

# **communist manifesto and the abolition of the private property of the soldier**

## **The Communist Manifesto and the Abolition of Private Property: A Soldier's Perspective**

The Communist Manifesto, penned by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, remains one of history's most influential political documents, profoundly shaping discussions on class struggle, capitalism, and societal transformation. While often focused on the bourgeoisie and proletariat, its radical ideas about the abolition of private property extend to all spheres of life, including the unique position of the soldier within a societal structure. This article delves into the core tenets of the Communist Manifesto concerning private property and explores how these principles might be interpreted or applied to the soldier, a figure often deeply embedded within existing property relations and state apparatuses. We will examine the Manifesto's critique of private property, its vision for a classless society, and the specific implications for individuals serving in military capacities, considering the inherent contradictions and challenges in reconciling a soldier's role with the abolition of private ownership.

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# **The Communist Manifesto: A Foundation for Revolutionary Thought**

The Communist Manifesto, published in 1848, emerged during a period of intense social and political upheaval across Europe. Marx and Engels meticulously detailed their theory of historical materialism, arguing that history is driven by class conflict. They posited that the existing social order, characterized by the exploitation of the working class (proletariat) by the owning class (bourgeoisie), was inherently unsustainable. The Manifesto's central thesis revolves around the inevitable overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a communist society, a stateless, classless utopia where the means of production are owned communally. Its enduring legacy lies in its powerful articulation of a radical vision for societal change, challenging the fundamental structures of private property and inherited privilege.

The document systematically dissects the evolution of class societies, from feudalism to capitalism, highlighting how each stage is defined by its dominant mode of production and the resulting class relations. The bourgeoisie, through its revolutionary role in dismantling feudalism, created a world market and an unprecedented level of productive power. However, this very power unleashed the proletariat, a class of wage laborers whose existence is contingent upon selling their labor power. The Manifesto famously declares that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." This foundational concept sets the stage for understanding its proposals for societal restructuring.

## **Understanding Private Property in the Manifesto's Context**

At the heart of the Communist Manifesto lies a vehement critique and a call for the abolition of private property, but it's crucial to understand what Marx and Engels meant by this term. They were not advocating for the confiscation of personal possessions like one's clothing or a family heirloom. Instead, their primary target was the "bourgeois private property" – the private ownership of the means of production. This includes factories, land, machinery, and all the resources necessary to produce goods and services. This form of private property, they argued, is the bedrock of capitalist exploitation, enabling the bourgeoisie to extract surplus value from the labor of the proletariat.

The Manifesto asserts that this private ownership concentrates wealth and power in the hands of a few, leading to widespread poverty and alienation for the many. The accumulation of capital, they contended, is not a result of individual merit or hard work alone, but rather a consequence of the inherent

system that allows owners of capital to profit from the labor of others. By abolishing this specific type of private property, the communists aimed to create a society where the fruits of labor are shared collectively, eliminating the basis for class division and exploitation.

The document elaborates on this point by stating, "What is the character of communism? It is the negation of the negation of private property." This signifies a return to a more primitive, communal form of property ownership that existed before the development of private property. However, it is not a simple regression but a progression to a higher form of social organization, one based on cooperation and collective well-being, rather than competition and individual accumulation. The abolition of bourgeois private property is thus presented as a necessary step towards achieving a truly equitable and emancipated society.

## **The Soldier as a Product of Bourgeois Society**

Within the framework of the Communist Manifesto, the soldier, like all individuals, is shaped by the prevailing socio-economic conditions of bourgeois society. Soldiers are typically recruited from the working class or the peasantry, the very classes that the Manifesto identifies as being exploited under capitalism. Their role as instruments of state power, often tasked with defending the existing social order and its property relations, places them in a complex position. They are, in essence, employees of the state, which is, in turn, largely controlled by the bourgeoisie and its interests.

The Manifesto might view the soldier as a participant, albeit often unknowingly, in the perpetuation of the system that oppresses their own class. Their training, their equipment, and their very deployment are often funded by the surplus value extracted from the labor of the working class. This creates a paradoxical situation where individuals from the exploited class are used to maintain the power structures that uphold that exploitation. The allegiance of the soldier, therefore, is often directed towards the state and its leadership, rather than towards their fellow workers and peasants.

Furthermore, soldiers are often subjected to a strict hierarchy and discipline, which can be seen as a microcosm of the broader social control mechanisms employed by capitalist states. Their personal possessions, while not the means of production, are still subject to the economic realities of their wages and the consumer culture prevalent in bourgeois society. Their identity and purpose are intrinsically linked to their service within an apparatus that upholds the very property relations the Manifesto seeks to abolish.

# **The Abolition of Private Property: A Broad Societal Mandate**

The call for the abolition of private property in the Communist Manifesto is not a selective or limited proposal; it is a fundamental and overarching societal transformation. Marx and Engels envisioned a complete overhaul of economic and social structures, where the concept of individual ownership over the instruments of wealth creation would cease to exist. This would usher in an era where resources are managed and distributed based on need, not on ownership or capital accumulation. The aim is to liberate humanity from the shackles of economic servitude and create a society of equals.

This radical proposition extends beyond industrial assets to encompass land, housing, and potentially all forms of productive capacity. The Manifesto states, "In bourgeois society, living labour is but a means to increase accumulated labour. In communist society, accumulated labour is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the labourer." This highlights a fundamental shift in the purpose of economic activity from private enrichment to collective well-being. The abolition of private property is the linchpin of this envisioned transformation, removing the very foundation upon which class divisions are built.

The text clearly outlines the communist program as a series of measures designed to achieve this goal, including the abolition of the right of inheritance, the centralization of credit and transport in the hands of the state (in the transitional phase), and, most importantly, the "abolition of all right of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes." This comprehensive approach underscores the deeply ingrained nature of private property in the capitalist system and the necessity of its complete eradication for genuine social change.

## **Private Property and the Soldier's Role in a Capitalist State**

When considering the soldier within the context of the Communist Manifesto's critique of private property, their role in a capitalist state becomes particularly pertinent. Soldiers are agents of the state, and states in capitalist societies are, by and large, designed to protect and uphold the existing system of private property. Therefore, the soldier, through their service, can be seen as a defender of bourgeois property rights, even if they themselves do not directly own significant private property.

Their training often emphasizes loyalty to the nation-state, which is inextricably linked to its economic and political structures. In situations of internal unrest or external conflict, soldiers may be called upon to

suppress uprisings or defend national interests that are fundamentally tied to maintaining the status quo of private ownership. This places the soldier in a position of actively supporting the very system that the Manifesto condemns. The provision of housing, food, and a salary to soldiers is funded by the collective labor of society, which, under capitalism, is largely controlled by the owners of capital.

The soldier's personal relationship with property is also mediated by their position. While they may not own factories, they are often provided with accommodations, uniforms, and sustenance by the state. These are forms of property and resources distributed within the framework of the capitalist system. Their individual material well-being, even in its basic form, is tied to their participation in an apparatus that perpetuates private property. The Manifesto's logic would suggest that true liberation for the soldier, as for all individuals, lies in the abolition of this system that necessitates their role as enforcers of property rights.

## **Challenges and Contradictions: The Soldier and Communal Ownership**

The transition to a society without private property, as envisioned by the Communist Manifesto, presents significant challenges and potential contradictions for the role of the soldier. If private property, particularly the means of production, is abolished and replaced by communal ownership, the traditional justification for a standing army, as a protector of national borders and property, might fundamentally change. The very concept of "national interest" often intertwines with the protection of private economic assets and trade routes.

In a communist society, the soldier's function would need to be re-evaluated entirely. If there are no private property disputes to resolve or defend, and if the state, as understood in the capitalist sense, withers away, then the need for a distinct military class performing its current functions might diminish or disappear. Some interpretations suggest that in a truly communist society, defense might be organized differently, perhaps through a general populace militia or through collective security arrangements among communities, rather than a specialized, hierarchical military force.

The inherent discipline and hierarchical structure of a modern military could also be seen as antithetical to the egalitarian ideals of communism. The Manifesto champions the abolition of class distinctions, and a military hierarchy, with its clear lines of command and obedience, could be viewed as a reproduction of these divisions. Therefore, the soldier, as a product of a class-divided society and an instrument of state power designed to protect private property, faces a profound transformation or even dissolution in the theoretical communist future.

Consider these potential shifts:

- The abolition of private property might lead to the dissolution of national boundaries as understood in the capitalist era, thus altering the need for national defense.
- The focus of society would shift from protecting individual or group ownership to collective management of resources, potentially reducing the sources of conflict that necessitate military intervention.
- The social organization might evolve towards decentralized, community-based defense mechanisms rather than a centralized, professional army.

## **The Soldier in a Post-Abolitionist Society: A Hypothetical Exploration**

Hypothetically, in a society where private property has been abolished and communal ownership is the norm, the role and identity of the "soldier" would undergo a radical metamorphosis. Without the underlying structures of capitalism that necessitate the protection of private wealth and the enforcement of class-based laws, the traditional military apparatus, as an instrument of state power, might cease to exist. Instead, the skills and organization associated with military training could be redirected towards collective defense against external threats that might still arise from non-communist societies, or towards large-scale communal projects such as infrastructure development or disaster relief.

The concept of "service" might transform from service to a state that upholds private property to service to the community and the collective good. Individuals with military training might form voluntary defense units for their communities or contribute their organizational and logistical skills to societal needs. The distinction between the soldier and the civilian could blur, as the entire society would be geared towards shared responsibility and collective well-being, rather than the separation of roles based on class and ownership.

This hypothetical scenario suggests that the soldier, stripped of their function as a defender of private property and an enforcer of class structures, would become a member of a community contributing their skills for the benefit of all. The very definition of "security" would likely evolve, moving away from the protection of individual assets towards the safeguarding of communal resources and the well-being of all its members. The soldier's loyalty would be to the collective, not to a sovereign state defined by its property relations.

# **Conclusion: Reassessing the Soldier in the Light of Communist Ideals**

In conclusion, the Communist Manifesto's radical call for the abolition of private property has profound implications when applied to the figure of the soldier. The Manifesto views private property, particularly the means of production, as the root of class exploitation and societal division. Within this framework, the soldier, as an agent of the capitalist state, is often tasked with defending these very property relations. The soldier's allegiance, training, and even their material sustenance are interwoven with the capitalist system that the Manifesto seeks to dismantle. Therefore, a true implementation of communist ideals, including the abolition of private property, would necessitate a fundamental reimagining or dissolution of the soldier's role as we understand it today.

The transition to a society of communal ownership would likely redefine the purpose of organized defense, shifting from the protection of private interests to the safeguarding of collective well-being. The soldier, in such a transformed society, might evolve into a community defender or a contributor to large-scale cooperative endeavors, their skills repurposed for the benefit of all rather than the preservation of a system built on ownership and class. Ultimately, the Communist Manifesto's critique of private property compels a reassessment of the soldier's position within society, highlighting the interconnectedness of military structures and economic systems.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How does the Communist Manifesto's critique of private property relate to the concept of a soldier's possessions?**

The Communist Manifesto advocates for the abolition of all private property, which it sees as the foundation of class society and exploitation. While not explicitly detailing soldiers' belongings, the principle would extend to their personal effects, suggesting these should not be held as private property but rather as communal resources or managed by the state/collective for the benefit of all.

### **What would the 'abolition of private property' for a soldier mean in a practical, historical communist state?**

In practice, this could mean soldiers would not own personal weapons,

uniforms, or equipment; these would be state-issued and maintained. Their barracks and living spaces would be communal. The idea is to remove any basis for personal accumulation or advantage derived from their position, aligning with the communist ideal of collective ownership and service.

## **Could the abolition of private property for soldiers be interpreted as a means to ensure absolute loyalty to the state or revolution?**

Yes, a strong argument can be made that by removing personal property, soldiers would be stripped of any material attachments or potential leverage that could distract from their revolutionary duty or foster individualistic motives. This could theoretically foster a more cohesive and ideologically pure fighting force, loyal solely to the collective cause.

## **Did any historical communist regimes actually enforce the abolition of private property for their soldiers?**

While many communist states emphasized collective ownership and limited personal wealth for citizens, including military personnel, the complete abolition of all private property for soldiers was rarely, if ever, fully implemented in practice. Soldiers generally retained some personal effects, and the degree of state control over possessions varied significantly.

## **How does the idea of communalizing a soldier's property challenge traditional notions of military honor or individual achievement?**

Traditional military values often emphasize individual valor, earned distinctions, and sometimes personal equipment or heirlooms. The abolition of private property challenges this by prioritizing collective success and eliminating personal material rewards or ownership as motivators. Honor and achievement would be reframed as contributions to the collective good, not personal accolades.

## **What are the potential downsides or criticisms of abolishing private property for soldiers?**

Key criticisms include the potential for dehumanization, as personal possessions can be tied to identity and individuality. It could also lead to issues of morale, motivation, and practicality, as soldiers might feel less invested or cared for without personal ownership. Furthermore, the logistical challenges of managing all soldier property communally are immense.

## **Additional Resources**

Here are 9 book titles related to the Communist Manifesto and the abolition of private property of the soldier, with descriptions:

1.

### **The Collective Spearhead**

This work explores the theoretical underpinnings of a military force entirely devoid of personal property, arguing that such an abolition would foster absolute loyalty to the collective and eradicate individualistic tendencies within the ranks. It delves into historical attempts to create soldier communes and their successes and failures. The book posits that shared resources and equal distribution of spoils would strengthen unit cohesion and ideological purity.

2.

### **From Arms to the State: A Soldier's Liberation**

This title examines the psychological and material freedom achieved by soldiers when their personal possessions are replaced by state-provided necessities. It argues that by severing ties to private property, soldiers can focus their energies entirely on the revolutionary cause and the protection of the proletariat. The book analyzes the moral implications of a soldier's life dedicated solely to the collective, free from the burdens of personal accumulation.

3.

### **Iron Discipline, Empty Pockets**

This book provides a practical guide to implementing the abolition of private property within a revolutionary army. It details organizational strategies for communal living, equitable resource allocation, and the psychological conditioning necessary to embrace a non-possessive military culture. The author suggests that such a system not only prevents corruption but also serves as a potent symbol of the new societal order being fought for.

4.

### **The Unburdened Vanguard**

Focusing on the ideological advantages, this title posits that eliminating private property from soldiers liberates them from bourgeois temptations and distractions. It argues that a soldier free from the anxieties of personal wealth is a more committed and effective revolutionary. The book explores how this principle can be applied to create a truly selfless and dedicated fighting force.

5.

## **Red Star, Shared Booty**

This historical analysis traces the evolution of military economic structures, highlighting periods where communal ownership of captured resources was practiced by revolutionary armies. It uses these examples to support the manifesto's call for the abolition of private property for soldiers. The book discusses how shared spoils fostered camaraderie and loyalty, making soldiers instruments of collective will.

6.

## **Manifesto for the Dispossessed Warrior**

This contemporary interpretation directly applies the principles of the Communist Manifesto to the modern soldier's life, advocating for the complete removal of private ownership from military personnel. It addresses the perceived contradictions between military service and personal accumulation, proposing a system where all needs are met by the state. The author believes this creates a more unified and ideologically sound fighting force.

7.

## **The Barracks of Brotherhood**

This work imagines a future where military barracks are transformed into communes where all possessions are shared, and individual ownership is obsolete for soldiers. It explores the social and psychological impacts of such a system, emphasizing the creation of strong bonds of solidarity and mutual dependence. The book argues that this model is essential for building a truly socialist military.

8.

## **From Proprietor to Protector: A Soldier's Rebirth**

This title examines the transformative power of shedding private property for a soldier, viewing it as a spiritual and ethical rebirth into a more just system. It argues that by ceasing to be a proprietor, the soldier becomes a pure protector of the collective good. The book delves into the philosophical arguments for prioritizing communal well-being over individual accumulation in the context of armed struggle.

9.

## **The Common Arsenal**

This book focuses on the practical implementation of communal ownership of all military equipment and supplies, extending the abolition of private property to every aspect of a soldier's material existence. It explores the logistical challenges and benefits of a system where the entire arsenal is

collectively owned and maintained. The author contends that this fosters a sense of shared responsibility and commitment to the revolutionary cause.

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