

Marx and Engels on Capitalism and Communism: *The Communist Manifesto* (1848)

Karl Marx is one of the few social theorists in this book who enjoys name recognition beyond the ranks of students and scholars. He saw himself as a socialist revolutionary and directed his writing to socialist activists. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, his ideas about a revolution to end capitalism seem far from being fulfilled, yet his analysis of capitalism as a global social, economic, and cultural system remains fresh and incisive. His views of culture, consciousness, and ideas continue to be penetrating and influential. (We will return to examine the development of Marx's thought after we consider the contributions to social theory made by Marx and Engels writing together.¹)

Often, however, when we say "Marx" or "Marxism," we are also referring to the contribution of Friedrich Engels, Marx's intellectual partner. Some of their work was a joint effort, but each pursued distinct areas of inquiry as well. Engels was interested in the study of human history in the larger context of scientific inquiry into all natural phenomena. He was a pioneer in explaining gender inequality and family structure as social institutions, using data from ethnographic studies of the Iroquois and from historical materials on the European cultures of classical antiquity. He recorded careful observations of the harsh living conditions of the English working class and Irish immigrants in Manchester, England.

Marx and Engels's stand toward capitalism, as we will see in *The Communist Manifesto*, was complex and ambivalent. A capitalist society is a society of class inequality, like most societies that preceded it in history, but it is not just "the same old" static type of society as feudal and slavery-based societies because its mode of production is radically different and new. Capitalism is an economic and social system that fetters—chains—human creativity and locks science, technology, and human labour into the narrow prison cell of private profit. Yet it also contains the promise of scientific understanding, material abundance, and freedom from traditional inequalities, especially those of gender ("patriarchy") and fixed-status communities, which make distinctions between serfs and nobles, for example. Capitalism promises a society of free, creative, unique individuals; it never delivers on this promise because of its foundation in differences in the ownership of productive property, but the promise itself is a step forward in human history.

It is important to emphasize here that Marx and Engels were not economic or technological determinists. Although they believed that technology and the mode of production (all the activities and relationships through which people create the "human-made" aspects of their world) were crucial in history, they absolutely rejected the idea that technology and the mode of production are external forces. What we call "technology" or "the economy" (or, in their words, "the mode of production") is comprised of human actions, human acts of creativity, and relationships between people. These are not "things."

Marx and Engels saw the interplay of another pair of supposed opposites, culture and social relationships. Social relationships between people, including economic relationships, construct a society. Our consciousness does not arise out of thin air; ideas reflect the experiences of acting and interaction in the context of these relationships. But this does not mean that ideas are unimportant in history or that their form is completely predictable from the structure of social relationships. Although Marx and Engels believed that ideas were more

a determined than a determining element in society, they were keenly interested in the ideas, culture, and consciousness associated with capitalism (and other class-based systems).

Marx and Engels had a keen insight into the nature of social change. They understood that significant shifts can take place through the accumulation of many small changes that finally add up to a major crisis and social transformation. This concept was derived from a dialectical model of change in which quantitative change in behaviours, institutions, and relationships can suddenly precipitate a qualitative shift, a change that is powerful enough to be termed a revolution. They were also aware that even in a revolution some elements of the old order—habits, beliefs, ways of doing things—may be carried forward into the new; revolutionaries need to be aware of this fact and should strive to hold on to “the rational kernel” of the preceding type of society. A revolution both puts an end to old social practices and preserves them within a new context; the Hegelian concept of *Aufhebung* (a German word that means both abrogation and preservation) sums up this recognition of the dual nature of change.

The Communist Manifesto begins with Marx and Engels’s view of the emergence of capitalism. All historical societies are split by class conflict, which, in the long run, has always ended either with the destruction of the society or with the emergence of the subordinate class as victors, the new dominant class of a new mode of production and a new social order. The bourgeoisie emerged from feudal society in Western Europe, its growth associated with colonization, the growth of manufactures and markets for crafts, new technologies of production and transportation, and the growth of global markets. The bourgeoisie is the capitalist class, the class of owners of capitalist enterprises, seen as a political and cultural as well as an economic force.

The bourgeoisie’s political development and consciousness of itself as a class grew in association with its rise as an economic force. Its roots were in the communities of commoners in the Middle Ages, but, as its economic activities grew and flourished, it challenged the ideological and political hold of the landed nobility. By the end of the eighteenth century, its power was such that its most politically active members could spearhead the French Revolution, a decisive moment when most of the privileges, rights, and power of the landed aristocracy were swept away.

The most important section of *The Communist Manifesto* begins with the sentence, “The bourgeoisie has played a most revolutionary role in history.” Marx and Engels list all the amazing changes that capitalism has brought about in the world. It has meant unleashing the enormous creative and productive powers of human beings. Global markets and global culture emerge; old prejudices, inequalities, and patriarchal and feudal relationships are swept away. All human relationships, including the structure of professions and the family, are being reorganized along capitalist lines, dominated by the commodity form. All countries are being forced to enter markets and to become like the successful capitalist societies, or they risk being humiliated and colonized. Under the competitive pressure inherent in capitalism, technological innovation is a ceaseless process. Culture is in constant flux, as “all that is solid melts into air.” This middle section is a great prose poem to capitalism as a dynamic, revolutionary type of society.

Finally, the authors introduce the metaphor of “fetters,” social institutions that limit

realization of the potential inherent in capitalism. Capitalism has unleashed the powers of human creativity, but these developments are dangerous for the bourgeoisie. The capitalist class would like to control social change and technological innovation; it fears that the logic of capitalism will lead to a new round of class conflict and the downfall of the bourgeoisie. The working class, all people whose labour in fact creates the technology and wealth of capitalist society, will begin to organize to end the domination of those few who own the means of production. In Marx and Engels's view, private ownership of the means of production, the appropriation of profit from the exploitation of labour, the market mechanism, and associated sociopolitical institutions, such as property law, are all forces that now limit rather than expand the possibilities for humankind.

But how would these "fetters" be broken? What would communism look like, and how would this new socio-economic arrangement come about? Marx and Engels were reluctant to spell out what communism would be like. (Although, in *The German Ideology*, we get a quick, tantalizing glimpse of their wildest fantasies.) Usually they distanced themselves from the utopian socialists who liked to plan out all the details of outlandish communal utopias that they believed could be attained in a rather magical way, for example, by a sudden jump from the present into a grand future. Marx and Engels believed that communism was a type of society that could be achieved only through a long, organized, political struggle that had to confront the realities of capitalist society. This struggle would shape the possibilities of the post-capitalist society. Communism still lay far in the future and could be imagined but not planned in any detail.

A stage of socialism, still characterized by a state (a central coercive institution of political power), a division of labour, and a principle of social distribution based on "from each according to his [or her] ability, to each according to his [or her] needs" would be necessary before communism could emerge.² In other words, in socialism, societal rewards would be based on talent and hard work, not on ownership of capital. Class fades away, but social roles and specializations still exist in socialist society.

In communism, distribution would be based on unique individual needs and no longer calculated on the basis of individual contributions and abilities. The link between work and livelihood would be completely severed, ending the very notion of work itself. This is a radically individualized vision of the good society, one that clearly requires a high level of technology.

Most people when they hear "communism" think of total equality; but Marx and Engels actually envisioned communism in opposite terms, as a society of total differentiation in which each person is valued in his or her uniqueness and individuality. Social categories, social roles, and specialized labour all cease to exist.

This dream of unique personhood is rooted in Marx and Engels's radical idea that communism means a complete breakdown of the division of labour. Communism means that the division between mental and manual labour is completely overcome. Communism means that we can do what we would like to do without ever being labelled in terms of social roles or categories: we can hunt, fish, ranch, and read literature without being a hunter, fisher, rancher, or literary critic. All constraining roles and specializations end.

In communism, each individual enjoys the sensuous pleasure of activities. Once liberated

from the need to earn wages and fulfil permanent “role expectations,” we would experience our activities as freely chosen and physically pleasurable.

Communism means the overcoming of all practices and actions that were previously represented as natural foundations of the division of labour, most specifically gender. (Incidentally the word “man” in the text is a translation of the more gender-neutral German word *mensch*.) The gender division of labour and its apparent naturalness is the original sin of human alienation and exploitation, the initial point of the social construction of unequal roles and relationships, a view that Engels elaborated on in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. Marx and Engels contrast a supposedly natural division of labour with the voluntary choice of activities; only the latter is free and unalienated creative activity. We realize our species-being most completely when we free ourselves from the illusion that there is a natural basis to the social order and recognize ourselves as a species that creates our own life conditions.

Marx and Engels’s vision is a radical statement about the social construction of gender and “human nature” in general. Human action is always socially constructed; in the past, we mystified this social construction by claiming that society reflected a natural order. “Nature” is itself a human construct. In communist society, we finally recognize that we ourselves construct our world, and this recognition frees us to construct it voluntarily and consciously. As Marx phrases it, we then will finally move from prehistory to history.

Most subsequent social thought is a reflection and elaboration of this statement by Marx and Engels, and sometimes a challenge to it. How do we construct our social world? How do we explain and represent these social constructions? How much freedom is possible in social construction, and to what extent is human action constrained either by nature or by the weight of the past—what is the dialectic between agency and structure in society? Is a voluntarily and consciously created social order possible?

Notes

1. We break chronological order in this section of the chapter so as to examine, first, the works that Marx and Engels wrote together. These are presented in order of publication date before we turn to the writings of Marx alone. This order has the added advantage of placing one of the best known and most accessible of Marx’s writings first and his seminal work last, *The Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*, respectively. [Return to text](#).
2. Karl Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Programme,” in *Marx-Engels Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), 3: 13–30. [Return to text](#).

Reading 2.1.1: Excerpts from *The Communist Manifesto* (1848)

[Source: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, in *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, trans. Samuel Moore in cooperation with Frederick Engels (1888; Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), 1: 98–137.]

Chapter I: Bourgeois and Proletarians

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes again, subordinate gradations.

The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonism. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: It has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other—bourgeoisie and proletariat.

From the serfs of the Middle Ages sprang the chartered burghers of the earliest towns. From these burgesses the first elements of the bourgeoisie were developed.

The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development.

The feudal system of industry, in which industrial production was monopolized by closed guilds, now no longer sufficed for the growing wants of the new markets. The manufacturing system took its place. The guild-masters were pushed aside by the manufacturing middle class; division of labor between the different corporate guilds vanished in the face of division of labor in each single workshop.

Meantime the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever rising. Even manufacture no longer sufficed. Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionized industrial production. The place of manufacture was taken by the giant, modern industry, the place of the industrial middle class, by industrial millionaires—the leaders of whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois.

Modern industry has established the world market, for which the discovery of America

paved the way. The market has given an immense development to commerce, to navigation, to communication by land. This development has, in its turn, reacted on the extension of industry; and in proportion as industry, commerce, navigation, railways extended, in the same proportion the bourgeoisie developed, increased its capital, and pushed into the background every class handed down from the Middle Ages.

We see, therefore, how the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange.

Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class. An oppressed class under the sway of the feudal nobility, it became an armed and self-governing association in the medieval commune; here independent urban republic (as in Italy and Germany), there taxable “third estate” of the monarchy (as in France); afterwards in the period of manufacture proper, serving either the semi-feudal or the absolute monarchy as a counterpoise against the nobility, and in fact cornerstone of the great monarchies in general—the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of modern industry and of the world market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative state, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie has played a most revolutionary role in history.

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors,” and has left no other bond between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment.” It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of Philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom—Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.

The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-laborers.

The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation.

The bourgeoisie has disclosed how it came to pass that the brutal display of vigor in the Middle Ages, which reactionaries so much admire, found its fitting complement in the most slothful indolence. It has been the first to show what man’s activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former migrations of nations and crusades.

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and

agitation distinguish the bourgeoisie epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind.

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionaries, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature.

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all nations, even the most barbarian, into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In a word, it creates a world after its own image.

The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life. Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West.

More and more the bourgeoisie keeps doing away with the scattered state of the population, of the means of production, and of property. It has agglomerated population, centralized means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. The necessary consequence of this was political centralization. Independent, or but loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments, and systems of taxation, became lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one

national class interest, one frontier, and one customs tariff.

The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground—what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor?

We see then that the means of production and of exchange, which served as the foundation for the growth of the bourgeoisie, were generated in feudal society. At a certain stage in the development of these means of production and of exchange, the conditions under which feudal society produced and exchanged, the feudal organization of agriculture and manufacturing industry, in a word, the feudal relations of property became no longer compatible with the already developed productive forces; they became so many fetters. They had to be burst asunder; they were burst asunder.

Into their place stepped free competition, accompanied by a social and political constitution adapted to it, and by the economic and political sway of the bourgeois class.

A similar movement is going on before our own eyes. Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule. It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return put the existence of the entire bourgeois society on trial, each time more threateningly. In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity—the epidemic of over-production. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed. And why? Because there is too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce. The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered, and no sooner do they overcome these fetters than they bring disorder into the whole of bourgeois society, endanger the existence of bourgeois property. The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them. And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand, by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.

The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself.

But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons—the modern working class—the proletarians.

In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed—a class of laborers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labor increases capital. These laborers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market.

Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labor, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and, consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack, that is required of him. Hence, the cost of production of a workman is restricted, almost entirely, to the means of subsistence that he requires for his maintenance, and for the propagation of his race. But the price of a commodity, and therefore also of labor, is equal to its cost of production. In proportion, therefore, as the repulsiveness of the work increases, the wage decreases. Nay more, in proportion as the use of machinery and division of labor increases, in the same proportion the burden of toil also increases, whether by prolongation of the working hours, by increased speed of the machinery, etc.

Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of laborers, crowded into the factory, are organized like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants. Not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois state; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the over-looker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself. The more openly this despotism proclaims gain to be its end and aim, the more petty, the more hateful and the more embittering it is.

The less the skill and exertion of strength implied in manual labor, in other words, the more modern industry develops, the more is the labor of men superseded by that of women. Differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class. All are instruments of labor, more or less expensive to use according to their age and sex.

No sooner has the laborer received his wages in cash, for the moment escaping exploitation by the manufacturer, than he is set upon by the other portions of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker, etc.

The lower strata of the middle class—the small tradespeople, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants—all these sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which modern industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly because their specialized skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production. Thus the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population.

The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first the contest is carried on by individual laborers, then by the work people of a factory, then by the operatives of one trade, in one locality, against the

individual bourgeois who directly exploits them. They direct their attacks not against the bourgeois conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported wares that compete with their labor, they smash machinery to pieces then set factories ablaze, they seek to restore by force the vanished status of the workman of the Middle Ages.

At this stage the laborers still form an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country, and broken up by their mutual competition. If anywhere they unite to form more compact bodies, this is not yet the consequence of their own active union, but of the union of the bourgeoisie, which class, in order to attain its own political ends, is compelled to set the whole proletariat in motion, and is moreover still able to do so for a time. At this stage, therefore, the proletarians do not fight their enemies, but the enemies of their enemies, the remnants of absolute monarchy, the landowners, the non-industrial bourgeois, the petty bourgeoisie. Thus the whole historical movement is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

But with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more. The various interest and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalized, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labor and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level. The growing competition among the bourgeois, and the resulting commercial crises, make the wages of the workers ever more fluctuating. The unceasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations (trade unions) against the bourgeoisie; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there the contest breaks out into riots.

Now and then the workers are victorious, but only of a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers. This union is furthered by the improved means of communication which are created by modern industry, and which place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralize the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes. But every class struggle is a political struggle. And that union, to attain which the burghers of the Middle Ages, with their miserable highways, required centuries, the modern proletarians, thanks to railways, achieved in a few years.

This organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier. It compels legislative recognition of particular interests of the workers, by taking advantage of the divisions among the bourgeoisie itself. Thus the ten-hour bill in England was carried.

Altogether, collisions between the classes of the old society further the course of development of the proletariat in many ways. The bourgeoisie finds itself involved in a constant battle. At first with the aristocracy; later on, with those portions of the bourgeoisie

itself whose interests have become antagonistic to the progress of industry; at all times with the bourgeoisie of foreign countries. In all these battles it sees itself compelled to appeal to the proletariat, to ask for its help, and thus, to drag it into the political arena. The bourgeoisie itself, therefore, supplies the proletariat with its own elements of political and general education, in other words, it furnishes the proletariat with weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie.

Further, as we have already seen, entire sections of the ruling classes are, by the advance of industry, precipitated into the proletariat, or are at least threatened in their conditions of existence. These also supply the proletariat with fresh elements of enlightenment and progress.

Finally, in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. Just as, therefore, at an earlier period a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole.

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product.

The lower middle class, the small manufacturers, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are therefore not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. If by chance they are revolutionary, they are so only in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat; they thus defend not their present, but their future interest; they desert their own standpoint to adopt that of the proletariat.

The "dangerous class," the social scum (*Lumpenproletariat*), that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue.

The social conditions of the old society no longer exist for the proletariat. The proletarian is without property; his relation to his wife and children has no longer anything in common with bourgeois family relations; modern industrial labor, modern subjection to capital, the same in England as in France, in America as in Germany, has stripped him of every trace of national character. Law, morality, religion, are to him so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests.

All the preceding classes that got the upper hand, sought to fortify their already acquired status by subjecting society at large to their conditions of appropriation. The proletarians cannot become masters of the productive forces of society, except by abolishing their own previous mode of appropriation, and thereby also every other previous mode of appropriation. They have nothing of their own to secure and to fortify; their mission is to destroy all

previous securities for, and insurances of, individual property.

All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority. The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air.

Though not in substance, yet in form, 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.

In depicting the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society, up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat.

Hitherto, every form of society has been based, as we have already seen, on the antagonism of oppressing and oppressed classes. But in order to oppress a class, certain conditions must be assured to it under which it can, at least, continue its slavish existence. The serf, in the periods of serfdom, raised himself to membership in the commune, just as the petty bourgeois, under the yoke of feudal absolutism, managed to develop into a bourgeois. The modern laborer, on the contrary, instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth. And here it becomes evident, that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an overriding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie, in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society.

The essential condition for the existence and sway of the bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labor. Wage-labor rests exclusively on competition between the laborers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the laborers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of modern industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie therefore produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own gravediggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.