

*The Communist Manifesto*, a pamphlet authored by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, was published for the first time in early 1848, on the eve of revolutionary outbreaks across Europe. Even though these subsequent revolutions, which were met with counter-revolution, did not produce the dramatic changes that the two Germans had anticipated in the *Manifesto*, the authors came to view the social upheaval as part of a process that would still eventually result in worldwide communism. As they indicated twenty-five years later in the preface to another printing, they believed the manifesto's general outline and principles continued to be valid, and that, while some details might stand improvement, it was now a "historical document" that should not be subject to revisions. *The Communist Manifesto* indeed became, as Engels pointed out in the preface to an 1890 edition, "the most widely circulated, the most international product of all socialist literature, the common program of many millions of workers..."

Engels acknowledged in the preface to an 1888 edition (Marx had passed away in 1883) that the manifesto's "fundamental proposition" originated with Marx and not with him. Specifically, that "the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange" is at the foundation of every historical epoch; the "history of mankind has been a history of class struggles"; and "the history of these class struggles forms a series of evolutions" that will culminate in the triumph of the proletariat (the working class) over the bourgeoisie (the capitalist ruling class) and the emancipation of "society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinction, and class struggles."

The first edition of the *Manifesto* was written and published in German. It appeared in English for the first time two years later in 1850 in *Red Republican*, a British socialist newspaper, having been translated by Helen Macfarlane. Macfarlane had actually associated with Marx and Engels in London and possibly with Marx in Vienna prior to her translation of the *Manifesto*. Her translation is acknowledged by both of them in the preface to the 1872 German edition and by Engels in the preface to the 1888 English edition. The following excerpt is from Macfarlane's translation and contains portions from the *Manifesto* that Marx and Engels believed would stand the test of time.

### ***The Communist Manifesto***

(*Helen Macfarlane: Red Republican*, edited and introduced by David Black, Unkant Publishers, 2014, pages 120, 124-133, 136-139 & 149; her translation of *The Communist Manifesto* was originally published in *Red Republican*, November 9, 16, 23 & 30, 1850.)

...the history of Society has been the history of the battle between the classes composing it. Freeman and Slaves, Patricians and Plebeians, Nobles and Serfs, Members of Guilds and Journeymen—in a word, the oppressors and the oppressed, have always stood in direct opposition to each other. The battle between them has sometimes been open, sometimes concealed, but always continuous. A never-ceasing battle, which has invariably ended, either in a revolutionary alteration of the social system, or in the common destruction of the hostile classes.

...New classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms and modes of carrying on the struggle, have been substituted for the old ones. The characteristic of our Epoch, the Era of

the Middle-class, or Bourgeoisie, is that struggle between the various Social Classes has been reduced to its simplest form. Society incessantly tends to be divided into two great camps, into two great hostile armies, the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat.

...Modern middle-class society, which has revolutionized the conditions of property, and called forth such colossal means of production and traffic, resembles the wizard who evoked the powers of darkness, but could neither master them, nor yet get rid of them when they had come at his bidding. The history of manufactures and commerce has for many years been the history of revolts of modern productive power against the modern industrial system—against the modern conditions of property—which are vital conditions, not only of the supremacy of the middle-class, but of its very existence. It suffices to mention the commercial crises which, in each of their periodical occurrences, more and more endanger the existence of middle-class society. In such a crisis, not only is a quantity of industrial products destroyed, but a large portion of the productive power itself. A social epidemic breaks out, the epidemic of over-production, which would have appeared a contradiction in terms to all previous generations. Society finds itself suddenly thrown back into momentary barbarism; a famine, a devastating war, seems to have deprived it of the means of subsistence; manufacturers and commerce appear annihilated—and why? Because society possesses too much civilization, too many of the necessities of life, too much industry, too much commerce.

The productive power possessed by society no longer serves as the instrument of middle-class civilization, of the middle-class conditions of property; on the contrary, this power has become too mighty for this system, it is forcibly confined by these conditions; and whenever it surpasses these artificial limitations, it deranges the system of Bourgeois society, it endangers the existence of Bourgeois property. The social system of the middle-class has become too small to contain the riches it has called into being. How does the middle-class try to withstand these commercial crises? On the one hand, by destroying masses of productive power; on the other, by opening up new markets, and using up the old ones more thoroughly. That is, they prepare the way for still more universal and dangerous crises, and reduce the means of withstanding them. The weapons with which the middle-class overcame feudalism are now turned against the middle-class itself. And the Bourgeoisie have not only prepared the weapons for their own destruction, they have also called into existence the men that are destined to wield these weapons, namely, the modern working men, the Proletarians.

The development of the Proletariat has kept pace with the development of the middle-class—that is, with the development of capital; for the modern working men can live only as long as they find work, and they find it only as long as their labour increases capital. These workers, who must sell themselves by piecemeal to the highest bidder, are a commodity like other articles of commerce, and, therefore, are equally subject to the variations of the market, and the effects of competition. Through the division of labour and the extension of machinery, work has lost its individual character, and therefore its interest for the operative. He has become merely an accessory to, or a part of the machine, and all that is required of him is a fatiguing, monotonous, and merely mechanical operation. The expense the wages-slave causes the capitalist is, therefore, equal to the cost of his keep and

of the propagation of his race. The price of labour, like that of any other commodity, is equal to the cost of its production. Therefore wages decrease in proportion as the work to be performed becomes mechanical, monotonous, fatiguing, and repulsive. Further, in proportion as the application of machinery and the division of labour increase, the amount of work increases also, whether it be through an increase in the hours of work, or in the quantity of it demanded in a given time, or through an increased rate of velocity of the machinery employed.

...The whole historical movement is thus, as yet, concentrated in the hands of the Bourgeoisie, every victory is won for them. But the increase of the Proletariat keeps pace with the evolution of production; the working-class is brought together in masses, and learns its own strength. The interests and position of different trades become similar, because machinery tends to reduce wages to the same level, and to make less and less difference between the various kinds of labour. The increasing competition amongst the middle-class, and the commercial crises consequent thereupon, make wages always more variable, while the incessant improvements in machinery make the position of the Proletarians more and more uncertain, and the collisions between the individual workmen and the individual masters, assume more and more the character of collisions between two classes. The workmen commence to form trade-unions against the masters; they turn out, to prevent threatened reductions in their wages. They form associations to help each other in, and to provision themselves for, these occasional revolts. Here and there the struggle takes the form of riots.

...This organization of the Proletarians into a class, and therewith into a political party, is incessantly destroyed by the competitive principle. Yet it always reappears, and each time it is stronger and more extensive.

...The Proletariat is the only truly revolutionary Class amongst the present enemies of the Bourgeoisie. All the other classes of Society are being destroyed by the modern industrial system, the Proletariat is its peculiar product.

...The vital conditions of Society, as at present constituted, no longer exist for the Proletariat. Its very existence is a flagrant contradiction to those conditions. The Proletarian has no property; the relation in which he stands to his family has nothing in common with Middle-class family relationships; the modern system of industrial labour, the modern slavery of Labour under Capital, which obtains in England as in France, in America as in Germany, has robbed him of his National Character. Law, Morality, Religion, are for him so many Middle-class prejudices, under which so many Middle-class interests are concealed. All the hitherto dominant Classes, have tried to preserve the position they had already attained, by imposing the conditions under which they possessed and increased their possessions, upon the rest of Society. But the Proletarians can gain possession of the Productive power of Society—of the instruments of Labour—only by annihilating their own, hitherto acknowledged mode of appropriation. The Proletarians have nothing of their own to secure, their task is to destroy all previously existing private securities and possessions. All the historical movements hitherto recorded were the movements of minorities, or movements in the interest of minorities. The Proletarian

movement is the independent movement of the immense majority in favour of the immense majority. The Proletariat, the lowest stratum of existing society, cannot arouse, cannot rise without causing the complete disruption and dislocation of the superincumbent classes. Though the struggle of the Proletariat against the Bourgeoisie is not a National struggle in its Content—or Reality—it is so in its Form. The Proletarians of every country must settle accounts with the Bourgeoisie there.

While we have thus sketched the general aspect presented by the development of the Proletariat, we have followed the more or less concealed Civil War pervading existing Society, to the point where it must break forth in an open Revolution, and where the Proletarians arrive at the supremacy of their own class through the violent fall of the Bourgeoisie. We have seen that all previous forms of Society have rested upon the antagonism of oppressing and oppressed Classes. But in order to oppress a Class, the conditions under which it can continue at least its enslaved existence must be secured. The Serf in the Middle Ages, even within his serfdom, could better his condition and become a member of the Commune; the burghers could become a Middle-class under the yoke of feudal Monarchy. But the modern Proletarian, instead of improving his condition with the development of modern Industry, is daily sinking deeper and deeper even below the conditions of existence of his own Class. The Proletarian tends to become a pauper, and Pauperism is more rapidly developed than population and Wealth. From this it appears, that the Middle-class is incapable of remaining any longer the ruling Class of Society, and of compelling Society to adopt the conditions of Middle-class existence as its own vital conditions. This Class is incapable of governing, because it is incapable of ensuring the bare existence of its Slaves, even within the limits of their slavery, because it is obliged to keep them, instead of being kept by them. Society can no longer exist under this Class, that is, its existence is no longer compatible with that of Society. The most indispensable condition for the existence and supremacy of the Bourgeoisie is the accumulation of Wealth in the hands of private individuals, the formation and increase of Capital.

The condition upon which Capital depends is the Wages-system, and this system again, is founded upon the Competition of the Proletarians with each other. But the progress of the modern industrial system, towards which the Bourgeoisie lend an unconscious and involuntary support, tends to supersede the isolated position of Proletarians by the revolutionary Union of their Class, and to replace Competition by Association. The progress of the modern industrial system, therefore, cuts away, from under the feet of the Middle-class, the very ground upon which they produce and appropriate to themselves the produce of Labour. Thus the Bourgeoisie produce before all the men who dig their very grave. Their destruction and the victory of the Proletarians are alike unavoidable.

...What relationship subsists between the Communists and the Proletarians?—The Communists form no separate party in opposition to the other existing working-class parties. They have no interest different from that of the whole Proletariat. They lay down no particular principles according to which they wish to direct and to shape the Proletarian movement. The Communists are distinguishable among the various sections of the Proletarian party on two accounts—namely, that in the different national Proletarian struggles, the Communists understand, and direct attention to, the common interest of the

collective Proletariat, an interest independent of all nationality; and that, throughout the various phases of development assumed by the struggle between the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat, the Communists always represent the interest of the Whole Movement. In a word, the Communists are the most advanced, the most progressive section, among the Proletarian parties of all countries; and this section has a theoretical advantage, compared with the bulk of the Proletariat—it has obtained an insight into the historical conditions, the march, and the general results of the Proletarian Movement. The more immediate aim of the Communists is that of all other Proletarian sections. The organization of the Proletariat as a class, the destruction of Middle-class supremacy, and the conquest of political power by the Proletarians.

The theoretical propositions of the Communists are not based upon Ideas, or Principles, discovered by this or that Universal Reformer. Their propositions are merely general expressions for the actual conditions, causes, etc., of an existing battle between certain classes, the conditions of an historical Movement which is going on before our very eyes.

The abolition of existing conditions of Property does not form a distinguishing characteristic of Communism. All such conditions have been subject to a continual change, to the operation of many historical Movements. The French Revolution, for example, destroyed the feudal conditions of property, and replaced them by Bourgeois ones. It is not, therefore, the abolition of property generally which distinguishes Communism; it is the abolition of Bourgeois property. But Modern Middle-class private property is the last and most perfect expression for that mode of Production and Distribution which rests on the antagonism of classes, on the using up of the many by the few. In this sense, indeed, the Communists might resume their whole Theory in that single expression—The abolition of private property.

It has been reproached to us, the Communists, that we wish to destroy the property which is the product of man's own labour; self-acquired property, the basis of all personal freedom, activity, and independence. Self-acquired property! Do you mean the property of the small shopkeeper, small tradesman, small peasant, which precedes the present system of Middle-class property? We do not need to abolish that, the progress of industrial development is daily destroying it. Or do you mean modern Middle-class property? Does labour under the Wages-system create property for the Wages-slave, for the Proletarian? No. It creates Capital, that is, a species of property which plunders Wages-labour, in order to use it up anew. Property, in its present form, rests upon the antagonism of Capital and Wages-labour...

You are horrified that we aim at the abolition of private property. But under your present system of society, private property has no existence for nine-tenths of its members; its existence is based upon the very fact that it exists not at all for nine-tenths of the population. You reproach us, then, that we aim at the abolition of a species of property which involves, as a necessary condition, the absence of all property for the immense majority of society. In a word, you reproach us that we aim at the destruction of YOUR property. That is precisely what we aim at.

...The Communists are further reproached with desiring to destroy patriotism, the feeling of Nationality.

The Proletarian has no Fatherland. You cannot deprive him of that which he has not got. When the Proletariat obtains political supremacy, becomes the National Class, and constitutes itself as the Nation—it will, indeed, be national, though not in the Middle-class sense of the word. The National divisions and antagonisms presented by the European Nations, already tend towards obliteration through the development of the Bourgeoisie, through the influence of free-trade, a worldwide market, the uniformity of the modern modes of Production and the conditions of modern life arising out of the present industrial system.

The supremacy of the Proletariat will hasten this obliteration of national peculiarities, for the united action of—at least—all civilized countries is one of the first conditions of Proletarian emancipation. In proportion to the cessation of the using up of one individual by another, will be the cessation of the using up of one nation by another. The hostile attitude assumed by nations towards each other will cease with the antagonisms of the classes into which each nation is divided.

...the first step in the proletarian revolution will be the conquest of Democracy, the elevation of the Proletariat to the state of the ruling class. The Proletarians will use their political supremacy in order to deprive the middle-class of the command of capital; to centralize all the instruments of production in the hands of the State, that is, in those of the whole proletariat organized as the ruling class, and to increase the mass of productive power with the utmost possible rapidity. It is a matter of course that this can be done...

When class distinctions will have finally disappeared, and production will have been concentrated in the hands of this Association which comprised the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power in the exact sense of the word, being the organized power of one class, which enables it to oppress another. When the proletariat has been forced to unite as a class during its struggle with the Bourgeoisie, when it has become the ruling class by a revolution, and as such has destroyed, by force, the old conditions of production, the conditions of existence of all class antagonism, of classes generally, and thus it destroys, also, its own supremacy as a class. The old Bourgeois Society, with its classes, and class antagonisms, will be replaced by an association, wherein the free development of EACH is the condition of the free development of ALL.

...The Communists invariably support every revolutionary movement against the existing order of things, social and political. But in all these movements, they endeavour to point out the property question, whatever degree of development, in every particular case, it may have obtained—as the leading question. The Communists labour for the union and association of the revolutionary parties of all countries. The Communists disdain to conceal their opinions and ends. They openly declare that these ends can be attained only by the overthrow of all hitherto existing social arrangements. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist Revolution. The Proletarians have nothing to lose in it save their chains. They will gain a World. Let the Proletarians of all countries unite!