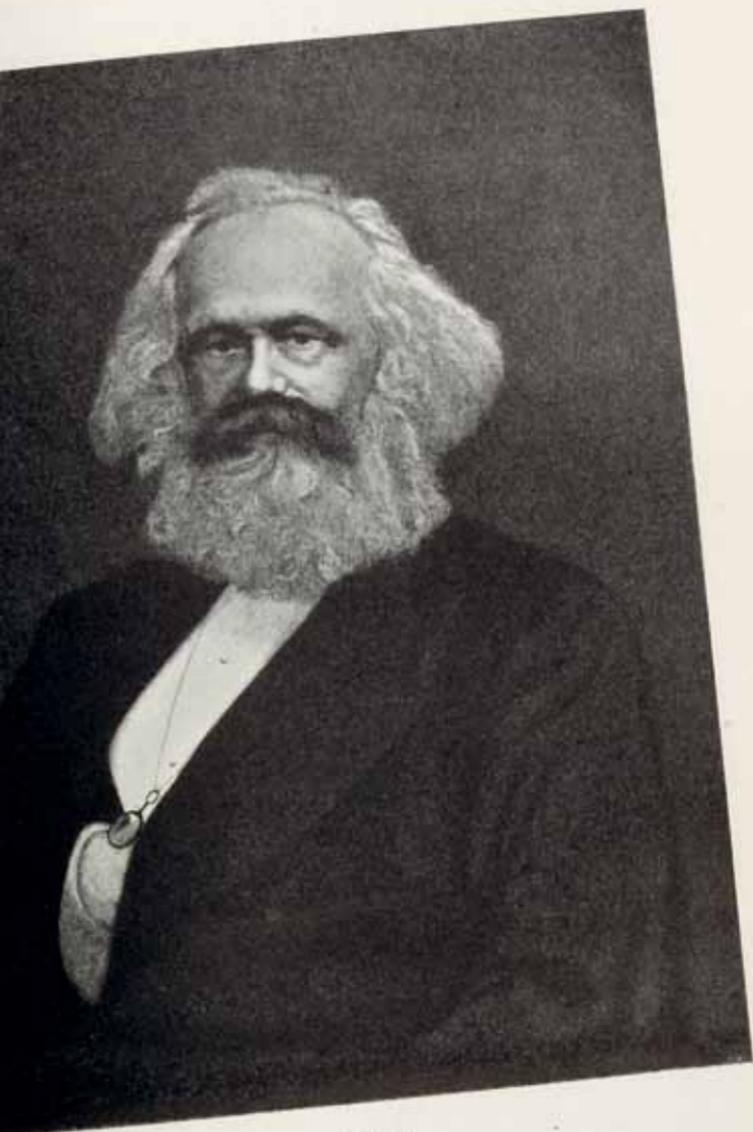
This situation changed as industrialisation progressed. Especially in Northern and Western Europe, strong working class movements emerged. When, after decades of political persecution, the German workers' party was finally permitted to participate in an election in 1890, they received 20% of the votes. In 1912, their proportion was 35%, making them Germany's largest party, both in terms of votes and party members. Most workers' parties referred to themselves as social democrats. The aim was still a class-less society and collective ownership. In

time, with the improved opportunities for parliamentary influence, increasing confidence was placed in the ballot box as the way forward.

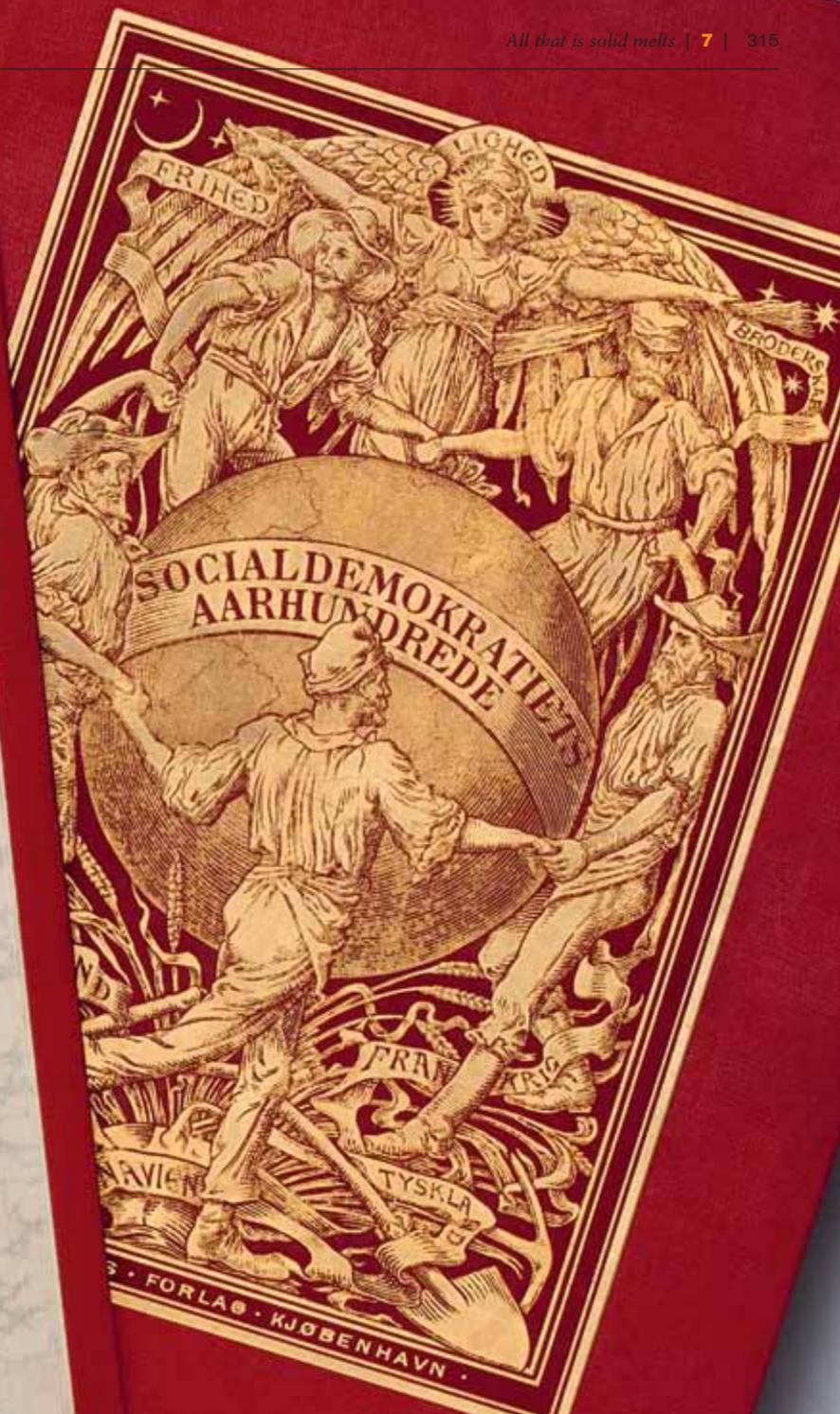
In 1910, The International Socialists' Congress was held in Copenhagen. The almost 900 delegates represented the largest non-religious union in the world and speaker after speaker highlighted the movement's demands and strength. But it was also apparent that there was disagreement between the reform-seeking majority and the more radical minority. When, in 1914, the labour movement did not manage to remain united in preventing the war, it was the spark which ignited division. The radical wing broke away and became organised into a new movement under the original name: The Communists.

Both communists and social democrats would come to have a crucial influence on the 20th century Europe. In the east were regimes headed by communists who took little account of political freedom: state's ownership and equality were the official aims. In the west, social democrats lead welfare states which attempted to create social reform by democratic means, but within the framework of continuing private ownership. Both movements claimed to represent Marxist ideals. Marx died in 1883, so we are unfortunately unable to ask him his view.

LARS K. CHRISTENSEN



KARL MARX  
Radering efter Fotograf



# THE BATTLE FOR THE WORLD

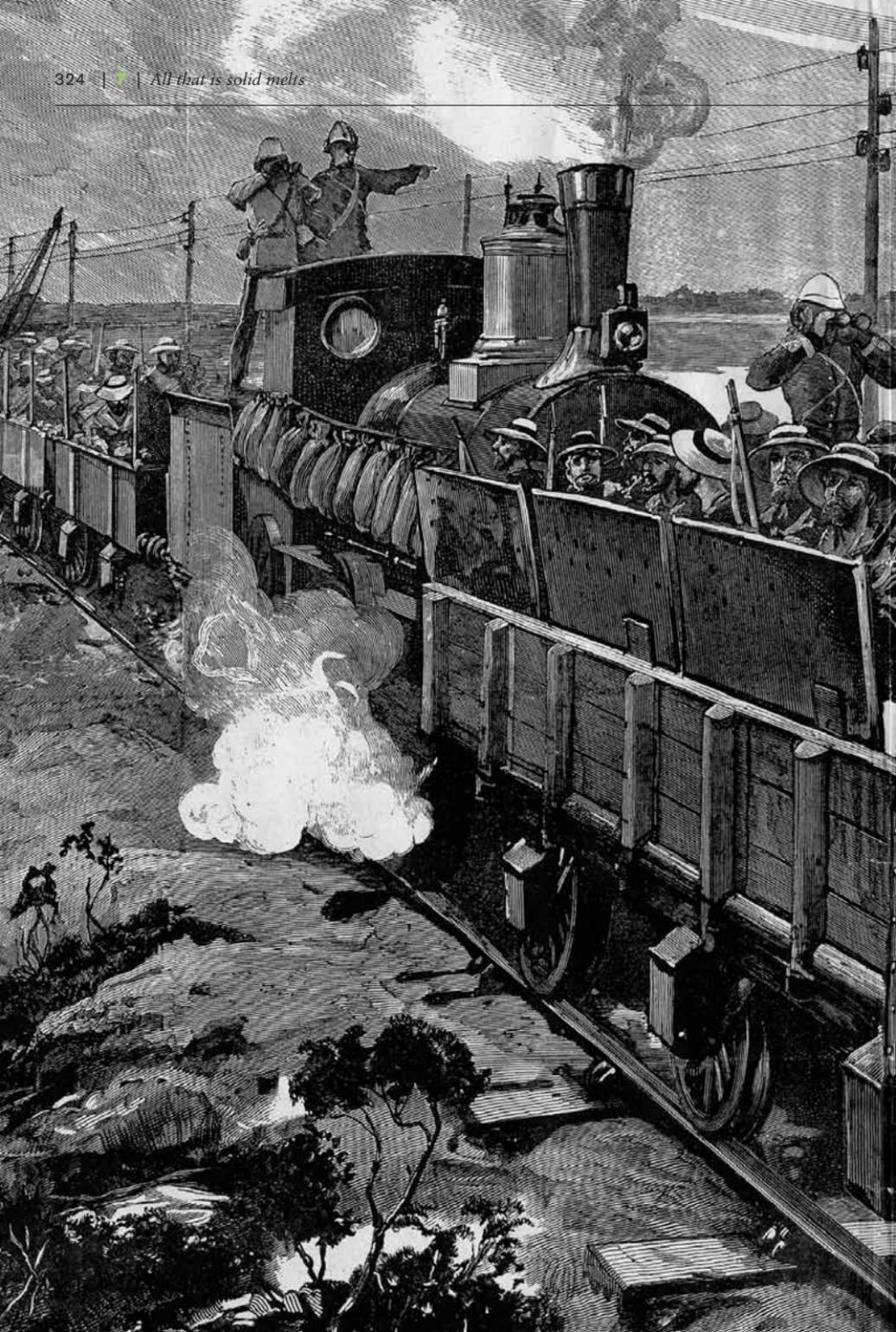
It was still dark and cool in the desert outside Omdurman in Sudan on 2nd September 1898 when a group of British cavalrymen was sent out on patrol. Only when the sun rose, just after six o'clock, did they gain sight of the enemy they faced: From the dark rocks on the horizon came column after column of marching warriors and between them horsemen. Hundreds of flags – green, black and white bearing texts from the Koran – fluttered above the marchers. The rising sun was reflected in thousands of shining spears. The battle cries rolled forwards towards the British soldiers like a deep rumble.

The British cavalrymen were part of an army of about 8000, augmented by a further c. 18,000 Egyptian auxiliary troops. But the Sudanese Mahdi army, which now charged, numbered at least 50,000 warriors. A terrifying prospect but for one simple, but important, detail: The British were armed with modern rifles, machine guns and cannon. In contrast, the Mahdi warriors had spears, sabres and antiquated firearms.

By noon it was all over. As many as 11,000 of the Mahdi warriors lay dead on the desert sand and the remainder had fled. The British losses numbered 47. With the conquest of



Fig. 1. | *Uniform belonging to Uthman Digna, a general in the Sudanese Mahdi army. Digna was badly wounded in a previous battle and did not take part at Omdurman. He died at the age of 90 in Egypt in 1926. Ethnographic Collection.*





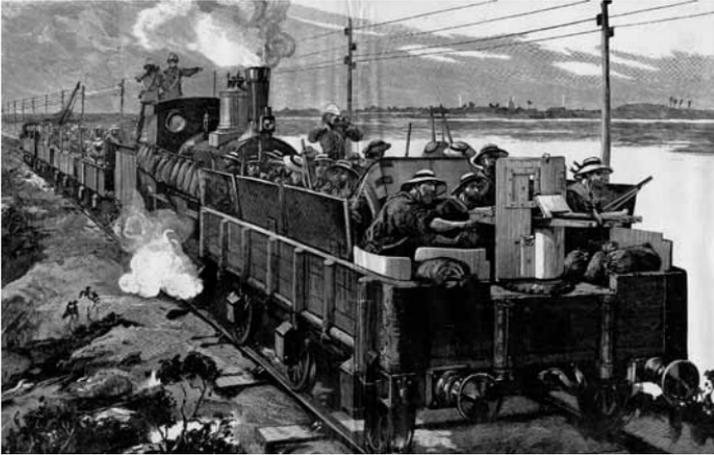


Fig. 2. | *British soldiers on their way into battle in Egypt. Their armaments included an early form of machine gun. Krigen i Ægypten, no. 2, Copenhagen 1882.*

Omdurman, Sudan effectively became a British colony and remained as such until 1956.

There was nothing new in European powers subjugating areas in Africa, America or Asia. But in the late 19th century European dominance of the world achieved a previously unseen extent. In Africa, the British and French secured the best morsels, but Germany and Belgium tagged along. Britain ruled over India and environs, France over Indochina, and The Netherlands over the huge island kingdom which today is Indonesia. Almost a quarter of the globe had colonial status.

Only in America had developments gone in the opposite direction: Both in North and South America former colonies had gained their independence and Spain represented only a shadow of its former colonial power. In North America, the former colony, the United States, was itself developing into a major power after the end of the civil war in 1865. The situation was rather

different in South America. Despite their formal independence, the economies of former colonies such as Argentina, Chile and Brazil were still deeply subservient to European interests.

And economic interests were what it was all about. The combination of a capitalist market economy and industrialisation created a European economy more dynamic than any seen previously in history. But it required new growing markets, and these could be found in the colonies. The same was true of raw materials for industry. In the 19th century, demands grew for copper, tin, rubber, saltpetre and other materials which could most readily be obtained outside Europe. Local populations provided cheap labour and railways and steam ships made transport viable.

Simultaneously, an improved European standard of living brought increasing demands not just for basic foodstuffs but also for “colonial goods” such as coffee, tea, cocoa and sugar. What were previously luxury goods for the few were now in demand from a growing proportion of the population. For example, the British alone drank more than five times as much tea in 1890 as they did in 1840.

The creation of an economy based on international trade and division of labour had its roots in the 18th century, but accelerated in the mid-19th century and was making a major impact by 1900. Economic links were forged between stock exchanges in London, Paris and New York and ports in Asia, mines in Central Africa and rubber plantations far up South American rivers. A doubling of the world’s merchant fleet tonnage between 1870 and 1910 and a fivefold expansion of the railway network during the same period are signs of this globalisation.

While the economy became global, its centre – Europe – was still divided into nation states. At the start of the 19th century most of these were at war. But the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 heralded a relatively peaceful period only broken by smaller, regional conflicts. After the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 there was peace on the continent for the remainder of the century. The great powers had relocated their rivalries to the colonies.

When British soldiers charged over the desert sand at Omdurman on that September day in 1898 it was not just for economic reasons. The British had long had an interest in Egypt, but from 1869, when the newly-built Suez Canal was opened, the country was of strategic importance for shipping between Britain and India, that most important of British colonies. When a nationally-oriented leader took power in Egypt, the British were afraid of losing control of the canal. So they intervened militarily and effectively made Egypt a colony and with that came an active role in Egypt's battle for control of Sudan. At the same time, they upset France who had originally financed the building of the Suez Canal. The two European powers embarked on a veritable race to secure as much as possible of Africa, while Germany attempted to keep up as best she could. In the middle of all this the Belgian king succeeded in securing Congo as his own personal colony.

Empires had existed since prehistory but never previously had the globe been so comprehensively divided up between the great powers, and never before had their economic and strategic interests dominated so many people and countries. This new world order became known as imperialism, a term which came into use in earnest in the 1890s.

For countries that came under the control of European interests, either as colonies or as independent but economically dependent states, this was very significant. There was often investment in infrastructure such as harbours, railways and plantations. For the people, this might mean a better income but also exploitation and repression. Of greatest importance in the long run was, however, the distortion of the countries' economy: Production was geared to exports of raw materials and agricultural products to Europe rather than meeting local needs.

Profits made by European powers from the colonies can be difficult to assess. Looking at individual colonies in isolation there may even have been an overall loss. But imperialism's significance for Europe cannot be quantified simply as the sum of incomes from individual colonies. It was an integrated part



Fig. 3. | Pottery figures of sepoys, i.e. Indians who served as soldiers for the British East India Company or in the British Army. Produced in India as souvenirs for British colonial officials. Ethnographical Collection.

of the economic system and a requirement for the continued expansion of European trade and industry through the 19th and well into the 20th century.

Even though sources are unreliable, the average standard of living in Europe at the end of the 18th century is thought to have been no greater than in the world as a whole. However, by 1913 it was at least three times higher in Europe and the United States than in the rest of the world – and for the most industrialised countries even higher. Our modern division between so-called economically developed and undeveloped countries was founded in the 19th century – in the era of imperialism.

# THE DREAM OF A BETTER PLACE

On a December day in 1876, the leader of the Danish Social Democratic Party, Louis Pio, was summoned by the police and informed that he would shortly be imprisoned. Alternatively, he could accept a sum of money and travel to America. Pio, who had been imprisoned previously, chose to accept the bribe. Together with a handful of friends he attempted to establish a socialist colony in the United States – without success.

Pio's example is unique in Denmark where, at least on paper, freedom of organisation and speech had existed since 1849. In Bismarck's Germany any form of workers' organisation received much harsher treatment. And further east, in Russia, it was not just the Tsar's political opponents who were persecuted – the Jewish minority was also subjected to discrimination and bloody pogroms.

The hope of escaping political and religious persecution was one of the factors which drove millions of Europeans to seek a better life in other continents, primarily North and South America, but also Australia.

Another factor was poverty. Between 1800 and 1900, the European population doubled in size, from c. 200 to c. 400 million. A large proportion of the growing population obtained work in the factories which sprang up, especially in towns. But in agriculture there was an ever-increasing surplus of labour. The situation was most catastrophic in Ireland. Agriculture was poorly developed and the potato was the only food source for thousands. In 1847 the country was hit by potato blight, and in the course of a few years 2 million people were lost from a population of 8.5 million: half died of starvation, the remainder emigrated.

The Irish catastrophe was fortunately an exception. Europe as a whole actually experienced a rising standard of living through the century. But this rise was unequally distributed and it was tempting for the rural poor, especially in areas where industrialisation developed slowly, to make the leap, not just to town, but all the way to America. With the so-called “Homestead Act” of 1862, immigrants to the United States could receive a piece of prairie land more or less for free on which to start their own

Fig. 1. | *Album containing photographs sent home to their family in Denmark by emigrants in America. Danish Modern History.*





Fig. 2. | *Trunk, camp bed, revolver and knife. In 1919 the owner travelled to Argentina where he worked as a gaucho, a kind of cowherd. He later returned to Denmark. Danish Modern History.*

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farm. This was, of course, attractive to European small holders and agricultural workers.

Technological developments, with more and larger steam ships, also made it steadily cheaper to cross the Atlantic and immigration increased markedly towards 1900. Between 1821 and 1914, 44 million Europeans left their homelands, with 1 million emigrating in 1902 alone. For European states, emigration was a safety valve which helped reduce the risk of social unrest.

For those who emigrated, life was naturally very different. Some remained just as poor as they were in their homeland, others experienced progress and a better life. The successful often

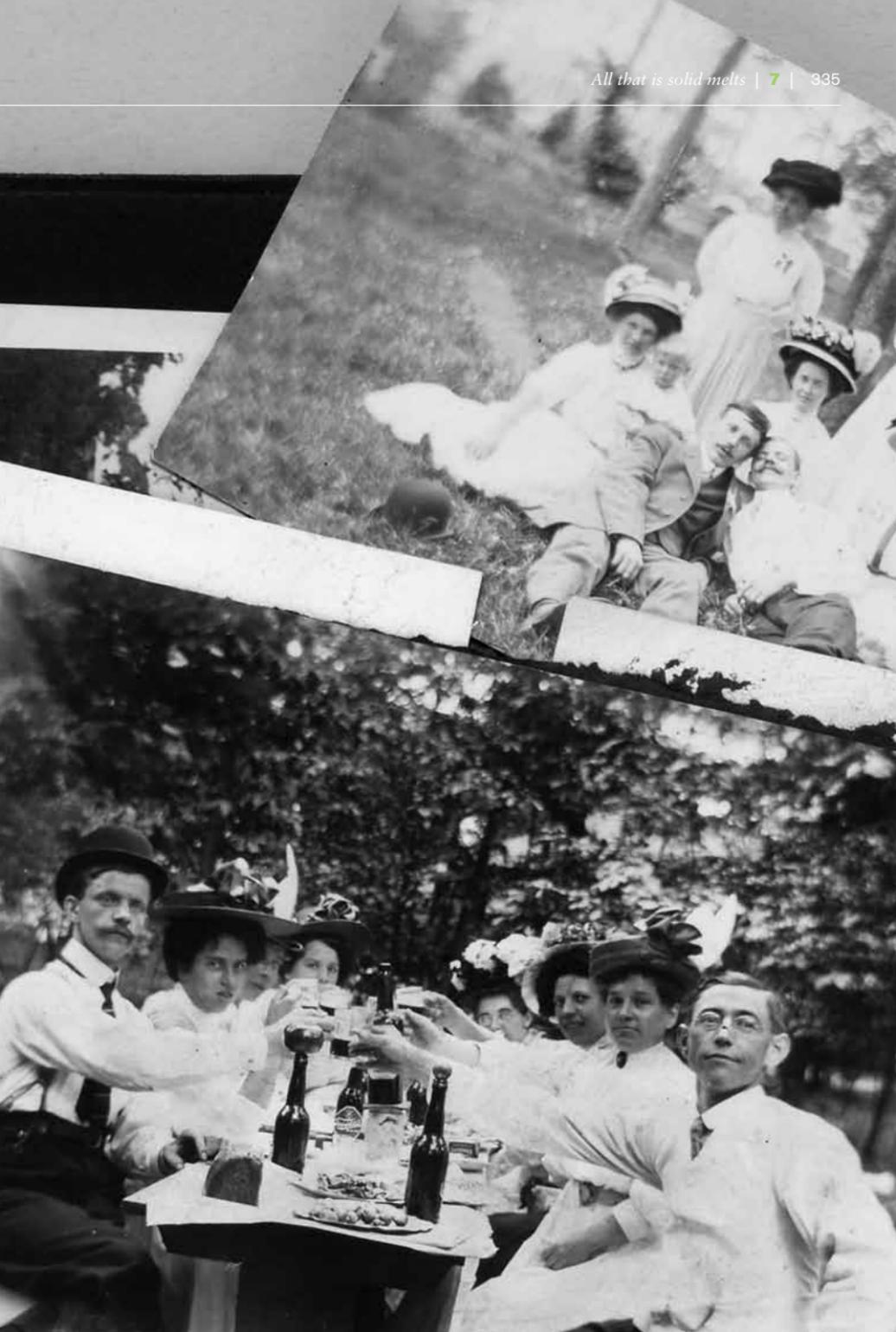
wrote back to their families at home, and perceptions in Europe of what could be achieved on the other side of the Atlantic were probably not diminished as a consequence. But there were emigrants who returned home, either because they couldn't settle abroad or because it had always been their original plan to stay for a few years to save money and then perhaps be able to buy a farm at home in the old country. It is especially possessions of these returned emigrants that subsequently have ended up in the National Museum's collections.

About two thirds of European emigrants chose America as their dream destination. Other popular destinations were Canada, Argentina and Australia. For recipient countries, immigration meant an often welcome addition to the population. In 1800, the population of America was 5.2 million, i.e. just less than today's Denmark. By 1900 it had grown to more than 76 million. It was mostly immigrants who took part in the internal colonisation of "The Wild West" and the transformation of the prairie to agricultural land. Simultaneously, the original native population was pressed into to smaller and smaller reservations.

Towards the end of the 19th century industrialisation really took hold in the United States and entirely new forms of mass production were introduced. It was unskilled European immigrants who became the workers in American industry which, after the turn of the century, caught up with – and in certain areas outcompeted – their old homelands.

LARS K. CHRISTENSEN





The texts in this booklet are my contributions to "EUROPE MEETS THE WORLD", a collection of essays published by the National Museum of Denmark in 2012, as a companion to the exhibition by the same title.

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Arnold Mikkelsen og John Lee

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