Class 1: Reading and Discussion Questions

*How can you use the pieces of the Communist Manifesto represented in the film Manifestoon to better understand the pieces you read for today?

*Based on what you've read and what you've just heard about his life and influence, why do you think Marx became such a polarizing figure?

What does Lenin identify as the component parts of Marxism? How are they related to each other? Have you heard of these ideas before? If so, what do you know about them?

Given the different struggles in which W.E.B. DuBois, Leila Khaled, Ho Chi Minh, and Albert Einstein engaged what common elements brought them to Marx's ideas? What was different for each?

According to Einstein, why is it difficult for people to make good use of their political rights under capitalism?

How does Einstein characterize a socialist economy? Why does he favor it? What social benefits does he see attached to a socialist economic system?

Discuss this statement from DuBois: "Capitalism cannot reform itself; it is doomed to self-destruction. No universal selfishness can bring social good to all."

The four readings show how four very different people have been influenced by Marxism: the foremost scientist of the 20th century, an incredibly influential Black theorist of the US, the leader of the Vietnamese revolution, and a dedicated militant in the Palestinian struggle.

1. In Einstein's article, why does he say a planned economy is not yet socialism?

2. What was the most important issue for Ho Chi Minh when he was becoming a socialist and why?

3. Clearly, communism is not now "marching triumphantly on" as DuBois states in his article. But how can struggling for the aims he outlines at the end of his article relate to Marx's ideas about socialism succeeding capitalism?

4. Who in Leila Khaled's article are the major forces in the Palestinian revolution?

5. What were Einstein's main critiques of capitalism?

6. WEB DuBois took a long time in becoming a communist, what were his reasons?

7. What do you think of Leila Khaled's observations of Western radicals?

8. What were Marx's main contributions to understanding society and the struggle for liberation?
Class 1 – Terms and Definitions

Definitions taken from Merriam-Webster Online and original texts from Marx, Engels and Lenin.

**Marxism:** the political, economic, and social principles and policies advocated by Marx; especially: a theory and practice of socialism including the labor theory of value, dialectical materialism, the class struggle, and dictatorship of the proletariat until the establishment of a classless society.

**Marxism** is the basis for **Scientific Socialism** (as opposed to non-Marxist Socialism, which is called Utopian Socialism). Communism is the logical conclusion of Scientific Socialism, as they are both based in Marxism.

**Capitalism:** An economic system in which the means of production are largely in private hands and the main incentive for economic activity is the accumulation of profits.

**Labor Theory of Value** is that labor creates all wealth in a society, and we laborers should be entitled (yes, ENTITLED!) to benefit from the fruits of our labor to the fullest extent.

**Dialectical Materialism:** the study of change (dialectics) in the real world (materialism). The "study of change" means analyzing life from theory that nothing remains the same for long (the only thing that doesn't change is change itself). In "the real world" means only what is scientifically provable through "thesis, antithesis and synthesis." What it is not is idealism, metaphysics or pseudo-sciences.

**Class Struggle:** the fact that there are two classes: the working class and the owning class, and their interests are in opposition; hence they are constantly struggling.

**Bourgeoisie:** The class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labor.

**Proletariat:** Marxist-Leninists define the proletariat or working class as "...that class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live."

In modern society, "... the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class...so that, in producing the proletariat, the bourgeoisie produces... its own gravediggers".

**Petit Bourgeoisie:** Between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, stands the *petty bourgeoisie*:

Marxist-Leninists define the petty bourgeoisie as *a class which owns or rents small means of production which it operates largely without employing wage labour*, but often with the assistance of members of their families. They are sometimes owners of the means of production and sometimes aligned with the proletariat.

This also applies to a section of *employed persons* -- those who are involved in *superintendence and the lower levels of management* -- e.g., foremen, charge-hands, departmental managers, etc. These employees have a supervisory function, a function is to ensure that the workers produce a maximum of surplus value for the employer. On the one hand, such persons are exploited workers, with interests in common with the proletariat (from
which they largely spring); on the other hand, their position as agents of the management in supervising the efficient exploitation of their fellow employees gives them interests in common with the bourgeoisie:

**Dictatorship of the Proletariat** is the idea that the proletariat (the working class) should alone run society during the transitional stage of Socialism. This is often misinterpreted to be thought of as one dictator runs everything. But what it means is that instead of democracy for all (including the class enemies), it is only democracy for the working class, which is why it is by definition a "dictatorship."

**Socialism**: An economic and political system in which private property is abolished and the means of production (i.e., capital and land) are collectively owned and operated by the community as a whole in order to advance the interests of all. In Marxist ideology, socialism is considered an intermediate stage in the inevitable transformation of capitalism into communism. A socialist society is envisioned as being characterized by the dictatorship of the proletariat; the existence of a high degree of cooperation and equality; and the absence of discrimination, poverty, exploitation, and war. With the non-existence of private ownership, the private profit motive is eliminated from economic life. Consequently, market forces do not play a role in organizing the process of production.

**Classless Society** is when there are no longer classes in opposition of one another (e.g., the owning class and working class), which is brought about through the implementation of Socialism via the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

**Communism**: an economic theory or system based on the ownership of all property by the community as a whole; the final stage of socialism as formulated by Marx, Engels, Lenin and others characterized by a classless and stateless society and the equal distribution of economic goods; achieved by revolutionary means.
On this first day of October 1961, I am applying for admission to membership in the Communist Party of the United States. I have been long and slow in coming to this conclusion, but a last my mind is settled.

In college I heard the name of Karl Marx, abut read none of his works, nor heard them explained. At the University of Berlin, I heard much of those thinkers who had definitively answered the theories of Marx but again we did not study what Marx himself had said. Nevertheless, I attended meetings of the Socialist Party and considered myself a Socialist.

On my return to America, I taught and studied for sixteen years. I explored the theory of Socialism and studied the organized social life to American Negroes; but still I neither read or heard much of Marxism. Then I came to New York as an official of the new NAACP and editor of iThe Crisisi Magazine. The NAACP was capitalist oriented and expected support from rich philanthropists.

But it had a strong Socialist element in its leadership in persons like Mary Ovington, William English Walling and Charles Edward Russell. Following their advice, I joined the Socialist Party in 1911. I knew then nothing of practical socialist politics and in the campaign of 1912, I found myself unwilling to vote the Socialist ticket, but advised Negroes to vote for [Woodrow] Wilson. This was contrary to Socialist Party rules and consequently I resigned from the Socialist Party.

For the next twenty years I tried to develop a political way of life for myself and my people. I attacked the democrats and Republicans for monopoly and disfranchisement; I attacked the Socialist for trying to segregate Southern Negro members; I praised the racial attitudes of the Communists, but opposed their tactics in the case of the Scottsboro boys and their advocacy of a Negro state. At the same time, I began to study Karl Marx and the communists; I read iDas Kapitali and other Communist literature; I hailed the Russian Revolution of 1917, but was puzzled at the contradictory news from Russia.

Finally in 1926, I began a new effort: I visited Communist lands. I went to the Soviet Union in 1926, 1936, 1949 and 1959; I saw the nation develop. I visited East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland. I spent ten weeks in China, traveling all over the land. Then this summer, I rested a month in Rumania.

I was earl convinced that Socialism was an excellent way of life, but I thought it might be reached by various methods. Fro Russia I was convinced she had chosen the only way open to her at the time. I saw Scandinavia choosing a different method, half-way between Socialism and Capitalism. In the United States I saw Consumers Cooperation as a path from Capitalism to Socialism, while England, France and Germany developed in the same direction in their own way. After the [1929 Great] depression and the Second World War, I was disillusioned. The Progressive movement in the United States failed. The Cold War started. Capitalism called Communism a crime.
Today I have reached a firm conclusion. Capitalism cannot reform itself; it is doomed to self-destruction. No universal selfishness can bring social good to all.

Communism - the effort to give all men what they need and to ask of each the best they can contribute this is the only hope of human life. It is a difficult and hard end to reach - it has and will make mistakes, but today it marches triumphantly on in education and science, in home and food, with increasing freedom of thought and deliverance from dogma. In the end Communism will triumph. I want to help bring that day.

The path of the American Communist Party is clear: It will provide the United States with a real Third Party and thus restore democracy to the land. It will call for:

1. Public ownership of natural resources and all of capital.
2. Public control of transportation and communication.
3. Abolition of poverty and limitation of personal income.
4. No exploitation of labor
5. Social medicine with hospitalization and care of the old.
6. Free education for all.
7. Training for jobs and jobs for all.
10. No dogmatic religion.

These aims are not crimes. They are practiced increasingly over the world. No nation can call itself free which does not allow its citizens to work for these ends.
From *My People Shall Live, the Autobiography of a Revolutionary*
Leila Khaled

In this excerpt from her autobiography, Chapter 4 titled *The Road to Haifa*, Palestinian revolutionary Leila Khaled outlines the program of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and describes her training as a guerrilla fighter in 1970.

*The National Front and the forces that constitute the revolution:*

1. We consider Palestinian national unity as essential in the mobilization of all the forces of the revolution to resist the enemy camp. On this basis we should adopt a definite stand in this direction.
2. The form of national unity is the creation of a front in which all the classes of the revolution---workers, peasants and petit bourgeoisie should be represented.
3. We should attend actively to the mobilization of workers and peasants in one revolutionary political organization armed with the ideology of scientific socialism. On this basis we should actively attempt to unify all the left-wing Palestinian organizations which, through dialogue between them and through their experience, can commit themselves to such an analysis.
4. The petit bourgeoisie will not join an organization committed to scientific socialism and strong political organization. Thus it will join those Palestinian organizations which raise general liberal slogans, avoid clarity in thinking and analysis of class structure, and exist in an organizational form that does not require of the petit bourgeoisie more than its capacity. In other words, the petit bourgeoisie will fill, in the first place, the ranks of EL-Fateh and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).
5. On this basis, and on the basis of our understanding of the basic conflict, the nature of the present phase and the necessity of national unity to assemble all the forces of revolution to resist Israel, we should work oft the establishment of a national front with El-Fateh and the PLO which can offer the war of liberation the necessary class alliance on the one hand, and protect the right of each class to view the war and plan for it in accordance with its class vision on the other..

...Before we embarked on a mission to test our endurance, the head of the military school, comrade Hassan, gave us a final briefing in which he distinguished between mere political agitation and fund-raising and politico-military work. He concluded his speech by saying, “This phase of our work is harsh and severe. Once you start it you can’t withdraw until the objective is accomplished. Therefore,” he continued, “examine your consciences, comrades, and see if you’re really up to it, if not please depart in peace.”

Startled, we each looked around and wondered whether we should proceed or withdraw. A three-hour “struggle session” followed. The arguments centered around whether our training was going to be used or whether we were just training for contingencies. We also argued about individuality, the role of women in the Movement and the kind of relationship we were going to have with parents, boy friends or husbands. If a woman decided to commit herself to this phase of the revolution it meant the final break with her past and relegating her private life and desires to a secondary position. If she was unable to accept these terms, then she could make a partial
commitment to become a supporter of a friend of the resistance rather than train to become a professional revolutionary.

At camp I did my utmost to prove that I was fit to be a good guerrilla fighter. I carried out orders conscientiously. My instructors offered no criticism, expressed no admiration, and had no particular plan for me. I knew that the PFLP leadership would take my personal desires into consideration, but would decide what missions I was to undertake on the basis of my potential and performances.

The training schedule was exacting, but occasionally left us time for a little fun. We were “entertaining” a group of foreign students and trying to lead a Bedouin kind of life in order to politicize our Bedouin population. The students had been attending an international solidarity meeting in Amman [Jordan] held under the auspices of the General Union of Palestinian Students. Most were graduates of the 1968 university upheavals in the West.

We found it very amusing that they honestly believed they were making a revolution if they undressed in public, seized a university building, or shouted an obscenity at bureaucrats. I was initially opposed and refused to talk to them, even though some believed in violent revolution, because I didn’t want to be another experimental “guinea-pig” to Westerners. I finally relented and I am glad I did. I hadn’t met Western “revolutionaries” before. It turned out they represented an unfamiliar cultural rather than a political phenomenon. Some seemed to have read the historic political literature of the left, but most regarded the Marxist-Leninist leaders disdainfully, with the exception of the “Young Marx,” who held some sort of fascination for a few of them.

Though we were impressed by their moral integrity and personal dedication, we felt their ideology and strategy had little to do with the making of revolution. Some Americans were quite serious and believed in the historic mission of the working class and were making plans to integrate themselves with the masses. What astonished us most about this group was that they were opposed to nationalism, a doctrine we hold dearly as a colonized and dissipated people. Some believed in violence for “the hell of it” and in students as revolutionary agents of history. But the majority were inclined towards guerrilla theater as a means of “making revolution”. They performed a little for us.

As they were departing I was rather struck by a French anarchist student who proclaimed, “Let chaos reign” and by a German who echoed the same sentiment. I exclaimed that the Palestinian people were an example of a society in chaos without authority and leadership, which as a result, was left at the mercy of the Zionist oppressor.
From “Why Socialism” (1949)
Albert Einstein

I have now reached the point where I may indicate briefly what to me constitutes the essence of the crisis of our time. It concerns the relationship of the individual to society. The individual has become more conscious than ever of his dependence upon society. But he does not view dependence as a positive asset, as an organic tie, as a protective force, but rather as a threat to his natural rights, or even to his economic existence. Moreover, his position in society is such that the egotistical drives of his makeup are constantly being accentuated, while his social drives, which are by nature weaker, progressively deteriorate. All human beings, whatever their position in society, are suffering from this process of deterioration. Unknowingly prisoners of their own egotism, they feel insecure, lonely, and deprived of the naive, simple, and unsophisticated enjoyment of life. Man can find meaning in life, short and perilous as it is, only through devoting himself to society.

The economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is, in my opinion, the real source of the evil. We see before us a huge community of producers the members of which are unceasingly striving to deprive each other of the fruits of their collective labor--not by force, but on the whole in faithful compliance with legally established rules. In this respect, it is important to realize that the means of production--that is to say, the entire productive capacity that is needed for producing consumer goods as well as additional capital goods--may legally be, and for the most part are, the private property of individuals.

For the sake of simplicity, in the discussion that follows I shall call "workers" all those who do not share in the ownership of the means of production--although this does not quite correspond to the customary use of the term. The owner of the means of production is in a position to purchase the labor power of the worker. By using the means of production, the worker produces new goods which become the property of the capitalist. The essential point about this process is the relation between what the worker produces and what he is paid, both measured in terms of real value. In so far as the labor contract is "free," what the worker receives is determined not by the real value of the goods he produces, but by his minimum needs and by the capitalists' requirements for labor power in relation to the number of workers competing for jobs. It is important to understand that even in theory the payment of the worker is not determined by the value of his product.

Private capital tends to become concentrated in few hands, partly because of competition among the capitalists, and partly because technological development and the increasing division of labor encourage the formation of larger units of production at the expense of the smaller ones. The result of these developments is an oligarchy of private capital the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organized political society. This is true since the members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists who, for all practical purposes, separate the electorate from the legislature. The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not in fact sufficiently protect the interests of the underprivileged sections of the population. Moreover, under existing conditions, private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the main sources of information (press, radio, education). It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most
cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make intelligent use of his political rights.

The situation prevailing in an economy based on the private ownership of capital is thus characterized by main principles: first, means of production (capital) are privately owned and the owners dispose of them as they see fit; second, the labor contract is free. Of course, there is no such thing as a pure capitalist society in this sense. In particular, it should be noted that the workers, through long and bitter political struggles, have succeeded in securing a somewhat improved form of the "free labor contract" for certain categories of workers. But taken as a whole, the present-day economy does not differ much from "pure" capitalism. Production is carried on for profit, not for use. There is no provision that all those able and willing to work will always be in a position to find employment; an "army of unemployed" almost always exists. The worker is constantly in fear of losing his job. Since unemployed and poorly paid workers do not provide a profitable market, the production of consumers' goods is restricted, and great hardship is the consequence. Technological progress frequently results in more unemployment rather than in an easing of the burden of work for all. The profit motive, in conjunction with competition among capitalists, is responsible for an instability in the accumulation and utilization of capital which leads to increasingly severe depressions. Unlimited competition leads to a huge waste of labor, and to that crippling of the social consciousness of individuals which I mentioned before. This crippling of individuals I consider the worst evil of capitalism. Our whole educational system suffers from this evil. An exaggerated competitive attitude is inculcated into the student, who is trained to worship acquisitive success as a preparation for his future career.

I am convinced there is only one way to eliminate these grave evils, namely through the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would be oriented toward social goals. In such an economy, the means of production are owned by society itself and are utilized in a planned fashion. A planned economy, which adjusts production to the needs of the community, would distribute the work to be done among all those able to work and would guarantee a livelihood to every man, woman, and child. The education of the individual, in addition to promoting his own innate abilities, would attempt to develop in him a sense of responsibility for his fellow men in place of the glorification of power and success in our present society.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to remember that a planned economy is not yet socialism. A planned economy as such may be accompanied by the complete enslavement of the individual. The achievement of socialism requires the solution of some extremely difficult sociopolitical problems: how is it possible, in view of the far-reaching centralization of political and economic power, to prevent bureaucracy from becoming all-powerful and overweening? How can the rights of the individual be protected and therewith a democratic counterweight to the power of bureaucracy be assured?
The Path Which Led Me to Leninism (1960)
Ho Chi Minh

After World War One, I made my living in Paris, at one time as an employee at a photographer's, at another as painter of "Chinese antiques" (turned out by a French shop). I often distributed leaflets denouncing the crimes committed by the French colonialists in Vietnam.

At that time, I supported the October Revolution only spontaneously. I did not yet grasp all its historic importance. I loved and respected Lenin because he was a great patriot who had liberated his fellow-countrymen; until then, I had read none of his books.

The reason for my joining the French Socialist Party was because those "ladies and gentlemen" - so I called my comrades in those days - had shown their sympathy with me, with the struggle of the oppressed people. But I had no understanding as yet of what a party, a trade-union socialism and communism, were.

Heated discussions were then taking place in the cells of the Socialist Party, about whether one should remain in the Second International, found a "Second-and-a-half" International or join Lenin's Third International? I attended the meetings regularly, two or three times a week and attentively listened to the speakers. At first, I did not understand everything. Why should the discussion be so heated? Whether with the Second, Second and-a-half or Third International, the revolution could be waged. Why squabble? And what about the First International? What had become of it?

What I wanted most to know - and what was not debated in the meetings - was: which International sided with the peoples of the colonial countries?

I raised this question - the most important for me - at a meeting. Some comrades answered: it was the Third, not the Second International. One gave me to read Lenin's "Theses on the national and colonial questions" printed in l'Humanity.

In those Theses, there were political terms that were difficult to understand. But by reading them again and again finally I was able to grasp the essential part. What emotion, enthusiasm, enlightenment and confidence they communicated to me! I wept for joy. Sitting by myself in my room, I would shout as if I were addressing large crowds: "Dear martyr compatriots! This is what we need, this is our path to liberation!"

Since then, I had entire confidence in Lenin, in the Third International.

Formerly, during the cell meetings, I had only listened to the discussions. I had a vague feeling that what each speaker was saying had some logic in it, and I was not able to make out who were right and who were wrong. But from then on, I also plunged into the debates and participated with fervor in the discussions. Though my French was still too weak to express all my thoughts, I hit hard at the allegations attacking Lenin and the Third International. My only argument was: "If you do not condemn colonialism, if you do not side with the colonial peoples, what kind of revolution are you then waging?"
Not only did I take part in the meetings of my own cell, I also went to other Party cells to defend "my" position. Here I must again say that comrades Marcel Cachin, Vaillant-Couturier, Monmousseau and many others helped me to broaden my knowledge. Eventually, at the Tours Congress, I voted with them for our joining the Third International.

At first, it was patriotism, not yet communism which led me to have confidence in Lenin, in the Third International. Step by step, during the course of the struggle, by studying Marxism-Leninism while engaging in practical activities, I gradually understood that only socialism and communism can liberate the oppressed nations and the working people throughout the world from slavery.

There is a legend, in our country as well as in China, about the magic "Brocade Bag". When facing great difficulties, one opens it and finds a way out. For us Vietnamese revolutionaries and people, Leninism is not only a miraculous "Brocade Bag", a compass, but also a radiant sun, illuminating our path to final victory, to socialism and communism.
Frederick Engels’ Speech at the Grave of Karl Marx
Highgate Cemetery, London. March 17, 1883

On the 14th of March, at a quarter to three in the afternoon, the greatest living thinker ceased to think. He had been left alone for scarcely two minutes, and when we came back we found him in his armchair, peacefully gone to sleep -- but for ever.

An immeasurable loss has been sustained both by the militant proletariat of Europe and America, and by historical science, in the death of this man. The gap that has been left by the departure of this mighty spirit will soon enough make itself felt.

Just as Darwin discovered the law of development or organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history: the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc.; that therefore the production of the immediate material means, and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch, form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, art, and even the ideas on religion, of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which they must, therefore, be explained, instead of vice versa, as had hitherto been the case.

But that is not all. Marx also discovered the special law of motion governing the present-day capitalist mode of production, and the bourgeois society that this mode of production has created. The discovery of surplus value suddenly threw light on the problem, in trying to solve which all previous investigations, of both bourgeois economists and socialist critics, had been groping in the dark.

Two such discoveries would be enough for one lifetime. Happy the man to whom it is granted to make even one such discovery. But in every single field which Marx investigated -- and he investigated very many fields, none of them superficially -- in every field, even in that of mathematics, he made independent discoveries.

Such was the man of science. But this was not even half the man. Science was for Marx a historically dynamic, revolutionary force. However great the joy with which he welcomed a new discovery in some theoretical science whose practical application perhaps it was as yet quite impossible to envisage, he experienced quite another kind of joy when the discovery involved immediate revolutionary changes in industry, and in historical development in general. For example, he followed closely the development of the discoveries made in the field of electricity and recently those of Marcel Deprez.

For Marx was before all else a revolutionist. His real mission in life was to contribute, in one way or another, to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the state institutions which it had brought into being, to contribute to the liberation of the modern proletariat, which he was the first to make conscious of its own position and its needs, conscious of the conditions of its emancipation. Fighting was his element. And he fought with a passion, a tenacity and a success such as few could rival. His work on the first Rheinische Zeitung (1842), the Paris Vorwärts
(1844), the *Deutsche Brusseler Zeitung* (1847), the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (1848-49), the *New York Tribune* (1852-61), and, in addition to these, a host of militant pamphlets, work in organizations in Paris, Brussels and London, and finally, crowning all, the formation of the great *International Working Men's Association* -- this was indeed an achievement of which its founder might well have been proud even if he had done nothing else.

And, consequently, Marx was the best hated and most calumniated man of his time. Governments, both absolutist and republican, deported him from their territories. Bourgeois, whether conservative or ultra-democratic, vied with one another in heaping slanders upon him. All this he brushed aside as though it were a cobweb, ignoring it, answering only when extreme necessity compelled him. And he died beloved, revered and mourned by millions of revolutionary fellow workers -- from the mines of Siberia to California, in all parts of Europe and America -- and I make bold to say that, though he may have had many opponents, he had hardly one personal enemy.

His name will endure through the ages, and so also will his work.
Vladimir Ilyich Lenin

The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism

Published: Prosveshcheniye No 3., March 1913. Signed: V. I.. Published according to the Prosveshcheniye text.
Translated: The Late George Hanna
Original Transcription: Lee Joon Koo and Marc Luzietti
Public Domain: Lenin Internet Archive (1996). You may freely copy, distribute, display and perform this work; as well as make derivative and commercial works. Please credit “Marxists Internet Archive” as your source.

This article was published in 1913 in Prosveshcheniye No. 3, dedicated to the Thirtieth Anniversary of Marx’s death.

Prosveshcheniye (Enlightenment) was a Bolshevik social, political and literary monthly published legally in St. Petersburg from December 1911 onwards. Its inauguration was proposed by Lenin to replace the Bolshevik journal Mysl (Thought), a Moscow publication banned by the tsarist government. Lenin directed the work of the journal from abroad and wrote the following articles for it: “Fundamental Problems of the Election Campaign”, “Results of the Election”, “Critical Remarks on the National Question”, “The Right of Nations to Self-Determination”, and others.

The journal was suppressed by the tsarist government in June 1914, on the eve of the First World War. Publication was resumed in the autumn of 1917 but only one double number appeared; this number contained two articles by Lenin: “Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?” and “A Review of the Party Programme”.

Throughout the civilised world the teachings of Marx evoke the utmost hostility and hatred of all bourgeois science (both official and liberal), which regards Marxism as a kind of “pernicious sect”. And no other attitude is to be expected, for there can be no “impartial” social science in a society based on class struggle. In one way or another, all official and liberal science defends wage-slavery, whereas Marxism has declared relentless war on that slavery. To expect science to be impartial in a wage-slave society is as foolishly naïve as to expect impartiality from manufacturers on the question of whether workers’ wages ought not to be increased by decreasing the profits of capital.

But this is not all. The history of philosophy and the history of social science show with perfect clarity that there is nothing resembling “sectarianism” in Marxism, in the sense of its being a hidebound, petrified doctrine, a doctrine which arose away from the high road of the development of world civilisation. On the contrary, the genius of Marx consists precisely in his having furnished answers to questions already raised by the foremost minds of mankind. His doctrine emerged as the direct and immediate continuation of the teachings of the greatest representatives of philosophy, political economy and socialism.

The Marxist doctrine is omnipotent because it is true. It is comprehensive and harmonious, and provides men with an integral world outlook irreconcilable with any form of superstition, reaction, or defence of
bourgeois oppression. It is the legitimate successor to the best that man produced in the nineteenth century, as represented by German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism.

It is these three sources of Marxism, which are also its component parts that we shall outline in brief.

I

The philosophy of Marxism is materialism. Throughout the modern history of Europe, and especially at the end of the eighteenth century in France, where a resolute struggle was conducted against every kind of medieval rubbish, against serfdom in institutions and ideas, materialism has proved to be the only philosophy that is consistent, true to all the teachings of natural science and hostile to superstition, cant and so forth. The enemies of democracy have, therefore, always exerted all their efforts to “refute”, under mine and defame materialism, and have advocated various forms of philosophical idealism, which always, in one way or another, amounts to the defence or support of religion.

Marx and Engels defended philosophical materialism in the most determined manner and repeatedly explained how profoundly erroneous is every deviation from this basis. Their views are most clearly and fully expounded in the works of Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and Anti-Dühring, which, like the Communist Manifesto, are handbooks for every class-conscious worker.

But Marx did not stop at eighteenth-century materialism: he developed philosophy to a higher level, he enriched it with the achievements of German classical philosophy, especially of Hegel’s system, which in its turn had led to the materialism of Feuerbach. The main achievement was dialectics, i.e., the doctrine of development in its fullest, deepest and most comprehensive form, the doctrine of the relativity of the human knowledge that provides us with a reflection of eternally developing matter. The latest discoveries of natural science—radium, electrons, the transmutation of elements—have been a remarkable confirmation of Marx’s dialectical materialism despite the teachings of the bourgeois philosophers with their “new” reversion to old and decadent idealism.

Marx deepened and developed philosophical materialism to the full, and extended the cognition of nature to include the cognition of human society. His historical materialism was a great achievement in scientific thinking. The chaos and arbitrariness that had previously reigned in views on history and politics were replaced by a strikingly integral and harmonious scientific theory, which shows how, in consequence of the growth of productive forces, out of one system of social life another and higher system develops—how capitalism, for instance, grows out of feudalism.

Just as man’s knowledge reflects nature (i.e., developing matter), which exists independently of him, so man’s social knowledge (i.e., his various views and doctrines—philosophical, religious, political and so forth) reflects the economic system of society. Political institutions are a superstructure on the economic foundation. We see, for example, that the various political forms of the modern European states serve to strengthen the domination of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat.

Marx’s philosophy is a consummate philosophical materialism which has provided mankind, and especially the working class, with powerful instruments of knowledge.

II

Having recognised that the economic system is the foundation on which the political superstructure is erected, Marx devoted his greatest attention to the study of this economic system. Marx’s principal work, Capital, is devoted to a study of the economic system of modern, i.e., capitalist, society.

Classical political economy, before Marx, evolved in England, the most developed of the capitalist countries. Adam Smith and David Ricardo, by their investigations of the economic system, laid the
foundations of the labour theory of value. Marx continued their work; he provided a proof of the theory and developed it consistently. He showed that the value of every commodity is determined by the quantity of socially necessary labour time spent on its production.

Where the bourgeois economists saw a relation between things (the exchange of one commodity for another) Marx revealed a relation between people. The exchange of commodities expresses the connection between individual producers through the market. Money signifies that the connection is becoming closer and closer, inseparably uniting the entire economic life of the individual producers into one whole. Capital signifies a further development of this connection: man’s labour-power becomes a commodity. The wage-worker sells his labour-power to the owner of land, factories and instruments of labour. The worker spends one part of the day covering the cost of maintaining himself and his family (wages), while the other part of the day he works without remuneration, creating for the capitalist surplus-value, the source of profit, the source of the wealth of the capitalist class.

The doctrine of surplus-value is the corner-stone of Marx’s economic theory.

Capital, created by the labour of the worker, crushes the worker, ruining small proprietors and creating an army of unemployed. In industry, the victory of large-scale production is immediately apparent, but the same phenomenon is also to be observed in agriculture, where the superiority of large-scale capitalist agriculture is enhanced, the use of machinery increases and the peasant economy, trapped by money-capital, declines and falls into ruin under the burden of its backward technique. The decline of small-scale production assumes different forms in agriculture, but the decline itself is an indisputable fact.

By destroying small-scale production, capital leads to an increase in productivity of labour and to the creation of a monopoly position for the associations of big capitalists. Production itself becomes more and more social—hundreds of thousands and millions of workers become bound together in a regular economic organism—but the product of this collective labour is appropriated by a handful of capitalists. Anarchy of production, crises, the furious chase after markets and the insecurity of existence of the mass of the population are intensified.

By increasing the dependence of the workers on capital, the capitalist system creates the great power of united labour.

Marx traced the development of capitalism from embryonic commodity economy, from simple exchange, to its highest forms, to large-scale production.

And the experience of all capitalist countries, old and new, year by year demonstrates clearly the truth of this Marxian doctrine to increasing numbers of workers.

Capitalism has triumphed all over the world, but this triumph is only the prelude to the triumph of labour over capital.

III

When feudalism was overthrown and “free” capitalist society appeared in the world, it at once became apparent that this freedom meant a new system of oppression and exploitation of the working people. Various socialist doctrines immediately emerged as a reflection of and protest against this oppression. Early socialism, however, was utopian socialism. It criticised capitalist society, it condemned and damned it, it dreamed of its destruction, it had visions of a better order and endeavoured to convince the rich of the immorality of exploitation.
But utopian socialism could not indicate the real solution. It could not explain the real nature of wage-
slavery under capitalism, it could not reveal the laws of capitalist development, or show what social force is
capable of becoming the creator of a new society.

Meanwhile, the stormy revolutions which everywhere in Europe, and especially in France, accompanied
the fall of feudalism, of serfdom, more and more clearly revealed the struggle of classes as the basis and the
driving force of all development.

Not a single victory of political freedom over the feudal class was won except against desperate resistance.
Not a single capitalist country evolved on a more or less free and democratic basis except by a life-and-
death struggle between the various classes of capitalist society.

The genius of Marx lies in his having been the first to deduce from this the lesson world history teaches and
to apply that lesson consistently. The deduction he made is the doctrine of the class struggle.

People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always
will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious,
political and social phrases, declarations and promises. Champions of reforms and improvements will
always be fooled by the defenders of the old order until they realise that every old institution, how ever
barbarous and rotten it may appear to be, is kept going by the forces of certain ruling classes. And there is
only one way of smashing the resistance of those classes, and that is to find, in the very society which
surrounds us, the forces which can— and, owing to their social position, must— constitute the power
capable of sweeping away the old and creating the new, and to enlighten and organise those forces for the
struggle.

Marx’s philosophical materialism alone has shown the proletariat the way out of the spiritual slavery in
which all oppressed classes have hitherto languished. Marx’s economic theory alone has explained the true
position of the proletariat in the general system of capitalism.

Independent organisations of the proletariat are multiplying all over the world, from America to Japan and
from Sweden to South Africa. The proletariat is becoming enlightened and educated by waging its class
struggle; it is ridding itself of the prejudices of bourgeois society; it is rallying its ranks ever more closely
and is learning to gauge the measure of its successes; it is steeling its forces and is growing irresistibly.
The Communist Manifesto
A Road Map to History's Most Important Political Document

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels
Edited by Phil Gasper

Haymarket Books
Chicago, Illinois
I pondered all these things, and how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name.

*William Morris, A Dream of John Ball*

The best story I've ever heard about *The Communist Manifesto* came from Hans Morgenthau, the great theorist of international relations who died in 1980. It was the early seventies at CUNY, and he was reminiscing about his childhood in Bavaria before World War I. Morgenthau's father, a doctor in a working-class neighborhood of Coburg, often took his son along on house calls. Many of his patients were dying of TB; a doctor could do nothing to save their lives, but might help them die with dignity. When his father asked about last requests, many workers said they wanted to have the *Manifesto* buried with them when they died. They implored the doctor to see that the priest didn't sneak in and plant the Bible on them instead.

As the nineties end, we find ourselves in a dynamic global society ever more unified by downsizing, de-skilling, and dread—just like the old man said....At the dawn of the twentieth century, there were workers who were ready to die with *The Communist Manifesto*. At the dawn of the twenty-first, there may be even more who are ready to live with it.

*Marshall Berman, Unchained Melody*
Contents

8 Preface and Acknowledgements
9 Introduction: History's Most Important Political Document
24 Marxism in a Nutshell

The Annotated Communist Manifesto

37 Preamble
39 Part I. Bourgeois and Proletarians
58 Part II. Proletarians and Communists
72 Part III. Socialist and Communist Literature
87 Part IV. Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties

Additional Materials

93 Afterword: Is the Manifesto Still Relevant?
118 Appendix A: Prefaces from Later Editions
   The 1872 German Edition • The 1882 Russian Edition
   • The 1883 German Edition • The 1888 English Edition
Appendix B: Engels' *The Principles of Communism*

Appendix C: Other Writings by Marx and Engels
- Marx on Alienation
- Demands of the Communist Party in Germany, March 1848
- The Materialist Conception of History
- History and Revolution
- Colonialism, Racism, Slavery, and the Origins of Capitalism
- On the Irish Question
- The Paris Commune
- The Transition to Communism
- The Realm of Necessity and the Realm of Freedom
- Women's Oppression and Women's Liberation
- The Emergence of Classes and the State
- Marx's Legacy

Study and Discussion Questions

A Note on the Translation

Further Reading

Glossary

References

Index
Preface and Acknowledgements

There are dozens of editions of The Communist Manifesto currently in print—do we really need another? I think a combination of three things makes this edition distinctive and worthwhile. First, it is edited by someone who is sympathetic to Marx’s general political perspective and views the Manifesto as more than an interesting historical relic. Second, it is aimed specifically at both students reading the Manifesto for the first time and young political activists—fighting against corporate globalization, war, environmental destruction, and all forms of oppression—who want to know whether Marx’s ideas are useful guides for them today. Third, it includes not just an introduction and a few notes on the text, but a full set of annotations, as well as study and discussion questions, an afterword on the contemporary relevance of the Manifesto, and a glossary. Several of the extant editions have one or even two of these features, but none has all three. The only other fully annotated version of the Manifesto in English that I am aware of is Hal Draper’s The Adventures of the Communist Manifesto (1994). Draper’s book is an important resource, which I often found valuable in writing my own commentary, but it is both difficult to obtain and written at a level of scholarly detail that most new readers of the Manifesto would find intimidating. While Draper’s annotations contain many penetrating insights, it is often hard to see the forest for the trees. In what follows, I hope the forest remains fully visible.

Thanks are owed to many people. Anthony Arnove and Julie Fain encouraged me to take on this project and prodded me to finish it. Lance Selfa, Snehal Shingavi, and, in particular, Paul D’Amato gave me helpful comments on earlier drafts. Mikki Smith and Dao Tran did the vital jobs of copy editing and proofreading. Eric Ruder designed the striking cover. Alan Maass did amazing work on the book’s layout. My gratitude to everyone. Needless to say, any remaining mistakes are my own.

P.G.
June 2005
INTRODUCTION

History's Most Important Political Document

*The Communist Manifesto* was first published in February 1848. Why is it still worth reading a book that was written so long ago? One answer to that question is that the authors of the *Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels,1 describe a world that is still recognizably our own. In the *Manifesto* they call it “bourgeois society”—in other words, a society in which the bourgeois class (defined by Engels as “the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production, and employers of wage labor”) is dominant—but later Marx himself would popularize the name by which it is now commonly known: capitalism. Much has changed since the mid-nineteenth century, but like Marx and Engels, we still live in a capitalist society. When they were writing, capitalism was established in relatively few places, most importantly in parts of western Europe and North America, but Marx and Engels envisioned that capitalism would eventually become a global system. Today nearly every area of the world is part of a single capitalist economic system. Precisely because Marx and Engels lived at a time when modern capitalism was young, they were able to analyze the system in a way that still seems to many to capture its essential features and its core dynamic. Here, for instance, is their dazzling description of the incessant change that capitalism brings in its wake:

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 bourgeois 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. (1848)*

Change can be exhilarating, and Marx and Engels praise the way in which capitalism has shattered narrow horizons and produced technological marvels. But they also see capitalism as a system that is increasingly running out of control, a system that concentrates wealth and power in the hands of a small minority, creates huge pools of poverty, turns life into a daily grind that prevents most people from fulfilling their potential, and experiences frequent and enormously wasteful economic crises. Capitalist development is also highly destructive of the natural environment, and economic competition between capitalist states often leads to military confrontation and war. The only solution to these potentially devastating problems, according to the Manifesto, is the abolition of capitalism itself and its replacement by a system in which the majority of the population democratically control society’s economic resources—in other words, genuine communism. Marx and Engels’ proposal is, to say the least, controversial. However, a strong case can be made that the problems they diagnose have not disappeared. If the roots of these problems run as deeply as Marx and Engels contend, then radical action remains necessary. That, perhaps, is reason enough to ponder the alternative they advocate.

Marx and Engels

Marx and Engels were born to relatively well-to-do families in small towns in the German Rhineland—Marx in Trier in 1818, and Engels in Barmen.

---

* References to passages in the Manifesto are by section number and paragraph number (e.g., I.12, III.26, etc.). References to passages in the preamble use “P” followed by paragraph number (e.g., P2). References to numbered points within paragraphs are given by adding a third number (e.g., II.72.5). References to other works (listed at the end of the book) are by author and date.
men two years later. Although the Rhineland was a province of Prussia, Napoleon's armies had occupied it until 1814, and its intellectual life had thus been deeply affected by the radical ideas of the French Revolution of 1789.3 These ideas were very much in the air as Marx and Engels grew up.

Because of Germany's economic and political backwardness at this time, what had been acted out in practice in France came to be reflected only in abstract philosophy in Marx and Engels' homeland.4 As Marx later put it, "In politics, the Germans have thought what other nations have done" (Marx 1844, p. 59). By the 1820s, the idealist philosophy of Hegel, with its emphasis on change—in particular historical change—had become dominant in Germany. Hegel believed that history was to be explained in terms of the development of ideas, indeed that history itself is merely a series of stages in the development of a World Spirit or Absolute Mind.5 However, Hegel's writing was highly obscure and open to different interpretations. Conservatives interpreted him as saying that the emergence of the highly authoritarian Prussian state represented the culmination of world history. After Hegel's death in 1831, the radical Young Hegelians rejected this conclusion as absurd and instead used Hegel's emphasis on change as a justification for the democratic transformation of society. They rejected the notion of Absolute Mind as a metaphysical extravagance, but remained idealists in the sense that they held that historical progress was the result of humanity achieving self-understanding.

Both Marx and Engels were members of the Young Hegelian movement in Berlin for a time—Marx when he was a student at the University of Berlin, and Engels while he was stationed in the city for his military service. Unlike Marx, who completed a doctorate in philosophy, Engels did not pursue formal schooling very far, but he was a fine writer and had a thorough grasp of the latest philosophical ideas. Between 1839 and 1842, Engels published nearly fifty articles, including two acclaimed anonymous pamphlets in which he defended the ideas of the Young Hegelians against the reactionary philosophy of Hegel's contemporary Schelling (Engels 1842a, 1842b).

Marx and Engels were soon to break with the Young Hegelians. Initially, and independently, they were strongly influenced by the work of Ludwig
Feuerbach, who rejected the idealism of the other Young Hegelians and argued that religious ideas reflected the material conditions in which they arose. Even more importantly, events took both Marx and Engels away from the abstract discussion of ideas detached from the real world. Marx received his doctorate in 1841, but an academic career was ruled out, as a new period of political reaction began in Prussia and the Young Hegelians were denied university positions. Instead, Marx became the editor of a radical liberal newspaper, the *Rheinische Zeitung*. This experience was to finally lead him to settle accounts with all varieties of Hegelianism. As one commentator puts it, the “young Marx is often portrayed as having come to a revolutionary understanding of society through a critique of Hegel’s texts on the state and society. The biographical fact, however, is that he came to the content of his critique of the Hegelian view of the state through a year and a half of rubbing his nose against the social and political facts of life, which he encountered as the crusading editor of the most extreme leftist democratic newspaper in pre-1848 Germany” (Draper 1977, p. 31). Marx himself later commented on this period of his life: “I experienced for the first time the embarrassment of having to take part in discussions on so-called material interests” (Marx 1859, p. 3). In particular, following the debates in the Rhine Province’s parliament, where the deputies regularly voted in favor of their own material interests, led Marx to reject the Hegelian idea that the state was—or could be—above classes.

By 1843, Marx was beginning to recognize that the ideals of the French Revolution, with its call for liberty and democracy, could never be achieved in a society based on material inequality. Formal freedom and democracy might exist in such a society, but they would be subverted in the interests of those who controlled the wealth. Real freedom was impossible in a society divided into exploiters and exploited. What was needed, Marx concluded, was not formal equality before the law, but a society of genuine equality in which economic power was not in the hands of a privileged minority. What was needed, in other words, was the abolition of private property. Thus, Marx’s commitment to radical democracy and human liberation led him over a period of years to communism.

Marx had already reached the materialist conclusion that the starting
point for understanding human society is not the realm of ideas but actual human beings and the material conditions in which they live. However, he had not yet come to the view that the modern working class of wage laborers (the proletariat) was central to the project of transforming society. Two things finally brought him to this conclusion. The first was his move to Paris in late 1843, after the censors closed the Rheinische Zeitung. France was economically and politically far more advanced than Germany, and Marx came into contact for the first time with an organized working-class movement. The second factor that led Marx to recognize the importance of the working class was the influence of Engels.

Marx and Engels had met briefly in 1842, but had not gotten on very well. Shortly afterward, Engels left for England to work in his father’s business in Manchester. By this time Engels already regarded himself as a communist (a year earlier than Marx), and he immediately became involved in the British working-class movement and began the research that was to culminate in his pathbreaking study The Condition of the Working Class in England, eventually published in 1845, which exposed the brutal exploitation of the industrial revolution. In late 1843, Engels also wrote an important article, “Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy” (published the following year), which contained in embryo many of the ideas that Marx and he were later to develop in greater detail. Engels’ article had a great influence on Marx, turning him toward the study of political economy. It was this that led Marx to conclude that the working class was the key to the revolutionary transformation of society because of its role in the economy and its ability to shut down the entire system of production.

When Marx and Engels met again in 1844, they found themselves in complete political agreement and began a partnership that only ended with Marx’s death in 1883. They collaborated first on The Holy Family (1845), a long critique of some of the Young Hegelians, whom they had come to see as pompous windbags who refused to participate in real political activity. Shortly afterward, Marx was expelled from Paris by the authorities and moved to Brussels. Here, he and Engels collaborated on The German Ideology (written in 1845–46, but never published in their lifetimes), which was intended to be both a final
settling of accounts with the Young Hegelians and an exposition of Marx and Engels' own views on materialism, revolution, and communism.

The Materialist View of History

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels set out systematically for the first time their materialist conception of historical change (now often called "historical materialism"), which underlies much of what they say in *The Communist Manifesto*. They criticize the Young Hegelians for wrongly holding that human progress is held back primarily by illusions, mistaken ideas, and false consciousness. In response, Marx and Engels argue

This demand to change consciousness amounts to a demand to interpret reality in another way, i.e., to recognize it by means of another interpretation. The Young-Hegelian ideologists, in spite of their allegedly "world-shattering" statements, are the staunchest conservatives. The most recent of them have found the correct expression for their activity when they declare they are only fighting against "phrases." They forget, however, that to these phrases they themselves are only opposing other phrases, and that they are in no way combating the real existing world when they are merely combating the phrases of this world. (p. 41)

Instead of starting with ideas, society can only be understood, and ultimately changed, by examining the material realities on which it is based.

The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, nor dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way. (p. 42)

The fundamental fact about real individuals is that they must engage in production in order to survive, and this shapes every other aspect of their lives.

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish them-
selves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life.

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production. (p. 42)

The material conditions of production include both the forces of production (or productive forces)—the methods and technology used in production—and what Marx and Engels call here the "form of intercourse" between individuals, or what they later call the "social relations of production." This includes the division of labor within production, which at a certain point in history gives rise to distinct social classes with their own antagonistic interests. On this basis develops the whole of the rest of society, including culture, social structures, and the institutions of the state. This is the starting point of Marx and Engels' materialist conception of history—the "history of humanity" must always be studied and treated in relation to the history of industry and exchange" (p. 50).

The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life-process of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they really are; i.e., as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions, and conditions independent of their will....

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as
narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. (pp. 46–47)

However, the ideas to be found in any given society are not simply the result of material conditions in general; they are also a reflection of the interests of the dominant, exploiting class.

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.... (p. 64)

In arguing that the ideas in people's heads have to be explained in terms of the material conditions of their lives, Marx and Engels were following in the footsteps of Ludwig Feuerbach, but they also criticized Feuerbach for ignoring how, over time, human activity changes those conditions and gives rise to new ones, leading to profound changes in the rest of society. "As far as Feuerbach is a materialist he does not deal with history, and as far as he considers history he is not a materialist. With him materialism and history diverge completely" (p. 64). In contrast to Feuerbach's static conception, Marx and Engels point to
the deep tensions that exist within societies that are divided into antagonistic classes, and that drive history forward:

[T]he forces of production, the state of society, and consciousness cannot and must come into contradiction with one another, because...intellectual and material activity—enjoyment and labor, production and consumption—devolve on different individuals, and...the only possibility of their not coming into contradiction lies in the negation [i.e., abolition] in its turn of the division of labor....

...[A]ll struggles within the State, the struggle between democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, the struggle for the franchise, etc., etc. are merely the illusory forms in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought out among one another. (pp. 52, 54)

A large part of *The German Ideology* is devoted to giving an account of European history that concretely illustrates these general ideas. In particular, Marx and Engels describe the way in which feudal society developed, and how tensions between the productive forces and the 'form of intercourse' eventually led to the emergence of capitalism and the triumph of the bourgeoisie.

This contradiction between the productive forces and the form of intercourse, which...has occurred several times in past history, without, however, endangering the basis, necessarily on each occasion burst out in a revolution, taking on at the same time various subsidiary forms, such as all-embracing collisions, collisions of various classes, contradiction of consciousness, battle of ideas, etc., political conflict, etc. From a narrow point of view one may isolate one of these subsidiary forms and consider it as the basis of these revolutions; and this is all the more easy as the individuals who started the revolutions had illusions about their own activity according to their degree of culture and the stage of historical development.

Thus all collisions in history have their origin, according to our view, in the contradiction between the productive forces and the form of intercourse. (pp. 88–89)

Just as such contradictions emerged as feudalism developed, Marx and Engels argued that they would inevitably appear in capitalism as well. For this
reason they claim that communist revolution is not a utopian ideal, but something that will be produced by actual material conditions, when circumstances have rendered the great mass of humanity 'propertyless,' and produced, at the same time, the contradiction of an existing world of wealth and culture, both of which conditions presuppose a great increase in productive power, a high degree of its development. Without a high level of production, scarcity cannot be abolished, and the result of revolution would be that "want is merely made general, and with destitution the struggle for necessities and all the old filthy business [i.e., class exploitation] would necessarily be reproduced" (p. 56). In addition, in a world of "universal competition," in which all countries are part of a single economic system, revolution cannot survive in a single country, since "each extension of intercourse would abolish local communism." They continue:

The mass of propertyless workers—the utterly precarious position of labor-power on a mass scale cut off from capital or from even a limited satisfaction and, therefore, no longer merely temporarily deprived of work itself as a secure source of life—presupposes the world market through competition. The proletariat can thus only exist world-historically, just as communism, its activity, can only have a "world-historical" existence. (p. 56)

The conditions for successful communist revolution thus presuppose an integrated world economy in which the mass of the population finds it increasingly difficult to secure a decent life—not a bad summary of the effects of globalization at the start of the twenty-first century.

Having set out their conception of history, Marx and Engels draw four further conclusions about the possibility and nature of communist revolution (pp. 94–95):

(l) In the development of productive forces there comes a stage when productive forces and means of intercourse are brought into being, which, under the existing relationships, only cause mischief, and are no longer productive but destructive forces (machinery and money); and connected with this a class is called forth, which has to bear all the bur-
dens of society without enjoying its advantages, which, ousted from society, is forced into the most decided antagonism to all other classes; a class which forms the majority of all members of society, and from which emanates the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution, the communist consciousness, which may, of course, arise among the other classes too through the contemplation of the situation of this class.

(2) The conditions under which definite productive forces can be applied are the conditions of the rule of a definite class of society, whose social power, deriving from its property, has its practical-idealistic expression in each case in the form of the State; and, therefore, every revolutionary struggle is directed against a class, which till then has been in power.

(3) In all revolutions up till now the mode of activity always remained unscathed and it was only a question of a different distribution of this activity, a new distribution of labor to other persons, whilst the communist revolution is directed against the preceding mode of activity, does away with labor, and abolishes the rule of all classes with the classes themselves, because it is carried through by the class which no longer counts as a class in society, is not recognized as a class, and is in itself the expression of the dissolution of all classes, nationalities, etc. within present society; and

(4) Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is, necessarily, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; 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.

Marx and Engels argue that the working class under capitalism occupies a unique position. Unlike the bourgeoisie under feudalism, for example, workers do not have their own form of private property to protect. In this sense, it is a "class which no longer counts as a class in society"—a class which, when it
moves into activity, will not fight just for its own interests, but for the interests of humanity as a whole. As the forces of production come into conflict with capitalist relations of production, the crisis can only be permanently resolved by the abolition of private property and its replacement by communal control of the economy, creating a society in which individual lives are no longer at the mercy of impersonal market forces, and in which true freedom therefore becomes possible. However, such a transformation requires "the alteration of men on a mass scale," something that can only take place in the course of struggle itself, culminating in the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist society. Their material situation leads workers to fight to protect their interests, but in the course of doing so, their consciousness changes both to see the need to replace the whole system and to give them the confidence and vision to do so.

The Communist League and the Manifesto

The 1840s was a period of growing political and economic crises in Europe. In response to this situation, Marx and Engels began a Communist Correspondence Committee in 1846, which enabled them to forge ties with communists and other radicals in both Europe and the United States. Among those with whom they made close links were some of the left-wing leaders of the Chartist movement in Britain (the first mass working-class movement, which was fighting for a charter of democratic reforms), and leaders of the League of the Just, a radical organization of perhaps two hundred German workers, many living in exile in Paris and London. The League organized secretly and had a romantic and conspiratorial view of revolution, in which a dedicated minority would seize power on behalf of the masses; in London, however, its leading members were influenced by the growth of trade unions and by the Chartists. In early 1847, Marx and Engels decided to join the League, and in June of that year, Engels attended an international congress convened by the League in London aimed at unifying communists from several countries, with the expectation that a revolution was imminent. At this conference, the League of the Just renamed itself the Communist League; reorganized itself on more open, democratic lines;
and abandoned its previous abstract slogans concerning justice and equality in favor of the call "Workers of All Countries, Unite!"

The Communist League was moving quickly in the direction of Marx and Engels' ideas. The June congress produced a communist "confession of faith," written by Engels (1847a) as a series of questions and answers for discussion among the League's members in preparation for a second congress in November. In October, following further debates in the organization, Engels wrote an improved version, *Principles of Communism* (1847b), still in question-and-answer form. Shortly afterward, he wrote to Marx:

I believe that the best thing is to do away with the catechism [question and answer] form and give the thing the title: *Communist Manifesto*. We have to bring in a certain amount of history, and the present form does not lend itself to this very well.

A few days later, on November 29, the second congress of the Communist League began in London. After much debate over the next ten days, Marx and Engels finally fully won the organization over to their ideas, and Marx was commissioned to write the League's official program. Thus, the *Communist Manifesto* was born. Marx wrote it over the next several weeks in Brussels, but he drew heavily on Engels' earlier drafts, so both are rightly credited as authors of the final version. As Marx was completing the document in late January 1848, revolution was already breaking out in parts of Italy. In mid-February, it was published in German in London, with the title *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (Manifesto of the Communist Party).

Within days of the Manifesto's publication, revolution had spread to Paris — where the monarchy was overthrown — and, over the next few weeks, to much of the rest of Europe, including Germany. Marx, Engels, and other members of the Communist League took part in the revolutionary movement in Germany, where they hoped the bourgeoisie would overthrow feudalism and create more favorable conditions for a workers' revolution. However, in Germany, the bourgeoisie proved more concerned about the threat from the working class than the repressive status quo, and the revolution went down to defeat in 1849. Elsewhere, too, the forces of counterrevolution were eventually victo-
rious. Marx and Engels went into exile in England, convinced that while the revolutionary moment had passed for the time being, the inexorable workings of economic and social forces would create new opportunities in the future.  

Socialism or Communism?

In the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels emphatically identify themselves as communists. Elsewhere, however, they are happy to describe themselves as socialists (or sometimes “scientific socialists”). How should these terms be understood, and how are they related?

The first point to bear in mind is that at the time the *Manifesto* was written, “socialist” was often used broadly to refer to anyone concerned by capitalism’s social problems, no matter what kind of solution they offered to those problems. This is how Marx and Engels use the term in Section III of the *Manifesto*. It thus makes sense for them to talk about “reactionary socialists” (who want to solve the problems by turning the clock back) and “conservative socialists” (who think the problems can be solved without fundamentally changing anything), as well as “critical-utopian socialists” (who want a new kind of society, but have no realistic strategy to achieve it). By contrast, the term “communist” clearly signified a commitment to some form of communal ownership and was the term used by radical workers themselves. For this reason, there was no question which name Marx and Engels would choose to use, as Engels himself explained in his Preface to the English edition of 1888:

> When it was written, we could not have called it a socialist manifesto. By Socialists, in 1847, were understood, on the one hand the adherents of the various Utopian systems: Owenites in England, Fourierists in France, both of them already reduced to the position of mere sects, and gradually dying out; on the other hand, the most multifarious social quacks who, by all manner of tinkering, professed to redress, without any danger to capital and profit, all sorts of social grievances, in both cases men outside the working-class movement, and looking rather to the “educated” classes for support. Whatever portion of the working class had become convinced of the insufficiency of mere politi-
cal revolutions, and had proclaimed the necessity of total social change, called itself Communist. It was a crude, rough-hewn, purely instinctive sort of communism; still, it touched the cardinal point and was powerful enough amongst the working class to produce the Utopian communism of Caber in France, and of Weitling in Germany. Thus, in 1847, socialism was a middle-class movement, communism a working-class movement. Socialism was, on the Continent at least, "respectable"; communism was the very opposite. And as our notion, from the very beginning, was that "the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself," there could be no doubt as to which of the two names we must take. Moreover, we have, ever since, been far from repudiating it.

As the nineteenth century progressed, "socialist" came to signify not merely concern with "the social question," but opposition to capitalism and support for some form of social ownership. While never abandoning the term "communist," Marx and Engels were also quite happy to call themselves socialists in this sense, in which "socialism" is simply a more general term than "communism." What is most distinctive about the kind of socialism they supported, however, is that it can only be created through the active participation of workers themselves—or as Engels puts it in the quotation above, "the emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself." American Marxist Hal Draper called this conception "socialism from below" and contrasted it with various varieties of "socialism from above," in which an elite imposes change on a passive working class. Historically, most versions of self-described socialism have been varieties of "socialism from above," which from Marx and Engels' perspective was not genuine socialism at all.

Unlike the utopian socialists, who drew up intricate blueprints of post-capitalist society (which they sometimes attempted to put into practice on a small scale), Marx and Engels never speculated on the detailed organization of a future socialist or communist society. The key task for them was building a movement to overthrow capitalism. If and when that movement was successful, it would be up to the members of the new society to decide democratically how it was to be organized, in the concrete historical circumstances in which they found themselves. Marx did comment in a more general way about what
Marxism in a Nutshell

1. Perhaps more than any other thinker, Marx's ideas have to be separated from the actions of many of those who have claimed to act in his name. Marx hated dogmatic thinking (he once half-jokingly responded to a group of his self-described followers, "All I know is that I am no Marxist!") and saw himself as a defender of radical democracy and human freedom. He condemned capitalism because he saw it as an irrational system that denies the majority of people an opportunity to fulfill their potential. Defenders of capitalism claim that, whatever its problems, it is a system based on freedom. Marx thought this to be an illusion.

2. Marx was a materialist who held that to understand any society we must examine the way in which it organizes production. According to Marx, this depends on two things: (a) the **forces of production**—land, raw materials, technology, skills, and knowledge; and (b) the **social relations of production**—who controls the forces of production and how. Marx argues that (a) and (b) are related—given a certain level of development of the forces of production, only certain relations of production are possible. It is also possible for the forces and relations of production to come into conflict. The forces of production may change in such a way that the relations of production begin to hold them back, stunting their further development. Or, the relations of production may evolve to the point where they become incompatible with the existing forces of production.

3. The relations of production define the **class structure** of society. For most of human history, societies have been sharply divided into different classes, with those at the top controlling most of the wealth and those at the bottom doing most of the work that produces the wealth. This exploitative relationship is the basis of class conflict. In slave societies, slaveholders control the wealth while slaves do the work. In feudal societies, landlords don't own peasants, but they are legally entitled to most of the wealth that peasants produce.

Despite the fact that under modern capitalism slavery is illegal and there are no longer laws determining the place of individuals within society, according to Marx we still live in a class society in which capitalists (the **bourgeoisie**) control most of the wealth that workers (the **proletariat**) produce. Even if everyone in a capitalist society began equal, competition would soon result in some controlling much more than others and the majority having only their **labor power** to sell.

4. For this reason, Marx argues that capitalism is not based on exchange between equals. To avoid poverty, workers are forced to sell their labor power to capitalists. Capitalists will only buy it if they think they can get more out of the worker than she receives in wages. So, at root, just as are slave and feudal societies, capitalism is based on exploitation. Capitalists want to pay their workers as little as possible and to make them work as hard as possible. Partly for this reason, most workers don't find their jobs fulfilling—work is alienating rather than rewarding.

5. The forces and relations of production together make up the **economic base** of society. According to Marx, this economic base shapes the rest of society, particularly its political and legal **superstructure**. The class that has economic dominance also has dominance elsewhere. It controls the political state and (consciously or unconsciously) uses its economic power to shape society's main institutions and ideas—social, legal, religious, philosophical, artistic, etc.—to support its interests, thus propagating an ideology that supports the status quo. In capitalist societies, the economic power of the bourgeoisie undermines genuine democracy. Ruling classes also have an interest in promoting divisions in the working class, such as those based on race, gender, and nationality.

6. Marx condemns capitalism as an exploitative and alienating system, but also as an irrational one. While capitalism has created technological wonders and greatly raised the level of production, it has also cre-
ated huge inequalities. In a world that produces more than enough food for everyone, half the world’s population does not get enough to eat. Capitalism also regularly fails on its own terms, with frantic booms regularly giving way to economic slumps that destroy many businesses and throw millions out of work. According to Marx, such economic crises are inevitable features of capitalism.

7. Economist Adam Smith argued that the pursuit of individual self-interest is the best way of promoting the public good. However, there are many circumstances in which the pursuit of self-interest leaves everybody worse off. For instance, if one business notices an unmet demand, it may invest in new production in order to increase its profits, but other businesses, acting independently, may do the same, creating a huge glut of new goods that come onto the market at the same time. Because production under capitalism is essentially uncoordinated, such crises of overproduction, as Marx called them, are common and can throw the whole economy into a tailspin. Nor is there any easy way to avoid such problems, since if individual companies try to play it safe, they risk being driven out of business by more aggressive rivals. As society’s productive forces grow, they come into increasing conflict with capitalist relations of production, and the crises get worse. Marx has a dialectical understanding of class society, because he sees internal contradictions and conflicts eventually producing dramatic changes.

8. Capitalism is not only disrupted by regular economic crises. Marx also believes that it results in environmental destruction and war. By its nature, capitalism is based on continuous expansion, which repeatedly comes into conflict with the natural environment. Global warming is an ominous contemporary example—in order to do something about it, we would need to sharply reduce our consumption of fossil fuels. However, since many of the most powerful corporations (including oil, coal, and auto companies) make huge profits from such consumption, little has been done to develop alternative, renewable energy sources. Since powerful states defend the economic interests of their own capitalist classes, Marx also believes that capitalist competition is at the root of war. Big corporations look to the states with which they are associated to help them control markets and gain access to resources.

9. According to Marx, capitalism is exploitative, alienating, undemocratic, irrational, environmentally destructive, and prone to war. But it also creates the possibility of an alternative. Capitalism creates a huge urban working class, which Marx believes has enormous potential power if it can overcome its divisions to organize and struggle for its interests collectively. Over the long run, capitalism cannot provide a satisfactory life for the vast majority of people who live under it. In fighting to improve their circumstances, workers ultimately find themselves running up against the limits of what capitalism can grant them. If they are able to use their collective strength to bring the system to a halt by general strikes and mass demonstrations, they can carry out a popular revolution that unseats the capitalists from power and creates a new social order, based on democratic workers’ control of the economy and society.

10. Marx says comparatively little about what this alternative—socialism or communism—will look like, but he envisages a society based on cooperation rather than competition, in which the economy is democratically controlled and there is much greater social equality. With the elimination of class antagonisms, the material basis for all forms of oppression would disappear. In particular, full women’s liberation would become a reality. Market mechanisms would gradually give way to forms of democratic planning that respect the environment; production would be organized to meet human needs and wants, not to make profits for a minority, and work would be organized to be fulfilling, not a hated chore. Whether such an alternative to capitalism is possible is perhaps the most important question facing humanity in the twenty-first century. Early in the twentieth century, the Polish-German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg described the alternatives facing humanity as socialism or barbarism. Ultimately, that may be our choice.
could be expected to happen in the aftermath of a successful workers' revolution. In the Critique of the Gotha Program (1875), Marx notes that because a communist society will not develop "on its own foundations" but will emerge from capitalist society, it will therefore be "in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges." At this early stage of its development, although some goods and services (such as housing and health care) would be provided to everyone, and although none would grow rich at the expense of others, work would be rewarded in proportion to a person's contribution. Only later, when work has been reorganized to become truly fulfilling, so that "labor has become not only a means of life but life's prime want," and when the level of production has consequently increased, will it be possible to go beyond market incentives and reward people not in accordance with their individual contribution, but in accordance with what they need to flourish. Some people have come to refer to the first phase of postcapitalist society that Marx describes as "socialism," and to the higher phase that will follow it as "communism." When used in this sense, "socialism" is not a more general term than "communism," but the name for a stage in the development of full communism.

Objections and Responses

More has been written about Marx's ideas than those of any other individual thinker, and from the moment he first presented them, they have been subject to fierce criticism. This is hardly surprising. As Marx and Engels wrote in the Manifesto, "The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class" (II.39). Anyone who challenges those ideas can expect to be sharply attacked by defenders of the status quo. Marxism has been declared dead many times, but time and again it has proved to be more resilient than its critics have claimed.

Of the many objections raised against Marxism, some rest on myths and misunderstandings, while others deserve more serious consideration. Marx never claimed to have spoken the final word on anything. His favorite motto was "doubt everything," and he put forward his views in a scientific spirit, re-
considering and changing them in the light of new evidence. Nevertheless, he never abandoned his core ideas, which have continued to prove remarkably fruitful as tools for understanding society and inspiring movements for radical social change.

It is obviously not possible to consider here all the objections that have been raised against Marxism, but some brief comments on a few of the more common may be useful.

(1) “Marx's theories have failed in practice.” This is surely the most widespread objection to Marxism, particularly since the collapse of the former Soviet Union and other so-called socialist regimes in Eastern Europe. However, this argument only makes sense if these countries were genuinely socialist in Marx's sense. It is true that in all these countries the means of production were state owned, but state ownership of the economy was never Marx and Engels' criterion of socialism. For them, socialism meant workers running society. While the state owned the economy in these countries, the state itself was not controlled by the working class, but by a privileged bureaucratic elite who controlled the surplus wealth created by the workers. Moreover, these bureaucratic rulers were driven by economic and military competition with the rest of the world to reinvest the surplus and to expand production in a continuous cycle of accumulation. If this analysis is correct, then what failed in Eastern Europe was not any kind of socialism, but a variety of bureaucratic state capitalism.

(2) “Marx's views are in conflict with human nature.” The argument that human beings are by nature competitive, selfish, and aggressive is one of the oldest arguments against socialism. In recent years, it has been made in scientific terms by sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists. Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson, for example, once joked about Marxism, “Wonderful theory. Wrong species.” Psychologist Steven Pinker claims, “The standard Marxist theory of human nature has probably been refuted by many sources of evidence, including the anthropological record and Darwinian theory.” However, the evidence for such claims is highly dubious. Biologically, the most distinctive human feature is
our large and flexible brain, and the most striking feature of human behavior throughout history is its enormous changeability, not its rigidity. Capitalism tends to encourage competitive, selfish, and aggressive behavior, but even under capitalism, people frequently exhibit cooperation, solidarity, and compassion. In circumstances that encouraged such characteristics, they would likely be exhibited more often. This is what Marx and Engels meant in The German Ideology by "the alteration of men on a mass scale." Such changes, they believed, would begin as the result of the activity of workers themselves, fighting collectively to improve their lives, and in turn altering the circumstances in which they live. Nothing about our biology or psychology says that this is impossible, indeed, quite the contrary. As evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould once put it:

Violence, sexism, and general nastiness are biological since they represent one subset of a possible range of behaviors. But peacefulness, equality, and kindness are just as biological—and we may see their influence increase if we can create social structures that permit them to flourish. (Gould 1977, p. 257)

(3) "Capitalism has changed since Marx's day and his criticisms are no longer relevant." This objection can take a variety of forms, from the claim that the working class is disappearing, to the claim that living standards in the advanced capitalist countries today are much higher than in the nineteenth century, to the claim that the worst excesses of capitalism can be controlled by government intervention. I discuss these issues at some length in the Afterword to this book. Suffice it to say that Marx and Engels' argument is not that it is impossible for living standards to rise under capitalism, or that some of its problems cannot be ameliorated for periods of time by various forms of state action, but that none of these measures can change the underlying nature of the system, and that new crises—whether economic, social, or environmental—cannot be indefinitely postponed. As they note at the beginning of the Manifesto, the class struggle may be hidden or it may be open. In periods when it is hidden, it may appear to some to have disappeared entirely. But if Marx and Engels are right, that will prove to be an illusion.
our large and flexible brain, and the most striking feature of human behavior throughout history is its enormous changeability, not its rigidity. Capitalism tends to encourage competitive, selfish, and aggressive behavior, but even under capitalism, people frequently exhibit cooperation, solidarity, and compassion. In circumstances that encouraged such characteristics, they would likely be exhibited more often. This is what Marx and Engels meant in *The German Ideology* by “the alteration of men on a mass scale.” Such changes, they believed, would begin as the result of the activity of workers themselves, fighting collectively to improve their lives, and in turn altering the circumstances in which they live. Nothing about our biology or psychology says that this is impossible, indeed, quite the contrary. As evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould once put it:

> Violence, sexism, and general nastiness are biological since they represent one subset of a possible range of behaviors. But peacefulness, equality, and kindness are just as biological—and we may see their influence increase if we can create social structures that permit them to flourish. (Gould 1977, p. 257)

(3) “Capitalism has changed since Marx’s day and his criticisms are no longer relevant.” This objection can take a variety of forms, from the claim that the working class is disappearing, to the claim that living standards in the advanced capitalist countries today are much higher than in the nineteenth century, to the claim that the worst excesses of capitalism can be controlled by government intervention. I discuss these issues at some length in the Afterword to this book. Suffice it to say that Marx and Engels’ argument is not that it is impossible for living standards to rise under capitalism, or that some of its problems cannot be ameliorated for periods of time by various forms of state action, but that none of these measures can change the underlying nature of the system, and that new crises—whether economic, social, or environmental—cannot be indefinitely postponed. As they note at the beginning of the *Manifesto*, the class struggle may be hidden or it may be open. In periods when it is hidden, it may appear to some to have disappeared entirely. But if Marx and Engels are right, that will prove to be an illusion.
Synopsis of the Manifesto

It may be helpful to give a brief outline of the Manifesto. In the preamble, Marx and Engels announce their intention to dispel the myths about communism and to state its actual ideas and goals. Section I begins by emphasizing the historical importance of class and class struggle, then goes on to explain the rise of the bourgeoisie, the dominant class in the economically most advanced societies. Marx and Engels argue that the bourgeoisie came to power as a result of a growing contradiction between the forces and relations of production in feudal society. Though the bourgeoisie has played a historically progressive role, a similar contradiction is emerging in modern society, which will eventually lead to the bourgeoisie's own downfall at the hands of the proletariat. Marx and Engels describe the development of the proletariat and explain why it is capable of playing a revolutionary role. They argue that the victory of the proletariat will bring about the end of class exploitation.

Section II starts by describing the relation of organized Communists to the rest of the working class. According to Marx and Engels, the Communists do not set themselves up as rivals to other genuine working-class organizations, but are simply the most politically advanced and militant section of the workers' movement. The central idea of communism is the abolition of bourgeois private property (which Marx and Engels distinguish from the abolition of all property). Much of the rest of this section responds to various objections to communism. Finally, Marx and Engels set out the program that might be implemented by a successful workers' revolution.

In section III, Marx and Engels criticize other tendencies identified as socialist. "Feudal socialism" was an unsuccessful attempt by sections of the old landed aristocracy to promote its own agenda by manipulating working-class grievances. "Petty-bourgeois socialism" was put forward by sections of the middle class that objected to modern industry destroying small businesses. "True socialism" was a German variant of petty-bourgeois socialism that ignored historical circumstances and substituted moralism for class politics. All these were reactionary (or backward-looking) ideologies. "Bourgeois socialism" is an at-
tempt to solve capitalism's social problems without fundamentally changing the economic system. Finally, various forms of "critical-utopian socialism" make valuable criticisms of capitalism, but because they see workers merely as victims, they have no serious strategy for transforming society.

In the brief final section, Marx and Engels explain the relation of Communist to non-working-class opposition parties. Communists support all progressive movements, but at the same time refuse to hide their political differences. Marx and Engels believed the struggle against feudalism in Germany was of particular importance because if successful, it would lead almost immediately to a workers' revolution. Communists bring the issue of private property to the forefront in every struggle and refuse to hide their aims. The Manifesto ends with a rousing call for revolution and international solidarity.

The Manifesto in Outline

Preamble
1–4 The purpose of the Manifesto.

Part I: Bourgeois and Proletarians
1–3 The historical importance of class.
4–5 Class in modern bourgeois society (capitalism).
6–12 The historical development of the bourgeoisie.
13–18 The revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie.
19–21 Capitalism as an international system.
22–24 Capitalism's drive to centralization, concentration, and technological growth.
25–28 The contradictions of feudal society compared to the contradictions of capitalism.
29–30 The role of the proletariat.
31–35 Exploitation and the degradation of work under capitalism.
36–43 The historical development of the proletariat.
44–46 The revolutionary role of the proletariat compared to other non-bourgeois classes.
47–51 Why the proletariat represents the interests of the vast majority.
52 Why the bourgeoisie is no longer fit to rule.
53 How the bourgeoisie produces its own gravediggers.
Part II: Proletarians and Communists
1–7 The relation of Communists to the working class and the workers' movement.
8–17 Communism and the abolition of bourgeois private property.
18–20 The nature of capital.
21–24 Wage-labor under capitalism.
25–32 Response to the objection that communism will destroy freedom and individuality.
33–34 Response to the objection that communism will destroy the incentive to work.
35–36 Response to the objection that communism will destroy culture.
37–38 Bourgeois ideas are historically limited, not eternal laws of nature.
39–45 Response to the objection that communism will abolish the family.
46–51 Response to the objection that communism will create a "community of women."
52–56 Response to the objection that communism will destroy countries and nationality.
57–67 Response to religious, philosophical, and ideological criticisms of communism.
68–72 The immediate goals of a workers' revolution.
73–74 The goal of a classless society.

Part III: Socialist and Communist Literature
1–11 Criticism of feudal socialism.
12–18 Criticism of petty-bourgeois socialism.
19–35 Criticism of "true" socialism.
36–43 Criticism of bourgeois socialism.
44–51 Criticism of critical-utopian socialism and communism.

Part IV. Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties
1–4 The relation of Communists to non-working-class opposition parties.
5–7 The special importance of Germany.
8–12 Communists and revolution.
Notes

1. Engels (like Marx) spent most of his adult life in England and chose to anglicize his name from "Friedrich" to "Frederick." Marx also occasionally anglicized his first name as "Charles."

2. I say "genuine" communism because it bears little resemblance to countries that have typically been identified as communist, such as the former Soviet Union.

3. The French Revolution of 1789 overthrew the feudal, absolute monarchy of King Louis XVI and proclaimed for "liberty, equality, fraternity." Napoleon seized power in a military coup in 1799 after a bitter conflict between the revolution's radical and moderate leaders. Over the next decade and a half, he conquered much of western Europe, eventually declaring himself Emperor. In this contradictory way, many of the revolution's progressive ideas were spread to other countries.

4. Germany was not united as a single country until much later in the nineteenth century. At this time, the German population was still divided between dozens of small states, of which Prussia was by far the largest.

5. Hegel's writings are notoriously difficult to understand. On one reading, he sees the entire universe as a conscious being gradually moving toward self-understanding. For an elementary introduction to Hegel's ideas, see Singer 1983.

6. Marx's thesis was a comparison of the materialist philosophies of the ancient Greek philosophers Democritus and Epicurus. See Marx 1841.

7. Marx means that he previously knew nothing about these important issues.

8. "The proceedings of the Rheinisch Landtag on thefts of wood and parceling of landed property, the official polemic, which Herr von Schaper, then Oberpräsident of the Rhine Province, opened against the Rheinische Zeitung on the conditions of the Moselle peasantry, and finally debates on free trade and protective tariffs provided the first occasions for occupying myself with economic questions" (Marx 1859, p. 3).

9. Engels died in 1895. He frequently downplayed his contributions to the partnership, but while it is certainly true that Marx played the dominant role, Engels was an original and important thinker in his own right who frequently played a crucial role in stimulating Marx's ideas (as well as providing Marx with vital financial support for many years).


11. Marx and Engels' brief comments provide the basis for a materialist explanation of the failure of the Russian Revolution of 1917, more than seventy years later. In an economically backward country, the revolution did not have the resources to build socialism by itself. With the failure of revolutions in other countries, Russia was left isolated and impoverished, and "all the old filthy business" eventually returned. See Harman 1967.

12. Marx was unable to travel from Brussels due to lack of money.


14. The Communist League itself fell apart after the defeat of the German Revolution, but many of its members, including Marx and Engels, played prominent roles in the International Working Men's Association (later called the "First International") in the 1860s and 1870s.

15. Reprinted in Appendix A. Footnotes in the quotation that follows are the editor's.

16. Followers respectively of Robert Owen (1771-1858), who set up a model mill town in Britain, and Charles Fourier (1772-1837), who described a socially harmonious ideal society in elaborate detail.

17. Étienne Cabet (1788-1856) wrote a novel describing an ideal communist community, which he and his followers later unsuccessfully attempted to put into practice.

18. Wilhelm Weitling (1808-71) was a German tailor who played a leading role in the League of the Just before it was influenced by Marx and Engels' views.
19. Marxists have also used other terms to describe themselves. In the late nineteenth century, Marx's followers typically called themselves "social democrats." Today, however, this label has come to designate support for social reforms that attempt to make capitalism more humane rather than replace it entirely. Given the association of "communism" with regimes such as the former Soviet Union, some contemporary Marxists prefer to call themselves "revolutionary socialists."


21. Marx and Engels also drew lessons from the actual experience of workers' struggles. In particular, they drew important lessons from the Paris Commune of 1871, when workers controlled the city for two months. See Marx 1871, and Marx and Engels' Preface to the 1872 edition of the Manifesto (reprinted in Appendix A).

22. This work consists of Marx's critical commentary on a draft program produced by the United Workers' Party of Germany.

23. At this stage, society would operate with the principle, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!" Critique of the Gotha Program (Marx 1875).

24. Of course, Marx has also had many critics on the Left, including anarchists, feminists, non-Marxist socialists, and, more recently, postmodernists. There isn't space to consider these criticisms here, but see the suggestions for further reading at the end of this book.

25. Several of these changes are noted in the annotations to the Manuscript. For Marx's memo, see Marx's "Confession," available online at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/04/01.htm.

26. Perhaps an analogy with Marx's contemporary Charles Darwin is apt. While Darwin inevitably made many mistakes, his central idea of evolution by natural selection remains the foundation of modern biology.

27. See Arner 2000. Of all these countries, only the Soviet Union experienced a genuine workers' revolution. For a Marxist explanation of the defeat of this revolution in the 1920s and the emergence under Stalin of a state capitalist regime, see Arner 2000 and Birns 2003.

28. For references and further discussion, see Gasper 2004, 2005.