

# **The Communist Manifesto Study Guide**

## **The Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx**

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# Plot Summary

The Manifesto of the Communist Party, informally the Communist Manifesto, was authored in 1847 by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels at the request of the Communist League. As established by latter writings of Engels, Marx provided the dominant philosophy and performed the bulk of the writing. The document so produced summarized the philosophical platform of the Communist party and was originally published in German in 1848.

The document is divided into four major parts; the third major part is further subdivided into smaller units. The first authorized printing featured a brief preface entitled 1848; subsequent authorized printings carried this tradition forward and featured preface text by one or both of the original authors. The document was intended to be brief but authoritative and, it was hoped, would circulate amongst many nationalities and languages. The success of the document was great but proceeded slowly. It was published in so many translations, editions, and revisions that from time to time the authors were compelled to issue 'authorized' printings—usually in the German language.

The first part of the document considers the antagonistic relationship of the bourgeois and the proletariat. The philosophy is somewhat abstracted but also features historical examples and presents a brief but intelligible recounting of the socio-economic forces which led to the dissolution of feudalism and the establishment of the bourgeoisie. The second part of the document considers the supportive relationship of the proletariat and Communism. This section is predominantly concerned with apologizing to many of the theoretical attacks against Communism then obtaining. It also seeks to establish as fact the benefits to the proletariat of wholesale adoption of Communist thought. This second part of the document concludes with a list of demands espoused by Communists. It is the contemporaneous segment of the document and many later prefaces expanded or clarified the principles discussed.

The third part of the document focuses on an examination of socialist and Communist literature, or theory and philosophy. It is itself divided and subdivided into sections that very briefly analyze then-current socialist movements. The eventual successes of Communism and the widespread adoption of Communist thinking led to the utter collapse of systems and theories herein deemed insufficient or wrong-headed. This is singularly interesting when one reviews the gradual fusion of Communist and elements of socialist theory from a historical retrospective. This part of the document rapidly became dated and many of the groups or associations described are today virtually unknown. Many modern editions of the Manifesto of the Communist Party feature extensive explanatory notes regarding several of the people and associations critiqued. The fourth and final part of the document examines the relationship between the Communists and the then-existing opposition parties. The document suggests that Communism might function as a sort of umbrella under which other opposition parties could merge to achieve greater and more-durable successes. At the time of the document's publication this probably appeared laughable due to the relative

insignificance of Communist thought—the ensuing century and a half, however, have proved instructive.

Over the ensuing decades a handful of 'authorized' printings of the document in various languages were performed. These included preface text written issued jointly by the original authors until the time of Marx's death whereupon they were issued solely by Engels. Most modern printings of the document include all of these 'authorized' edition prefaces.

# 1848

## 1848 Summary and Analysis

The Manifesto of the Communist Party, informally the Communist Manifesto, was authored in 1847 by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels at the request of the Communist League. As established by latter writings of Engels, Marx provided the dominant philosophy and performed the bulk of the writing. The document so produced summarized the philosophical platform of the Communist party and was originally published in German in 1848.

This brief section was intended as the preface to the remainder of the document; it has historically been treated as part of the document, proper, and is nearly always presented as the initial segment of the text itself. The Communist movement had, by 1848, gained traction in Europe, but as usual, all pre-existing centers of power were focused on retaining their entrenched paradigm. The very word 'Communist' was being used indiscriminately and inaccurately as a pejorative by all political entities. This demonstrated all existing power centers tacitly acknowledged that Communism was a credible and co-equal power center. In addition, this resulted in the need for Communism to define itself accurately. Thus, the need for the current Manifesto of the Communist Party. For this reason, Communists assembled in London and drafted the current document that was published in the English, French, German, Italian, Flemish, and Danish languages in 1848.

The nearly simultaneous publication of the Manifesto of the Communist Party c. 1848 in all of the major European languages gave a great impetus to the Communist ideology. Indeed, as subsequent printings, revisions, and translations would clearly demonstrate the brief document would be come a seminal component of global political thinking for at least the next one hundred and fifty years. The brief 1848 introduction to the original Manifesto of the Communist Party states the then-current political paradigm and explains in brief but clear terms why and how the document was being issued. It is instructive to compare and contrast the original 1848 preface to later prefaces; e. g., the 1872, 1882, 1883, 1888 and 1890 editions.



# I—Bourgeois and Proletarians

## I—Bourgeois and Proletarians Summary and Analysis

Part 1 examines the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It considers, briefly, the historical development of both. The archetypical economic developmental path largely is based upon a study of England; the archetypical social development path largely is based upon a study of France. Societal history is the history of class struggle. The oppressor and the oppressed stand in constant opposition of each other and their struggle is uninterrupted and results in the periodic revolutionary reconstitution of society and the repetitive ruin of the opposed classes.

Historically, society has been organized into fine gradations of social rank—into diminutive divisions forming a continuum of privilege that are broadly understood as social classes. Established classes are antagonistic to other classes. The advent of the bourgeoisie has simplified class antagonism into two great hostile camps—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The manifesto examines a brief recounting of the rise of the modern bourgeoisie. In brief, the emergence of new and vast markets enabled industrialization and mass manufacturing. Manufacturing creates a division of class into the owners of capital—the bourgeoisie—and the performers of labor—the proletariat. Both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat have a long history of development. The development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by corresponding political developments tending to empower the class. The bourgeoisie deliberately ends all previous systems of allegiance, deliberately vacates social mores, and deliberately shatters family relationships in the quest of ever-expanding capital. The existence of the bourgeoisie relies upon the constant revolutionizing of the methods of production, and thus the relations of production. The expansive nature of the bourgeoisie lends it a cosmopolitan character and allows it to transcend most historical boundaries. The process is urbanizing, coercive, and centralizing.

The process has also been enormously successful by its own yardstick. In about one hundred years, the foundational means of production espoused by the bourgeoisie has generated more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations combined. The process, however, is beyond control and causes constant revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production; also, production methodology is now so efficient that over-production is a constant occurring problem. When the bourgeoisie finds itself overwhelmed by its own production of capital is asserts control by the enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces, by the establishment of new markets, and by a more-efficient exploitation of existing markets. This leads to an ever-more destructive repetitive cycle.

The bourgeoisie relies upon the proletariat and the two great classes are largely defined in terms of opposition to each other. The production capability has been stripped of individuality and talent through the utilization of machinery. Modern skills are monotonous, simple, and easily obtained. The price of labor as a commodity is



therefore very low; as the repulsiveness of the work increases, the wage decreases. Small workshops have given away to massive factories; skilled artisans have been replaced by machine operators. The more modern is the industry so the less skilled is the worker. As the bourgeoisie gains power, the proletariat expands and subsumes the middle classes. The proletariat has evolved; at first, the struggle was between individual workingmen and the bourgeoisie. Later, workingmen organized into local labor unions. Later the unions join into syndicates. As each level or increased organization emerges, so the methodology and effectiveness of conflict improves. The very nature of modernization and mechanization allows the process to continually occur more rapidly than in the past.

As the bourgeoisie continually revolutionizes society, it frequently comes into conflict with remnants of classes from the old society. These relics of the past usually are drawn to the proletariat by some common goals. Ironically, therefore, the bourgeoisie constantly supplies the proletariat with a general and political education and a constant influx of new ideologies. For example, past ruling classes often have more commonality with the modern proletariat than they do with the modern bourgeoisie. Only the proletariat, however, persists as a truly revolutionary influence. Other aligned elements that are fighting for their continued survival are conservative, not revolutionary—they try to roll back the wheel of history.

As the process continues, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie become more polarized; they have nearly nothing in common and do not share sympathetic views. Ultimately, the proletariat must shrug off the whole apparatus of society; the vast upheaval will by definition be directly primarily toward the destruction of the bourgeoisie. Hitherto, every society has been based on the antagonism between the oppressing and the oppressed. Even the oppressed class must be able to persist, if even under only slavish conditions. The rapacious drive of the modern bourgeoisie is rapidly making base existence impossible for the modern proletariat, however, and this must needs cause revolution.



## II—Proletarians and Communists

### II—Proletarians and Communists Summary and Analysis

Part 2 examines the relationship between the proletariat and the Communists. The proletariat in the early portion of this part is often referred to generically as the working class; this is a minor departure from the more-broad definition established for the proletariat in part one but should be carefully noted. Another interesting component of Part two's construction involves the direct address to a hypothetical reader from a bourgeois background; thus statements such as "But don't wrangle with us so long as you apply. . . the standard of your bourgeois notions of freedom" are fairly common. The working classes often form various local organizations or unions to better immediate conditions. Such organizations are nearly always in alignment with Communism; that is, Communism does not stand in opposition to other working-class parties. The two diagnostic features of Communism are that Communism seeks to establish the common interest of the proletariat across national boundaries and always and everywhere represents the interests of the working-class movement as a whole instead of focusing on transient or developmental issues. Thus, Communism is more efficient and better suited to effective mass organization than are local or national working-class parties.

Like the proletariat working class organizations, the Communists desire to form the entire proletariat into a class to overthrow the bourgeois establishment and seize political power. The Communist goals and philosophy is thus based upon political reality and not upon some theoretical construct. The future destruction of the bourgeoisie naturally entails the dissolution of private property. This dissolution has occurred before. The Communists do not imply that working men and women will be divested of the rightful fruits of their labor—such a state already exists. Instead, the dissolution of private property infers the abandonment of amassed capital held by the bourgeoisie and the establishment of proletariat control over the means of production. Capital, the collective product, is social power. When capital is converted into property, the property should be the collective property of the all members of society.

Wage labor is instituted to keep the proletariat in a state of near extinction. Minimum wages are so low as to ensure working peoples cannot do more than prolong and reproduce a bare existence. Communists seek to do away with the miserable character of such wage labor. Instead of existing only to increase the capital of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat should exist to enjoy the fruits of its own labor. Thus, in bourgeois society the past dominates the present; in Communism the present dominates the past. Communism thus enables individuality and values the living, working person.

The much-vaunted freedom enjoyed in bourgeois society is simply the freedom of the bourgeoisie to buy, sell, and amass capital at the expense of working men and women. Individual freedom for the proletariat does not exist. The Communist goal of doing away with private property is wrongly and much maligned by the bourgeoisie in an attempt to





convince the proletariat that the currently obtaining paradigm is preferable to a Communist revolution. For example, statements that individuality will cease to exist are true only if by individuality one means the ability to exploit others. Communists do not deprive anyone of the power to appropriate the products of society—it does, however, deprive everyone of the power to subjugate the labor of others. Another example is the statement that in Communist society laziness would overwhelm the means of production. Were this true, the current bourgeoisie would have entirely disintegrated. Thus, the argument is simply a tautology. Along with class capital, Communism seeks the dissolution of class culture. Thus, bourgeois concepts of culture, law, and freedom will be set aside. The vanishing of capital will cause the vanishing of the bourgeois family, bourgeois education, and bourgeois mores, including the conceptualization of women as wives. Communists do intend to do "away with the status of women as mere instruments of production" but have nothing to do with the introduction of free love as has existed from time immemorial. In fact, the dissolution of capital infers the dissolution of the enslavement of sexuality and therefore prostitution.

Communists desire to abolish countries and nationality. These artificial constructions are simply artifacts of the past that have been retained as useful appendages of bourgeois power. Just as the exploitation of one person by another will be done away with, so the exploitation of one country by another will be done away with. Humanity's ideas, views and consciousness change with alterations in the condition of material existence. Religious, philosophical, and ideological thought will thus obviously change as Communism significantly alters the conditions of life. Attacks upon Communism from religious, philosophical, or ideological angles are, then, immaterial and artificial. Several brief examples of historical revolution doing away with established e.g. religious thought are enumerated. Because all previous societies have been but subtle shifts of the basic paradigm of exploiter and exploited, it is only reasonable that all previous philosophy has been similar. As the proletariat wrests absolute and eternal control from the bourgeois a new classless society will emerge which will demand new philosophies. The Communist manifesto thus demands the abolition of both religion and the absolute morality resulting from religious philosophy.

Part 2 concludes with a numbered list of the various measures that will in principle lead to Communism. The ten steps include abolition of land and rents, a graduated, progressive, income tax; abolition of inheritance and confiscation of emigrant and rebel properties. Other steps are the establishment of a national bank with exclusive monopoly over state capital, centralization of communication and transport, extension of state-owned production instruments, and equal obligation to work enforced. In addition, there is the combination of industries and a gradual de-urbanization, free education and the abolition of child labor. Class distinctions will thus disappear and production will become publicly owned and managed. Communism will replace the old bourgeois society with a condition of free development of each individual as a condition for the free development of all.



## III—Socialist and Communist Literature

### III—Socialist and Communist Literature Summary and Analysis

Part 3 examines existing literatures. It is divided into three main sections—reactionary socialism, conservative socialism, and utopian socialism. Reactionary socialism is itself further divided into three sections—feudal socialism, petty-bourgeois socialism, and true socialism. The manifesto takes a broad definition of literature and uses the term to embody not only literature proper, but the whole body of thought and cultural expectation surrounding a social literature. Thus, the response of Communism to 'literature' suggests an attempt by the authors to establish the role of Communism in a wider, historical, context. From a historical perspective, the critique of these various alternative theories was devastating to their adherents. With the rise of Communism, these competing viewpoints virtually disappeared from any meaningful context. Various later editions of the text add occasional explanatory footnotes to this section.

Reactionary feudal socialism of the pre-modern era focused, toward the end, on maligning the modern bourgeois society through pamphlets. Such a literary attack was necessitated by the real loss of aristocratic power that had already largely occurred in e.g. France and England. The aristocratic literature sought to gain sympathy from the forming proletariat; to do so the literature by necessity lost sight of many fundamental tenets of aristocratic privilege while simultaneously predicting doom for the working classes. The manifesto calls this literature half lamentation and half lampoon. This reactionary feudal socialism was largely ineffectual in convincing the forming proletariat to conservative revolution. The real aristocratic objection to the bourgeoisie is that it establishes a reactionary, revolutionary, proletariat that seeks to destroy old institutions.

Reactionary petty-bourgeois socialism—the medieval burgesses and peasant proprietors—were also mostly demolished by the advent of the modern system of production. A remnant of the medieval middle class remains, however, fluctuating in significance and numbers. Modern production constantly forces the petty bourgeois toward the proletariat while the petty bourgeois simultaneously clings tenaciously to the lower rungs of the bourgeoisie. In France, writers historically identified with the proletariat; thus was born the literature of the petty bourgeois. Defined largely as an oppositional literature, the petty-bourgeois socialism critically dissects the bourgeoisie and educates the proletariat. It seeks to restore the old means of production and the old ways or, conversely, to force modern means and ways into old frameworks and relations. It is reactionary and Utopian and, historically, an abject failure.

Reactionary German, or 'true', socialism developed in Germany when the feudal society was just giving way to the emerging bourgeoisie. The emerging German literature focused on political developments and was devoid of the rich social conditions that obtained in France. Thus, German socialism was a fusion of French political ideologies with German social ideologies; this fusion was a difficult one and resulted in various



nearly nonsensical philosophical constructions without practical application. Whereas French socialist presumed the existence of a French bourgeoisie against which the French proletariat struggled, German socialism focused on the interests of human nature and largely forgot about class. German socialism was ultimately used by the existing governmental powers as a weapon of theory against the rising German bourgeoisie. Thus supported by existing power structures, German socialism widely spread—even though devoid of the seminal French ideology.

Conservative or Bourgeois socialist literature is a response by the bourgeoisie to the criticisms of reactionary socialism; its goal is simply to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society. Conservative socialism is a well-developed theory inclusive of all the scholastic pursuits common to the bourgeoisie. It seeks to maintain all the advantages of modern society without any revolutionary elements. Thus, the proletariat is expected to continue to function as an exploited class and march to the tune of religion, law, and the established order. Another thrust of this literature is the devaluation of all revolutionary movements by an inordinate focus on the negative elements of any upheaval. The Communist manifesto dispenses with conservative socialism as a mere figure of speech, inadequate to address the demands of any real-world paradigm: "It is summed up in the phrase: the bourgeois is a bourgeois—for the benefit of the working class."

The Critical-Utopian socialism and Communism section examines the body of thought and literature which surrounds the earliest attempts at Communist development. These events occurred during the initial stages of the collapse of feudalism and centered on a proletariat that was not well formed or even entirely defined or understood. Thus, early experiments were usually focused on the strong personality or charisma of individuals and their peculiar vision was the measure of local success. Most of these individuals consider themselves to be above class struggle or superior to the average man; they thus reject all political and even revolutionary action and attempt to secure their goals through peaceful force of will. Such a strategy does not yield success. Even so, the literature of this thought contains some valuable ideas and may serve as an education for Communists, as long as it is understood to be Utopian in character. In actual effect, this body of thought is without significance, as it can offer no tangible process to the proletariat. Moreover, in fact, when placed into motion, limited struggles of such character generally come into open conflict with true working-class struggles. A few brief examples of Utopian socialist movements are offered; they are without exception ephemeral and in conflict with a wider proletariat agenda.



## **IV—Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties**

### **IV—Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties Summary and Analysis**

Part 4 is the shortest and final major division of the original document. Communists support existing opposition parties formed by the working classes of the world. Communists seek to assist existing parties meet their immediate goals while simultaneously fostering a long-term and over-arching goal of a classless society; even so, Communists reserve the privilege of analyzing existing parties when their ideologies preclude rational development. The Communists specifically mentions supporting the Chartists of England, the Agrarian Reformers of America, the Reformed Social Democrats of France, the Radicals of Switzerland, and the Polish party of agrarian revolution. The Communists even join with the German bourgeoisie when it acts in a revolutionary way against the German absolute monarchy—but even so, Communists never lose sight of the ultimate goal and they foster recognition of the antagonism inherent in the Germanic system. The Communist interest in Germany is timely—Germany is on the verge of bourgeois revolution and is thus a prime candidate for Communist intervention.

In summary, Communists support every revolutionary movement against existing social and political systems. Communists focus on the issue of private property and capital. They work everywhere with existing labor unions and democratic parties. They do not hide their goals or philosophy. Communists declare that proletariat goals can only be achieved through forcible action.

# Preface to the 1872 German Edition

## Preface to the 1872 German Edition Summary and Analysis

The document enjoyed several major reprinting and numerous translation and revision events; the first major re-publication took place in 1872. Marx and Engels added a preface upon each major reprinting and latter editions in general retained all previous preface text. The preface to the 1872 German edition primarily recounts the history of the Communist manifesto's creation and promulgation. An international association of workers, known as the Communist League, in 1847 commissioned Karl Marx and Frederick Engels to write the manifesto. The manuscript was first published in German in 1848, and was printed in London. This was of necessity performed as a secret action. Between 1848 and 1872, the document was republished in twelve German editions that were issued in Germany, England, and America. The document was translated by Helen Macfarlane c. 1850 and published in English initially in 1850. By 1871, at least three English-language translations had been published in America. The first French-language edition appeared in 1848. Subsequent French-language editions were published. A Polish version appeared in England c. late 1848. A Russian translation was published in Switzerland in c. 1863. A Danish translation appeared c. late 1848.

The 1872 preface then asserts that the fundamental tenets of the original document remain essentially correct. Even though the steps outlined at the end of Part 2 would be worded perhaps differently or slightly altered, the theory remains correct. The magnificent strides of modern industry have compelled subtle change to Communist theory; but the foundational tenets are as correct in 1872 as they were in 1848. Additionally, the critique of socialist literature is of course incomplete as further development continues to occur. Even so, the document has become historically significant and must needs therefore remain static. Future editions, perhaps, might incorporate significant changes. The preface is signed by Marx and Engels.

# Preface to the 1882 Russian Edition

## Preface to the 1882 Russian Edition Summary and Analysis

The first Russian-language edition of the document was translated by the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin and was published in c. 1863. It was viewed in Western Europe as only a literary curiosity. Much has changed since then. The original document's Part 4 considered Communism's relation to various other opposition parties and clearly indicates the then-limited influence of Communism. Notably, Russia and the United States were not even mentioned. The preface suggests that the mass of recent American immigrants is poised to strike a decisive Communist blow to the emerging American bourgeoisie who are rapidly amassing capital. The Russian Revolution of 1848-9 shocked Europe. In present-day Russia, more than half of the land is owned in common. This stands in hopeful contrast to Russian bourgeois exploitation. The authors hope that the Russian revolution will continue and become the signal for a global proletarian revolution; thus, the common ownership of Russian land may well be the starting point for Communist development. Note that the actual text of the 1882 Russian edition attached to the preface is not the Bakunin translation but a second translation performed by Vera Zasulich. The preface is signed by Marx and Engels.



# **Preface to the 1883 German Edition**

## **Preface to the 1883 German Edition Summary and Analysis**

This brief preface announces the 1883 death of Marx. Engels bluntly states the dominant theory found in the document was the product of Marx's philosophy and thought. Although both men had envisioned a similar process, Marx was the moving force behind the Communist manifesto and Marx's philosophy was much in advance of Engels'. The preface contains an interesting and prescient footnote wherein Engels recounts his opinion that the document had done for history what—at that time—Darwin's theory had done for science. The preface is signed by Engels.



# Preface to the 1888 English Edition

## Preface to the 1888 English Edition Summary and Analysis

The preface is quite extensive and recounts most of the material presented in previous preface texts. Additional historical and political interpretations of events are provided. The preface to the 1872 German Edition is quoted nearly completely; the preface to the 1883 German Edition is offered again nearly verbatim but not as a quotation. The edition is significant because it was the first major English-language translation directly endorsed as essentially correct by Engels; at the time, the original document was four decades old and had become enormously influential.

That document was originally published as the political platform of the Communist League, a then-secret working man's association concentrated in Germany. At an official meeting, the League commissioned Marx and Engels to prepare a comprehensive theoretical and practical party program. The program thus created was written in German and published in London in 1848 as the Manifesto of the Communist Party. Since that time, the document has been printed in numerous editions and various languages. Many translations have been sound but several are atrocious. Since the original publication political class struggle has continued. Usually, this struggle is waged between factions of the bourgeoisie. These are factions seeking transient ascendance over other bourgeois factions. Proletarian movements have been ruthlessly exterminated by those in power. As a signal example, the various members of the Communist League were hunted down by the Prussian police and imprisoned for various terms—the League itself was formally dissolved. The proletariat was next represented in earnest by the International Working Men's Association; this organization suffered, however, from sponsoring a political program diverse enough to include English trade unions, European adherents to Proudhon, and German adherents to LaSalle.

Marx's program had counted on the willful self-education and intellectual development of the working class. Such education would result in combined action and mutual discussion. Alas, such progress was never made and when the International Working Men's Association disbanded in 1874 the various proletarian movements around Europe faltered. Eventually the English labor unions would become local associations lacking in any large or international class-movement vision. Simultaneously, however, the Manifesto of the Communist Party had risen in prominence amongst working class thinking. The preface again recounts, in somewhat more detail, numerous other translations, editions, and revisions of the document including the curious fact that the first Spanish-language edition was translated from the 1886 French-language edition—itsself, of course, a translation.

Had the document been issued in e.g. 1888 it may well have been termed a Socialist manifesto. However, in 1847 the term socialist brought to mind established middle-class





splinter movements devoid of significant political fervor. Some examples of this include the English Owenites and the French Fourierists. Thus, working men of significant vision rallied instead under the title of Communism. In the event the choice of terminology was fortuitous and has proved successful. Engels once again reformulates a statement yielding total credit for the manifesto's seminal philosophy to Marx; and again he compares the document's influence in politics to Darwin's theory in science. The preface then quotes at length from the preface to the 1872 German edition. The preface concludes by noting the present translation into English has been performed by Samuel Moore; that the translation was subsequently revised by Engels, and that additional explanatory notes are included. The preface is signed by Engels.



# Preface to the 1890 German Edition

## Preface to the 1890 German Edition Summary and Analysis

The preface is quite extensive and recounts much of the material presented in previous preface texts, particularly drawing from the preface to the 1882 Russian edition. The preface to the 1882 Russian edition had originally been written in German, then translated into Russian (subsequently, of course, translated into English). Curiously, Engels does not have access to the German-language original and thus translates the Russian-language preface back into German. The English-language edition considered in this summary has thus traveled from German to Russian to German to English. It would be interesting indeed to compare the resultant text to the original. The English-language equivalent is simply an extended quotation from the previously presented preface to the 1882 Russian edition. Other translations are noted—Polish, Danish, French, and English. Several revisions are noted as being incorrect or presenting only fragments of the original document. By implication, the 1890 German edition, as well as other editions prefaced by Engels, is correct and complete. Prior to 1888, numerous poor and fragmentary English-language translations appeared in England and America—Moore's 1888 translation was therefore significant. The preface then presents again most of the information presented in preface of the 1888 English edition—namely, the International Working Men's Association activities and a brief discussion of European socialism. Additionally, the material discussing the historic interpretation of the term socialist is discussed. These materials are nearly identical to the materials from the 1888 English edition. The preface again asserts the seminal nature and signal contribution of the manifesto. The document was championed by working people who practiced a crude, rough-hewn, form of Communism that gradually evolved. Although relatively few persons heeded initially the 1848 call "Working men of all countries, unite!" the movement has garnered ever-increasing support. The European and American proletariat is mobilizing, concentrating effort and power, and moving toward specific goals; the future will surely be instructive. The preface is signed by Engels.



# Characters

## Karl Heinrich Marx

The Manifesto of the Communist Party considered in this summary notes several individuals by name but provides little to no biographical data about any of them. The descriptions included below are therefore necessarily brief.

Marx (1818 - 1883) was a Prussian philosopher and the co-developer of Communist theory with Frederick Engels. Marx was one of the authors of the Manifesto of the Communist Party; in latter editions, Engels credited Marx as the dominant contributor to that document. Marx offers no biographical data in the document though preface to the 1883 German edition notes his death on March 13, 1883, and his burial at Highgate Cemetery. Many modern publications of the document feature biographies of Marx.

## Frederick Engels

Engels (1820 - 1895) was a German philosopher and the co-developer of Communist theory with Karl Marx. Engels was one of the authors of the Manifesto of the Communist Party though in latter editions of that document he repeatedly declared that Marx was the dominant contributor. Engels offers no biographical data in the document though it can be inferred that he was a devoted member of the Communist League. Engels' name is often rendered as Friedrich Engels. Many modern publications of the document feature biographies of Engels.

## Helen Macfarlane

Macfarlane (b. c. 1816, d. after 1850) was the translator for the first English-language printing of the Manifesto of the Communist Party in 1850. Her translation was originally published in the periodical Red Republican, published by George Julian Harney. Engels refers to her as Miss Helen Macfarlane.

## Mikhail Bakunin

Bakunin (1814 - 1876), an anarchist, was the translator for the first Russian-language edition of the Manifesto of the Communist Party published c. 1863 by Kolokol. The Bakunin translation was not selected for the authorized 1882 edition.

## Vera Zasulich

Zasulich (1849 - 1919) was the translator for the 1882 Russian-language edition of the Manifesto of the Communist Party. Engels describes her as 'heroic' but declines to



comment on why Bakunin's earlier Russian-language translation was unacceptable as the basis for the authorized Russian-language edition.

## **Samuel Moore**

Moore was the translator for the 1888 English-language edition of the Manifesto of the Communist Party. Moore's translation has served as the basis for nearly all English-language printings. Even the current Draper translation uses Moore's translation as the basis.

## **Hal Draper**

Draper (1914 - 1990) was the translator for most current English-language editions of the Manifesto of the Communist Party. He relied heavily on the 1888 Moore translation and made only minor modifications to clarify meaning and bring jargon into alignment with modern usages.

## **George Julian Harney**

Harney (1817 - 1897) was the publisher of the Red Republican, issued serially in London c. 1850. The periodical is significant in the context of this summary because it provided the original vehicle of publication for the first English-language translation of the Manifest of the Communist Party.

## **Pierre-Joseph Proudhon**

Proudhon (1809 - 1865) was a French theorist and political philosopher. He considered himself to be an anarchist but Engels refers to Proudhon's adherents as socialists. Proudhon is significant in the context of this summary as the foremost example offered of a political theorist which Marx and Engels would consider to be a natural friend of the Communist movement.

## **Charles Darwin**

Darwin (1809 - 1882) was a revolutionary scientific philosopher who proposed the biological theory of evolution through a mechanism eventually known as natural selection. Engels refers to Darwin in several prefaces, comparing the influence of the manifesto on politics to the influence of Darwin's writings on science. Darwin's influence on science was, of course, fundamental and vast.



# Objects/Places

## The Bourgeoisie

The bourgeoisie is the name given to that class of modern capitalists who are the owners of the means of social production. They are the employers of the wage laborer.

## The Proletariat

The proletariat is the name given to that class of modern laborers who do not possess the means of production. They are thus reduced to selling their labor power in order to live.

## Communism

Communism is a political theory first codified in the Manifesto of the Communist Party. In general, Communism seeks to establish a classless, stateless society through the destruction of the bourgeoisie and the ascendancy of a universal proletariat.

## The Communist League

Originally founded as the League of the Just in Paris during 1836, the Communist League consisted primarily of German workers. The group was initially focused on Utopian socialism but slowly changed into a Marxian Communist political organization. During its early formation the Communist League remained a secret organization. With the publication of the Manifesto of the Communist Party in 1848 it commenced public operations. In the early 1850s the group was actively suppressed and most prominent members were arrested, convicted, and served lengthy prison terms. The organization was formally dissolved in 1852.

## International Working Men's Association

The International Working Men's Association, or First International, was an international socialist organization seeking to consolidate a variety of various trade unions and democratic organizations. The International espoused the working class struggle. It was established in 1864 in London and held various congresses throughout Europe. Engels saw the International as the natural heir to the political thought espoused by the Communist League. By 1872, however, prominent leaders of the International—including Mikhail Bakunin—openly criticized Marx's political theories.



## Production

Production is the name given to the process whereby laborers create real wealth. Access to production is thus critical to the class struggle considered by the document. Marx and Engels argue that production is controlled by the bourgeoisie but fueled by the labor of the proletariat.

## Capital

Capital is the abstracted social power which results from massed production; that is, the abstracted fruits of labor. Capital is an artificial construction meant to abstract real wealth and enable its monopolization by the bourgeoisie.

## Labor

Labor is the physical process of performing productive work to make real wealth. In Communism, labor is the product of the individuals, but is also the abstracted potential of the proletariat to contribute to the welfare of the bourgeoisie through production of capital.

## Literature

Literature is the ostensible subject of Part three of the Manifesto of the Communist Party. The use of the term in this context is somewhat broad and signifies more than simply a body of printed material. Instead, the document uses the term literature to mean the whole body of political and social philosophy which surrounds a given theory and its development. In this sense literature does include printed materials such as pamphlets and books, but also includes the social milieu giving rise to such materials.

## Authorized Editions

The Manifesto of the Communist Party has been published innumerable times in various editions, revisions, and translations. Many of these are of sophomoric effort and some few have been intentionally mutilated. Whereas Marx and Engels clearly desired the document to have a wide, multi-national, and multi-lingual distribution, they also desired it to be presented correctly. To this end, various 'authorized' editions were produced in several languages. These authorized editions included German-language (the original language of authorship) editions of 1848, 1872, 1883 and 1890; a Russian-language edition of 1882; and an English-language edition of 1888. The preface to the 1848 German Edition stated that the initial issue of the manifesto was intended to be simultaneously published in English, French, German, Italian, Flemish, and Danish. Such 'publications', however, were of minor character excepting that in German.



# Themes

## History is Created by Class Struggle

The manifesto begins "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles"; this bold statement establishes the basic premise of the theory of Communist philosophy. Much of Part one of the document is devoted to a historical recounting of the putatively ceaseless class struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed. Part 2 is closely aligned with the concept that Communism provides the best solution to the class struggle. Part 3 returns to an analysis of historical class struggle and demonstrates the processes whereby revolutionary classes become stilted and complaisant. Part 4 concludes the document with a statement regarding the then-current state of the bases of power engaged in class struggle.

The very concept of Communism relies on the pre-existence of the proposed historical nature of the class struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed; if no such struggle indeed exists, then Communism offers a hollow promise and is a solution searching for a problem. For this reason, Marx and Engels strongly and repetitively focused on class antagonism. It is interesting that the Communists so wholeheartedly insisted that the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat had existed throughout all of recorded history but could be eliminated through a fundamental but simple change in society. By reclaiming the source and fruits of production, the proletariat could eliminate the bourgeoisie and thereby end forever the class struggle (one only wonders if history would therefore also cease). In historical fact, when such programs have reached national adoption the proletariat quickly ceases to be the envisioned atomic and homogenous group and a 'new' bourgeoisie emerges.

## Communism Represents the Proletariat

In the many years since the document was originally published the terms Communism and proletariat have become so inseparable welded together that to a modern reader the constant insistence that Communist thought champions the proletariat seems bizarrely emphasized. In 1848, however, Communism was a new and largely unknown philosophy being espoused by a small and actually secret organization known as the Communist League. The proletariat, or working class, had on the other hand existed since time immemorial and featured hundreds if not thousands of labor unions, democratic associations, and social clubs. Marx and Engels wanted to decisively state that Communist action furthered the cause of the working man; that Communist theory recognized the plight of the working man; and that Communist goals had in mind only the best interests of the working man. In this respect the document can be viewed as a sales pitch for Communist theory.

After Part 1 of the document establishes the proletariat in opposition to the bourgeoisie, Part 2 establishes Communism's essentially idealistic conformance to the state of the



proletariat; this segment is the principle argument that Communism represents the proletarian more efficiently and better than any hitherto existing method of organization. Part 3 of the document illustrates why existing socialist movements are insufficient and clearly inferior to Communism. Finally, Part four of the document tentatively suggests how existing power centers could best work with Communism.

## **Communist Governance Requires Fundamental Societal Changes**

Perhaps an unintended but major theme of the document is that adoption of Communism requires fundamental and vast changes to society and culture. First, of course, is the cessation of the heretofore- ceaseless class struggle between the oppressed and the oppressors. As the document states that this class struggle composes all of recorded history, its cessation implies a long-term profound change in all future human endeavors.

The document also states that numerous societal norms and mores must be abandoned or actively destroyed during the medium-term adoption of Communism. The enumerated institutions to be vitiated include the ownership of private property, religion, the rule of law, and even marriage and family structures. The authors admit that many of these institutions will have to be actively and even violently suppressed. These medium-term goals of Communism are primarily secondary effects of the system; they are, however, major stumbling blocks for the vast majority of middle-class America and Europe. When informed that for the common weal he must yield up his private property, his religion, his philosophy, and even his spouse, many a working man has taken a second, and a critical second, look at Communist theory. The document also suggests ten short-term societal changes that presumably must lead toward wholesale Communism. These steps are enumerated near the end of Part two of the document, and they are considered at some length in the appropriate section of this summary.





# Style

## Perspective

The manifesto was a commissioned piece; members of the Communist League sponsored Marx and Engels to develop the party's political platform into a cohesive and cogent statement of purpose. The end result was a scholarly but conversational brief manifesto that was to become one of history's most-important political statements. Marx and Engels were uniquely suited to perform the task of writing. They were long involved with Communist and other left-wing popular political movements. They were educated, intelligent, and introspective and—significantly—they had a well-developed and intelligible political philosophy aimed at righting the societal ills of the time. Their analysis of history in terms of the class struggle was distinctively Germanic and their interpretation of the social paradigm common throughout Europe was essentially correct.

The document was commissioned at a time of political foment and social unrest in many European countries. The Communist League, the sponsoring organization, was on the verge of emerging from its secret status and taking a public role in current events. To be successful in this transition they needed an informational instrument which could be accessed by the public and they therefore commissioned the production of the manifesto. The document was intended to have wide, perhaps universal, distribution, and was clearly intended to garner sympathetic support for Communism's political agenda.

## Tone

The document is a curious blend of tones, in some parts utilizing a fairly austere and intellectual presentation of philosophy, while in other parts presenting text in almost a slang jargon. For example, contrast "It has drowned out the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation" with "...in ordinary life, despite their high falutin' phrases, they stoop to pick up the golden apples dropped from the tree of industry." This uneven tone is often criticized as a disingenuous attempt to reach out to a largely uneducated potential readership through the use of funny or catchy phraseology. This is, however, probably unfair as the tone which emerges is likely as much a product of translation as original-language writing.

The mood of the manifesto is likewise subtly complex. On the surface the document is hopeful, exciting, and charged with the energies of revolution and positive change. This contrasts nicely with an underlying brooding feeling brought on by the realization of widespread, constant, total, and brutal oppression brought about by the current social paradigm. This sad introspection reaches nearly a height of religious fervor when the authors describe the starvation-plight of working class men, women, and children.

Nevertheless, the document is presented as a nearly objective analysis of the then-prevailing circumstances and presents a well-developed and internally cohesive response intended to lead to a better, Utopian-like, society.

## Structure

The manifesto has a straightforward structure which is easy to follow. Numerous and various prefaces introduce the several authorized editions, and then the body of the text is presented (in many modern editions the prefaces are published as trailing matter). The body of the text is divided into four enumerated and named parts. Part three is itself further divided and subdivided into five smaller pieces. The main parts are titled with descriptive text. The goal of using such an 'outline' structure was doubtlessly to aid comprehension by the proletariat who, at that time, were often uneducated and definitely not scholastic in orientation. The document was intended as an educatory and introductory statement; were such a manifesto written today it would probably not be so presented.

One of the more interesting aspects of the document considers the process whereby it has been translated and published. The document is not and never was copyrighted or even centrally controlled. Thus, after its initial German-language publication in 1848 various translations, editions, and revisions of the document slowly but constantly appeared across the globe. The process whereby these were promulgated is not always as might be expected. For example, the first Spanish-language translations were based on a French-language translation instead of the original German. In a latter authorized edition Engels used portions of a Russian-language publication to retranslate text into German (which was subsequently retranslated into Russian for Russian-language publication). Further, the entire document was not always published and in some cases the document was deliberately altered and falsified for political gain. For these reasons multiple versions of the document exist in most countries—an interesting scholastic situation.

## Quotes

"A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this specter: Pope and Tsar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies.

"Where is the party in opposition that has not been decried as communistic by its opponents in power? Where is the opposition that has not hurled back the branding reproach of communism, against the more advanced opposition parties, as well as against its reactionary adversaries?" (1848)

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

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

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

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

"Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinct feature: it has simplified class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other—bourgeoisie and proletariat." (I—Bourgeois and Proletarians)

"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 condition of life and his relations with his kind.

"The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere." (I—Bourgeois and Proletarians)



"In what relation do the Communists stand to the proletarians as a whole? The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties.

"They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole.

"They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement.

"The Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only:

"(1) In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality.

"(2) In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

"The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the lines of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.

"The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all other proletarian parties: Formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat." (II—Proletarians and Communists)

"You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society, private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths. You reproach us, therefore, with intending to do away with a form of property, the necessary condition for whose existence is the non-existence of any property for the immense majority of society.

"In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend.

"From the moment when labor can no longer be converted into capital, money, or rent, into a social power capable of being monopolized, i.e., from the moment when individual property can no longer be transformed into bourgeois property, into capital, from that moment, you say, individuality vanishes.

"You must, therefore, confess that by 'individual' you mean no other person than the bourgeois, than the middle-class owner of property. This person must, indeed, be swept out of the way, and made impossible.

"Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labor of others by means of such appropriations." (II—Proletarians and Communists)

"In political practice, therefore, they join in all corrective measures against the working class; and in ordinary life, despite their high falutin' phrases, they stoop to pick up the golden apples dropped from the tree of industry, and to barter truth, love, and honor, for traffic in wool, beetroot-sugar, and potato spirits.



"As the parson has ever gone hand in hand with the landlord, so has clerical socialism with feudal socialism.

"Nothing is easier than to give Christian asceticism a socialist tinge. Has not Christianity declaimed against private property, against marriage, against the state? Has it not preached in the place of these, charity and poverty, celibacy and mortification of the flesh, monastic life and Mother Church? Christian socialism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat." (III—Socialist and Communist Literature, 1. Reactionary Socialism, a. Feudal Socialism)

"The robe of speculative cobwebs, embroidered with flowers of rhetoric, steeped in the dew of sickly sentiment, this transcendental robe in which the German Socialists wrapped their sorry 'eternal truths', all skin and bone, served to wonderfully increase the sale of their goods amongst such a public. And on its part German socialism recognized, more and more, its own calling as the bombastic representative of the petty-bourgeois philistine.

"It proclaimed the German nation to be the model nation, and the German petty philistine to be the typical man. To every villainous meanness of this model man, it gave a hidden, higher, socialistic interpretation, the exact contrary of its real character. It went to the extreme length of directly opposing the 'brutally destructive' tendency of communism, and of proclaiming its supreme and impartial contempt of all class struggles. With very few exceptions, all the so-called socialist and communist publications that now (1847) circulate in Germany belong to the domain of this foul and enervating literature." (III—Socialist and Communist Literature, 1. Reactionary Socialism, c. German or 'True' Socialism)

"But these socialist and communist publications contain also a critical element. They attack every principle of existing society. Hence, they are full of the most valuable materials for the enlightenment of the working class. The practical measures proposed in them—such as the abolition of the distinction between town and country, of the family, of the carrying on of industries for the account of private individuals, and of the wage system, the proclamation of social harmony, the conversion of the function of the state into a more superintendence of production—all these proposals point solely to the disappearance of class antagonisms which were, at that time, only just cropping up, and which, in these publications, are recognized in their earliest indistinct and undefined forms only. These proposals, therefore, are of a purely utopian character.

"The significance of critical-utopian socialism and communism bears an inverse relation to historical development. In proportion as the modern class struggle develops and takes definite shape, this fantastic standing apart from the contest, these fantastic attacks on it, lose all practical value and all theoretical justifications. Therefore, although the originators of these systems were, in many respects, revolutionary, their disciples have, in every case, formed mere reactionary sects. They hold fast by the original views of their masters, in opposition to the progressive historical development of the proletariat. They, therefore, endeavor, and that consistently, to deaden the class struggle and to reconcile the class antagonisms. They still dream of experimental realization of their social utopias, of founding isolated phalansteres, of establishing



'Home Colonies', or setting up a 'Little Icaria'—pocket editions of the New Jerusalem—and to realize all these castles in the air, they are compelled to appeal to the feelings and purses of the bourgeois. By degrees, they sink into the category of the reactionary conservative socialists depicted above, differing from these only by more systematic pedantry, and by their fanatical and superstitious belief in the miraculous effects of their social science.

"They, therefore, violently oppose all political action on the part of the working class; such action, according to them, can only result from blind unbelief in the new gospel."  
(III—Socialist and Communist Literature, 3. Critical-Utopian Socialism and Communism)

"In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things.

"In all these movements, they bring to the front, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time.

"Finally, they labor everywhere for the union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries.

"The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

"Proletarians of all countries, unite!" (IV—Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties)

"The first Russian edition of the Manifesto of the Communist Party, translated by Bakunin, was published early in the 'sixties by the printing office of the Kolokol. Then the West could see in it (the Russian edition of the Manifesto) only a literary curiosity. Such a view would be impossible today.

"What a limited field the proletarian movement occupied at that time (December 1847) is most clearly shown by the last section: the position of the Communists in relation to the various opposition parties in various countries. Precisely Russia and the United States are missing here. It was the time when Russia constituted the last great reserve of all European reaction, when the United States absorbed the surplus proletarian forces of Europe through immigration. Both countries provided Europe with raw materials and were at the same time markets for the sale of its industrial products. Both were, therefore, in one way or another, pillars of the existing European system.

"How very different today. Precisely European immigration fitted North America for a gigantic agricultural production, whose competition is shaking the very foundations of European landed property—large and small. At the same time, it enabled the United States to exploit its tremendous industrial resources with an energy and on a scale that must shortly break the industrial monopoly of Western Europe, and especially of England, existing up to now. Both circumstances react in a revolutionary manner upon America itself. Step by step, the small and middle land ownership of the farmers, the basis of the whole political constitution, is succumbing to the competition of giant farms; at the same time, a mass industrial proletariat and a fabulous concentration of capital funds are developing for the first time in the industrial regions.





"And now Russia! During the Revolution of 1848-9, not only the European princes, but the European bourgeois as well, found their only salvation from the proletariat just beginning to awaken in Russian intervention. The Tsar was proclaimed the chief of European reaction. Today, he is a prisoner of war of the revolution in Gatchina, and Russia forms the vanguard of revolutionary action in Europe." (Preface to the 1882 Russian Edition)

"The preface to the present edition I must, alas, sign alone. Marx, the man to whom the whole working class of Europe and America owes more than to any one else—rests at Highgate Cemetery and over his grave the first grass is already growing. Since his death [March 13, 1883], there can be even less thought of revising or supplementing the Manifesto. But I consider it all the more necessary again to state the following expressly: The basic thought running through the Manifesto—that economic production, and the structure of society of every historical epoch necessarily arising there from, constitute the foundation for the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently (ever since the dissolution of the primeval communal ownership of land) all history has been a history of class struggles, of struggles between exploited and exploiting, between dominated and dominating classes at various stages of social evolution; that this struggle, however, has now reached a stage where the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) can no longer emancipate itself from the class which exploits and oppresses it (the bourgeoisie), without at the same time forever freeing the whole of society from exploitation, oppression, class struggles—this basic thought belongs solely and exclusively to Marx.

"I have already stated this many times; but precisely now is it necessary that it also stand in front of the Manifesto itself." (Preface to the 1883 German Edition)

"The Manifesto being our joint production, I consider myself bound to state that the fundamental proposition which forms the nucleus belongs to Marx. That proposition is: That in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which it is built up, and from that which alone can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; That the history of these class struggles forms a series of evolutions in which, nowadays, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class—the proletariat—cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class—the bourgeoisie—without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinction, and class struggles.

"This proposition, which, in my opinion, is destined to do for history what Darwin's theory has done for biology, we both of us, had been gradually approaching for some years before 1845. How far I had independently progressed towards it is best shown by my Conditions of the Working Class in England. But when I again met Marx at Brussels,



in spring 1845, he had it already worked out and put it before me in terms almost as clear as those in which I have stated it here." (Preface to the 1888 English Edition)

"Working men of all countries, unite!' But few voices responded when we proclaimed these words to the world 42 years ago, on the eve of the first Paris Revolution in which the proletariat came out with the demands of its own. On September 28, 1864, however, the proletarians of most of the Western European countries joined hands in the International Working Men's Association of glorious memory. True, the International itself lived only nine years. But that the eternal union of the proletarians of all countries created by it is still alive and lives stronger than ever, there is no better witness than this day. Because today, as I write these lines, the European and American proletariat is reviewing its fighting forces, mobilized for the first time, mobilized as one army, under one flag, for one immediate aim: the standard eight-hour working day to be established by legal enactment, as proclaimed by the Geneva Congress of the International in 1866, and again by the Paris Workers' Congress of 1889. And today's spectacle will open the eyes of the capitalists and landlords of all countries to the fact that today the proletarians of all countries are united indeed.

"If only Marx were still by my side to see this with his own eyes!" (Preface to the 1890 German Edition)



## Topics for Discussion

The manifesto begins with "A specter is haunting Europe"; what image does the phrase conjure in your mind? Why would Marx and Engels refer to Communism as a haunting specter?

Discuss the gradual rise in influence enjoyed by Communism as made evident through a comparison of the statements included in the various prefaces issued with the text.

Marx and Engels jointly wrote the manifesto yet in later years Engels rather freely admitted that Marx took the major role. However, Engels' long life allowed him to comment at length upon the manifesto through the issuing of various prefaces to authorized printings. Who do you think was more influential on the history of the manifest—Marx or Engels?

The prefaces to the manifesto often mention individuals in the context of political alliances. Yet in later years many of those individuals stood in complete opposition to Marxist Communism. Discuss how Communism might have caused this due only to its success as a system of political thought.

Do modern developments in Communist nations definitively discredit the theory of Communism? Or are modern Communist governments Communist only in name? Is an example of a 'pure' Communist government extant in history?

Engels refers to one translator as Miss Helen Macfarlane and another translator as Bakunin. Discuss how this subtle difference suggests a potentially sexist attitude pervasive in early Communist theory.

Given the choice, would you rather be a member of the bourgeois or the proletariat? Why?

Do you find the ten enumerated steps toward Communism (review II—Proletarians and Communists) credible? Would such steps actually result in a Communist system of governance?

The manifesto states that Communism is naturally aligned with all working-class associations because of a nearly-complete overlap of interests. Do you think that most working-class associations would agree with this assessment?

Communism demands the abolition of religion, capital, and private property. Can you conceive of a world where these fundamental institutions of society have ceased to exist? Would you support a political movement which sought to actively destroy them?



Describe historically significant developments in Communist governance with which you are familiar. What elements do they have in common with your own country's political evolution?

Marx and Engels state that all of recorded history results from conflict between two great classes of people—the oppressors and the oppressed. They then develop the theory of Communism which espouses a classless society where the mechanism enabling oppression (private property and e.g. capital) is deliberately destroyed. Do you think it reasonable to assume that a basic situation persisting through all of recorded history could effectively be destroyed through collective action? Why or why not?

The manifesto states that bourgeois men view their wives as mere instruments of production, to be exploited for personal gain. Do you think this was a radical idea in 1848? Do you agree with this assessment of the conditions of marriage?

The manifesto states that workers have no country; that nationality is an artificial construct that allows the bourgeoisie to exert control over the means of production. Do you consider your own nationality to be an artificial construct supported by those in power as a mechanism to exploit others?

Did you enjoy reading the manifesto? Are you more or less sympathetic to the Communist cause for having read and studied the document?