



## Quelle

Friedrich Engels, To the Working Classes of Great-Britain, Vorrede in: F. Engels, Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England (Barmen, 15. März 1845)<sup>1</sup>

### Working Men!

To you I dedicate a work, in which I have tried to lay before my German Countrymen a faithful picture of your condition, of your sufferings and struggles, of your hopes and prospects. I have lived long enough amidst you to know something about your circumstances; I have devoted to their knowledge my most serious attention, I have studied the various official and non-official documents as far as I was able to get hold of them - I have not been satisfied with this, I wanted more than a mere *abstract* knowledge of my subject, I wanted to see you in your own homes, to observe you in your every-day life, to chat with you on your condition and grievances, to witness your struggles against the social and political power of your oppressors. I have done so: I forsook the company and the dinner parties, the port-wine and champaign of the middle-classes, and devoted my leisure-hours almost exclusively to the intercourse with plain Working Men; I am both glad and proud of having done so. Glad, because thus I was induced to spend many a happy hour in obtaining a knowledge of the realities of life - many an hour, which else would have been wasted in fashionable talk and tiresome etiquette; proud, because thus I got an opportunity of doing justice to an oppressed and calumniated class of men who with all their faults and under all the disadvantages of their situation, yet command the respect of every one but an English money-monger; proud, too, because thus I was placed in a position to save the English people from the growing contempt which on the Continent has been the necessary consequence of the brutally selfish policy and general behaviour of your ruling middle-class.

Having, at the same time, ample opportunity to watch the middle-classes, your opponents, I soon came to the conclusion that you are right, perfectly right in expecting no support whatever from them. Their interest is diametrically opposed to yours, though they always will try to maintain the contrary and to make you believe in their most hearty sympathy with your fates. Their doings give them the lie. I hope to have collected more than sufficient evidence of the fact, that - be their words what they please - the middle-classes intend in reality nothing else but to enrich themselves by your labour while they can sell its produce, and to abandon you to starvation as soon as they cannot make a profit by this indirect trade in human flesh. What have they done to prove their professed good-will towards you? Have they ever paid any serious attention to your grievances? Have they done more than paying the expenses of half-a-dozen commissions of inquiry, whose voluminous reports are damned to everlasting slumber among heaps of waste paper on the shelves of the Home-office? Have they even done as much as to compile from those rotting bluebooks a single readable book from which every body might easily get some information on the condition of the great majority of "free-born Britons"? Not they indeed, those are things they do not like to speak of - they have left it to a foreigner to inform the civilized world of the degrading situation you have to live in.

A Foreigner to *them*, not to *you*, I hope. Though my English may not be pure, yet, I hope, you will find it *plain* English. No working man in England - nor in France either, by-the-bye ever treated

---

<sup>1</sup> Diese Quelle stellt eine Vorrede von Friedrich Engels dar, die in folgendem Band abgedruckt ist: Engels, Friedrich, Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England. Nach eigenen Anschauungen und authentischen Quellen, Leipzig 1845, in: Marx/Engles Gesamtausgabe, Erste Abteilung, Band 4, Glashütten 1970, S. 5-6. Transkript angefertigt durch Anne Lammers (Themenportal Europäische Geschichte).

me as a foreigner. With the greatest pleasure I observed you to be free from that blasting curse, national prejudice and national pride, which after all means nothing hut *wholesale selfishness* - I observed you to sympathize with every one who earnestly applies his powers to human progress - may he be an Englishman or not - to admire every thing great and good, whether nursed on your native soil or not - I found you to be more than mere *Englishmen*, members of a single, isolated nation, I found you to be MEN, members of the great and universal family of Mankind, who know their interest and that of all the human race to be the same. And as such, as members of this Family of "One and Indivisible" Mankind, as Human Beings in the most emphatical meaning of the word, as such I, and many others on the Continent, hail your progress in every direction and wish you speedy success. - Go on then, as you have done hitherto. Much remains to be undergone; be firm, be undaunted - your success in certain, and no step you will have to take in your onward march, will be lost to our common cause, the cause of Humanity!

Barmen (Rhenan Prussia) March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1845.

FRIEDRICH ENGELS

---

Friedrich Engels, To the Working Classes of Great-Britain, Vorrede in: F. Engels, Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England (Barmen, 15. März 1845). In: Themenportal Europäische Geschichte (2011), URL: <<http://www.europa.clio-online.de/2011/Article=489>>.

Auf diese Quelle bezieht sich ein einführender und erläuternder Essay von Przyrembel, Alexandra: Friedrich Engels, Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England. Nach eigenen Anschauungen und authentischen Quellen, Leipzig 1845. In: Themenportal Europäische Geschichte (2011), URL: <<http://www.europa.clio-online.de/2011/Article=488>>.