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present



THE YOUNG KARL MARX

[Le jeune Karl Marx]

A film by **Raoul Peck**

Featuring **August Diehl, Stefan Konarske, Vicky Krieps, Olivier Gourmet**

2017 / France-Germany-Belgium / Scope / 118 min

International Sales

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International Press

Rendez-vous

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SYNOPSIS

At the age of 26, Karl Marx embarks with his wife Jenny on the road to exile. In Paris in 1844 they meet young Friedrich Engels, son of a factory owner, who's studied the sordid beginnings of the English proletariat. Engels, somewhat of a dandy, brings Karl Marx the missing piece to the puzzle that composes his new vision of the world. Together, between censorship and police raids, riots and political upheavals, they will preside over the birth of the labor movement, which until then had been mostly makeshift and unorganized. This will grow into the most complete theoretical and political transformation of the world since the Renaissance – driven, against all expectations, by two brilliant, insolent and sharp-witted young men from good families.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Tackling Karl Marx.

But which Marx? A thwarted utopia for some, a work better forgotten for others, a traumatic memory for those in Europe and elsewhere in the world who lived through his intricate legacy? A man and thinking too complex to truly be understood? A dangerous, outdated doctrine?

To end up a tired old man with a hardened look in his eye; someone almost inhuman, frozen in time as a glorious effigy or worse, forever bearded, in wax, at Madame Tussauds' in Berlin, between Angela Merkel and Marlene Dietrich?

And yet, as the world is experiencing a series of exceptional financial crises, there is an unexpectedly renewed interest in Karl Marx, coupled with a rekindled popularity. These last years the worlds' most renowned magazines have put Marx on their covers: Time, Newsweek, Forbes, Financial Times, and even Der Spiegel. Back in 1999 a BBC poll had ranked him first of the century's greatest thinkers – Albert Einstein taking second place. In 2014, the French economist Thomas Piketty sold 450,000 copies – in the United States! - of *Capitalism in the 21st Century*, an analysis shedding its own light on Karl Marx's theories.

These journalists and economists haven't erred in their judgement. As we've recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, it is now possible to get back to fundamentals, to the essence of what Karl Marx's scientific work was. And that without having to shoulder the responsibility or guilt for what doctrines resulting from his work have caused throughout the world: the shattering of the 20th century world order.

From a personal perspective, Karl Marx became a part of my work and life very early on. I've always mistrusted any form of dogma, and therefore "Marxists" themselves. I was lucky enough, however, to be confronted with his work first within a scholarly context in a less polemical period than today. At the time, we spoke of Eurocommunism and new pathways; where Italy, for example, tried to innovate by bringing together unions and parties, leaning towards a more open and more democratic strategy. Whereas at the same time, the French communist party illustrated the extent to which strict adherence to the diktats of the Soviet Union led to failure.

I was 17 years old. I had come to Germany to study at the university in (West!) Berlin. And like many of my friends, both Germans and foreigners, I attended rather early in my academic career, “Kapital” classes. Not only were the classes compulsory in a number of the Free University of Berlin’s schools, (school of sociology, psychology), but they were also an essential matter if one wanted to intelligently and “scientifically” broach the subject within a milieu that was deeply influenced by Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Jürgen Habermas, Max Horkheimer and other members of the “Frankfurt school” in a city bustling with debate like the rebelliously spirited Berlin.

Like many others, I thus conscientiously followed four years of seminars concerning the Kapital's three volumes (“Die drei Bände”), and thus acquired knowledge of and about Karl Marx’s actual work – rather than the dogma.

For a number of Europeans, this still-sensitive chapter of history remains a taboo, a red flag forbidding any reasoned or serene discussion. But the unhealed wounds of this legacy don’t take anything away from the fact that Marx, although he spent most of his life exiled in France and England, was German, and therefore is, as such, an integral part of the country’s patrimony.

I was then confronted with what kind of film to make.

An American-style “biopic”, with a somewhat surly, but somewhat kindly, tired-faced Marx, speaking in English through his bushy beard in a vague political context, shedding a few tears at the successive deaths of his children, cheating on his wife? Assuredly not.

Nor would the film deal with the later years when Marxist thought was led adrift in countries such as the USSR, among others. Wasn’t Scorsese criticized for leaving the Inquisition and forced evangelization out of *The Last temptation of Christ*?

From the outset, I decided to make a film that would speak to the widest audience, without distorting historical truth. Drawing from my personal history and particular perspective, I have given myself the liberty, with Pascal Bonitzer, of tackling the “Young Karl Marx,” to delve into the genesis of this monumental work, as explained so well by Raymond Aron (considered by Jean-Paul Sartre as his conservative mirror image, but who paradoxically ended up being one of the best scholars concerning the work of the young Karl Marx):

“Marxism has the specificity that it can be explained in five minutes, five hours, in five years or in a half century. In fact, it can readily be simplified into a half hour summary, which can eventually allow those who know nothing about the history of Marxism to listen not without a certain irony to those who have spent their lives studying it.”

I wanted the direction to be in a modern and flowing style, to accompany the characters' youthful age and movement. The three main actors took part in rehearsals before filming to create their steadfast friendship, the trio's obvious symbiotic relationship throughout the trials and ordeals of their turbulent youth.

Rather than creating an umpteenth period film, the goal was to concentrate on recreating an atmosphere – the feverish reality of an era - to better immerse the audience in 1840s Europe: the harshness of English factories, the extreme destitution and filth of Manchester streets (comparable to a shanty town), the gilded warmth of Parisian interiors (luxurious residences, libraries, etc.), and the energy of youth eager to change the world, all combined to illustrate the early years of gaping inequalities .

The film was shot to respect the three languages historically used by the characters (French, German, and English). Marx and Engels spoke, wrote and published in German and French, going from one language to the other according to where they were and with whom they were speaking. Most of the film is therefore in French.

This story of Marx's youth isn't fictional in the typical cinematic sense. We wanted to stay as close as possible to the real and lively story of these larger than life characters, staying as close as possible to the era's "Zeitgeist." It is for this reason that we preferred to use direct sources first and foremost (and not the often mutually plagiarized and at times mistaken interpretations of diverse editors and chroniclers).

For this work that took over six years, we combed through the most relevant biographies and research, but also the most critical. In the end we concentrated on both the correspondence exchanged from 1843 to 1850 between the main characters (including the voluminous exchanges between Marx and Engels) and Raymond Aron's lectures at the College de France. All of this work resulted in a screenplay anchored in cinema, far from any form of didacticism.

The old bearded man resting on his dogma has thus been left behind to favor the intellectual and physical adventures of this irrepressible trio (Karl and Jenny Marx, Friedrich Engels), in a tension-filled Europe, vulnerable to censorship, on the cusp of unprecedented popular (and proletarian) revolutions, culminating – for the movie's part – in the writing of “The Communist Manifesto” – this analytically reasoned and radical list of the workings and ill effects of capitalism.

Today, Marx's long gray beard doesn't only hide his face: it eclipses the possibility of a serene reflection, far from polemics, and hinders the exploration of the thinker's actual scientific and political contributions, his extraordinary analytical capabilities, his humanistic aspirations, his justified concerns as for example the distribution of wealth, child labor, equality between men and women, etc. – all major issues quite relevant in today's world – in Europe and elsewhere. It is up to each one of us, afterwards, to ponder over the History that followed this episode.

Before they'd even reached the age of thirty, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had undoubtedly started to change the world – for better or worse.

All that the film intends to propose lies therein: youth and the revolution of ideas.

Raoul Peck

RAOUL PECK

Raoul Peck is a director, screenwriter and producer. Born in Haiti, he was raised in Congo, in the US and in France. He then studied Economic Engineering at the TU Berlin and the DFFB Berlin. Peck served as Haiti's Minister of Culture in 1996 and 1997, and since 2010 he has been the president of La Fémis in Paris, the famous film and television school. In 2001, the Human Rights Watch Organization awarded him with the Irene Diamond Lifetime Achievement Award. He served as jury member at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival, as well as jury member at the Berlinale in 2002.

Selected Filmography

2016 **I Am Not Your Negro**, documentary – 2017 Oscar® nominee, Toronto IFF People's Choice Best Documentary, selected at the 2017 Berlinale Panorama.

2014 **Murder in Pacot [Meurtre à Pacot]** – Toronto IFF 2014

2013 **Fatal Assistance [Assistance mortelle]**, documentary – Berlinale 2013

2009 **Moloch Tropical** – Toronto IFF 2009 and Berlinale 2010

L'école du pouvoir, a Canal+ film

2006 **L'affaire Villemin**, a ARTE-France 3 series

2005 **Sometimes in April**, a HBO series – AFI TV Program of the Year 2006, Berlinale 2005

2000 **Lumumba** – Cannes 2000

1994 **Desounen: Dialogue with Death**, documentary

1993 **The Man on the Shore [L'homme sur les quais]** – Cannes 1993

1990 **Lumumba: Death of a Prophet**, documentary

1988 **Haitian Corner** – Locarno Special Mention 1988

AUGUST DIEHL (Karl Marx)

Born in 1976 in Berlin, August Diehl studied at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Art in Berlin. His breakthrough came with his first role, the leading part in the film *23* (1998) for which he won the Best Actor Award at the Deutscher Filmpreis. He went on to play numerous roles in films as well as on the stage, treading the boards in the most prestigious theatres in the German-speaking world and winning further awards. In Quentin Tarantino's Oscar®-nominated *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), he played the SS-Sturmbannführer Dieter Hellstrom, gaining international recognition, and in *Salt* (2010), Diehl starred alongside Angelina Jolie. In addition to his leading roles in German films *The Coming Day* (2010), *If Not Us, Who?* (2011) and *Shores of Hope* (2012), Diehl also starred in the music video for *Schiffsverkehr*, Herbert Grönemeyer's single in 2011.

At the 2000 edition of the Berlinale, he was named a European Shooting Star and Diehl was also nominated twice for the Best Actor Award at the Deutscher Filmpreis in 2005 and 2011. Many of August Diehl's films have been presented at the Berlinale, and in 2014, he won the Acting Award at the Emden International Film Festival. Director Terrence Malick cast Diehl in the leading role in his forthcoming film, *Radegund*.

Recent Filmography

- 2018 **Radegund** by Terrence Malick
- 2016 **Close to the Enemy**, a BBC series
 - Allied** by Robert Zemeckis
 - Dark Diamond [Diamant noir]** by Arthur Harari
- 2015 **Come What May [En mai, fais ce qu'il te plaît]** by Christian Carion
 - The Disappearing Illusionist [Dirk Ohm]** by Bobbie Peers
- 2013 **Night Train to Lisbon** by Billie August
 - Layla** by Pia Marais
 - The Husband** by Bruce McDonald
- 2012 **Confession of a Child of the Century** by Sylvie Verheyde
 - Shores of Hope [Wir wollten aufs Meer]** by Toke Constantin Hebbeln
- 2011 **If Not Us, Who? [Wer wenn nicht wir]** by Andres Veiel
- 2010 **Salt** by Phillip Noyce
- 2009 **Inglourious Basterds** by Quentin Tarantino

STEFAN KONARSKE (Friedrich Engels)

Stefan Konarske was born in 1980 in Stade. He left home at an early age and spent a portion of his schooldays in Paris. After two years in a private theatre in Hamburg, he joined the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Art in Berlin. Konarske is a successful theatre actor and was elected Best Upcoming Actor by Theater Heute. He appeared in the award-winning German film *NVA* (2005), and collaborated with director Detlev Buck on *Tough Enough* and on *Same Same But Different*.

After several roles for television, including a number of episodes of *Tatort*, he portrayed Deputy Commissioner Daniel Kossik in *Tatort Dortmund*. Konarske is also an established actor in French theatre, television and cinema. In 2014, he took up his first French role under the direction of Marcial Di Fonzo Bo alongside Romain Duris, Marina Foïs and Anaïs Demoustier in *Démon*s, produced by ARTE. Stefan Konarske will appear in Luc Besson's next film, *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets*, to be released this Summer.

VICKY KRIEPS (Jenny Marx)

Vicky Krieps had her first acting experience at the Conservatoire de Luxembourg and the Schauspielhaus Zurich, where she was a student. Krieps has made a name for herself with roles in national and international films, such as the drama *The Colony* also featuring Daniel Brühl, Anton Corbijn's *A Most Wanted Man*, *Measuring the World* by Detlev Buck, and *The Chambermaid Lynn* by Ingo Haeb, for which she received the Best Upcoming Actress Award from the Förderpreis Neues Deutsches Kino.

OLIVIER GOURMET (Joseph Proudhon)

Olivier Gourmet is a Belgian actor. In 1996 he appeared in *La promesse* by Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, and won Namur's Best Actor Award for his performance. He then worked on several other Dardenne films: *Rosetta* (Cannes Palme d'Or 1999), *Le fils* (2002), for which he won the Best Actor Award in Cannes, *L'enfant* (Cannes Palme d'Or 2005), *Lorna's Silence [Le silence de Lorna]* (2008), *The Kid with a Bike [Le gamin au vélo]* (Cannes Grand Prix 2011), and *The Unknown Girl [La fille inconnue]* (2016).

He also played in Jacques Audiard's *Read My Lips [Sur mes lèvres]* (2001), in *The Ax [Le couperet]* by Costa-Gavras (2005), and Jean-François Richet's Mesrine biopic thriller in 2008. In 2011, Olivier Gourmet received a Magritte Award in Belgium, a César Award nomination in France, as well as other international nominations for his lead performance in *The Minister [L'exercice de l'Etat]* by Pierre Schoeller. He then received a second César Award nomination in 2012 for his supporting role in *Grand Central* by Rebecca Zlotowski.

The Young Karl Marx is his first collaboration with Raoul Peck.

CREDITS

Karl Marx

Friedrich Engels

Jenny Marx

Mary Bruns

Joseph Proudhon

Wilhelm Weitling

August Diehl

Stefan Konarske

Vicky Krieps

Hannah Steele

Olivier Gourmet

Alexander Scheer

Director

Raoul Peck

Screenplay

Pascal Bonitzer & Raoul Peck

Cinematographer

Kolja Brandt

Production design

Benoit Barouh

Costume design

Paule Mangenot

Hair design/make-up design

Anne Moralis

Sound Editor

Jörg Theil

Editor

Frédérique Broos

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Nicolas Blanc, Rémi Grellety, Raoul Peck, Robert Guédiguian

Production companies

Agat Films, Velvet Film

Co-producers

Benny Drechsel (Rohfilm), Patrick Quinet (Artémis Productions)

German distributor

Neue Visionen

French distributor

Diaphana Distribution

International Sales

Films Distribution