

communist manifesto how to make demands

The Communist Manifesto, a foundational text of political thought, offers a unique lens through which to understand historical struggles and the dynamics of societal change. While its ultimate aims are complex and often debated, a key element of its analysis lies in how it implicitly and explicitly addresses the concept of "making demands" within a class-divided society. This article delves into the principles and historical context surrounding how the Communist Manifesto frames the process of articulating and advancing the demands of the proletariat, exploring the underlying philosophies, strategic implications, and historical examples. Understanding how to make demands through the lens of this seminal work provides valuable insight into historical labor movements, revolutionary theory, and the ongoing discourse on social justice.

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The Communist Manifesto: A Framework for Understanding Demands

The Communist Manifesto, penned by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, is a powerful historical document that analyzes the evolution of society through the lens of class struggle. While its primary focus is on the inevitable overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat, a crucial underlying theme is the process by which the working class learns to articulate and pursue its interests – in essence, how to make demands. The Manifesto doesn't offer a step-by-step manual for demand creation in the modern sense, but rather provides a theoretical framework that illuminates the historical development of workers' demands and their potential to drive social transformation. It posits that demands are not merely requests for minor concessions but are intrinsically linked to the fundamental power imbalances inherent in capitalist societies. By understanding the historical context and the philosophical underpinnings of the Manifesto, one can gain a deeper appreciation for how the articulation of demands has been a driving force in labor history and revolutionary movements.

The document meticulously outlines the adversarial relationship between the bourgeoisie, the owning class, and the proletariat, the working class. This inherent conflict is the fertile ground from which demands emerge. The Manifesto argues that the proletariat, initially fragmented and unaware of its collective power, gradually develops a class consciousness. This burgeoning awareness allows them to identify their shared grievances and to begin formulating demands that challenge the existing social and economic order. The very act of making demands, therefore, is portrayed as a symptom and a catalyst for this evolving consciousness, marking a progression from individual hardship to collective action.

Historical Context of Demands in the 19th Century

To fully grasp the implications of "making demands" as presented in the Communist Manifesto, it is essential to situate it within the turbulent landscape of the 19th century. This era was characterized by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and the nascent stages of organized labor movements. Workers, drawn from agrarian backgrounds to burgeoning factories, faced exploitative working conditions, meager wages, and a complete lack of social safety nets. The demands of these early working-class movements often centered on immediate survival and the amelioration of the most egregious forms of exploitation. These were not abstract political theories but concrete expressions of suffering and the desire for a more humane existence.

The early demands focused on issues such as the abolition of child labor, the establishment of a reasonable workday (often advocating for a 10-hour or even 8-hour day), the improvement of factory safety, and the right to form trade unions. These demands, though seemingly modest by today's standards, represented a significant challenge to the unfettered power of factory owners and the prevailing laissez-faire economic ideology. The Manifesto reflects and synthesizes these historical struggles, recognizing that these piecemeal demands were not ends in themselves but crucial steps in the proletariat's journey towards recognizing its collective strength and ultimate revolutionary potential.

The political climate of the 19th century also played a crucial role in shaping how demands were made. In many nations, suffrage was limited, and workers had little direct political power. This meant that demands had to be advanced through extra-parliamentary means, such as strikes, demonstrations, and the formation of clandestine organizations. The Manifesto acknowledges this reality, emphasizing the need for a political party that could articulate and champion the demands of the proletariat, ultimately aiming to seize state power.

Understanding Class Struggle and the Role of Demands

At the heart of the Communist Manifesto lies the concept of class struggle, defined as the inherent conflict between opposing social classes. The Manifesto famously states, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." Within this framework, the making of demands by the proletariat is not an isolated act but an integral part of this ongoing conflict. The demands serve as markers of the proletariat's growing awareness of its exploited position and its determination to challenge the dominance of the bourgeoisie.

The Manifesto argues that the bourgeoisie, in its relentless pursuit of profit, continuously revolutionizes the means of production, thereby intensifying the exploitation of labor. This constant pressure forces the proletariat to adapt and, crucially, to articulate new demands. These demands are often a direct response to the evolving methods of capitalist production and the new forms of alienation and hardship they create. For instance, as factories grew larger and more complex, the demands for workplace safety and regulations became more pronounced.

The role of demands in this dynamic is multifaceted. Firstly, they serve to unify the working class. By identifying common grievances, workers move beyond individual complaints and recognize their shared interests as a class. Secondly, demands act as a catalyst for organizing. To effectively make and press demands, workers must unite, form unions, and develop political organizations. This process of organization is vital for translating individual suffering into collective power. Finally, the Manifesto suggests that demands can serve a pedagogical function, educating the proletariat about the nature of its oppression and the ultimate need for a radical restructuring of society.

The Unifying Power of Shared Grievances

One of the most significant ways the Communist Manifesto frames how to make demands is by highlighting the unifying power of shared grievances. Before a class can effectively make demands, its members must recognize that their individual struggles are part of a larger, systemic issue. The Manifesto posits that the capitalist mode of production inherently creates a set of common hardships for all workers, regardless of their specific trade or location. These shared grievances, when recognized, become the bedrock upon which collective demands are built.

For example, the long working hours, low wages, and dangerous factory conditions experienced by a textile worker in Manchester were mirrored in the experiences of a coal miner in Wales or a dockworker in Liverpool. The Manifesto suggests that as workers increasingly encountered each other in factories, cities, and through nascent communication networks, they began to see their commonality. This realization of shared suffering is the crucial first step in transforming isolated

individuals into a cohesive class capable of formulating and advancing unified demands. It's about moving from "my low wage" to "our low wages," from "my dangerous job" to "our dangerous jobs."

The Manifesto implicitly argues that articulating these shared grievances through organized channels is essential. This might involve factory meetings, union pamphlets, or public demonstrations. The act of publicly voicing these common complaints serves not only to inform other workers but also to make the ruling class aware of the growing discontent. The shared nature of the grievance amplifies its impact and strengthens the resolve of those making the demand.

Beyond Reform: The Demand for Fundamental Change

While early labor movements often focused on achieving reforms within the existing capitalist system, the Communist Manifesto pushes the concept of making demands further, advocating for demands that fundamentally challenge the system itself. The Manifesto views the reforms sought by many 19th-century workers – such as shorter hours or higher wages – as important but ultimately insufficient to resolve the core contradictions of capitalism. It argues that as the proletariat's consciousness develops, its demands will inevitably escalate from seeking concessions within the system to demanding the abolition of the system altogether.

The Manifesto's ultimate demand for the proletariat is the seizure of political power and the abolition of private property in the means of production. This is presented not as a radical utopian fantasy, but as the logical conclusion of the historical process of class struggle. The demands for things like an "abolition of all right of inheritance" or a "heavy progressive or graduated income tax" (listed in the Manifesto as measures for more developed industrial countries) are not merely aimed at redistribution but at dismantling the mechanisms of capitalist accumulation and inherited wealth.

Therefore, when considering "how to make demands" through the Manifesto's lens, it's about recognizing that while specific, immediate demands are necessary for survival and for building solidarity, they must be understood within a broader strategic framework that aims for fundamental societal transformation. The Manifesto encourages a perspective where every demand, even a reformist one, can be a stepping stone towards the ultimate demand for liberation from capitalist exploitation.

The Role of Political Organization in Demands

The Communist Manifesto strongly emphasizes that the effective articulation and realization of proletarian demands are inextricably linked to political organization. It critiques the fragmented nature of early worker actions and advocates for the formation of a unified political party representing the interests of the entire proletariat. Without such organization, the Manifesto argues, the working class will remain a "formless, scattered mass" incapable of effectively pressing its demands or challenging the organized power of the bourgeoisie.

The Manifesto's proposed demands often require collective action that transcends individual workplaces and even national borders. This necessitates a coordinated political strategy. The formation of trade unions, cooperatives, and, most importantly, a dedicated communist party, are

seen as essential organizational structures for advancing these demands. These organizations provide the framework for:

- Educating workers about their class interests.
- Developing coherent strategies for making and pursuing demands.
- Mobilizing workers for collective action, such as strikes and political campaigns.
- Representing the proletariat in the political arena, aiming to eventually seize state power.

The Manifesto's perspective on making demands is thus inherently political. It is not simply about voicing grievances, but about building the organized power necessary to enforce those demands and to fundamentally alter the power dynamics of society.

From Demands to Action: The Communist Manifesto's Strategy

The Communist Manifesto outlines a strategic progression from the articulation of demands to concrete action, aiming for a revolutionary transformation of society. This strategy involves a gradual escalation of demands, the cultivation of revolutionary consciousness, and the fostering of international solidarity. It is a process that moves from immediate, often localized, concerns to a comprehensive vision of societal upheaval and the establishment of a new social order.

The Manifesto's approach to making demands is not static; it is dynamic and responsive to the evolving conditions created by capitalism. It suggests a cyclical process where demands lead to action, action leads to repression or concessions, and both inform the formulation of new, often more radical, demands. This constant push and pull between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie drives the historical narrative presented in the document.

The ultimate goal, as articulated in the Manifesto, is not merely to improve working conditions or redistribute wealth within the existing framework, but to fundamentally dismantle the capitalist system and establish a classless society. Therefore, the demands made by the proletariat are understood as instruments in this larger, ongoing struggle for emancipation.

The Gradual Escalation of Demands

A key aspect of the Communist Manifesto's approach to making demands is the concept of gradual escalation. The document implies that as the proletariat becomes more organized and its class consciousness deepens, its demands will naturally become more radical and far-reaching. Early demands often focus on immediate amelioration of working and living conditions – the bread-and-butter issues that directly affect daily survival. These might include fair wages, shorter working hours, and safer workplaces.

However, as workers experience the limitations of these reforms and recognize the systemic nature of their exploitation, their demands begin to shift. They start to question the fundamental ownership of the means of production and the distribution of wealth. The Manifesto itself lists ten specific demands for more developed industrial nations, such as the abolition of property in land and the application of all rents of land to public purposes, a heavy progressive or graduated income tax, and the abolition of all right of inheritance. These are clearly more systemic demands than those focused on immediate working conditions.

This escalation is not necessarily a pre-ordained plan but a historical consequence of the ongoing class struggle. The bourgeoisie, in its efforts to maintain its power, often resists even modest demands, thereby pushing the proletariat towards more radical positions. The Manifesto suggests that this dynamic is an inherent part of the process, and that the proletariat's demands will evolve in direct proportion to its growing understanding of its own power and the injustices of the capitalist system.

The Necessity of Revolutionary Consciousness

For the Communist Manifesto, making demands is not merely about articulating needs; it is fundamentally about cultivating and expressing revolutionary consciousness. Revolutionary consciousness, in this context, refers to the proletariat's understanding of its historical role as the revolutionary class destined to overthrow capitalism and establish a communist society. Without this consciousness, the demands made by workers, even if numerous and forcefully expressed, remain within the confines of the existing system and are unlikely to lead to fundamental change.

The Manifesto argues that the bourgeoisie, through its control of economic and political institutions, actively works to prevent the development of this revolutionary consciousness. It seeks to divide the working class and to lull it into a false sense of contentment with minor reforms. Therefore, the process of making demands becomes a crucial pedagogical tool for fostering this consciousness. By challenging the status quo, workers are forced to confront the nature of their oppression and the power structures that perpetuate it.

The act of organizing, striking, and advocating for specific demands serves to politicize the working class. It exposes them to ideas about class solidarity, historical materialism, and the potential for a different kind of society. The Manifesto sees the communist party as playing a vital role in this process, acting as the vanguard that clarifies the theoretical understanding of the revolutionary movement and guides the proletariat in articulating demands that are aligned with its ultimate revolutionary goals.

International Solidarity and Collective Demands

The Communist Manifesto makes a powerful case for international solidarity as a crucial element in how the proletariat makes its demands. The document famously concludes with the rallying cry, "Working Men of All Countries, Unite!" This call underscores the belief that the struggles of the working class are not confined by national borders but are a global phenomenon. Capitalism, in its pursuit of markets and cheap labor, is inherently international, and therefore, the proletariat's

response must also be international.

The Manifesto argues that individual national labor movements, while important, are insufficient on their own to challenge the global power of capital. The bourgeoisie can easily exploit divisions between national working classes, playing them off against each other to depress wages and working conditions. Therefore, to effectively make demands and achieve its ultimate goals, the proletariat must unite across national boundaries, recognizing their shared class interests.

This international solidarity translates into the formulation of collective demands that reflect the common struggles of workers worldwide. It means supporting strikes in other countries, advocating for international labor standards, and ultimately working towards a global revolution. The Manifesto views national oppression as intrinsically linked to economic exploitation under capitalism, and thus, the fight for liberation must be a united, international one. Making demands becomes a global act of solidarity and a unified challenge to the international bourgeoisie.

Examples of Communist Manifesto-Influenced Demands

The influence of the Communist Manifesto can be seen in the evolution of demands made by working-class movements throughout history. While not every demand made by a labor union directly originates from a specific sentence in the Manifesto, the underlying principles of class consciousness, systemic critique, and the pursuit of collective power have profoundly shaped the trajectory of such demands.

These examples illustrate how the theoretical framework provided by the Manifesto has been translated into practical action and the articulation of specific grievances and aspirations by the proletariat. The ongoing dialogue between Marxist thought and labor activism demonstrates the enduring relevance of understanding how demands are made within a class-divided society.

Early Labor Movement Demands

The early demands of the 19th-century labor movement, even before the widespread dissemination of the Communist Manifesto, were often in line with the document's analysis of worker exploitation. The struggle for the ten-hour workday, for instance, was a direct response to the grueling sixteen-hour shifts common in factories. This demand was not just about personal comfort but about reclaiming time for family, rest, and political activity, thereby beginning to challenge the bourgeoisie's absolute control over the laborer's life.

Demands for the abolition of child labor also reflected a growing awareness that the capitalist drive for profit was inherently dehumanizing. The Manifesto implicitly supports such demands by highlighting how the bourgeoisie reduces labor to a mere commodity, including the labor of children. The fight against unsafe working conditions and for rudimentary safety regulations, like proper ventilation or guards on machinery, were also direct challenges to the capitalist imperative to minimize costs, even at the expense of human life.

Furthermore, the very act of forming trade unions and demanding the right to collective bargaining was a significant step in making collective demands. The Manifesto would see this as the proletariat beginning to assert its organized power, moving away from individual supplication towards a collective assertion of rights.

Political Reforms and the Suffrage Movement

The Communist Manifesto's emphasis on seizing political power directly informed many of the political reform demands made by working-class movements. While the Manifesto advocates for the proletariat to use its political power to abolish the bourgeoisie, it also recognizes the interim necessity of winning political rights within existing systems. The struggle for universal suffrage, or the right to vote for all adult men (and later, women), was a crucial demand that enabled the working class to have a voice in the political arena.

The Manifesto's demand for a "heavy progressive or graduated income tax" is a clear example of a demand aimed at redistributing wealth and diminishing the economic power of the bourgeoisie. Such demands were often linked to the political struggle for increased social spending on public services like education, healthcare, and infrastructure, which were seen as benefiting the working class disproportionately. The fight for the repeal of laws that restricted trade unions and the right to strike also falls under this category of political demands aimed at empowering the working class.

These political reform demands were not seen as ends in themselves by those influenced by the Manifesto, but as necessary steps in building the power and consciousness of the proletariat to ultimately achieve a more fundamental transformation.

Post-Manifesto Revolutionary Movements

Following the publication of the Communist Manifesto, its ideas significantly shaped numerous revolutionary movements across the globe, influencing the nature and articulation of their demands. The Paris Commune of 1871, though preceding the full impact of the Manifesto, foreshadowed many of its themes, with demands for the separation of church and state, the election of officials by universal suffrage, and the suspension of debts. Later socialist and communist revolutions, from the Russian Revolution of 1917 to various anti-colonial movements in the 20th century, explicitly or implicitly echoed the Manifesto's call for the proletariat to seize power and establish a new social order.

The demands made in these revolutions often included the nationalization of key industries, the collectivization of agriculture, the establishment of workers' councils (soviets), and the implementation of planned economies. These were demands aimed at dismantling the capitalist system wholesale and replacing it with a socialist or communist one. The Manifesto's emphasis on international solidarity was also evident in the rhetoric and actions of many of these movements, which often sought to inspire and support similar uprisings in other nations.

While the outcomes and interpretations of these revolutionary movements are complex and widely debated, their demands undeniably reflect the core tenets of the Communist Manifesto regarding the

need for fundamental societal change driven by the organized working class.

Modern Interpretations of "Making Demands" Through the Manifesto's Lens

Even today, the Communist Manifesto offers a compelling framework for understanding how various social and economic groups can effectively make demands. While the explicit goal of proletarian revolution may not be the focus of every contemporary movement, the principles of identifying systemic oppression, building solidarity, and articulating collective grievances remain highly relevant. Modern social justice movements, labor unions, and political activists can draw upon the Manifesto's analysis to sharpen their strategies for demanding change.

For instance, the contemporary focus on issues like economic inequality, fair wages, workers' rights, and environmental justice can be seen as a continuation of the class struggle as analyzed by Marx and Engels. The Manifesto's insistence on understanding the root causes of these issues, rather than just addressing symptoms, encourages a deeper, more systemic approach to demand-making. This involves identifying the power structures and economic policies that create and perpetuate these disparities.

The Manifesto's emphasis on the power of organized collective action also resonates strongly in modern activism. From online petitions and social media campaigns to large-scale protests and strikes, the principle of uniting people around shared demands is a testament to the enduring influence of Marxist thought. The understanding that individual voices can become a powerful chorus when amplified by collective organization is a direct legacy of the ideas presented in the Manifesto.

Conclusion: The Enduring Relevance of Communist Manifesto-Inspired Demands

The Communist Manifesto, despite its historical context, continues to provide a powerful analytical tool for understanding how to make demands within societies characterized by power imbalances. Its core message emphasizes that demands are not isolated requests but are intrinsically linked to the broader dynamics of class struggle. By understanding the historical evolution of these demands, from early calls for basic protections to revolutionary aspirations for systemic change, we gain insight into the forces that have shaped modern societies and continue to drive social progress.

The Manifesto's emphasis on shared grievances as a unifier, the escalation of demands towards fundamental change, the necessity of political organization, and the power of international solidarity all offer enduring lessons for contemporary movements. Whether advocating for labor rights, economic justice, or social equality, the principles outlined by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto remain a vital resource for those seeking to understand and enact meaningful change by effectively making their demands heard and acted upon.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the fundamental demands outlined in the Communist Manifesto for the proletariat?

The Communist Manifesto outlines several key demands for the proletariat, often presented as immediate measures to be implemented by the victorious working class. These include the abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes, a heavy progressive or graduated income tax, abolition of all rights of inheritance, confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels, centralization of credit in the hands of the state by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly, centralization of the means of transportation in the hands of the state, extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state, the equal liability of all to labor, establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture, combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries, gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country by a more equable distribution of the population over the country, and abolition of all child labor in factories in its present form. Education of all children from public funds and their participation in the fruits of public production are also crucial demands.

How does the Communist Manifesto suggest the working class should articulate and enforce their demands?

The Manifesto suggests that the articulation and enforcement of demands are intrinsically linked to the working class's revolutionary action. It posits that these demands will arise from the process of overthrowing bourgeois rule and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. The collective organization of the proletariat into a class, and ultimately into a political party, is the primary mechanism for articulating and pushing these demands. The enforcement would then be through the state power held by this revolutionary class.

What is the historical context for the demands made in the Communist Manifesto?

The demands in the Communist Manifesto are rooted in the critique of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution prevalent in the mid-19th century. Marx and Engels observed the stark inequalities, exploitation of labor, and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The demands are a response to these perceived injustices, aiming to dismantle the existing bourgeois property relations and establish a society where the means of production are collectively owned and controlled, thereby eliminating class exploitation.

Are the demands in the Communist Manifesto meant to be universally applicable or are they context-specific?

While the Manifesto presents its demands as a program for the international proletariat, their initial framing and emphasis are heavily influenced by the specific socio-economic conditions of mid-19th century industrializing Europe. Marx and Engels acknowledged that the specific measures would vary from country to country. However, the underlying principles of abolishing private property in the means of production and establishing a classless society are presented as universal goals for the proletariat.

How does the concept of 'abolition of private property' relate to the specific demands for land, credit, and transportation?

The 'abolition of private property' in the Manifesto refers specifically to the abolition of bourgeois private property, meaning property that is used to exploit wage labor. The demands for land, credit, and transportation are specific examples of how this broader principle would be enacted. By placing these essential sectors under state control (representing the collective will of the proletariat), the Manifesto aims to eliminate the capitalist's ability to profit from these resources and to ensure they serve the needs of society as a whole, rather than private interests.

What role does the state play in enacting the demands of the Communist Manifesto?

According to the Communist Manifesto, the state plays a crucial, albeit transitional, role in enacting the proletariat's demands. The victorious proletariat would use the existing state apparatus, transformed into the 'dictatorship of the proletariat,' to gradually wrest all capital from the bourgeoisie, centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, and increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible. The state, in this view, is the instrument through which the abolition of class distinctions and the transition to communism would be managed.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to "Communist Manifesto: How to Make Demands," with descriptions:

1.

The Power of the Proletariat: A Guide to Collective Action

This book explores historical and contemporary examples of how organized labor and marginalized groups have successfully leveraged collective power to articulate and achieve their demands. It delves into the strategic planning, communication, and negotiation tactics essential for effective mobilization. Readers will learn about building solidarity, identifying key leverage points, and navigating the complexities of power dynamics.

2.

Manifesto for a New Era: Articulating the People's Will

This title focuses on the contemporary relevance of the manifesto as a tool for social and political change. It examines how to translate abstract desires for justice and equality into concrete, actionable demands that resonate with broad publics. The book provides frameworks for crafting compelling narratives and organizing diverse voices to amplify shared aspirations.

3.

From Grievance to Governance: Demanding a Better Society

This work bridges the gap between identifying societal injustices and actively participating in the process of shaping policy and governance. It offers practical strategies for translating grievances into

well-defined demands that can be presented to institutions. The book emphasizes the importance of understanding existing power structures to effectively challenge and reform them.

4.

The Art of the Demand: Negotiating for Social Justice

This book dissects the linguistic and strategic elements involved in making effective demands for social justice. It examines how language, framing, and timing can influence the reception and potential success of demands. Through case studies and theoretical insights, it guides readers on how to articulate needs persuasively and secure meaningful concessions.

5.

Blueprint for Change: Crafting Your Manifesto

This practical guide provides a step-by-step approach to creating a personal or group manifesto focused on driving societal change. It encourages deep reflection on core values and desired outcomes, then translates these into clear, impactful demands. The book offers tools for research, consensus-building, and dissemination to ensure maximum reach and influence.

6.

Echoes of the Manifesto: Contemporary Struggles and Demands

This title revisits the foundational principles of revolutionary manifestos and applies them to modern-day struggles for economic fairness, environmental protection, and human rights. It analyzes how the spirit of demanding systemic change continues to inform activism across various movements. The book highlights the enduring power of clearly articulated demands in challenging oppressive systems.

7.

The Language of Liberation: Articulating Demands for Freedom

This exploration focuses on the critical role of language in defining and demanding liberation from various forms of oppression. It examines how revolutionary texts and movements have used language to frame their struggles and articulate their aspirations. The book provides insights into developing powerful rhetoric that can mobilize support and inspire action for radical societal transformation.

8.

Organizing for Power: From Local Demands to Global Impact

This book offers a comprehensive look at the principles and practices of grassroots organizing for the purpose of making impactful demands. It details how to build strong organizations, develop clear demands, and execute strategies that can influence local, national, and even international policy. The work underscores the importance of sustained effort and strategic adaptation in achieving long-term social change.

The Demanding Citizen: Rights, Responsibilities, and Resistance

This title examines the evolving role of the engaged citizen in a democracy, emphasizing the proactive nature of making demands for improved social and political conditions. It explores the historical context of citizenship as a force for demanding accountability and advocating for the common good. The book encourages readers to understand their rights and responsibilities in actively shaping the society they wish to inhabit.

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