

IN 2016 PAVEL BÜCHLER COMMISSIONED
a latin translation of a passage from
KARL MARX AND FRIEDRICH ENGELS'
the communist manifesto (1848). it was hand-typeset in *plantin*,
printed in a single copy on a historical press
in the *plantin moretus museum, antwerp*, and photocopied an hour
later at a local copy center.

PHILIPPE PIROTTE

The original sheet, *Factionis Communisticæ Præconium*—1562 was added to the collection of the Hendrik Conscience Heritage Library by Iris Kockelberg, the Plantin Moretus Museum's director. The photocopy, *Factionis Communisticæ Præconium*—1562 (copy), was shown in an exhibition at Tommy Simoens gallery.

If I recall it right, an artist friend of mine once said, 'print suggests truth.' Newspapers, books, printed matter convey the truth. It seems that since the news is less and less 'printed' but more and more travelling in the digital sphere, it is also less 'pressing,' less and less true. As the aforementioned friend is a painter it is funny to think that before photography graphic prints were used to document paintings. These prints were considered to contain 'truthful' information about their counterparts. Fellow painters used them to find out what their colleagues were up to, and processed the information into a new counter-factual practice. Printed texts have this same reminiscence of truth in Western religious history.¹ The Bible is considered a holy book, and though there are many versions, the four canonical ones have become authoritative in their Latin translations. Priests were the gatekeepers, restraining the proletariat from reading the 'truth' on their own, independently from their interpretation. But then Protestants became avid readers by translating the holy book into popular languages. In the Jewish genealogy of subsequent holy books, Karl Marx could be considered as the Messiah nobody was waiting for.

¹ The Quran has to be read aloud; its text repeats time and again.

colonis Ævi Medii exierunt qui cives falsi dicuntur primarum civitatum, quorum e numero genita sunt prima elementa burgariatus.

Inventa America, circumnavigata Africa, burgariatus orienti terrenam novam effecerunt. Mercatus cum Indiarum Orientalium, tum Sinarum, deductio coloniarum in America, necnon bonorum cum coloniis commutatio, numerus auctus mediorem commutationis, et generatim mercium, commercio, navigationi, industriæ quæstuosæ, impetum qualem numquam antea homines noverant, et eodem elementis ad res novas in labentem cultum civilem feudalem inferendas inclinatis evolutionem rapidam dederunt.

Modus operandi qui usque adhuc exsiterat, sive feodalis sive gildalis industriæ quæstuosæ iam non desiderii mercatum novorum et crescentium sufficiebat. In eius loco substituta est fabricatio. Magistri gildonum evicti sunt ab ordine medio industriali; munerum divisio inter varias societates quæstuosas evanuit ante munerum divisionem ipsis in fabricis singulis.

At semper augebantur mercatus, semper ascendebat desiderium. Ne fabricatio quidem adhuc sufficiebat. Tunc vapor et machinæ artem industrialem bona efficiendi renovavit. Locum fabricationis sumpsit magnam industriam nostræ ætatis, locum ordinis medii industrialis millionarii industriales, duces totorum exercituum industrialium, burgarii nostræ ætatis.

Industria quæstuosæ nostræ ætatis mercatum inter gentes totius orbis fundavit, cui America reperta viam paraverat, qui mercatus commercio, navigationi, com-

Flirting with the sacrilegious Pavel Büchler wanted to have the *Communist Manifesto* translated into Latin. It proved difficult but a short piece of the text was in the end translated by a Catholic. Indeed the *Manifesto* was never translated into this language that nobody speaks anymore, except maybe Pavel's Catholic who probably communicates with God in Latin in some kind of *colloque singulier*. The *Manifesto*, though, was meant to be read by everyone, by all potential revolutionaries. It spurred a defiant position against all elitist, authoritative, canonical speech. So why did Pavel want to print an excerpt of the *Manifesto* in Latin and, moreover, why should this have been done on the printing devices of the 16th Century Bill Gates of book-printing Christophe Plantin, one of the early engineers of mechanical reproduction? And why a single copy? Was it to give back an aura to one of the most printed books in the world, in an inversed Benjaminian move? Pavel's unique print—again an insubordination against the function of the machine on which it is made—was added to the famous Plantin Museum Library by its conservator as one of their precious and undeniably 'rare' prints. Burying the *Communist Manifesto* in a library of rare books doesn't make sense to me, but then Pavel made a photocopy of his print, which is shown in art galleries. I am getting nervous while lost among ghosts: Benjamin again, Plantin, Karl Marx and a catholic translator. Could Pavel be a medieval scholastic copyist?

Published and curated
by *Little Krimminals*
— Sara Bernshausen,
Barbara Krimm
and Julia Rosenbaum

Text: Philippe Pirotte
Design: StudioKrimm
Photos: Jonas Lampens

Acknowledgements:
Michael Danner
Steffen Lang /
Druckerei Heenemann
Tanya Leighton Gallery
Philippe Pirotte
Stefan Rueff /
Art Passepartout
Tommy Simoens
Frederike Thonon /
Tommy Simoens Gallery

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