

The Communist Manifesto

A Study Guide



These notes are designed to help new comrades to understand some of the basic ideas of Marxism and how they relate to the politics of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL). More experienced comrades leading the educational can use the tutor notes to expand on certain key ideas and to direct comrades to other reading.

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Background to the Manifesto

The text

Karl Marx wrote the Manifesto of the Communist Party in German. It was first published in February 1848. It has sometimes been misdated 1847, including in Marx and Engels' own writings, by Kautsky, Lenin and others.

The standard English translation was done by Samuel Moore in 1888 and authorised by Frederick Engels. It can be downloaded from the Marxist Internet Archive
<http://www.marxists.org.uk/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm>

There are scores of other editions by different publishers and with other translations. Between 1848 and 1918, the Manifesto was published in more than 35 languages, in some 544 editions, (Beamish 1998 p.233)

The text is also in the *Marx and Engels Collected Works* (MECW), Volume 6, along with other important articles, drafts and reports from the time.
<http://www.marxists.org.uk/archive/marx/works/cw/volume06/index.htm>

The context

The Communist Manifesto was written for and published by the Communist League, an organisation founded less than a year before it was written.

In early 1846 Marx, Engels and others founded the Communist Correspondence Committee (CCC), which aimed to put European communists in touch with one another. The CCC wrote to other prominent socialists, such as George Julian Harney in England, Proudhon and Cabet in France, asking them to join. The former agreed, the latter two declined.

It was in this way that Marx, in the spring of 1846, first established contact with Carl Schapper, Heinrich Bauer and Joseph Moll and the League of the Just in London. The League of the Just worked with the German Workers' Educational Society, founded in 1840.

The League of the Just convened its first international congress in London on 2-9 June 1847. Engels attended as the representative of the Paris Communist Correspondence Committee and Wilhelm Wolff, because of Marx's financial problems, represented the Brussels Committee.

The Conference agreed to change the organisation's name to the Communist League and its leading slogan to Proletarier aller Länder vereinigt Euch! (Workers of all Countries, Unite!) Engels wrote a *Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith* and a new set of rules were drafted during the congress. A circular was sent out explaining the new turn and opening a debate on the programme. And a bimonthly paper, the *Kommunistische Zeitschrift* was planned (with one number published in September 1847).

Further progress was also indicated by a circular by Schapper, Bauer and Moll in September 1847. It argued that "it is time we came to our senses and therefore we can waste no more time on dreamers and system-mongers who have no energy for action... We are no elegant bourgeois and therefore do not beat about the bush but say what we think, i.e. call things by their names." (Nimtz 2000 p.48)

The Brussels circle around Marx and Engels was commended for its activity since the congress. It had constituted a branch of the Communist League and formed a German Workers' Educational Association "to serve as a preparatory school for the League". They also took part on the founding of the Brussels Democratic Association, which promoted liberal democracy. (Nimtz 2000 p.50)

According to Beamish, Engels' first draft was based on a "Communist Confession in Questions and Answers" by Moses Hess, published in the Paris *Vorwärts* newspaper in 1844. (1998 p.229)

However, after he returned to Paris Engels outmanoeuvred Hess by going through Hess's draft in detail. Engels wrote to Marx (25-26 October 1847): "I dealt with this point by point and was not yet half way through when the lads declared themselves satisfied. Completely unopposed, I got them to entrust me with the task of drafting a new one which would be discussed next Friday by the district and will be sent to London behind the backs of the communities." (MECW 38 pp.138-139)

Engels went ahead with a second draft, known as the *Principles of Communism* over the next few weeks.

However there was still a political battle to be won at the League's second congress, which took place in London from 29 November to 10 December 1847. Over nearly two weeks the League's new rules and its draft programme were thoroughly debated.

Marx and Engels' success is clearly evident in its newly stated aim. The June draft "Rules of the Communist League" said that "the League aims at the emancipation of humanity by spreading the theory of the community of property and its speediest possible practical introduction". However the rules adopted at the end of November were far sharper: "The aim of the League is the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the rule of the proletariat, the abolition of the old bourgeois society which rests on the antagonism of classes, and the foundation of a new society without classes and without private property." (MECW 6 p.585, p.633)

Although agreement had been reached on the new rules and on common principles, there was not enough time to redraft the programme. This job was assigned to Marx.

Marx arrived back in Brussels by mid-December but did not get on with drafting the Manifesto. Instead, he spent the next two weeks delivering lectures on wage-labour to the German Workers' Educational Society. Engels arrived in Brussels on 17 December but was in Paris four days later, until the end of January. This means Marx almost certainly wrote the Manifesto alone (albeit using Engels' drafts and his previous work).

It is clear Marx had not finished the Manifesto much before the end of January 1848 from a letter he received, dated 26 on January 1848, from Schapper, Bauer and Moll, "in the name of and by order of the Central Committee". The letter said:

"The Central Committee charges its regional committee in Brussels to communicate with Citizen Marx, and to tell him that if the Manifesto of the Communist Party, the writing of which he undertook to do at the recent congress, does not reach London by February 1st of the current year, further measures will have to be taken against him. In the event of Citizen Marx not fulfilling his task, the Central Committee requests the immediate return of the documents placed at Citizen Marx's disposal."

Marx probably missed the deadline but the minutes of the London "Workingmen's Educational Society" of 29 February 1848 approved the transfer of funds covering the costs of the Manifesto. Therefore the pamphlet was probably printed the preceding week (22-29 February) or perhaps a week earlier. The page proofs were set in the office of the Workers' Educational Society (191 Drury Lane, High Holborn) with the gothic character set the Society had purchased in the summer of 1847, and then delivered to the printer, J. E. Burghard, at his shop at 46 Liverpool Street, Bishopsgate by Friedrich Lessner. It seems that Marx must have submitted the manuscript to London in early to mid-February. (Beamish 1998 pp.238-239)

Questions

I: Bourgeois and Proletarians

- 1) What is class? Why is class struggle the driving force of human history?
- 2) Why does Marx believe capitalism is progressive? Is it still progressive?
- 3) What is the nature of the capitalist state?
- 4) How does the proletariat differ from slaves and peasants?
- 5) Why is the working class the revolutionary class?
- 6) Why is the organised labour movement central?
- 7) What's wrong with Marx's formulations on?
 - Simplifying class antagonisms
 - Crises
 - Wages
 - Lumpenproletariat
 - Peasants

II: Proletarians and Communists

- 1) What distinguishes the Communists from the working class movement?
- 2) Do Communists want to take away individual's personal possessions?
- 3) Do Communists want to abolish the family?
- 4) What is the Marxist attitude towards nations and nationalism?
- 5) What is the significant for Marxists of "the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class"?
- 6) What does Marx mean by "winning the battle of democracy"?
- 7) What sort of demands are made in the 10-point programme? Are they obsolete today?
- 8) How does Marx describe the final goal of Communism/

III: Socialist and Communist Literature

- 1) What is the defining feature of reactionary socialism?
- 2) What is the defining feature of bourgeois socialism?
- 3) What is the defining feature of utopian socialism?
- 4) What are modern examples are there of:
 - reactionary socialism?
 - bourgeois socialism?
 - utopian socialism?
- 5) Is this division of socialists useful? What other ways of evaluating forms of socialism are there?
- 6) Why doesn't Marx criticise other Communists in the Manifesto?

IV: Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties

- 1) How does Marx describe the relationship between Communists and other working class and social movements?
- 2) How should Communists work with other workers organisations?
- 3) Why is working class unity necessary?
- 4) Do Communists support for every opposition movement?
- 5) Were Marx and Engels right to call for support for the bourgeoisie? Under what circumstances?

Further reading

The most comprehensive and politically useful guide is Hal Draper, *Adventures of the Communist Manifesto*, first published by the Center for Socialist History (Alameda 1994).

Also very useful is *The Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*, edited with an introduction and notes by David Riazanov (London 1930).

The most recent scholarship in German is *Das Kommunistische Manifest (Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei) von Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels*, edited by Thomas Kuczynski (Trier 1995). <http://www.fes.de/marx/km/vesper.html>

An older but still valuable study is Bert Andréas, *Le Manifeste Communiste de Marx et Engels. Histoire et Bibliographie 1848-1918* (Milan 1963).

Apart from Draper, the best modern annotated editions are:

- *The Communist Manifesto*, Norton Critical edition, edited by Frederic L. Bender (New York 1988).
- *Birth of the Communist Manifesto*, with an introduction, notes and translations by Dirk Struik (New York 1971). Chapter 2 is online at <http://www.cpa.org.au/amrarch/39ds.html#>
- *The Communist Manifesto*, with an introduction by Gareth Stedman Jones, the latest Penguin edition (Harmondsworth 2002).

Marxist discussions of the Manifesto include:

Karl Kautsky, 1901, 'To What Extent is the Communist Manifesto Obsolete?' *Social Democrat*, Vol.9 no.?, 1905, pp.155-164.
<http://www.marxists.org.uk/archive/kautsky/1904/xx/manifesto.htm>

Leon Trotsky, 'Ninety Years Of The Communist Manifesto', 30 October 1937, first published in *The New Internationalist*, February 1938.
<http://www.marxists.org.uk/archive/trotsky/works/1937/1937-90commanifesto.htm>

Sean Matgamna, 1998, 'The Communist Manifesto and the Russian Revolution', *Workers' Liberty* 44. <http://archive.workersliberty.org/wlmags/wl44/comman.htm>

Other studies referred to are:

- *The Communist Manifesto: New Interpretations*, edited by Mark Cowling (Edinburgh 1998). This includes a (post) modern translation by Terrell Carver.
- *Studies in Marxism*, edited by Mark Cowling, Volume 4, 1997 contains some useful articles, especially Filio Diamanti, 'The influence of Etienne Cabet on the Communist Manifesto',
- *The Communist Manifesto Now*, *Socialist Register*, edited by Colin Leys and Leo Panitch (London 1998) contains some useful articles, especially by Rob Beamish, 'The Making of the Manifesto'.
- *Karl Marx and World Literature*, by S.S. Prawer (Oxford 1976).
- *The Theory of Revolution in the Young Marx*, by Michael Löwy (Leiden 2003).
- *Marx and Engels: Their Contribution to the Democratic Breakthrough*, by August Nimtz (Albany 2000).

Title, preface, preamble

Title: “Manifesto of the Communist Party”

Engels suggested the title in a letter to Marx (November 1847): “I believe we would do best to drop the catechism form and entitle the thing: Communist Manifesto. Since a certain amount of history has to be related in it, the present form is quite unsuitable.” (MECW 38 p.149) The pamphlet was first published as the “Communist Manifesto” in the German edition of 1872.

“Manifesto”

The first document bearing a similar title was the “Manifeste des Communistes” in the Fourierist paper *La Phalange*, 19 May – 11 June 1841. Moses Hess probably brought it to Marx’s attention in the *Rheinische Zeitung* in April 1842. Victor Considérant, the editor of *La Phalange* issued a Manifeste de la démocratie pacifique in 1843, reissued as a book, *Principes du socialisme. Manifeste de la démocratie au XIXe siècle in 1847* (note the similar name to Engels’ draft, *Principles of Communism*).

“Communist”

Members of the Communist League had called themselves “Communists” long before the organisation included the word in its name. Both William Weitling and Etienne Cabet called themselves “Communists”. The term distinguished those who advocated the abolition of private property and had a working class orientation.

“Party”

Party is used in the sense of “movement” or tendency, rather than sect. The name of the Communist League not printed anywhere in the Manifesto. Marx and Engels’ first used the term “communist party” in *The German Ideology* (1845-46), when they wrote “Communist... means the follower of a definite revolutionary party”. (MECW 5 p.57) However it is clear that they did not mean those simply belonging to a definite organisation. For example Marx wrote to Annenkov, 28 December 1846 that “as for our own party, not only is it poor, but there is a large faction in the German communist party which bears me a grudge because I am opposed to its utopias and its declaiming”. (MECW 38 p.105)

Authors

The names of the author(s) were not included in the first editions. Marx first revealed he was the author of the Manifesto in public in a series of letters to the *Neue Deutsche Zeitung* in June 1850. (MECW 10 p.387)

Marx and Engels were first identified as the authors by George Julian Harney in his introduction to Helen MacFarlane’s translation, published in four issues of the weekly *Red Republican* from 9-30 November 1850. Harney wrote that translation had been “drawn up in the German language, in January 1848, by Citizens Charles Marx and Frederic Engels”. It was also revealed in the *Neue Rheinische Revue*, 29 November 1850. “We give here an excerpt from the Manifesto of the Communist Party written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, published before the February Revolution”. (Draper 1994 p.28-29)

English preface

Engels highlighted the most important idea behind the Manifesto in his preface to the 1888 English edition, “the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself” (MECW 26 p.517).

The idea that the modern industrial proletariat, rather than simply any kind of workers (such as artisans) were the social agent that was the key to universal human emancipation was

made in an article, *Critical Notes on the Article "The King of Prussia and Social Reform. By a Prussian"*, (7 August 1844). Marx wrote: "Only in the proletariat can [socialism] discover the active agent of its emancipation..." (MECW 3, pp.201-202)

And he put it crisply in *The Holy Family* (1845), his first published book, co-authored with Engels in autumn 1844: "the proletariat can and must emancipate itself." (MECW 4, p.37)

The idea that socialism can only come about through the conscious activity of the working class to liberate itself is the thread that runs through Marx and Engels' politics for the rest of their lives. It was well summed up later by Marx, in his provisional rules of the International Working Men's Association (October 1864): "the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves." (MECW 20 p.14)

Marx repeated the same idea in his "Programme of the French Workers Party" (1880): "That the emancipation of the productive class is that of all human beings without distinction of sex or race" (MECW 24 p.340)

Preamble

"A spectre is haunting Europe — the spectre of communism"

This is most likely to have come from an article by Wilhelm Schulz in the Rotteck and Welcker encyclopaedia (1846), which began: "For the last few years there has been talk about communism in Germany, and it has now become a menacing spectre, of which some take fright and which others use to inspire fright".

A similar expression is in an anonymous brochure, *Der Pauperismus und die Volksschule* (1847): "there is a growling of the thunder of discontent with the status quo, and... the flashing lightening illumines the pale spectre of communism". In an influential book, *Socialism and Communism in France* (1842) Lorenz Stein referred to "communism, a dark, menacing spectre, in whose reality nobody wants to believe, and whose existence however everyone acknowledges and fears." (Draper 1994 pp.204-205)

"Communists should openly publish their views, their aims, their tendencies"

In other words, turn away from the practice of conspiratorialism – a condition Marx and Engels insisted on before joining the Communist League.

In March-April 1847, Engels wrote in similar terms in *The Constitutional Question in Germany*: "It is high time that the German Communists disowned the responsibility imputed to them for the reactionary deeds and desires of the true socialists. It is high time that the German Communists, who represent the German proletariat with its very clear, very tangible needs, broke in the most decisive manner with that literary clique." (MECW 6 p.77)

He also expressed similar views in both drafts of the Manifesto. In the *Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith* (June 1847) he wrote: "We are convinced not only by the uselessness but even harmfulness of all conspiracies. We are also aware that revolutions are not made deliberately and arbitrarily but that everywhere and at all times they are the necessary consequence of circumstances which are not in any way whatever dependent on the will or on the leadership of individual parties or of whole classes." (MECW 6 pp.101-102)

Translations

Efforts were made at French, English, Italian, Flemish and Danish translations, and Spanish, Polish and Hungarian translations were also mentioned, but none have been found from 1848-49. The only translation before 1850 was in Swedish.

According to Beamish, the Manifesto was eventually published in more than 35 languages, in some 544 editions that appeared between 1848 and 1918 alone. (1998 p.233)

I: Bourgeois and Proletarians

Key points

The essentials to discuss:

- Classes and class struggle
- Capitalism creates the prerequisites for socialism
- The state
- The working class (in contrast to slaves and serfs)
- The labour movement

Highlight some problems too:

- “simplified class antagonisms” and disappearing middle classes
- Crises
- Wages
- Lumpenproletariat
- Peasants

“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”

The examples “freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman” are not a list of polar classes. Note Engels’ point about surplus.

In the *Principles of Communism* (November 1847) Engels wrote: “So long as it is not possible to produce so much that not only is there enough for all, but also a surplus for the increase of social capital and for the further development of the productive forces, so long must there always be a ruling class disposing of the productive forces of society, and a poor, oppressed class... lord and serf... master guildsman and the journeyman and day labourer... big factory owner and the proletarian.” (MECW 6 p.349)

“the common ruin of the contending classes”

For Marx, the fate of society depends on social struggles, and the outcome need not necessarily be progressive.

Bourgeoisie

Bourgeoisie means the modern capitalist class, not simply citizen or townspeople. As Engels put it in *Principles of Communism* (November 1847): “The class of big capitalists who already now in all civilised countries almost exclusively own all the means of subsistence and the raw materials and instruments (machinery, factories etc), needed for the production of these means of subsistence.” (MECW 6 p.342)

Marx was the first socialist to emphasise the revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie in creating the material and social prerequisites for socialism.

“simplified class antagonisms”

Marx had already used a similar expression in the *Paris Manuscripts* (1844): “that there remain altogether only two classes of the population — the working class and the class of capitalists.” (MECW 3 p.266)

Engels also expressed matters in similar terms in the *Principles of Communism* (November 1847): “Two new classes which are gradually swallowing up all the other classes have come into being” and “The two decisive classes of society and the struggle between them the main struggle of the day.” (MECW 6 p.342, p.352)

The idea was in fact common to the left at the time. In a letter to the Chartist paper, *The Northern Star* on 13 March 1839, George Julian Harney wrote: "society is divided into classes which are opposed to each other in an implacable antagonism." (Löwy 2003 p.128)

In 1839, Flora Tristan visited England and discovered Chartism. In her book, *Promenades dans Londres* (1840), she wrote: "the great struggle, the struggle which is destined to transform the social order, is that which pits property-owners and capitalists – who controls everything, wealth and political power... - against the workers of city and countryside, who have nothing, neither land, nor capital, nor political power." (Löwy 2003 p.80)

The myth of the disappearance of the middle class

Marx said capitalism "pushed into the background every class handed down from the Middle Ages", which is not the same as the disappearance of the middle class.

He also describes of the generation of new middle classes by capitalism in Section III: "a new class of petty bourgeois has been formed, fluctuating between proletariat and bourgeoisie, and ever renewing itself as a supplementary part of bourgeois society".

The state

Note the common misquotation: "The state is the executive committee of the ruling class". Draper translates the original as: "The modern state power is only a committee that manages the common affairs of the whole bourgeois class". (1994 p.117)

This formulation makes clear that the principal function of the state is to maintain class domination. But it assumes that the class that is economically dominant is also politically dominant, (which is not always the case e.g. with Bonapartism, or fascism).

The words "common" or "whole" suggests an important distinction between the common interests of the whole class and the divergent and possibly conflicting interests of individual firms or fractions of capital, rather than the bourgeoisie as a single unified class.

Some Marxists, using Marx's early writings, conceive of a looser relation between the capitalist class and the state, and grant the state some degree of autonomy, an agent with its own interests with some latitude for action not reducible to class interests.

Note also the penultimate paragraph of Section II, where Marx argues that "political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another." This section also talks about the "public [state] power" losing its political character once class distinctions have disappeared, anticipating the idea of the state "withering away".

"no other nexus... than callous 'cash payment'"

This expression originates with Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), who used it in his books *Chartism* (1840) "in epochs when cash payment has become the sole nexus of man with man" and in *Past and Present* (1843) "Cash-payment is not the sole nexus of man with man".

Engels used the expression in his *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy* (1843): "The abolition of feudal servitude has made 'the cash payment the sole relation between human beings'." (MECW 3 p.475-6, p.485)

This was repeated in 1845 in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*: "as Carlyle says, that 'Cash Payment is the only nexus between man and man'. Even the relation between himself and his wife is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, mere 'Cash Payment'. Money determines the worth of the man; he is "worth ten thousand pounds". He who has money is of "the better sort of people", is "influential", and what he does counts for something in his social circle. The huckstering spirit penetrates the whole language, all relations are expressed in business terms, in economic categories. Supply and demand are the formulas

according to which the logic of the English bourgeois judges all human life.” (MECW 4 p.563-564)

Marx also referred to the idea twice in the year before the Manifesto was written. In *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847) he wrote: “Finally, there came a time when everything that men had considered as inalienable became an object of exchange, of traffic and could be alienated. This is the time when the very things which till then had been communicated, but never exchanged; given, but never sold; acquired, but never bought — virtue, love, conviction, knowledge, conscience, etc. — when everything, in short, passed into commerce. It is the time of general corruption, of universal venality, or, to speak in terms of political economy, the time when everything, moral or physical, having become a marketable value, is brought to the market to be assessed at its truest value.” (MECW 6 p.113)

In his notes on wages for his lectures to the German Workers’ Educational Society (December 1847), Marx wrote: “Firstly: thereby everything patriarchal falls away, since haggling, purchase and sale remain the only connection, and the money relationship the sole relationship between employer and workers. Secondly: the halo of sanctity is entirely gone from all relationships of the old society, since they have dissolved into pure money relationships.” (MECW 6 p.436)

“free trade”

Engels first discussed free trade in his *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy* (1843). He summed up his and Marx’s attitude in a letter to Julius Campe, 14 October 1845: “We have no intention of defending protective tariffs any more than free trade, but rather of criticising both systems from our own standpoint. Ours is the communist standpoint.” (MECW 38 p.34)

Marx’s most detailed treatment of the question was his *Speech on the Question of Free Trade*, delivered in Brussels in January 1848, just before the Communist Manifesto was published. The speech is imbued with scepticism about the “free trade sophisms” of the manufacturing class. Marx railed against the “sudden philanthropy of the factory owners”, who argued that free trade benefited the working class. He argued that the bosses’ opposition to a shorter working day revealed their hypocrisy. (MECW 6, p450ff)

Yet Marx concluded his speech with the following declaration: “But, in general, the protective system of our day is conservative, while the free trade system is destructive. It breaks up old nationalities and pushes the antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the extreme point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this revolutionary sense alone, gentlemen, that I vote in favour of free trade.”

“naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation”

Capitalism is defined by the exploitation of waged labour by capital. The key characteristic of capitalist social relations is that for the first time in history the means whereby the surplus is pumped out of the direct producers is ‘purely’ economic in form.

“converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers”

This is a good example of Marx’s rhetorical flourishes, as these professionals were not part of the working class. Marx used a similar formulation in his lectures on wages in December 1847: “Likewise, all so-called higher kinds of labour, intellectual, artistic, etc., have been turned into articles of commerce and have thereby lost their old sanctity. What a great advance it was that the entire regiment of clerics, doctors, lawyers, etc., hence religion, law, etc., ceased to be judged by anything but their commercial value.” (MECW 6 p.436)

“all that’s solid melts into air”

This is a (highly evocative) mistranslation. The original said: “ Everything feudal and fixed goes up in smoke” (Carver) or “all that is established and stable dissolves away” (Draper).

World market and international relations

Marx explains the expansion of the world market and the spread of the states system in the development of capitalism, prefiguring much of the discussion about globalisation. Class relations under capitalism are global in scope and the state is understood as a political form of class relations. International relations are traced back to labour-capital relations. (Burnham in Cowling 1998 p.190ff)

In *The German Ideology* (1845-46), Marx and Engels wrote: "the expeditions of adventurers, colonisation; and above all the extension of markets into a world market, which had now become possible and was daily becoming more and more a fact, called forth a new phase of historical development." (MECW 5 p.69)

One consequence of Marx's conception is that national self-sufficiency is impossible under capitalism – and so is socialism in one country. Engels explained this succinctly in the *Principles of Communism* (November 1847): "Will it be possible for this revolution to take place in one country alone? No. Large-scale industry, already creating the world market, has so linked up all the peoples of the earth, and especially the civilised peoples, that each people is dependent on what happens to another." (MECW 6 pp.351-352)

"barbarian and semi-barbarian countries" and "Chinese walls"

Marx argues that capital forces all social formations to adopt capitalist relations of production and that relations between states involve exploitation. Engels expressed this idea in the *Principles of Communism* (November 1847): "All semi-barbarian countries, which until now had been outside historical development... were forcibly torn out of their isolation." (MECW 6 p.345)

Similar ideas were shared by other socialists. For example Victor Considérant wrote in 1847: "Industrial nations try mightily to obtain foreign markets for their manufactured goods. England, tormented by overproduction of goods, makes superhuman efforts to pour her products over all the earth. She breaks open by cannon shot the closed doors of the Chinese Empire. She incessantly crosses the globe arms in hand demanding consumers." (Bender 1988 p.97)

"the idiocy of rural life"

Draper argues that this is a mistranslation. The German word "idiotismus" meant private, away from public life, isolated. Engels had a similar idea in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) when he wrote that rural weavers "remained sunk in apathetic indifference to the universal interest of mankind." (MECW 4 p.309)

"concentrated property in a few hands"

Marx described the concentration of capital in *Paris Manuscripts* (1844): "In an increasingly prosperous society only the richest of the rich can continue to live on money interest. Everyone else has to carry on a business with his capital, or venture it in trade. As a result, the competition between the capitalists becomes more intense. The concentration of capital increases, the big capitalists ruin the small, and a section of the erstwhile capitalists sinks into the working class, which as a result of this supply again suffers to some extent a depression of wages and passes into a still greater dependence on the few big capitalists. The number of capitalists having been diminished, their competition with respect to the workers scarcely exists any longer; and the number of workers having been increased, their competition among themselves has become all the more intense, unnatural, and violent. Consequently, a section of the working class falls into beggary or starvation just as necessarily as a section of the middle capitalists falls into the working class." (MECW 3 p.238)

"burst asunder"

Here the metaphor applies to feudalism. In *Capital* (Chapter 32) Marx uses it to describe the end of capitalism.

Crisis — “the epidemic of over-production”

Draper argues the Manifesto is not “distinctively Marxist” in its treatment of crises. (1994 p.223)

The conception of crises in the Manifesto has more in common with Fourier “crises plethoriques” or Carlyle “in the midst of plethoric plenty, the people perish”. (Stedman Jones 2002 p.175)

Engels expressed it in his *Principles of Communism*: “Ever since the beginning of this (19th) century, the condition of industry has constantly fluctuated between periods of prosperity and periods of crisis; nearly every five to seven years, a fresh crisis has intervened, always with the greatest hardship for workers, and always accompanied by general revolutionary stirrings and the direct peril to the whole existing order of things.” (MECW 6 p.347)

The proletariat

Proletarians mean modern waged workers i.e. not synonymous with all workers in history (see Engels’ note to 1888 edition).

The proletariat was originally a Latin term. The Swiss writer Simonde de Sismondi (1773-1842) is credited with reintroducing the term into 19th century discussion. “It is a misfortune to have called into existence a man whom one has at the same time deprived of all pleasures which give savour to life, to the country a citizen who has no affection for it and no attachment to the established order.” (Stedman Jones 2002 p.35, pp.268-269)

Engels expressed the point in his *Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith* (June 1847): “The proletariat is that class in society which lives entirely from the sale of its labour and does not draw profit from any kind of capital; whose weal and woe, whose life and death, whose sole existence depends on the demand for labour – hence, on the changing state of business, on the vagaries of unbridled competition. The proletariat, or the class of proletarians, is, in a word, the working class of the 19th century.” (MECW 6 p.312)

Marx and Engels first made the new conception clear in *The Holy Family* (1845): “It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment regards as its aim. It is a question of what the proletariat is, and what, in accordance with this being, it will historically be compelled to do. Its aim and historical action is visibly and irrevocably foreshadowed in its own life situation as well as in the whole organization of bourgeois society today.” (MECW 4, p.37)

Contrast with slaves and serfs

To draw out the difference between the modern proletariat and other exploited classes, Engels compared them in his drafts. In the *Principles of Communism* (November 1847) he wrote: “The slave is sold once and for all; the proletarian must sell himself daily and hourly. The individual slave, property of one master, is assured an existence, however miserable it may be, because of the master’s interest. The individual proletarian, property as it were of the entire bourgeois class which buys his labour only when someone has need of it, has no secure existence. This existence is assured only to the class as a whole. The slave is outside competition; the proletarian is in it and experiences all its vagaries. The slave counts as a thing, not as a member of society. Thus, the slave can have a better existence than the proletarian, while the proletarian belongs to a higher stage of social development and, himself, stands on a higher social level than the slave. The slave frees himself when, of all the relations of private property, he abolishes only the relation of slavery and thereby becomes a proletarian; the proletarian can free himself only by abolishing private property in general.” (MECW 6 p.343-344)

“The serf possesses and uses an instrument of production, a piece of land, in exchange for which he gives up a part of his product or part of the services of his labour. The proletarian works with the instruments of production of another, for the account of this other, in exchange for a part of the product. The serf gives up, the proletarian receives. The serf has an assured existence, the proletarian has not. The serf is outside competition, the proletarian is in it. The serf liberates himself in one of three ways: either he runs away to the city and there becomes a handicraftsman; or, instead of products and services, he gives money to his lord and thereby becomes a free tenant; or he overthrows his feudal lord and himself becomes a property owner. In short, by one route or another, he gets into the owning class and enters into competition. The proletarian liberates himself by abolishing competition, private property, and all class differences.” (MECW 6 p.344)

“an appendage of the machine”

This idea was common to the left in the 1840s. Engels wrote in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845): “Prolonged and exhausting labour, continued from day to day, and from year to year, is not calculated to develop the intellectual or moral faculties of man. The dull routine of a ceaseless drudgery, in which the same mechanical process is incessantly repeated, resembles the torment of Sisyphus – the toil, like the rock, recoils perpetually on the wearied operative. The mind gathers neither stores nor strength from the constant extension and retraction of the same muscles. The intellect slumbers in supine inertness; but the grosser parts of our nature attain a rank development. To condemn man to such severity of toil is, in some measure, to cultivate in him the habits of an animal. He becomes reckless. He disregards the distinguishing appetites and habits of his species. He neglects the comforts and delicacies of life. He lives in squalid wretchedness, on meagre food, and expounds his superfluous gains in debauchery.” – Dr. J. Kay.– Note by Engels. (MECW 4 p.467)

Worker as a commodity

Marx had not yet distinguished labour from labour power (the capacity to work). He later argued that labour power becomes a commodity under capitalism.

The conception in the Manifesto came from his earliest studies of political economy. In the *Paris Manuscripts* (1844) Marx wrote: “Political economy considers labour in the abstract as a thing; labour is a commodity. If the price is high, then the commodity is in great demand; if the price is low, then the commodity is in great supply: the price of labour as a commodity must fall lower and lower. (Buret, op. cit.) This is made inevitable partly by the competition between capitalist and worker, partly by the competition amongst the workers... If then labour is a commodity it is a commodity with the most unfortunate attributes. But even by the principles of political economy it is no commodity, for it is not the “free result of a free transaction”. (MECW 3 pp.244-45)

Wages

Marx later discarded theory of wages in the Manifesto, that “the cost of production of a workman is restricted, almost entirely, to the means of subsistence that he requires for maintenance” and that “the average price of wage-labour is the minimum wage, i.e., that quantum of the means of subsistence which is absolutely requisite to keep the labourer in bare existence as a labourer”.

Marx’s notes for his lectures to the German Workers’ Educational Society in December 1847 contain similar formulations: “The minimum itself has a historical movement and sinks always further towards the absolutely lowest level... This minimum tends to become the same in different countries.” (MECW 6 p.425, p.426)

The idea that wages were driven to a minimum was common, reflecting the obvious impoverishment of most workers at the time. However in his later work, Marx held to a substantially different theory of wages. He distinguished between the value and the price of labour power. Wages are the price of labour, and therefore a function of the supply of and

demand for it in the labour market. The value of labour power, like other commodities, is determined by its costs of production, or the necessary means of subsistence.

In his mature works, Marx stressed the variable elements in the determination of wages i.e. those determinants beyond the simply physiological necessities “to maintain the working individual in his normal state as a working individual” (*Capital I*, 1976 p.275)

As he put it in *Value, Price and Profit* (1865), “the value of labour power is constituted from two elements, one of which is merely physical, the other historical or social”. (MECW 20 p.144)

Although he did not ignore structural constraints, Marx conceived of wage levels as the outcome of class struggle: “The fixation of its actual degree is only settled by the continuous struggle between capital and labour, the capitalist constantly tending to reduce wages to their physical minimum, and to extend the working day to its physical maximum, while the working man constantly presses in the opposite direction. The matter resolves itself into a question of the respective powers of the combatants.” (MECW 20 p.146)

In his *Economic Manuscripts*, previously known as *Theories of Surplus Value* – but in fact the second drafts of what became *Capital*, Marx allowed for substantial variation of wages, as well as higher wages.

According to Marx: “it must not be imagined that wages in different countries are inversely proportional to the productivity of labour. In fact exactly the opposite is the case. The more productive one country is relative to another in the world market, the higher will be its wages as compared with the other. In England, not only nominal wages but [also] real wages are higher than on the continent. The worker eats more meat; he satisfies more needs. This, however, only applies to the industrial worker and not the agricultural labourer. But in proportion to the productivity of the English workers their wages are not higher (than the wages paid in other countries).” (MECW 31 p.352)

“that the workers themselves, although they cannot prevent reductions in real wages [resulting from increases in productivity], will not permit them to be reduced to the absolute minimum; on the contrary, they achieve a certain quantitative participation in the general growth in wealth.” (MECW 32 p.444)

A source of confusion sometimes arises because Marx assumed when he is discussing the formation of surplus value in *Capital* volume 1 that “the value of labour power was “something fixed, a given magnitude”.

In Chapter 17 of Volume 1 of *Capital*, Marx argues that the price of labour is determined by three circumstances: 1) The length of the working day; 2) the normal intensity of labour and 3) the productivity of labour. A change in any one of these factors could lead to a rise or a fall in wages. He also argued that movements of wages were “regulated by the expansion and contraction of the industrial reserve army [unemployment], and this in turn corresponds to the periodic alterations of the industrial cycle”. (*Capital I* 1976 p.790)

“they smash to pieces machinery”

Engels described the most primitive forms of working class protest in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845): “As a class, they first manifested opposition to the bourgeoisie when they resisted the introduction of machinery at the very beginning of the industrial period... This form of opposition also was isolated, restricted to certain localities, and directed against one feature only of our present social arrangements. When the momentary end was attained, the whole weight of social power fell upon the unprotected evil-doers and punished them to its heart's content, while the machinery was introduced none the less. A new form of opposition had to be found.” (MECW 4 pp.502-503)

“the proletarians do not fight their enemies, but the enemies of their enemies.”

In 1848, workers in places like Germany were fighting alongside their enemy (the bourgeoisie) against the enemy in power (and the enemies of the bourgeoisie), the landed aristocracy. Marx warns that this secedes leadership to the bourgeoisie, a view he would revise during the experience of the 1848 revolution.

Engels expressed a similar opinion in *The Constitutional Question in Germany* (1847): "If the bourgeoisie, so to speak, our natural enemy, is the enemy whose overthrow will bring our party to power, the German status quo is still more our enemy, because it stands between the bourgeoisie and us, because it hinders us from coming to grips with the bourgeoisie. For that reason we do not exclude ourselves in any way from the great mass of opposition to the German status quo. We only form its most advanced section — a section which at the same time through its unconcealed *arrière pensée* against the bourgeoisie takes up a quite definite position." (MECW 6 p.77)

"petty-bourgeoisie"

This is a class that makes a living through its own labour with its own means of production. It includes self-employed artisans and shopkeepers. Its interests are largely local. They are distinguished from the bourgeoisie because they do not live primarily by extracting surplus value from waged workers, or only on a small scale. It is a more clearly defined class than the more general "middle-class". In this paragraph the petty bourgeoisie is one of those classes that the proletariat has to fight.

Trade unions (combinations)

Marx and Engels were demarcated from other socialists at the time by their support for trade unionism on principle. Others such as Proudhon opposed unions.

In *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) Engels described the process of formation: "In all branches of industry Trades Unions were formed with the outspoken intention of protecting the single working-man against the tyranny and neglect of the bourgeoisie. Their objects were to deal, en masse, as a power, with the employers; to regulate the rate of wages according to the profit of the latter, to raise it when opportunity offered, and to keep it uniform in each trade throughout the country." (MECW 4 p.504)

In *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), Marx also took the same view of trade union struggle: "The first attempt of workers to associate among themselves always takes place in the form of combinations." (MECW 6 p.210)

"Every class struggle is a political struggle"

This means a class wide struggle is necessarily a political struggle – i.e. a struggle that puts the control of society in question (as opposed to a strike in a single factory).

Marx expresses this more clearly in *The Poverty of Philosophy*: "the struggle of class against class is a political struggle". (MECW 6 p.211) as does Engels in 1881, "A struggle between two great classes of society necessarily becomes a political struggle... In every struggle of class against class, the next end fought for is political power". (MECW 24 p.386)

"organisation of the proletarians into a class and into a political party"

This means party in the loose sense of movement, the working class organised into class wide organisations. In *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), Marx expressed it thus: "Large-scale industry concentrates in one place a crowd of people unknown to one another. Competition divides their interests. But the maintenance of wages, this common interest which they have against their boss, unites them in a common thought of resistance — combination... In this struggle — a veritable civil war — all the elements necessary for a coming battle unite and develop. Once it has reached this point, association takes on a political character." (MECW 6 pp.210-211)

“education” and “bourgeois ideologists”

This is not about how the working class movement gains intellectuals. It means that workers are educated by being thrust into struggle by the bourgeoisie; sections of the bourgeoisie and other classes that are proletarianised bring education skills to the service of the labour movement; and small number of bourgeois individuals go over to supporting the working class e.g. Robert Owen.

As Marx and Engels put it in *The German Ideology* (1845-46), communist consciousness “may of course arise among the other classes too through the contemplation of the situation of this class (MECW 5 p.52)

“the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class”

This means the proletariat (the waged working class) is the leading class, the only social agent with both the power and the interest to overthrow capitalism and replace it with something more progressive. It does not mean that all other classes are simply “one reactionary mass” as Lassalle put it. It does not mean that peasants and petty bourgeois cannot be allies in the struggle.

In fact Engels had earlier evolved a strategy of class alliance, with the working classes (the proletariat, the small peasants and the petty bourgeoisie) were aligned against the bourgeoisie and the old regime. (MECW 6 p.294, p.356)

“lumpenproletariat”

Neither Marx nor Engels ever used the German term “lumpenproletariat” in English. At the time of writing the Manifesto, Draper argues that Marx and Engels were not clear about the nature of the lumpenproletariat in 1848.

The term may have been inspired by Heine’s description of Parisian rag-pickers (lumpensammler) in *French Conditions* (1832): “These latter had at last found their natural allies, rag-pickers and old clo’ women, who now staked their claims according to the same principles, as champions of customary rights, of traditional, inherited rights to trash, of every kind of rottenness.” (Praver 1976 p.201)

The term was first used by Engels in *The Constitutional Question in Germany* (1847): “This division into farm labourers, day labourers, handicraft journeymen, factory workers and lumpen proletariat... For a few talers the lumpen proletarian fights out with his fists the squabbles between bourgeoisie, nobility and police.” (MECW 6 pp.82-83)

“Law, morality and religion have become bourgeois prejudices”

This is another idea expressed in more detail by Engels in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845): “In this connection, a word or two as to the respect for the law in England. True, the law is sacred to the bourgeois, for it is his own composition, enacted with his consent, and for his benefit and protection. He knows that, even if an individual law should injure him, the whole fabric protects his interests; and more than all, the sanctity of the law, the sacredness of order as established by the active will of one part of society, and the passive acceptance of the other, is the strongest support of his social position. Because the English bourgeois finds himself reproduced in his law, as he does in his God, the policeman's truncheon which, in a certain measure, is his own club, has for him a wonderfully soothing power. But for the working-man quite otherwise! The working-man knows too well, has learned from too oft-repeated experience, that the law is a rod which the bourgeois has prepared for him; and when he is not compelled to do so, he never appeals to the law.” (MECW 4 pp.514-517)

“movement of the immense majority”

This is an anticipatory exaggeration – the proletariat was not in 1848 the immense majority even in England. It would have been understood at the time to include the wider working classes. It means the proletariat will lead the movement of the immense majority, even when it is not itself the largest class.

“the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat”

This means that bourgeois rule must be forcibly overthrown if necessary. As Marx and Engels put it in *The German Ideology* (1845-46): “this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.” (MECW 5 pp.52-530)

Marx explained it vividly in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847): “An oppressed class is the vital condition for every society founded on the antagonism of classes. The emancipation of the oppressed class thus implies necessarily the creation of a new society. For the oppressed class to be able to emancipate itself, it is necessary that the productive powers already acquired and the existing social relations should no longer be capable of existing side by side. Of all the instruments of production, the greatest productive power is the revolutionary class itself. The organization of revolutionary elements as a class supposes the existence of all the productive forces which could be engendered in the bosom of the old society. Does this mean that after the fall of the old society there will be a new class domination culminating in a new political power? No. The condition for the emancipation of the working class is the abolition of every class, just as the condition for the liberation of the third estate, of the bourgeois order, was the abolition of all estates and all orders.” (MECW 6 p.211)

“gravediggers”

A similar thought was expressed by Engels in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845): “The proletarian, who has nothing but his two hands, who consumes today what he earned yesterday, who is subject to every possible chance, and has not the slightest guarantee for being able to earn the barest necessities of life, whom every crisis, every whim of his employer may deprive of bread, this proletarian is placed in the most revolting, inhuman position conceivable for a human being. The slave is assured of a bare livelihood by the self-interest of his master, the serf has at least a scrap of land on which to live; each has at worst a guarantee for life itself. But the proletarian must depend upon himself alone, and is yet prevented from so applying his abilities as to be able to rely upon them.” (MECW 4 p.413)

“equally inevitable”

The phrase does not make sense. It does not mean that the victory of the working class is inevitable (recall “the common ruin of contending classes”). Nor does historical experience bear out the fall of the bourgeoisie with the victory of the working class i.e. Stalinism. At most it implies that the fall of the bourgeoisie and the victory of the proletariat are a necessity.

II: Proletarians and Communists

Key points

The essentials to discuss are:

- The relationship between Communists and the working class movement
- Private property
- The family
- Nationalism and internationalism
- Ruling ideas
- Working class power
- Programme, demands and
- The final goal

Some controversies

- The meaning of sectarianism
- The base and superstructure metaphor
- The 10 point programme

“relation of the Communists to the proletariat”

For Marx, the immediate context was the desire to break from conspiratorialism of the left. Marx and Engels believed revolutionaries should be part of the existing class movement, and not counterpose their organisation to the labour movement. This idea ran consistently throughout their political lives. For example Engels quoted these following paragraphs to the German movement in 1884, arguing they still had “full validity”. (MECW 26 p.120)

“Communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties”

Riazanov says Marx was particularly concerned that the Communist League did not counterpose itself to the Chartists or set itself up as an organisational rival.

George Julian Harney expressed it in the following way in 1847: “Once and for all we explicitly state that we repudiate all idea of forming a ‘party’ in addition to the parties already existing in England. We desire not to rival but to aid all men who are honestly combined to work out the emancipation of the people.” (Löwy 2003 p.129)

Draper argues that the translation is wrong. Party here is used in the more general sense of “movement”. The original said, “Communists are not a separate party”, which is weaker than “form”, which implies establish or set up. It also uses “opposed” whereas a better rendition is “in relation to”. Marx was not opposing organisation within the movement in general. He had done that with the Correspondence Committees, and of course the Communist League. So had others with their approval e.g. Harney’s Fraternal Democrats.

Löwy argues that Marx did not mean that Communist should not form a party in the modern sense, i.e. an organisation based around particular political ideas. He interprets the Manifesto as defining Communists as a proletarian party among other proletarian parties and the Communist League itself, with a definite set of ideas, a paper, rules and an organisational structure, did indeed constitute a party in the narrower sense. So too were the Fraternal Democrats. On 13 December 1847, after two years of hesitation, decided to organise themselves formally by adopting rules and electing a secretariat. (Löwy 2003 pp.142-143)

Marx and Engels had a pretty “organised” conception in mind even with the Correspondence Committees. They wrote in a letter to Köttgen, 15 June 1846: “We therefore also agree with you completely that cheap, easily understandable books and pamphlets with a communist content must be widely circulated... In our view the contributions should be used only for the printing of cheap communist leaflets and pamphlets & to cover the costs of correspondence, including that from here abroad. It will be necessary to fix a minimum sum for the monthly

contributions, so that the amount of money that can be used for common purposes can be accurately determined at any moment. It is furthermore necessary that you should communicate to us the names of the members of your communist association — since we have to know, as you know of us, who it is we are dealing with.” (MECW 6 pp.54-55)

“sectarian principles”

The original did not say that Communists should not lay down any principles of their own — after all, that’s precisely what Marx was doing with the Manifesto. The original referred to “special” not “sectarian” principles, which Communists should not lay down “to model the proletariat movement”. This meant Communists did not invent huge “systems” and did not present their ideas as ultimatums to the real movement.

Marx expressed this idea in a letter to Ruge in March 1843: “In that case we do not confront the world in a doctrinaire way with a new principle: Here is the truth, kneel down before it! We develop new principles for the world out of the world’s own principles. We do not say to the world: Cease your struggles, they are foolish; we will give you the true slogan of struggle. We merely show the world what it is really fighting for, and consciousness is something that it has to acquire, even if it does not want to. The reform of consciousness consists only in making the world aware of its own consciousness, in awakening it out of its dream about itself, in explaining to it the meaning of its own actions.” (MECW 3, p.142)

“Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties”

This boils down to “representing the common interests of the whole proletarian movement” i.e. to organise a class movement not a sect.

In *The German Ideology*, (1845-46), Marx and Engels wrote that, “Communist... means the follower of a definite revolutionary party”, but went on, “Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things.” (MECW 5 p.49, p.57)

Engels expressed it in *The Communists and Karl Heinzen* (3 October 1847): “Communism is not a doctrine by a movement, it proceeds not from principles but from facts. The Communists do not base themselves on this or that philosophy as their point of departure but on the whole course of previous history... Communism, insofar as it is a theory, is the theoretical expression of the position of the proletariat in this struggle and the theoretical summation of the conditions for the liberation of the proletariat.” (MECW 6 pp.303-304)

Marx made a similar point in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847): “But in the measure that history moves forward, and with it the struggle of the proletariat assumes clearer outlines, [the socialists and Communists] no longer need to seek science in their minds; they have only to take note of what is happening before their eyes and to become its mouthpiece.” (MECW 6 p.177)

Engels summed up the meaning crisply in the *Principles of Communism* (November 1847): “What is Communism? Communism is the doctrine of the conditions of the liberation of the proletariat.” (MECW 6 p.312)

“that section which pushes forward all others”

The original said “always pressing forward” — the translation emphasises the vanguard role of Communists.

“immediate aims”

Engels expressed a similar idea in a letter to the Communist Correspondence Committee (23 October 1846): “I therefore defined the aims of the Communists as follows: 1. to ensure that the interests of the proletariat prevail, as opposed to those of the bourgeoisie; 2. to do so by

abolishing private property and replacing same with community of goods; 3. to recognise no means of attaining these aims other than democratic revolution by force.” (MECW 38 p.82)

Note that if the “immediate aim” is working class rule, this means that reformist utopian sects were not regarded as “proletarian parties”.

“the exploitation of the many by the few”

This was a common phrase at the time e.g. “Ye are many – they are few” Percy Shelley, *The Mask of Anarchy* (Draper 1994 p.249) It was particularly associated with Saint-Simonians. Bazard and Enfantin wrote in 1829: “If sympathy proclaims that the exploitation of man by man must disappear completely; if it is true that mankind is moving toward a state of things in which all men, without distinction of birth, will receive from society according to their merits and be remunerated according to their work; then it is evident that the constitution of property must be changed....” (Struik 1971 p.25)

“Abolition of private property”

The idea that private property needed to be abolished had a long history on the left before the Manifesto. For example Abbé Mably (1709-85) wrote, “Equality cannot exist in conjunction with private property, which is the source of all our social evils.” (Bender 1988 p.3)

Marx understood that it meant the abolition of capitalist private ownership, not most people’s personal possessions – also a common idea. For example Morelly wrote in the *Code de la Nature* (1755): “no private property except objects of daily use” (Struik 1971 p.202)

However Marx also meant a deeper transformation – of social relations of production. As he put it in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847): “In each historical epoch, property has developed differently and under a set of entirely different social relations. Thus to define bourgeois property is nothing else than to give an exposition of all the social relations of bourgeois production. To try to give a definition of property as of an independent relation, a category apart, an abstract and eternal idea, can be nothing but an illusion of metaphysics or jurisprudence.” (MECW 6 p.197)

“Capital is a social power”

Marx expressed this idea in 1849, in *Wage Labour and Capital*: “Capital also is a social relation of production. It is a bourgeois relation of production, a relation of production of bourgeois society. The means of subsistence, the instruments of labour, the raw materials, of which capital consists -- have they not been produced and accumulated under given social conditions, within definite special relations?” (MECW 9 p.212)

“Individuality”

The Manifesto emphasises that the bourgeois conception of individualism is a classbound conception, and implicitly counterposes the individualism a communist society will make possible. (Draper 1994 p.252)

“bourgeois ideas are the outgrowth of the conditions of bourgeois production and property”

This doesn’t mean all ideas are simply a reflection of bourgeois property, and have no autonomy.

“your jurisprudence is but the will of your class”

Marx argues that the justice system is class-ridden.

“Abolition of the family!”

The abolition of the family is discussed in two senses:

- 1) The observation that the family was being abolished by capitalism (either as an accomplished fact or as an ongoing process;
- 2) The claim that Communists intended to abolish the family.

In the first sense, Marx had already mentioned this in Section I: "The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation."

Criticism of the family predates socialism (e.g. Plato) and reached a high point with Fourier, who advocated the compulsory amalgamation of families into a communal living group.

Engels wrote about the "dissolution of the family" (MECW 3 p.424) in the *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy* (1843) and described it in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845).

He wrote: "Thus the social order makes family life almost impossible for the worker. In a comfortless, filthy house, hardly good enough for mere nightly shelter, ill-furnished, often neither rain-tight nor warm, a foul atmosphere filling rooms overcrowded with human beings, no domestic comfort is possible. The husband works the whole day through, perhaps the wife also and the elder children, all in different places; they meet night and morning only, all under perpetual temptation to drink; what family life is possible under such conditions? Yet the working-man cannot escape from the family, must live in the family, and the consequence is a perpetual succession of family troubles, domestic quarrels, most demoralising for parents and children alike. Neglect of all domestic duties, neglect of the children, especially, is only too common among the English working-people, and only too vigorously fostered by the existing institutions of society. And children growing up in this savage way, amidst these demoralising influences, are expected to turn out goody-goody and moral in the end! Verily the requirements are naive, which the self-satisfied bourgeois makes upon the working-man!" (MECW 4 pp.424-425)

Marx wrote in the Theses on Feuerbach (1845) that the family "must be destroyed in theory and in practice". (MECW 5 p.4)

In *The Holy Family* (1845), Marx and Engels quote from "Fourier's masterly characterisation of marriage" (MECW 4 p.196). In *The German Ideology* (1845-46) they wrote of "the slavery latent in the family" and that "wife and children are the slaves of the husband" (MECW 5 p.46).

They elaborated on this: "But marriage, property, the family remain untouched in theory, because they are the practical basis on which the bourgeoisie has directed its domination... One cannot speak at all of the family " as such ". Historically the bourgeois gives the family the character of the bourgeois family, in which boredom and money are the binding link, in which also includes the bourgeois dissolution of the family, which does not prevent the family itself from always continuing to exist. It's dirty existence as its counterpart in the holy concept of it in official phraseology and universal hypocrisy.

Where the family is actually abolished, as with the proletariat, just the opposite of what "Stirner" thinks takes place. Then the concept of the family does not exist at all, but here and there family affection based on extremely real relations is certainly to be found.

In the 18th-century the concept of the [feudal] family was abolished by the philosophers, because the actual family was already in the process of dissolution at the highest pinnacles of civilization. The internal family bond, the separate components constituting the concept of the family were dissolved, for example, obedience, piety, fidelity in marriage, etc.; but the real body the family, the property relation, the exclusive attitude in relation to their families, forced cohabitation — relations determined by the existence of children, the structure of modern towns, the formation of capital, etc. — all these were preserved, along with numerous violations, because the existence of the family is made necessary by its connection with the mode of production, which exists independently of the will of bourgeois society.

That it was impossible to do without it was demonstrated in the most striking way during the French Revolution, when for a moment the family was as good as legally abolished. The

family continues to exist even in the 19th-century, only the process of its dissolution has become more general, not on account of the concept, but because of the higher development of industry and competition; the family still exists although its dissolution was long ago proclaimed by French and English Socialists and this has at last penetrated also to the German church fathers, by way of French novels.” (MECW 5 pp.180-181)

“replace home education by social”

Social education, in the sense that society has the responsibility for educating every child, instead of this task falling exclusively to parents or the church.

Engels reported in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) that the English working class movement “has repeatedly demanded of parliament a system of strictly secular public education”. (MECW 4 p.408)

In his *Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith* (June 1847) he said that a democratic government would take care of “educating all children at the expense of the state” and “in state establishments”. In the *Principles of Communism* (November 1847) he wrote that this education would take place “in national institutions and at the expense of the nation” and would be “combined with production”. (MECW 6 p.102, p.427)

“community of women”

Advocacy of a “community of women” – meaning the holding of wives in common, not polygamy – was associated not with Communism but with Plato. Draper argues that the issue was introduced in the Manifesto not because it was a big issue on the left, but to turn the tables on the bourgeois propagandists. (1994 p.261)

In the *Paris Manuscripts* (1844) Marx denounced the “infinite degradation” in which women were conceived of simply as spoils. (MECW 3 p.294) Engels’ drafts also repudiate that association of a “community of women” with communism. (MECW 6 p.102 and p.354)

“bourgeois marriage”

Marx raises the hypocrisy of bourgeois marriage, rather than proposing a different institution. In the *Principles of Communism*, Engels also highlighted the reduction of sexual morality to a “purely private relation” and that bourgeois marriage was founded on private property. (MECW 6 p.354)

“Workers have no country”

Struik argues that the phrase “seems a gratuitous concession to the preachings of Weitling and other socialists of his day”. (1971 p.74, p.34) Riazanov argues that the idea that “workers have no country” was “to be found in all communist literature, whether emanating from France or from Germany, before the date when the Manifesto saw the light of day.” (1930 p.167)

For example Marx quotes the idea in his unpublished notebooks, excerpted from Brissot de Warville: “There can be no virtue since three-quarters of the people have no property; for without property the people have no country, without a country everything is against them, and for their part they must be armed against all. Since this is the luxury of three-quarters of bourgeois society, it follows that these three-quarters can have neither religion nor morality nor attachment to the government.”

The German original of the Manifesto used “fatherland” rather than country. Fatherland is a state of mind, whereas living in a “country” is a fact of life in the modern world.

The phrase does not mean workers should be indifferent to national oppression or deny the existence of nations and national identity (see for example Marx and Engels’ attitude to Poland, in Section IV).

Nor did they deny that the class struggle takes place on a national terrain. Note Marx's comment in Section I, that "the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie."

It meant that workers should regard bourgeois national state as part of the machinery of their oppression. It sums up basic working class internationalism, which flows from the global scope of capitalism.

There were many ideas at the time of world federations derived from the idea of universal brotherhood. During the French Revolution, Anacharsis Cloots declared himself a "citizen of the world". Marx was making a point about the primacy of class over nationality. The target is patriotism, of binding workers to the bosses through nationalism.

"national divisions and antagonisms are vanishing"

Marx is highlighting an important cosmopolitan tendency of capitalism, though on its own this is one-sided. It is another example where Marx states a tendency as an accomplished fact, without qualifying it with countervailing tendencies.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx wrote: "while the bourgeoisie of each nation still retained separate national interests, large scale industry created a class which in all nations has the same interest and for which nationality is already dead." (MECW 5 p.73)

"exploitation of one nation by another"

Marx was probably thinking of traditional colonialism, though an argument can be made for the transfers of surplus value under capitalism.

Religion

Marx describes religion as a "bourgeois prejudice" in Section I and scorns religious criticism of communism, but does not formally reject religion or espouse atheism. Engels' drafts asked, "do Communists reject the existing religions?", answering that they do and that communism will make "all existing religions superfluous and abrogate them". (MECW 6 p.103)

Although atheists themselves, since 1843 Marx and Engels had rejected making atheism a programmatic requirement for the movement or indeed their platform.

In an address delivered to a Communist circle in November 1847, Marx said: "Of all that has been achieved by German philosophy the critique of religion is the most important thing; this critique, however, has not proceeded from social development. Everything that has been written hitherto against the Christian religion has limited itself to proving that it rests on false principles; how, for example, the authors have used one another; what had not yet been examined was the practical cult of Christianity... This story, as presented in Daumer's work, deals Christianity the last blow; the question now is, what significance this has for us. It gives us the certainty that the old society is coming to an end and that the edifice of fraud and prejudice is collapsing." (MECW 6 p.631)

"the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class"

Riazanov said that "the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class" was a paraphrase of Goethe's dictum. (1930 p.173)

Marx summed up the same idea in *The German Ideology* (1845-46), where he elaborates on its meaning: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more

than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch.” (MECW 5 p.59)

These paragraphs in Manifesto on the relationship between ideas and reality sum up Marx’s new theory of historical change, later known as historical materialism.

“raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class”

This meant the conquest of political power by the working class.

“win the battle of democracy”

“Democracy” meant a democratic regime with voting rights, free speech etc, liberties few workers had in 1848.

Engels wrote in the *Principles of Communism* that “in the first place [the revolution] would inaugurate a democratic constitution and thereby, directly or indirectly, the political rule of the proletariat.” Engels’ was also using the expression in the sense of a class alliance, with the proletariat leading the small peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie, which Engels called “the Democracy”.

Draper argues that the phrase in the original “the winning of democracy” were deliberately cryptic and that he “put a veil of haze over the concept at a point in time when he was still uncertain or opposed”. This was because Marx did not accept Engels’ perspective, and had not made up his mind on the form of proletarian rule. (1994 p.269)

“hands of the state”

This was one of the few statements by Marx in favour of state ownership of the means of production. State ownership is a form of social ownership, but Marx did not preclude others such as workers’ associations or cooperatives.

Marx and Engels made their most significant amendment to the Manifesto here – a point which is vital to any Marxist understanding of the bourgeois state. In the preface to the 1872 German edition of the Manifesto, “one thing was proved by the [Paris] Commune, viz, that the working class cannot simply lay hold of the read-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes”. (MECW 23 p.175)

“measures which necessitate further inroads upon the old social order”

Transitional measures i.e. those which “outstrip themselves” were understood as going beyond reforms but were not fully socialist.

Engels expressed it thus in the *Principles of Communism*: “Of course, all these measures cannot be carried out at once. But one will always lead on to the other. Once the first radical onslaught upon private ownership has been made, the proletariat will see itself compelled to go always further.” (MECW 6 p.351)

The list of transitional measures were part of the period of “the Democracy” in Engels’, though this was not the case in the Manifesto. (Draper 1994 p.269)

In a letter to Sorge 20 June 1881, Marx referred to the “transitional measures which, as likewise indicated in the Manifesto, are and must be self-contradictory”. (MECW 46 p.100)

10 point programme

Many socialists who have studied the background to the Manifesto argue that “items in the transitional programme were not drafted exclusively by Marx and Engels. They were formulated by the communists as a congress and arrived at by collaboration.” (Riazanov 1930 p.180)

Draper also takes that view. The demands had already a long history by 1848 and were included in Engels’ drafts. Note that none of the points in the programme call for a direct attack on the central economic power of capital, its ownership of the means of production. (Draper 1994 p.273)

“class distinctions” disappear

Marx expressed the idea of a classless society that would follow the transitional period of workers’ rule. He wrote in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847): “Does this mean that after the fall of the old society there will be a new class domination culminating in a new political power? No. The condition for the emancipation of the working class is the abolition of all classes”. (MECW 6 p.212)

“association”

Marx had explained what this meant in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847): “The working class, in the course of its development, will substitute for the old civil society an association which will exclude classes and their antagonism.” (MECW 6 p.212)

“free development”

This paragraph sets the end-goal of communism as the free, unfettered development individual human brings.

Engels used a similar formulation in his first draft: “To organise in such a way that every member of it can develop and use all his capabilities and powers in complete freedom and without thereby infringing the basic conditions of this society.” (MECW 6 p.96)

An editorial in the single issue of the Communist League’s paper, *Kommunistische Zeitschrift* (1847), probably written by Karl Schapper, stated the same idea. It said: “We are not communists who want to destroy personal freedom and make the world over into a big barracks or a big workhouse. There certainly are communists who take the easy way out and want to deny and abolish personal freedom, which in their opinion stands in the way of harmony; but we have no desire to purchase equality at the price of freedom. We are convinced and will seek to show... that in no society can personal freedom be greater than in one based on communality.” (Draper 1994 p.281)

These ideas had a long pedigree among socialists. For example Morelly wrote in the *Code de la Nature* (1755): “[Every citizen] will contribute for his part to the general weal according to his powers, his talents and his age.” (Struik 1971 p.202)

And Bazard and Enfantin wrote in *The Doctrine of Saint-Simon* (1829): “All social institutions should aim at the moral, intellectual and physical improvement of the most numerous and poorest class. All privileges of birth to be abolished without exception. The task of each be according to his capacity, the wealth of each be according to his works.” (Struik 1971 p.29)

III: Socialist and Communist Literature

Key points

- Reactionary socialism is backward looking, glorifying a (mythical) past.
- Bourgeois socialism is satisfied with the present, with a few reforms.
- Utopian socialism looks to a better future, but with no means to get there.
- Modern examples of reactionary socialism – Greens, Islamists
- Modern examples of bourgeois socialism – social democrats, NGOs
- Modern examples of utopian socialism – anti-capitalists, anarchists, autonomists, most other Marxists
- Socialists can be divided into those who dwell on the past, simply want to reform the present, or who want a better future without a clear idea how to get there. Another way to divide socialists is by agency – the Marxist view is of socialism from below (i.e. from the working class) whereas others are varieties of socialism from above – by bourgeois governments, military despots, Stalinist bureaucrats, other saviours and saints.

“obsolete”

In the 1872 preface, Marx and Engels said of Section III: “it is self-evident that the criticism of socialist literature is deficient in relation to the present time, because it comes down only to 1847.” (MECW 23 p.175)

Many Marxists and others regard this section as obsolete. This is unfortunate, as many of the conceptions underlining these tendencies are still around today, albeit in new forms.

“socialists”

In 1848, socialists were the utopian sects or various sorts of social quacks who flogged panaceas to make society better without infringing on capital. Socialists were generally middle class ideologists who looked to the “educated classes” for support. They were respectable. They did not demand the end of private property. (Draper 1994 p.283)

Engels wrote in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845): “The Socialists are thoroughly tame and peaceable, accept our existing order, bad as it is, so far as to reject all other methods but that of winning public opinion. Yet they are so dogmatic that success by this method is for them, and for their principles as at present formulated, utterly hopeless. While bemoaning the demoralisation of the lower classes, they are blind to the element of progress in this dissolution of the old social order, and refuse to acknowledge that the corruption wrought by private interests and hypocrisy in the property-holding class is much greater. They acknowledge no historic development, and wish to place the nation in a state of Communism at once, overnight, not by the unavoidable march of its political development up to the point at which this transition becomes both possible and necessary. They understand, it is true, why the working-man is resentful against the bourgeois, but regard as unfruitful this class hatred, which is, after all, the only moral incentive by which the worker can be brought nearer the goal. They preach instead, a philanthropy and universal love far more unfruitful for the present state of England. They acknowledge only a psychological development, a development of man in the abstract, out of all relation to the Past, whereas the whole world rests upon that Past, the individual man included. Hence they are too abstract, too metaphysical, and accomplish little.” (MECW 4 p.525-526)

“reactionary”

This meant, as Marx put it earlier in the Manifesto, those who “seek to turn back the wheel of history”. This meant turning society back to pre-bourgeois conditions, i.e. to feudalism or absolutism.

“feudal socialism”

Engels' draft the *Principles of Communism* (November 1847) defined feudal socialists as "adherents of a feudal and patriarchal society which has already been destroyed... [who concluded] from the evils of existing society, that feudal and patriarchal society must be restored because it was free of such evils. In one way or another, all their proposals are directed to this end".

Engels argued that Communists oppose this tendency because "it seeks to establish the rule of the aristocracy, the guildmasters, the small producers, and their retinue of absolute or feudal monarchs, officials, soldiers, and priests – a society which was, to be sure, free of the evils of present-day society but which brought it at least as many evils without even offering to the oppressed workers the prospect of liberation through a communist revolution. (MECW 6 p.355)

Draper argues that the roots of this view go back to Thomas More's *Utopia*, which envisages an idealised version of the absolutist state, with the power of the feudal landed property broken but without the domination of the bourgeoisie. The feudal socialists discussed by Marx were agents of the absolutist state's attempts to keep the bourgeoisie as a tool, and prevent it becoming the master. (1994 p.284)

"menace of the future"

Draper argues that this meant the ongoing influence of pre-bourgeois values in anti-capitalist ideologies, such as the equation anti-capitalism = socialism.

"Saw on their hindquarters the old feudal coat of arms"

This is an allusion to Germany: *A Winter's Tale*, a poem by Heinrich Heine (1844), which Marx had helped get published in Paris.

"This beautiful reminder of the Middle Ages,
Of noble servants and squires,
Who bore loyalty in their heart,
And a coat of arms on their behind."
(Praver, 1976 p.139)

"Christian socialism"

This term originates with a misprint in the original German edition. In 1848 Marx wrote "der heilige socialismus", meaning holy or religious socialism. However it was printed as "heitige" and then miscorrected as "heutige" ('present-day') socialism. In 1872, Marx and Engels corrected the mistake, updating the idea of religious socialism by calling it "Christian socialism".

Marx wrote in *The Communism of the Rheinischer Beobachter* (1847): "The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submissiveness and humbleness, in short, all the qualities of the rabble, and the proletariat, which will not permit itself to be treated as rabble, needs its courage, its self-confidence, its pride and its sense of independence even more than its bread. The social principles of Christianity are sneaking and hypocritical, and the proletariat is revolutionary." (MECW 6, p.231)

Petty-bourgeois socialism

This section does express Marx and Engels views very clearly. For example Proudhon, a good example of petty-bourgeois socialism, is treated as a representative of a different trend. The only example given is Sismondi.

In the *Principles of Communism*, Engels organises petty-bourgeois socialists under the heading, "democratic socialists".

On 5 May 1846, Marx wrote to Proudhon inviting him to become the Paris correspondent of the CCC. Proudhon reply rejected “revolutionary action as a means of social reform” and that he did not understand Marx’s combating of true socialism. (Löwy 2003 p.127)

“school of socialism”

Sismondi founded no school of socialism. Riazanov suggests that this section is referring to the works of Eugène Beret (1811-1842) and Jérôme Adolphe Blanqui (1798-1854)

However Marx wrote in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, “Those who, like Sismondi, wish to return to the true proportion of production, while preserving the present basis of society, are reactionary, since, to be consistent, they must also wish to bring back all the other conditions of industry of former times.” (MECW 6 p.137)

“German or True Socialism

This label was aimed principally at the ideas expressed by Moses Hess in the 1840s. Other representatives were Karl Grün, Otto Lüning, Andréas Gottschalk and Hermann Kriege.

The key idea was a non-class humanism or humanitarianism. The positive side of this tendency was its trenchant critique of the status quo. However it also denounced bourgeois-democratic political reforms (like gaining a constitution) as liberal traps. True socialism was an unwitting ally of the reactionary status quo, or as the Manifesto puts it: “this “True” Socialism thus served the government as a weapon for fighting the German bourgeoisie”.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels criticised the true socialists, because they “regard foreign communist literature not as the expression and the product of a real movement but as purely theoretical writings”. (MECW 5 p.455)

They counterposed the genuine communist and workers’ parties to these “German ideologists”.

“Here we have, on the one hand, the actually existing communist party in France with its literature and, on the other, a few German pseudo-scholars who are trying to comprehend the ideas of this literature philosophically. The latter are treated just as much as the former as a “principal party of this age”, as a party, that is to say, of infinite importance not only to its immediate antithesis, the French communists, but also to the English Chartists and communists, the American national reformers and indeed to every other party “of this age”. It is unfortunate that none of these know of the existence of this “principal party”. But it has for a considerable time been the fashion among German ideologists for each literary faction, particularly the one that thinks itself “most advanced”, to proclaim itself not merely “one of the principal parties”, but actually “the principal party of this age”. We have among others, “the principal party” of critical criticism, the “principal party” of egoism in agreement with itself and now the “principal party” of the true socialists. In this fashion Germany can boast a whole horde of “principal parties”, whose existence is known only in Germany and even there only among the small set of scholars, pseudo-scholars and literati.” (MECW 5 p.466)

“Practical reason”

This is an overt allusion to Immanuel Kant’s work, *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). Marx and Engels wrote in *The German Ideology* (1845-46): “The characteristic form which French liberalism, based on real class interests, assumed in Germany we find again in Kant. Neither he, nor the German middle class, whose whitewashing spokesman he was, noticed that these theoretical ideas of the bourgeoisie had as their basis material interests and a will that was conditioned and determined by the material relations of production. Kant, therefore, separated this theoretical expression from the interests which it expressed; he made the materially motivated determinations of the will of the French bourgeois into pure self-determinations of “free will”, of the will in and for itself, of the human will, and so converted it into purely ideological conceptual determinations and moral postulates. Hence the German petty bourgeois recoiled in horror from the practice of this energetic bourgeois liberalism as

soon as this practice showed itself, both in the Reign of Terror and In shameless bourgeois profit-making.” (MECW 5 p.195)

“philosophy of action”

This is the title of an essay by Moses Hess published in 1843.

“confronting the political movement with Socialist demands”

The True Socialists are criticised here not they propose demands to a movement, but they “counterpose the socialist demands to the actual course of politics”. (Draper 1994 p.298)

Marx and Engels were among the few socialists in the 1840s who combined working class socialist views with support for bourgeois-democratic political reforms.

Conservative or Bourgeois Socialism

This means those socialists who supported the status quo. This meant the status quo in France and England, where the bourgeois ruled. Although Marx mentions Proudhon as an example, this is not consistent with his characterisation before or after the Manifesto.

In the *Principles of Communism* (November 1847), Engels described this tendency: “The second category consists of adherents of present-day society who have been frightened for its future by the evils to which it necessarily gives rise. What they want, therefore, is to maintain this society while getting rid of the evils which are an inherent part of it.

To this end, some propose mere welfare measures – while others come forward with grandiose systems of reform which, under the pretence of re-organizing society, are in fact intended to preserve the foundations, and hence the life, of existing society.

Communists must unremittingly struggle against these bourgeois socialists because they work for the enemies of communists and protect the society which communists aim to overthrow.” (MECW 6 p.355)

“temperance fanatics”

Draper argues that German socialists had a long record of fighting drunkenness and alcoholism within the working class movement without supporting prohibition. (1994 p.304)

“reforms that in no respect affect the relations between capital and labour”

Draper says Marx is condemning economism, the depreciation of political issues in favour of exclusive concentration on economic demands. (1994 p.306)

“prison reform”

The original German was “cellular prisons”, with Pentonville prison (opened in 1840) in mind. Cells for individual prisoners were an improvement on the previous system of large cells. The English translation generalised this to “prison reform”. The *Marx and Engels Collected Works* has a misleading footnote translating the term as “solitary confinement”. (MECW 6 p.514)

Utopian socialism

Marx was the first to combine utopian and socialism in the Manifesto. He had in mind the followers of Cabet, Fourier and Owen. Marx and Engels generally expressed admiration for these founders, in contrast to their disciples and their sects.

Marx provided no definition of the term utopian socialism in the Manifesto. The nearest to it is: “Historical action is to yield to their personal inventive action; historically created conditions of emancipation to fantastic ones; and the gradual, spontaneous class organisation of the proletariat to an organisation of society especially contrived by these inventors. Future history

resolves itself, in their eyes, into the propaganda and the practical carrying out of their social plans.”

Draper argues that the defining characteristic of the utopian socialist approach was its method, the leap into speculative abstraction, instead of deriving proposals for social change from actual forces at work in society. (1994 p.308)

“We do not here refer to the writings of Babeuf and others”

Marx excludes Babeuf, because he represented a primitive form of communism i.e. of the same tendency – whereas Marx is discussing other tendencies.

As Marx and Engels put it in *The German Ideology* (1845-46): “The few non-revolutionary communist bourgeois who made their appearance since the time of Babeuf were a rare occurrence; the vast majority of the communists in all countries are revolutionary. All communists in France reproach the followers of Saint-Simon and Fourier with their peaceableness...” (MECW 5 p.309)

In *Moralising Criticism and Critical Morality* (1847), Marx wrote: “The first manifestation of a truly active communist party is contained within the bourgeois revolution, at the moment when the constitutional monarchy is eliminated. The most consistent republicans, in England the Levellers, in France Babeuf, Buonarroti, etc., were the first to proclaim these “social questions”. The Babeuf Conspiracy, by Babeuf’s friend and party-comrade Buonarroti, shows how these republicans derived from the “movement” of history the realisation that the disposal of the social question of rule by princes and republic did not mean that even a single “social question” has been solved in the interests of the proletariat.” (MECW 6 p.321)

“It inculcated universal asceticism and social levelling in its crudest form”

This was aimed at Weitling and his supporters. As Engels expressed it in *The Peasant War in Germany* (1850), “This austerity of behaviour, this insistence on relinquishing all enjoyment of life, contrasts the ruling classes with the principle of Spartan equality”. (MECW 10 p.428)

“suffering class”

The view of the working class as the “suffering class” was common to the Saint-Simonians. It was also Marx’s early starting point. In 1842 he wrote of “the existence of a suffering humanity that thinks and of a thinking humanity that is oppressed”. In the *Paris Manuscripts* (1844) the emphasis for the first time was placed on struggle rather than suffering. (Draper 1994 p.315)

“phalansteries”

Marx uses the term to cover the model community or at least the central building (palaces) advocated by Fourier.

“home colonies”

This was Robert Owen’s term for his proposed model communities. Engels used the term in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845).

“duodecimo”

Describes a book’s page size, used figuratively to mean small or miniature.

“reactionary or conservative”

The translation missed out an “or”, making the nonsensical term “reactionary conservative socialism”.

IV: Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties

Key points

The essentials are:

- The relationship between Communists and other working class and social movements
- Conception of the united front
- Working class unity

Worth debating:

- Support for every revolutionary movement
- Support for the bourgeoisie

“represent the future of that movement”

This statement reiterates the views expressed at the beginning of Section II.

“Agrarian reformers in America”

Marx was referring to the National Reform Association (see glossary). In an article against Karl Heinzen, *Moralising Criticism and Critical Morality* (October 1847), Marx referred to the group in complimentary terms: “Just as in England the workers form a political party under the name of the Chartists, so do the workers in North America under the name of the National Reformers and their battle-cry is not at all rule of the princes or the republic, but rule of the working class or the rule of the bourgeois class.” (MECW 6 p.324)

Engels in the *Principles of Communism* (November 1847) was similarly positive: “In America, where a democratic constitution has already been established, the communists must make the common cause with the party which will turn this constitution against the bourgeoisie and use it in the interests of the proletariat – that is, with the agrarian National Reformers.” (MECW 6 p.356)

Draper argues that the significance for Marx was that this was a class-based movement, not simply a sect. (1994 p.323)

“The socialist-democrats”

Marx means *La Réforme* tendency in France. The term meant the socialist wing of the Democratic camp.

Engels discussed these socialists in the *Principles of Communism* (November 1847): “These democratic socialists are either proletarians who are not yet sufficiently clear about the conditions of the liberation of their class, or they are representatives of the petty bourgeoisie, a class which, prior to the achievement of democracy and the socialist measures to which it gives rise, has many interests in common with the proletariat.

“It follows that, in moments of action, the communists will have to come to an understanding with these democratic socialists, and in general to follow as far as possible a common policy with them – provided that these socialists do not enter into the service of the ruling bourgeoisie and attack the communists. It is clear that this form of co-operation in action does not exclude the discussion of differences.” (MECW 6 p.355)

“revolutionary tradition”

This refers not to the revolution tradition in general, but to the phrasemongering that hung on from reminiscences about the French Revolution (1789-1794).

“In Switzerland, they support the Radicals”

This referred to a political tendency led by James Fazy (1796-1878) and Henri Druey (1799-1855). In 1847 the radicals played a prominent role in beating back attempts by right-wing cantons (the Sonderbund) to split from the federal government.

Marx wrote an *Address of the Democratic Association of Brussels to the Swiss People* praising Swiss democracy (MECW 6 p.625). In the *Principles of Communism* (November 1847) Engels was similarly appreciative: “In Switzerland, the Radicals, though a very mixed party, are the only group with which the communists can co-operate, and, among these Radicals, the Vaudois and Genevese are the most advanced.” (MECW 6 p.356)

Poland: “support the party that insists on an agrarian revolution”

The Cracow insurrection (February 1846) led by Ludwik Mieroslawski (1814-1878) and Henryk Dembinski (1791–1864) set up a national government and proposed a programme of radical agrarian reform in the interests of the peasantry. The uprising was crushed by Austria and Russia. The Polish national movement received widespread support from leftist movements, including workers’ organisations.

At a meeting on 29 November 1847 to commemorate the Polish insurrection of 1830, Engels was reported as arguing: “this commemoration of the Polish revolution is not only an advantage to Poland, but to the whole world, as it causes the principles of democracy to be spread far and wide. He, as a German, had great interest in Polish success, as it would much hasten liberty in Germany, and freedom Germany had resolved to obtain sooner or later. And he firmly believed that no nation could become free without benefiting all others.” (MECW 6 pp.620-621)

“In Germany, they fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way”

Marx sets down in advance the policy he and Engels would follow during the 1848 revolution, while they were active in Cologne Democratic Association and Workers’ Association and editing the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*.

The policy meant the working class should support the takeover by the bourgeoisie. However it entailed no class truce and contains a basic formulation of “permanent revolution” – after the overthrow of the old regime, the proletarian struggle against the new bourgeois power would “immediately begin”. Note Marx includes the petty-bourgeoisie on the side of reaction.

Marx and Engels first expressed this attitude in a letter to Köttgen (15 June 1846), when they advise; “If you cannot produce a working men’s petition with at least 500 signatures, then petition rather, as the bourgeoisie in Trier wish to do, for a progressive property tax, and if, even then, the bourgeoisie of the area do not join in, eh bien, join them for the time being in public demonstrations, proceed Jesuitically, put aside teutonic probity, true-heartedness and decency, and sign and push forward the bourgeois petitions for freedom of the press, a constitution, and so on. When this has been achieved a new era will dawn for communist propaganda. Our means will be increased, the antithesis between bourgeoisie and proletariat will be sharpened. In a party one must support everything which helps towards progress, and have no truck with any tedious moral scruples.” (MECW 6 pp.55-56)

In *Moralising Criticism and Critical Morality* (October 1847), Marx argued: “The German workers meanwhile know very well that the absolute monarchy does not waver for a moment, nor can it do so, in greeting them, in the service of the bourgeoisie, with cannon-balls and whip-lashes. Why, then, should they prefer the brutal harassment of the absolute government with its semi-feudal retinue to direct bourgeois rule? The workers know very well that it is not just politically that the bourgeoisie will have to make broader concessions to them than the absolute monarchy, but that in serving the interests of its trade and industry it will create, willy-nilly, the conditions for the uniting of the working class, and the uniting of the workers is the first requirement for their victory. The workers know that the abolition of bourgeois property relations is not brought about by preserving those of feudalism. They know that the

revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie against the feudal estates and the absolute monarchy can only accelerate their own revolutionary movement. They know that their own struggle against the bourgeoisie can only dawn with the day when the bourgeoisie is victorious. Despite all this they do not share Herr Heinzen's bourgeois illusions. They can and must accept the bourgeois revolution as a precondition for the workers' revolution. However, they cannot for a moment regard it as their ultimate goal." (MECW 6 pp.332-333)

Engels explained the policy in the *Principles of Communism* (November 1847): "In Germany, finally, the decisive struggle now on the order of the day is that between the bourgeoisie and the absolute monarchy. Since the communists cannot enter upon the decisive struggle between themselves and the bourgeoisie until the bourgeoisie is in power, it follows that it is in the interest of the communists to help the bourgeoisie to power as soon as possible in order the sooner to be able to overthrow it. Against the governments, therefore, the communists must continually support the radical liberal party, taking care to avoid the self-deceptions of the bourgeoisie and not fall for the enticing promises of benefits which a victory for the bourgeoisie would allegedly bring to the proletariat. The sole advantages which the proletariat would derive from a bourgeois victory would consist (i) in various concessions which would facilitate the unification of the proletariat into a closely knit, battle-worthy, and organized class; and (ii) in the certainty that, on the very day the absolute monarchies fall, the struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat will start. From that day on, the policy of the communists will be the same as it now is in the countries where the bourgeoisie is already in power." (MECW 6 pp.356-357)

"never cease to instil into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat"

Marx underlined the need for working independence even where Communists support the revolutionary bourgeoisie.

"support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order"

This does not mean that Communists have to support every protest movement, even if it has a socialist tinge. It means assessing a movement by the class forces that make it up, who are in motion and for what ends.

Even where Communists support other movements, they "emphasise the property question" i.e. class. It doesn't mean 'drop your politics to get along in a popular movement'. It does mean Communists should build progressive movements, including class movements without revolutionary aims e.g. trade unions.

"union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries."

Draper argues that this is better translated as "alliance and accord", meaning a united front of democratic parties. It is not about merger or fusion, and certainly not between socialist or communist groups. (1994 p.331)

Communists "openly declare" their views and aims

This reiterates the point made in the preamble – Communists disdain to remain a secret sect.

"Nothing to lose in it"

The sentence should read: "The proletarians have nothing to lose in it but their chains". Most translations miss out "in it". What Marx meant was not that workers have nothing to lose at all – rather they have nothing to lose when drive to make their own revolution.

"Proletarians of All Countries, Unite!"

This phrase first appeared on the top of the rules of the newly formed Communist League adopted at the 2-9 June 1847 congress of the League (MECW 6 p. 586)

It was also used on the circular, The Central Authority to the League, 14 September 1847 in the names of Schapper, Moll and Bauer. (MECW 6 p.602)

The motto first appeared in public on the masthead of the League's paper, the *Kommunistische Zeitschrift*, September 1847 (Riazanov 1930 p.286)

Andréas, who attributed the authorship to Engels, found that it was used in a toast on 20 September 1847 at a meeting of German, French and English Communists: "May the proletarians of all countries unite themselves in common for the vindication of their rights." (Bender 1988 p.93 N.6)

A similar idea had been put forward by the Fraternal Democrats in 1846: "To all oppressed classes of every land... to unite themselves for the triumph of their common cause. 'Divide and rule' is the motto of the oppressor, 'unite yourselves for victory' should be ours." (Beamish 1998 p.222)

Marx had also received the Address of the Fraternal Democrats to the Brussels Democratic Association (December 1847), probably written by Harney, which said: "But it is in the interests of the proletarians, everywhere oppressed by the same kind of taskmasters and defrauded of the fruits of their industry by the same description of plunderers, it is in their interest to unite." (Löwy 2003 p.129)

Earlier socialists had appealed for working class unity. Thomas Dézamy wrote in *Calomnies et politiques de M. Cabet* (1842): "It is more than ever necessary to lose no time in finding common ground on which the proletariat can unite and, first and foremost, before proceeding further, establish its own unity." And Flora Tristan wrote in *Union ouvrière* (1843): "Workers, put aside, therefore, all your petty rivalries and form, alongside your particular association, a compact, solid and indissoluble union." (Löwy 2003 p.72, p.80)

In his essay on *Ludwig Marcus* (1844), Heine had spoken "of that fraternal union of the workers of all lands, of that wild army of the proletariat, which is bent on doing away with all concern about nationality in order to pursue a common purpose in Europe, to call into being a true democracy." (Bender 1988 p.106)

Glossary

Gracchus Babeuf (1760-1797) organised the first communist movement aimed at a new anti-capitalist social order. From 1793 he called for sans-culotte power. In 1796 he became convinced that the revolution had been betrayed and organised an insurrectionary committee. He was denounced by an informer, tried and sentenced to death. He committed suicide but was guillotined anyway.

Louis Blanc (1811-1882) was an historian and writer. In 1839 his first socialist work, *Organisation du Travail* proposed workers' cooperative production financed by the state. He was a member of the Réforme tendency and joined the provisional government in 1848. Draper describes him as "an early version of reformist socialism with a strong state-socialistic cast". (1994 p.325)

Etienne Cabet (1788-1856) wrote a novel *Voyage en Icarie* (1840), which blueprinted the details of a utopia. Cabet's ideas had some influence in the Communist League in the 1840s. Engels wrote about Cabet as early as November 1843 in the Owenite paper, the *New Moral World* (MECW 3 p.397, p.400) and in 1847 described him as "the acknowledged representative of the great mass of the French proletariat". (MECW 6 p.76)

The Chartists were the pivotal working class movement in the decade before the Communist Manifesto in Britain. Engels described Chartism as "the compact form of their opposition to the bourgeoisie... the whole working-class which arises against the bourgeoisie". (MECW 4 p.517) Marx described the Chartists as "the organised party of the proletariat", which had waged "the most advanced class struggle the world has seen" between 1839-42. (MECW 7 pp.297-98)

Victor Considérant (1808-1893) was the leader of the Fourierists after Fourier's death in 1837. Considérant edited the daily *Démocratie Pacifique* (1843-51), which promoted a liberal, social-democratic sect without a working class orientation.

Alexandre Théodore Dézamy (1803-1850) was a materialist communist and one of the first communists read by Marx in the early 1840s. He organised the Belleville banquet in 1840, the first independent and public manifestation of Communism in France and wrote an important critique of Cabet, *Calomnies et politique de M. Cabet* (1842). In the *Holy Family* (1845), Marx and Engels referred to Dézamy and his group as "the more scientific French communists". (MECW 6 p.131)

Ferdinand Flocon (1800-1866) A committed French republican and democrat, and a journalist with *La Réforme*. A member of the provisional government in 1848, he offered Marx asylum in Paris. (MECW 6 p.649) Engels wrote that he was "cordial and open-hearted" and "one of the most decent fellows I know". (MECW 38 p.168)

Charles Fourier (1772-1837) wrote criticised the bourgeois society and put forward the idea of a model community and a new social order, known as the phalanx. Marx and Engels planned to publish his work as part of a library of foreign socialist writers. They also admired his advanced views on women's rights and sexual liberation. Fourier's movement was usually used the term associationism not socialism. His leading follower was Victor Considérant.

François Guizot (1787-1874), historian and statesman in France. Guizot was foreign minister and briefly premier under Louis Philippe.

French Legitimists – these were royalists who opposed the bourgeois monarchy of Louis Philippe (1830-1848) who championed some reforms of workers' conditions. Its notable figures were Count Charles Forbes de Montalembert (1810-1870) and Vicomte Alban de Villeneuve-Bargement (1784-1850).

Alexandre Ledru-Rollin (1807-1874) was elected a deputy in 1841, becoming the leading figure of republican liberalism. He allied with Louis Blanc in La Réforme. In the 1848 he became interior minister in the provisional government.

Prince von Metternich (1773-1859), chief minister of the Hapsburg Empire and architect of the European order between 1815 and 1848.

The **National Reform Association** founded the United States in October 1845 by George Henry Evans. It published the *Working Man's Advocate*, later *Young America*. It set itself the task of "directing the organisation of the masses so that the workers may at last confront capital and themselves make the laws". (Löwy 2003 p.145) Its basic concern was land reform: it called for every worker to get 160 acres, with the slogan "Vote yourself a farm". It also came out for the ten-hour day, the abolition of slavery and the standing army.

Robert Owen (1771-1858) was the pioneer of socialism and cooperativism in Britain. He began as a cotton manufacturer and created New Lanark as a model factory and community. He later attempted to create model communities elsewhere, such as New Harmony in the US, but these failed. He helped found the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union in 1834, but was basically hostile to working class organisation.

Réformistes meant the political tendency around the influential liberal-radical Paris daily *La Réforme* (1843-1850), founded by Ledru-Rollin and edited by Ferdinand Flocon.

Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) was an advocate of scientific social planning, but not socialism in the modern sense. He did not advocate a utopia as such and only mentioned the working class in his final work – as a source of recruitment. Riazanov argues that Saint-Simon's influence on Marx was small. (1930 p.232) However Saint-Simon's ideas were taken up by the Saint-Simonian school organised by Bazard and Enfantin, which fed into the early history of the socialist movement.

Simonde de Sismondi (1773-1842) was a Swiss economist and historian. Marx called him "epoch-making in political economy" (MECW 32 p.393) but also criticised his mistakes and inadequacies. However Sismondi did not found a school of socialism, or indeed of political economy.

Flora Tristan, (1803-1844) was a pioneer socialist and feminist who promoted working class self-reliance and related the oppression of women to the oppression of the working class. Tristan publicised Chartism after visiting England and advocated L'Union Ouvrière (the Workers' Union) in France. Engels discusses her briefly in the *Holy Family* (1845).

William Weitling (1808-1870) was a tailor and influential communist during the 1840s. He wrote the programme for the League of the Just in 1838 Weitling's *Guarantee of Harmony and Freedom* (1842) was described by Marx as "a fiery and brilliant debut of the German workers". However in March 1846 Marx denounced Weitling's "craft workers' communism".

Young England – a tendency within the British Tory party who sought to counteract the political dominance of the bourgeoisie in the name of an idealised aristocracy ('Merrie England', Cavaliers). They held out a hand to the enemy of their enemy i.e. the working class, exposing the horrors of industrial conditions and promoting reforms such as the factory acts, the Ten Hours Bill 1847. Its leading figures were Lord Ashley (later Lord Shaftsbury) and outside parliament, Thomas Carlyle.