

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE  
HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT



MARX  
*Later Political Writings*

## *Manifesto of the Communist Party*

A spectre stalks the land of Europe – the spectre of communism. The powers that be – Pope and Tsar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police – are in holy alliance for a witchhunt.

Where is the opposition that has not been smeared as communistic by its enemies in government? Where is the opposition that has not retaliated by slandering more progressive groups and reactionary opponents alike with the stigma of communism?

Two things follow from this fact.

- I. Communism is already recognised as a force by all the European powers.
- II. It is high time for communists to lay before the world their perspectives, their goals, their principles, and to counterpose to the horror stories of communism a manifesto of the party itself.

For this purpose communists of various nationalities have gathered together in London and have drawn up the following manifesto, for publication in English, French, German, Italian, Flemish and Danish.

### **I Bourgeois and proletarians**

The history of all society up to now is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in short, oppressor and oppressed stood in

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continual conflict with one another, conducting an unbroken, now hidden, now open struggle, a struggle that finished each time with a revolutionary transformation of society as a whole, or with the common ruin of the contending classes.

In earlier epochs of history we find almost everywhere a comprehensive division of society into different orders, a multifarious gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the middle ages feudal lords, vassals, guildmasters, journeymen, serfs, and again in almost all of these classes further fine gradations.

Modern bourgeois society, which arose from the ruins of feudal society, has not transcended class conflict. It has merely established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old.

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, is distinguished by the fact that it has simplified class conflict. Society as a whole is tending to split into two great hostile encampments, into two great classes directly and mutually opposed – bourgeoisie and proletariat.

From the serfs of the middle ages arose the petty traders of the first towns; from this class of petty traders the first elements of the bourgeoisie developed.

The discovery of America and the voyages round Africa provided fresh territory for the rising bourgeoisie. The East Indian and Chinese market, the colonisation of America, the colonial trade, the general increase in the means of exchange and of commodities, all gave to commerce, to sea transport, to industry a boost such as never before, hence quick development to the revolutionary element in a crumbling feudal society.

The feudal or guild system in industry could no longer satisfy the increasing demand from new markets. Small-scale manufacture took its place. The guildmasters were squeezed out by the middle ranks in industry; the division of labour between different guild corporations gave way to the division of labour within the individual workshop itself.

But markets were ever growing and demand ever rising. Even small-scale manufacture no longer sufficed to supply them. So steampower and machinery revolutionised industrial production. In place of small-scale manufacture came modern large-scale industry,

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in place of the middle ranks of industry came industrial millionaires, the generals of whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois.

Large-scale industry has established a world market, for which the discovery of America prepared the way. The world market has given an immeasurable stimulus to the development of trade, sea-transport and land communications. This development has produced in turn an expansion of industry, and just as industry, commerce, sea-trade and railways have expanded, so the bourgeoisie has developed, increased its capital, and pushed into the background all pre-existing classes from the middle ages onwards.

So we see how the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long process of development, a series of revolutions in the modes of production and exchange.

Each of these stages of development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance. From an oppressed class under the rule of feudal lords, to armed and self-administering associations within the medieval city, here an independent urban republic, there a third estate taxable by the monarchy, then in the era of small-scale manufacture a counterweight to the nobility in the estates-system or in an absolute monarchy, in general the mainstay of the great monarchies, the bourgeoisie – with the establishment of large-scale industry and the world market – has finally gained exclusive political control through the modern representative state. The power of the modern state is merely a device for administering the common affairs of the whole bourgeois class.

The bourgeoisie has played a highly revolutionary role in history.

Where it has come to power the bourgeoisie has obliterated all relations that were feudal, patriarchal, idyllic. It has pitilessly severed the motley bonds of feudalism that joined men to their natural superiors, and has left intact no other bond between one man and another than naked self-interest, unfeeling 'hard cash'. It has drowned the ecstasies of religious fervour, of zealous chivalry, of philistine sentiment in the icy waters of egoistic calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange-value, and in place of countless attested and hard-won freedoms it has established a single freedom – conscienceless free trade. In a word, for exploitation cloaked by religious and political illusions, it has substituted open, unashamed, direct, brutal exploitation.

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The bourgeoisie has stripped the sanctity from all professions that were hitherto honourable and regarded with reverence. It has transformed the doctor, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science into its paid workforce.

The bourgeoisie has torn the pathetic veil of sentiment from family relations and reduced them to purely monetary ones.

The bourgeoisie has revealed how the brutal exercise of power, which reactionaries admire so much in the middle ages, was suitably complemented by the dullest indolence. Uniquely it has demonstrated what human activity can accomplish. It has executed marvels quite different from Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts and Gothic cathedrals; it has carried out expeditions quite different from barbarian invasions and crusades.

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without continually revolutionising the instruments of production, hence the relations of production, and therefore social relations as a whole. By contrast the first condition of existence of all earlier manufacturing classes was the unaltered maintenance of the old mode of production. The continual transformation of production, the uninterrupted convulsion of all social conditions, a perpetual uncertainty and motion distinguish the epoch of the bourgeoisie from all earlier ones. All the settled, age-old relations with their train of time-honoured preconceptions and viewpoints are dissolved; all newly formed ones become outmoded before they can ossify. Everything feudal and fixed goes up in smoke, everything sacred is profaned, and men are finally forced to take a down-to-earth view of their circumstances, their multifarious relationships.

The need for a constantly expanding outlet for their products pursues the bourgeoisie over the whole world. It must get a foothold everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

Through the exploitation of the world market the bourgeoisie has made the production and consumption of all countries cosmopolitan. It has pulled the national basis of industry right out from under the reactionaries, to their consternation. Long-established national industries have been destroyed and are still being destroyed daily. They are being displaced by new industries – the introduction of which becomes a life-and-death question for all civilised nations – industries that no longer work up indigenous raw materials but use raw materials from the ends of the earth, industries whose products

are consumed not only in the country of origin but in every part of the world. In place of the old needs satisfied by home production we have new ones which demand the products of the most distant lands and climes for their satisfaction. In place of the old local and national self-sufficiency and isolation we have a universal commerce, a universal dependence of nations on one another. As in the production of material things, so also with intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common currency. National partiality and narrowness become more and more impossible, and from the many national and local literatures a world literature arises.

Through rapid improvement in the instruments of production, through limitless ease of communication, the bourgeoisie drags all nations, even the most primitive ones, into civilisation. Cut-price commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces undeveloped societies to abandon even the most intense xenophobia. It forces all nations to adopt the bourgeois mode of production or go under; it forces them to introduce so-called civilisation amongst themselves, i.e. to become bourgeois. In a phrase, it creates a world in its own image.

The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the town. It has created enormous cities, vastly inflated the urban population as opposed to the rural, and so rescued a significant part of the population from the idiocy of living on the land. Just as it has made the country dependent on the town, so it has made the undeveloped and semi-developed nations dependent on the civilised ones, peasant societies dependent on bourgeois societies, the East on the West.

Increasingly the bourgeoisie is overcoming the dispersal of the means of production, of landed property and of the population. It has agglomerated the population, centralised the means of production, and concentrated property in a few hands. The necessary consequence of this was political centralisation. Provinces that were independent or scarcely even confederated, with different interests, laws, governments and taxes, were forced together into one nation, one government, one legal system, one class interest nationally, one customs zone.

In scarcely one hundred years of class rule the bourgeoisie has created more massive and more colossal forces of production than

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have all preceding generations put together. The harnessing of natural forces, machinery, the application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steamships, railways, the telegraph, clearance of whole continents for cultivation, canalisation of rivers, whole populations conjured up from the ground – what earlier century foresaw that such productive powers slumbered in the bosom of social labour.

This is what we have seen so far: the means of production and trade that formed the basis of bourgeois development were generated in feudal society. At a certain level of development of these means of production and trade, the relations in which feudal society produced and exchanged, the feudal organisation of agriculture and small-scale manufacture, in a word feudal property relations, no longer corresponded to the forces of production already developed. They impeded production instead of advancing it. They became just so many fetters. They had to be sprung open, they were sprung open.

In their place came free competition along with a complementary social and political constitution, the economic and political rule of the bourgeois class.

A similar movement is going on before our very eyes. The bourgeois relations of production and trade, bourgeois property relations, modern bourgeois society, which has conjured up such powerful means of production and trade, resembles the sorcerer who could no longer control the unearthly powers he had summoned forth. For decades the history of industry and commerce has been but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern relations of production, against property relations that are essential for the bourgeoisie and its rule. It suffices to mention the commercial crises, returning periodically with ever increasing severity, that place the very existence of bourgeois society in question. In these crises a large portion of the current product as well as previously generated forces of production are regularly destroyed. During these crises an epidemic breaks out in society, one which would seem a paradox to all earlier epochs – the epidemic of overproduction. Society is suddenly thrust back into a condition of temporary barbarism; a famine, a general war of annihilation appears to have cut off all means of life; industry and commerce appear to be destroyed, and why? Because there is too much civilisation, too many goods, too much industry, too much commerce.

The forces of production available to society no longer serve for the advancement of bourgeois civilisation and the bourgeois relations of property; on the contrary, the forces of production have become too powerful for these relations, they are impeded by them, and as soon as they overturn this impediment, they bring the whole of bourgeois society into disorder and endanger the existence of bourgeois property. Bourgeois relations have become too narrow to encompass the wealth they produce. – And how does the bourgeoisie surmount these crises? On the one hand through the enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other through the capture of new markets and a more thoroughgoing exploitation of old ones. How exactly? By preparing more comprehensive and devastating crises and diminishing the means for preventing them.

The weapons used by the bourgeoisie to strike down feudalism are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself.

But the bourgeoisie has not only forged the weapons which bring it death; it has also produced the men who will wield these weapons – modern workers, *proletarians*.

As the bourgeoisie, i.e. capital, develops, so in direct proportion does the proletariat, the class of modern workers who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital. These workers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity like any other article of commerce and equally exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market.

Because of the extensive use of machinery and the division of labour, the work of the proletarians has lost all the characteristics of autonomy and hence all attraction for the workers. The worker becomes a mere appendage to the machine, and only the simplest, most monotonous, most reflex-like manual motion is required. The costs occasioned by the worker are limited almost entirely to the subsistence which he requires for his maintenance and the reproduction of his race. The price of a commodity, and therefore of labour, is equal to its costs of production. As the repulsiveness of a task increases, so the wage declines proportionately. Moreover as machinery and the division of labour become more widespread, the amount of work rises proportionately, whether through lengthening working-hours, or increasing the work demanded in a given time, or accelerating the speed of machines, etc.



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Modern industry has transformed the small workshop of the patriarchal master craftsman into the huge factory of the industrial capitalist. Workers, pressed together *en masse* in a factory, are organised like an army. They become the common footsoldiers of industry under the command of a full hierarchy of officers and commanders. They are not only the chattel servants of the bourgeois class and the bourgeois state, they are hourly and daily enslaved by the machine, by the overseer, and above all by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself. The more openly this despotism proclaims gain to be its ultimate aim, the more petty, hateful and embittering it is.

As manual work requires fewer skills and less exertion, that is, the more modern industry has developed, so the labour of men is more and more displaced by that of women. Differences of age and sex have no social validity any more for the working class. They are merely instruments of labour which cost more or less according to age and sex.

Once the exploitation of the worker by the factory owner comes to an end, he receives his wages in cash, and other sections of the bourgeoisie beset him in turn, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker, etc.

The lower middle classes, small workshop proprietors, merchants and rentiers, tradesmen and yeoman farmers of the present, all these classes will descend into the proletariat, in part because their small capital is not sufficient for the scale of large industry and so succumb to the competition of larger capitals, in part because their skills are devalued by the new modes of production. There are recruits to the proletariat from all classes in the population.

The proletariat goes through various stages of development. Its struggle with the bourgeoisie begins with its very existence.

At the outset there are struggles mounted by individual workers, then the workers in a factory, then workers in one trade at a particular site, against the individual bourgeois who exploits them directly. They direct their assaults not only against the bourgeois relations of production but against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported commodities that compete with theirs, they smash up machines, they put factories to the torch, they seek to regain the lost status of the medieval workman.

At this stage the workers form a mass dispersed over the whole

country and disunited through competition. The purpose behind their own unification is not yet a massive organisation of workers, rather this is a consequence of the unity of the bourgeoisie, which must set the whole proletariat in motion in order to achieve its own political purposes, and for the moment it can do so. At this stage the proletariat does not struggle against its enemies, but rather against the enemies of its enemies – the remnants of absolute monarchy, the great landowners, the non-industrial bourgeoisie, the small traders. The whole movement of history is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie; every victory so gained is a victory for the bourgeoisie.

But with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases; it is forced together in greater masses, its power grows and it feels it more. The interests, the circumstances of life within the proletariat become ever more similar, while machinery increasingly obliterates different types of labour and forces wages down to an almost equally low level. The increasing competition of the bourgeois amongst themselves and the crises emerging therefrom make the worker's wage ever more fluctuating; the incessant improvement in machinery, which develops ever more quickly, makes their whole livelihood ever more uncertain; the confrontations between individual workers and individual bourgeois increasingly take on the character of confrontations between two classes. As a result the workers begin to form coalitions against the bourgeois; they unite in order to protect their wages. They establish continuing associations themselves in order to make provision in advance for these occasional rebellions. Here and there the struggle breaks out into riots.

From time to time the workers are victorious, but only temporarily. The real result of their battles is not some immediate success but a unity amongst workers that gains ever more ground. This is furthered by improved communications, which are generated by large-scale industry, and which put workers from different localities in touch with one another. But this unity is all that is needed to centralise the many local struggles of a generally similar character into a national struggle, a class struggle. Every class struggle, however, is a political struggle. And the unity, which took the burghers of the middle ages centuries with their country lanes, is being accomplished by modern proletarians in a few years with railways.

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This organisation of the proletarians into a class, and hence into a political party, is disrupted time and again by competition amongst the workers themselves. But it always rises up again, stronger, more resolute, more powerful. It compels the recognition of workers' individual interests in legal form by taking advantage of divisions within the bourgeoisie itself. Thus the Ten Hours Bill in England was passed.

On the whole, clashes within the old society advance the development of the proletariat in many ways. The bourgeoisie becomes involved in a constant battle; at first against the aristocracy; later against a part of the bourgeoisie itself, those whose interests contradict the advance of industry; and always against the bourgeoisie in foreign countries. In all these struggles it finds it necessary to appeal to the proletariat, to enlist its aid, and thus to draw it into political action. Hence it supplies the proletariat with its own materials for development, i.e. weapons for use against the bourgeoisie itself.

Moreover, as we have seen, there are whole sections of the ruling class dumped into the proletariat as a result of the advance of industry, or at least threatened in their essential circumstances. These also transmit to the proletariat a mass of materials for self-development.

Finally at the time when the class struggle comes to a head, the process of dissolution within the ruling class, within the whole of the old society, takes on such a violent and striking character that a part of the ruling class renounces its role and commits itself to the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. As in the past when a part of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a part of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, in particular, a part of the bourgeois ideologists who have worked out a theoretical understanding of the whole historical development.

Of all the classes which today oppose the bourgeoisie, the only truly revolutionary class is the proletariat. The other classes come to the fore and then decline to extinction with large-scale industry, whereas the proletariat is its particular product.

The middle classes, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, they all struggle against the bourgeoisie in order to secure their existence as middle classes against economic ruin. Hence they are not revolutionary, but conservative. Moreover they are reactionary for they seek to turn back the tide of history. If they

are revolutionary, it is because they recognise that they face a descent into the proletariat, so they defend their future interests, not just their present ones, and they abandon their own standpoint in order to adopt that of the proletariat.

The lumpenproletariat, that passive dungheap of the lowest levels of the old society, is flung into action here and there by the proletarian revolution, though by its whole situation in life it will be readier to sell itself to reactionary intrigues.

The circumstances necessary for the old society to exist are already abolished in the circumstances of the proletariat. The proletarian is without property; his relationship to his wife and children no longer has anything in common with bourgeois family relations; modern industrial labour, modern servitude to capital, which is the same in England as in France or America as in Germany, has stripped him of all national characteristics. The law, morality, religion, are for him so many bourgeois prejudices that hide just as many bourgeois interests.

Up to now all the classes that seized power for themselves have sought to assure their hard-won position by subjecting the whole of society to their own economic terms. The proletarians can only seize the productive powers of society by abolishing their own former mode of appropriation and hence all former modes of appropriation. The proletarians have nothing of their own to secure; they will have to destroy all former private security and private assurances.

All previous movements were movements of minorities or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the independent movement of the vast majority in the interests of that vast majority. The proletariat, the lowest stratum of present-day society, cannot lift itself up, cannot raise itself up, without flinging into the air the whole superstructure of social strata which form the establishment.

The struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie is at the outset a national one in form, although not in content. Naturally the proletariat of each country must first finish off its own bourgeoisie.

In outlining phases in the development of the proletariat in the most general terms, we traced the more or less hidden civil war within existing society up to the point where it breaks out into open revolution, and the proletariat establishes its rule through the forcible overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

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As we have seen, all society up to now has been based on conflict between oppressing and oppressed classes. But for a class to be oppressed, there must be assured conditions within which it can at least scrape a slave-like existence. The serf rose to be a member of the medieval commune during the period of serfdom just as the petty trader rose to bourgeois status under the yoke of feudal absolutism. The modern worker, by contrast, instead of advancing with industrial progress, sinks ever deeper beneath the circumstances of his own class. The worker becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more quickly than population and wealth. It should now be obvious that the bourgeoisie is incapable of continuing as the ruling class of society and of enforcing its own conditions of life on society as sovereign law. It is incapable of ruling because it is incapable of assuring its slave any kind of existence within his slavery, because it is forced to let him sink into a condition where it must feed him, instead of being fed by him. Society can not live under it any longer, i.e. its life is no longer compatible with society itself.

The essential condition for the existence and for the rule of the bourgeois class is the accumulation of wealth in the hands of private individuals, the formation and expansion of capital, and the essential condition for capital is wage-labour. Wage-labour rests exclusively on the competition of workers amongst themselves. Industrial progress, involuntarily and irresistibly promoted by the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the workers through competition with their revolutionary unity through close association. The development of large-scale industry pulls from under the feet of the bourgeoisie the very foundations on which they produce goods and appropriate them. Above all it produces its own gravediggers. Its downfall and the victory of the proletariat are equally unavoidable.

## II Proletarians and communists

What is the general relation between communists and proletarians?

Communists are not a separate party as opposed to other workers' parties.

They have no interests apart from those of the whole proletariat.

They do not declare any special principles for shaping the proletarian movement.

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Communists are distinguished from the rest of the proletarian parties only in that, on the one hand, in the various national struggles of the proletarians they raise and highlight the common interests of the whole proletariat, independent of nationality, and on the other hand, in the various stages of development through which the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie proceeds, they always represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

Communists are therefore in practice the most resolute and thrusting section of the working-class parties of every country; they have an advantage over the general mass of the proletariat in terms of a theoretical insight into the conditions, progress and general result of the movement.

The immediate aim of the communists is the same as that of all the other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of bourgeois rule, conquest of political power by the proletariat.

The theoretical propositions of the communists are in no way founded on ideas or principles invented or discovered by this or that reformist crank.

They merely express in general terms the factual relations of an existing class struggle, a historical movement that is proceeding under our own eyes. The abolition of existing property relations is not distinctively communist.

All property relations have been subject to continuous historical change, to continuous historical variation.

The French revolution, for example, abolished feudal property in favour of bourgeois property.

What is distinctively communist is not the abolition of property in general but the abolition of bourgeois property.

But modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the production and appropriation of products which rests on class conflict, on the exploitation of individuals by others.

In that sense communists can sum up their theory in a single phrase: the transformation of private property.

We communists have been reproached with wanting to abolish property that is personally acquired or produced oneself, property that forms the basis of personal freedom, activity and independence.

Property that is hard won, dearly acquired, well deserved! Are

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they talking here of petty traders, small farmers and their property, which preceded the bourgeois form? We do not need to abolish it, as the development of industry has abolished it and does so daily.

Or are they talking of modern bourgeois private property?

But does wage-labour, the labour of the proletarian, create property for him? Not at all. It creates capital, i.e. property which exploits wage-labour, which can increase only on condition that it produces new wage-labour to be exploited afresh. Property in its present form develops within the essential conflict between capital and labour. Let us consider both sides of this conflict. To be a capitalist is not just to have a purely personal position in the process of production but a social one.

Capital is a social product and can only be set in motion by an activity common to many members of society, in the last instance only by the activity common to all members of it.

Capital is therefore not a personal power but a social one.

If capital is converted into social property belonging to all members of society, personal property is not therefore converted into social. Only the social character of property is converted. It loses its class character.

Now we come to wage-labour.

The average price of wage-labour is the minimum wage, i.e. the sum total of the means of life necessary for subsistence as a living worker. What the wage-labourer appropriates through his own activity merely suffices to reproduce a bare existence. We want in no way to abolish this personal appropriation of the products of labour used for the reproduction of life itself, an appropriation that leaves no pure surplus that could give power over another's labour. We want instead to transform the miserable character of this appropriation through which the worker merely lives in order to increase capital, and only in so far as it suits the interest of the ruling class.

In bourgeois society living labour is merely a means to increase accumulated labour. In communist society accumulated labour is but a means to broaden, to enrich, to promote the whole life of the worker.

Therefore in bourgeois society the past rules over the present, and in communist society the present over the past. In capitalist society it is capital that is independent and personalised, while the living individual is dependent and depersonalised.

And the bourgeoisie calls the transformation of these relationships the transformation of individuality and freedom! And rightly so. Of course this concerns a transformation of bourgeois individuality, independence and freedom.

Under the current bourgeois relations of production freedom means free trade, freedom to buy and sell.

But if bargaining disappears so does free bargaining. The expression free bargaining, like all the other boasts of freedom by our bourgeoisie, means anything only in contrast to restricted bargaining, in contrast to the suborned burgher of the middle ages, but not in contrast to the communist transformation of bargaining, the bourgeois relations of production and the bourgeoisie itself.

It horrifies you that we wish to transform private property. But in your existing society private property has been transformed for nine-tenths of its members; it exists precisely in that it does not exist for nine-tenths. You reproach us for wanting to transform a type of property which presupposes the propertylessness of the vast majority of society as a necessary condition.

In a word you reproach us for intending to transform your property. That is exactly what we want.

From the moment that labour can no longer be turned into capital, money, rent, in short, into a monopolisable power in society, i.e. from the moment that personal property can no longer be turned into bourgeois property, from that moment, clearly, the individual person is transformed.

Thus you confess that by a person you understand nothing except the bourgeois, the bourgeois property-holder. And this person is to be transformed as well.

Communism deprives no one of the power to appropriate products in society; it merely removes the power to subjugate the labour of others through this appropriation.

It has been objected that with the transformation of private property, all activity will cease and a general idleness will spread.

According to this view bourgeois society ought to have collapsed into idleness long ago; for those who work do not gain and those who gain, do not work. The whole idea amounts to the tautology that as soon as there is no more capital, there will be no more wage-labour.

All the objections which are directed at the communist mode of



appropriation and production of material products have been extended to the appropriation and production of intellectual products. To the bourgeois the disappearance of class property denotes the disappearance of production itself, and in just the same way the disappearance of class-bias in education denotes the disappearance of education altogether.

The bourgeois regrets the loss of this education, but for the vast majority it is only training to act as a machine.

But do not argue with us while you judge the abolition of bourgeois property by your bourgeois conceptions of freedom, education, justice, etc. Your ideas themselves are products of the relations of bourgeois production and property, just as your justice is merely the will of your class raised to the status of law, a will whose content is established in the material circumstances of your class.

The biased conception by which you transform your relations of production and property from historical relations that emerge in the course of production into eternal laws of nature and reason is a conception you share with all the ruling classes that have previously come and gone. What you grasp in the case of ancient property, what you grasp in the case of feudal property, you will never grasp in the case of bourgeois property.

Transformation of the family! Even the most radical of the radicals flares up at this infamous proposal of the communists.

What is the basis of the contemporary bourgeois family? Capital and private gain. It is completely developed only for the bourgeoisie; but it finds its complement in the enforced dissolution of the family among the proletarians and in public prostitution.

The bourgeois family naturally declines with the decline of its complement, and the two disappear with the disappearance of capital.

Do you object that we want to transform the exploitation of children by their elders? We admit this offence. But, you say, we transform the dearest relations of all when we move child-rearing from the domestic sphere into the social.

And is your education not determined by society as well? Through the social relations with which you are brought up, through the more or less direct or indirect interference of society by means of schools, etc.? Communists did not discover the effect

of society on child-rearing; they merely alter its character, rescuing it from the influence of the ruling class.

Bourgeois phrases about the family and child-rearing, about the deeply felt relationship of parent to child, become even more revolting when all proletarian family ties are severed as a consequence of large-scale industry, and children are simply transformed into articles of trade and instruments of labour.

But you communists want to introduce common access to women, protests the whole bourgeoisie in chorus.

The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be utilised in common and naturally cannot think otherwise than that common use is equally applicable to women.

He does not suspect that the point here is to transform the status of women as mere instruments of production.

Anyway nothing is more laughable than the moralising dismay of our bourgeois concerning the community of women allegedly sanctioned by communists. Communists do not need to introduce the community of women; it has almost always existed.

Our bourgeois, not content with having the wives and daughters of the proletariat at their disposal, not to mention legally sanctioned prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in reciprocal seduction of married women.

Bourgeois marriage is really the community of married women. At the very most the communists might be reproached for wanting to replace a hidden community of women with a sanctioned, openly avowed community of women. In any case it is self-evident that with the transformation of the current relations of production, the community of women emerging from those relations, i.e. sanctioned and unsanctioned prostitution, will disappear.

Communists have been further criticised for wanting to abolish the nation and nationalities.

Workers have no nation of their own. We cannot take from them what they do not have. Since the proletariat must first of all take political control, raise itself up to be the class of the nation, must constitute the nation itself, it is still nationalistic, even if not at all in the bourgeois sense of the term.

National divisions and conflicts between peoples increasingly disappear with the development of the bourgeoisie, with free trade and

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the world market, with the uniform character of industrial production and the corresponding circumstances of modern life.

The rule of the proletariat will make them disappear even faster. United action, at least in the civilised countries, is one of the first conditions for freeing the proletariat.

To the degree that the exploitation of one individual by another is transformed, so will the exploitation of one nation by another.

As internal class conflict within a nation declines, so does the hostility of one nation to another.

The denunciations of communism from the religious, philosophical and ideological points of view do not merit detailed discussion.

Does it require a profound insight to grasp that men's presumptions, views and conceptions alter according to their economic circumstances, their social relations, their social existence?

What else does the history of ideas demonstrate than that the products of the intellect are refashioned along with material ones? The ruling ideas of an age were always but the ideas of the ruling class.

In speaking of ideas which revolutionise the whole of society, we merely express the fact that within the old society the elements of a new one have formed, that the dissolution of the old ideas stays in step with the dissolution of the old conditions of life.

When the ancient world was in decline, the ancient religions were conquered by Christianity. When Christian concepts were defeated in the eighteenth century by the ideas of the Enlightenment, feudal society fought a life and death struggle with the then revolutionary bourgeoisie. The ideas of religious freedom and freedom of inquiry merely expressed the rule of free competition in the moral realm.

However, it may be said, religious, moral, philosophical, political and legal ideas, etc. have been modified in the course of historical development. Religion, morality, philosophy, politics, the law are always maintained through these changes.

Besides, there are eternal truths, such as freedom, justice, etc., which are common to all social circumstances. But communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes religion and morality, instead of maintaining them, and it therefore contradicts all historical development up to now.

What does this objection amount to? The history of all society up to now was made through class conflicts which took different forms in different epochs.

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But whatever form it has taken, the exploitation of one part of society by another is a fact common to all past centuries. Hence it is no wonder that the social consciousness of all the centuries past, in spite of all its multiplicity and varying aspects, takes on certain common forms. These are forms, forms of consciousness, which finally vanish only with the total disappearance of class conflict.

The communist revolution is the most radical break with traditional property relations, so it is no wonder that in its process of development there occurs the most radical break with traditional ideas.

But let us put by the bourgeois objections to communism.

We have seen above that the first step in the workers' revolution is the advancement of the proletariat to ruling class, victory for democracy.

The proletariat will use its political power to strip all capital from the bourgeoisie piece by piece, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e. the proletariat organised as ruling class, and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.

Naturally this can only be effected at first by means of despotic incursions into the rights of private property and into bourgeois relations of production, hence through measures which appear economically inadequate and unsustainable, but which drive the course of development past that stage and are essential means for overturning the mode of production as a whole.

These measures will naturally vary according to the country.

For the most advanced countries the following could be very generally applicable:

- (1) Expropriation of property in land and investment of rents in state enterprises.
- (2) A sharply progressive system of taxation.
- (3) Abolition of inheritance.
- (4) Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
- (5) Centralisation of credit in the hands of the state through a national bank with public capital and a guaranteed monopoly.
- (6) Centralisation of all means of transport in the hands of the state.
- (7) Expansion of nationalised factories, instruments of production,

newly cultivated lands and improvement of agriculture according to a common plan.

- (8) Equal obligation to labour for all, establishment of industrial armies, particularly for agriculture.
- (9) Managerial unification for agriculture and industry, progressively eliminating the conflicting interests of town and country.
- (10) Free public education for all children. Elimination of factory work for children in its present form. Associating education with material production, etc. etc.

When in the course of development class distinctions have disappeared, and all production is concentrated in the hands of associated individuals, then the public power loses its political character. Political power in its true sense is the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat necessarily unites as a class in its struggle against the bourgeoisie, makes itself into a ruling class through revolution, and as a ruling class forcibly transforms the old relations of production, then it will transform, along with these relations of production, the underlying conditions for class conflict and for classes in general, hence its own supremacy as a class.

In place of the old bourgeois society with its classes and class conflicts there will be an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

### III

#### Socialist and communist literature

##### (1) Reactionary socialism

###### (a) *Feudal socialism*

Because of their historical position the French and English aristocracies had the job of writing pamphlets against modern bourgeois society. In the French revolution of July 1830 and in the English reform movement these aristocracies were once more beset by the hateful upstarts. There could no longer be any question of a serious political struggle. A literary battle was the only thing left. But even in the literary domain the old phrases of the restored monarchy had become impossible. To arouse sympathy the aristocrats had to appear to forego their interests, and to formulate their indictment of the bourgeoisie only in terms of the interests of the exploited

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working class. Thus they prepared their revenge – daring to sing slanderous songs against their new master and to whisper more or less malign prophecies in his ear.

In this way feudal socialism arose, half lamentation, half lampoon, half echo of the past, half menace of the future, striking the bourgeoisie at its very core through bitter, witty, biting judgements that were always comic because of a total incapacity to grasp the course of modern history.

They waved the proletarian begging bowl in order to unite the people under their flag. But as often as the aristocracy succeeded, the people espied the old feudal arms on their hind quarters and deserted with loud and irreverent laughter.

A section of the French legitimists and the Young England movement gave the best exhibition of this spectacle.

When the feudalists point out that their mode of exploitation takes a form different from that of bourgeois exploitation, they still forget that they did their exploiting under wholly different and now superseded circumstances and conditions. When they demonstrate that under their rule the modern proletariat did not exist, they forget that the modern bourgeoisie was a necessary offspring of their social order.

In any case they conceal the reactionary character of their criticisms so little that their main complaint about the bourgeoisie emerges in these terms, that under their regime a class has developed, one that will explode the whole social order.

They berate the bourgeoisie more for creating a revolutionary proletariat than for merely producing a proletariat as such.

In political practice they support all the repressive legislation against the working class, and in ordinary life, in spite of all their inflated talk, they comfort themselves by picking golden apples and by swapping truth, love and honour for speculation in wool, beet-root and spirits.

The parson was always hand in glove with the feudal lord, and clerical socialism was always so with the feudalists.

Nothing is easier than to give to Christian asceticism a socialist tinge. Has not Christianity declaimed against private property, against marriage, against the state? Has it not preached their replacement by charity and poverty, celibacy and mortification of the flesh, monasticism and the organised church? Saintly socialism

is but the holy water with which the priest blesses the fulminations of the aristocrat.

### *(b) Petty-bourgeois socialism*

The feudal aristocracy is not the only class that was ruined by the bourgeoisie, not the only class whose conditions of life withered and died in modern bourgeois society. The suburban burghers of the middle ages and the small-holding peasantry were the precursors of the modern bourgeoisie. In the less industrial and commercially developed countries this class still just rubs along next to the rising bourgeoisie.

In countries where modern civilisation has developed, a new petty-bourgeoisie has formed, fluctuating between proletariat and bourgeoisie, and always renewing itself as a complement to bourgeois society, but whose members are continually being dumped into the proletariat as a result of competition, who themselves – as modern industry develops – see the time approaching when they will disappear as an independent part of modern society and will be replaced in trade, in small-scale manufacture, in agriculture by managerial classes and domestic workers.

In countries such as France where the peasant classes make up far more than half the population it was natural for writers who supported the proletariat against the bourgeoisie to use the standards of the petty-bourgeoisie and small peasantry in their criticism of the bourgeois regime and to espouse the workers' party from the standpoint of the petty-bourgeoisie. Petty-bourgeois socialism was formed in this way. Sismondi is the high point of this literature not only in France but also in England.

This type of socialism dissected with great perspicuity the conflicts inherent in modern relations of production. It exposed the hypocritical apologetics of economists. It demonstrated incontrovertibly the destructive consequences of the use of machinery and the division of labour, the concentration of capital and of land ownership, the production of surplus goods, crises, the necessary ruin of the small trader and peasant, the poverty of the proletariat, anarchy in production, flagrant disparities in the distribution of wealth, the industrial fight to the death between one nation and another, the dissolution of traditional morality, of traditional family relationships, of traditional national identities.

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In its positive programme this type of socialism either wants to restore the traditional means of production and trade, and along with them traditional property relations and traditional society, or it wants to force modern means of production and trade back into the confines of traditional property relations that are now being – and must be – dismantled. In either case it is reactionary and utopian in equal measure.

Guild socialism for artisans and patriarchal relations in agriculture are the last word here.

In its later development this tendency petered out in a pusillanimous hangover.

### *(c) German or true socialism*

The socialist and communist literature of France, which originated within the constraints imposed by the bourgeoisie in power, and which is the literary expression of the struggle against their rule, was imported into Germany at a time when the bourgeoisie had just begun its struggle against feudal absolutism.

German philosophers, semi-philosophers and wordsmiths eagerly occupied themselves with this literature and simply forgot that with the importation of these writings from France, the circumstances of French economic life were not imported into Germany at the same time. Set against German conditions, the French literature lost all immediate practical significance and took on a purely literary cast. That literature could only appear as idle speculation concerning the true society or the realisation of the human essence. Thus for the German philosophers of the eighteenth century the demands of the first French revolution only made sense as demands of 'practical reason' in general, and the public expression of the will of the French revolutionary bourgeoisie signified in their eyes the law of pure will, of will as it had to be, of the truly human will.

The definitive task of the German literati consisted in bringing the new French ideas into line with their traditional philosophical outlook, or rather in appropriating the French ideas for themselves from their own philosophical point of view.

This appropriation took place in the same way that foreign languages are learned, through translation.

It is well known how monks transcribed absurd lives of the Catholic saints over the manuscripts on which the classical works of



ancient pagans were inscribed. The German literati reversed this with secular French literature. They write their philosophical nonsense under the original French. For example, under the French critique of monetary relations they wrote 'externalisation of the human essence', under the French critique of the bourgeois state they wrote 'transformation of the reign of abstract generality', etc.

This insertion of their philosophical phrases beneath the French discussions they dubbed 'philosophy of the deed', 'true socialism', 'German science of socialism', 'philosophical foundation of socialism', etc.

The literature of French socialism-communism was thus punctiliously emasculated. And since it ceased in German hands to express the struggle of one class against another, so the German 'true socialist' was conscious of superseding French one-sidedness, of having substituted for true requirements the requirement of truth, for the interests of the proletariat the interests of the human essence – of man in general, of man belonging to no class or to any actuality at all, but to the misty realm of philosophical fantasy.

This German socialism, which pursued its lumbering scholastic exercises so earnestly and solemnly and trumpeted itself so blatantly, gradually lost its pedantic innocence.

The struggle of the German, particularly the Prussian bourgeoisie against feudalism and absolute monarchy, in a word, the liberal movement, grew more earnest.

Thus the 'true socialists' were offered a much sought after opportunity to put forward socialist demands in opposition to current politics, to hurl traditional anathemas against the liberals, against the representative state, against bourgeois competition, bourgeois freedom of the press, bourgeois justice, bourgeois freedom and equality, and to preach to the masses how they had nothing to gain from this bourgeois movement and everything to lose. German socialism forgot at just the right time that French criticism, whose mindless echo it was, itself presupposed modern bourgeois society, along with the material conditions corresponding to it and the complementary political constitution, the very things for which the struggle in Germany was so earnest.

This served the absolutist regimes in Germany, with their following of clergy, schoolmasters, country squires and bureaucrats, as a welcome scarecrow to frighten off the rising bourgeoisie.

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This marked a sweet revenge for the bitter whipping and buck-shot with which the same regimes belaboured the uprisings of the workers.

Though 'true socialism' formed a weapon in the hands of the governments against the German bourgeoisie, it also represented a reactionary interest directly, the interest of German philistines. In Germany the petty-bourgeoisie forms the real social basis of existing circumstances, but it is a relic of the sixteenth century, albeit one that is ever changing into different forms.

To preserve this class is to preserve existing circumstances in Germany. The industrial and political rule of the bourgeoisie threatens it with certain ruin, on the one hand as a consequence of the concentration of capital, on the other, from the rise of the revolutionary proletariat. 'True socialism' appeared to kill two birds with one stone. It spread like an epidemic.

The gown, worked from speculative cobwebs, embroidered with flowery speeches, saturated with damp, sticky sentiment, this extravagant gown, with which German socialists cover their few scraggy eternal truths, merely increased the sale of their wares to the public.

For its part German socialism recognised its vocation ever more clearly, as the highfalutin representative of petty-bourgeois philistinism.

It proclaimed the German nation to be the model nation and the German petty philistine to be the model man. To his every dirty trick it gave a hidden, higher, socialist interpretation which meant the opposite. It drew the ultimate conclusion when it directly opposed the crudely destructive programme of communism, and announced that it was impartial and above all class struggles. With very few exceptions everything that is ostensibly socialist and communist now circulating in Germany comes from this malodorous and boring domain.

### (2) Conservative or bourgeois socialism

A part of the bourgeoisie wants to redress *social grievances* in order to assure the maintenance of bourgeois society.

Included in it are economists, philanthropists, humanitarians, do-gooders for the working classes, charity organisers, animal welfare

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enthusiasts, temperance union workers, two-a-penny reformers of multifarious kinds. This form of bourgeois socialism has been worked up into whole systems.

For example, take Proudhon's *Philosophy of Poverty*.

The socialist bourgeois want the living conditions of modern society without the struggles and dangers necessarily arising from it. They want existing society with the exception of the revolutionary elements bent on destroying it. They want the bourgeoisie without the proletariat. The bourgeoisie naturally views the world in which it rules as the best. Bourgeois socialism works this comforting conception up into a more or less complete system. By requiring the proletariat to realise this system in order to reach a new Jerusalem, bourgeois socialism requires the proletariat to remain in present-day society but to cast off its spiteful conceptions of it.

A second less systematic and more practical form of this socialism sought to discredit every revolutionary movement in the eyes of the working class by proving how only a change in the material relations of life, in economic relations, might be of use to them, not this or that political change. By change in the material relations of life this form of socialism by no means understands the abolition of bourgeois relations of production, which is only possible by revolutionary means, but rather administrative reforms presupposing the present relations of production; hence changing nothing in the relationship of capital and wage-labour, but at best reducing the costs to the bourgeoisie of their political rule and simplifying their state administration.

Bourgeois socialism only reaches a suitable expression when it turns into a mere figure of speech.

Free trade! in the interests of the working class; protective tariffs! in the interests of the working class; prison reform! in the interests of the working class, which is the final, the only sincere word of bourgeois socialism.

Ultimately its socialism consists in maintaining that the bourgeois are bourgeois – in the interests of the working class.

### (3) Critical-utopian socialism and communism

We are not referring here to the literature which has expressed the demands of the proletariat in all the great modern revolutions (like the writings of Babeuf, etc.).

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The first attempts by the proletariat to assert its own class interests directly were made in times of general upheaval, in the period of the overthrow of feudal society; these attempts necessarily foundered on the undeveloped condition of the proletariat itself, as well as on the lack of material conditions for its emancipation, conditions which are only the product of the bourgeois epoch. The revolutionary literature which accompanied these first stirrings of the proletariat is necessarily reactionary in content. It teaches a general asceticism and a crude egalitarianism.

Proper socialist and communist systems, the systems of Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen, etc., emerged in the first undeveloped period of struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie which we have outlined above. (See 'Bourgeoisie and proletariat' [*sic*].)

The founders of these systems, to be sure, see the conflict between classes as well as the active elements of dissolution in prevailing society itself. But they discern on the side of the proletariat no historical autonomy, no political movement of its own.

Since the development of class conflict proceeds in step with the development of industry, they discover few material conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat, and they search for a social science based on social laws in order to create these conditions.

In place of activity in society they have to introduce their personally invented forms of action, in place of historical conditions for emancipation they have to introduce fantastic ones, in place of the gradually developed organisation of the proletariat into a class they have to introduce a specially contrived organisation of society. The approaching events of world history resolve themselves into propaganda and practical execution of their plans for society.

They are indeed conscious in their plans of generally supporting the interests of the working classes as the class that suffers most. Only from the point of view of the most suffering class does the proletariat exist for them.

The undeveloped form of the class struggle, as well as their own circumstances in life, leads however to the belief that they are far above the conflicting classes. They want to improve the circumstances of all members of society, even the best placed. Hence they continually appeal to the whole of society without distinction, even by preference to the ruling class. Anyone needs but to understand their system in order to recognise it as the best possible plan for the best possible society.

Hence they reject all political action, particularly all revolutionary action; they want to reach their goal by peaceful means and seek through the power of example to pave the way for the new social Gospel through small-scale experiments, which naturally fail.

In a time when the proletariat is still highly undeveloped and hence comprehending its own position in a fantastic way, these fantastic images of future society correspond to its first deeply felt urge for a general reorganisation of society.

But the socialist and communist writings also consist of critical elements. They attack all the fundamental principles of existing society. Hence they have offered material that is very valuable for the enlightenment of the workers. Their positive proposals concerning future society, e.g. transformation of the conflict of interest between town and country, transformation of the family, of private appropriation, of wage-labour, the proclamation of social harmony, the conversion of the state into a mere agency for administering production – all these proposals merely point towards the end of class conflict which had in fact only just begun to develop, which they only knew in its first formless and undefined stage. Hence these proposals themselves still have only a purely utopian import.

The significance of critical utopian socialism and communism stands in an inverse relationship to historical development. To the extent that the class struggle develops and takes shape, this fantastic transcendence of the class struggle, this fantastic attack on the class struggle, loses all practical worth, all theoretical justification. Though the originators of these systems were revolutionary in many senses, their disciples have in every case formed reactionary sects. They adhere to the original views of their mentors in firm opposition to the historically progressive development of the proletariat. Consequently they seek to dull the class struggle further and to ameliorate conflict. They still dream of an experimental realisation of their social utopias, the establishment of individual phalansteries, the foundation of home colonies, the building of a little Icaria – pocket editions of the new Jerusalem – and to erect all these castles in the air, they must appeal to the philanthropy of the bourgeois heart and purse. Gradually they fall into the category of the reactionary or conservative socialism depicted above, and distinguish themselves only by their more systematic pedantry, by a fantastic faith in the miraculous effects of their social science.

Hence they are bitterly opposed to all political activity by the workers which could only happen through blind disbelief in the new Gospel.

The Owenites in England oppose the Chartists, the Fourierists in France oppose the *réformistes*.

### IV

#### Relation of communists to the various opposition parties

After Section 2 the relation of the communists to the already constituted working-class parties is self-evident, hence their relation to the Chartists in England and the agrarian reformers in North America.

They struggle for the attainment of the immediate aims and interests of the working class, but within the current movement they also represent the future. In France the communists ally themselves to the social-democratic party against the conservative and radical bourgeoisie, without giving up the right to criticise the phrases and illusions flowing from the revolutionary tradition.

In Switzerland they support the radicals without losing sight of the fact that this party consists of contradictory elements, in part of democratic socialists in the French sense, in part of radical bourgeois.

In Poland the communists assist the party which works for an agrarian revolution as a precondition for national emancipation. This is the party which brought the Cracow insurrection of 1846 to life.

In Germany the communist party struggles in common with the bourgeoisie against absolute monarchy, feudal landholding classes and the petty-bourgeoisie as soon as the bourgeois revolution breaks out.

But they never cease for a moment to instil in the workers as clear a consciousness as possible concerning the mortal conflict between bourgeoisie and proletariat, so that German workers may straight-away turn the social and political conditions, which the bourgeoisie must introduce along with its rule, into so many weapons against the bourgeoisie itself, so that after the overthrow of the reactionary classes in Germany, the struggle against the bourgeoisie begins straight away.

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Communists direct their attention chiefly to Germany, because Germany is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution, and because it carries out this upheaval under more advanced conditions of European civilisation in general and with a much more developed proletariat than England in the seventeenth century and France in the eighteenth; thus the bourgeois revolution in Germany can be merely the immediate prelude to a proletarian revolution.

In a word communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against existing social and political conditions.

In all these movements they emphasise the property question, which may have taken a more or less developed form, as the basic question for the movement.

Finally communists work everywhere for the unification and mutual understanding of democratic parties of all countries.

Communists disdain to make their views and aims a secret. They openly explain that their ends can only be attained through the forcible overthrow of all social order up to now. Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution. Proletarians have nothing to lose in it but their chains. They have a world to win.

*Proletarians of all countries unite!*