Section XVI: Developments in Socialism, 1848-1914

Contemporary Civilization (Ideas and Institutions of Western Man)

1958

2. Karl Marx

Robert L. Bloom
Gettysburg College

Basil L. Crapster
Gettysburg College

Harold L. Dunkelberger
Gettysburg College

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/contemporary_sec16

Part of the Political History Commons, Social History Commons, and the Sociology Commons

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.


This is the publisher's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/contemporary_sec16/3

This open access book chapter is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.
2. Karl Marx

Abstract
With the 1840's the socialist heritage underwent profound changes. Most significantly, these may be attributed to the influence of Karl Marx, (1818-1883), in whose person were joined both the intellectual critic and the practical revolutionary. The import of his life, if any one meaning can be drawn from it, lay in the works to which he gave himself with single-minded devotion. All else was assigned lower priority: material comfort, personal welfare, respectability. Even the poverty and suffering of his family, though bitterly and painfully experienced, were not permitted to sway the concentration he felt compelled to bring to his study, writing, and organizational activities. This triumph of will, indeed, was aided by the forbearance and equal dedication of his wife, as well as by the intellectual and pecuniary support he derived from his close friend, Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). In the end, the impact of Marx far transcended the bounds of socialist development, affecting a significant portion of subsequent political, economic, and social thought and action, in both the East and West. [excerpt]

Keywords
Contemporary Civilization, Socialism, Karl Marx

Disciplines
History | Political History | Social History | Sociology

Comments
This is a part of Section XVI: Developments in Socialism, (1848-1914). The Contemporary Civilization page lists all additional sections of Ideas and Institutions of Western Man, as well as the Table of Contents for both volumes.

More About Contemporary Civilization:

From 1947 through 1969, all first-year Gettysburg College students took a two-semester course called Contemporary Civilization. The course was developed at President Henry W.A. Hanson's request with the goal of "introducing the student to the backgrounds of contemporary social problems through the major concepts, ideals, hopes and motivations of western culture since the Middle Ages."

Gettysburg College professors from the history, philosophy, and religion departments developed a textbook for the course. The first edition, published in 1955, was called An Introduction to Contemporary Civilization and Its Problems. A second edition, retitled Ideas and Institutions of Western Man, was published in 1958 and 1960. It is this second edition that we include here. The copy we digitized is from the Gary T. Hawbaker ’66 Collection and the marginalia are his.

Authors

This book chapter is available at The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College: https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/contemporary_sec16/3
Nevertheless, Blanc's emphasis on reform, on gradual and peaceful change, remained influential. Another aspect of his thought which bore continuing significance was related to his concept of the right to work and the rewards of labor. Giving expression to an old idea, Blanc championed the slogan: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

To illustrate the variety as well as to indicate another source of ideas in pre-Marxian socialism, one final figure may be noted. Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), a French writer and onetime parliamentary deputy, was an anarchist by outlook. Strictly speaking, the anarchist aim of society without government does not fit in with those socialist conceptions postulating the state as an instrument of reform. The anarchist position, however, bears a similarity to other socialist theories which regard government as a tool for oppression by the dominant classes. Proudhon, moreover, shared a number of views held by other schools of socialism. Critical of the existing economic system, he held that "property is theft," espoused the labor theory of value, and opposed rent, profit, and interest. Marx, though ultimately disdainful of Proudhon, learned much from him concerning the "contradictions" of capitalism.

Altogether by 1848 a considerable heritage of socialist thought existed, the product of a host of writers representing different branches of a family of ideas. Along with the individuals already mentioned were many others whose contributions rate some acknowledgment in standard histories of socialism. By 1848, certain ideas were current, although not widely held or even known by many people. It was on this basis that the structure of modern socialism was erected, in theory and practice.

2. Karl Marx

With the 1840's the socialist heritage underwent profound changes. Most significantly, these may be attributed to the influence of Karl Marx (1818-1883), in whose person were joined both the intellectual critic and the practical revolutionary. The import of his life, if any one meaning can be drawn from it, lay in the works to which he gave himself with single-minded devotion. All else was assigned lower priority: material comfort, personal welfare, respectability. Even the poverty and suffering of his family, though bitterly and painfully experienced, were not permitted to sway the concentration he felt compelled to bring to his study, writing, and organizational activities. This triumph of will, indeed, was aided by the forbearance and equal dedication of his wife, as well as by the intellectual and pecuniary support he derived from his close friend, Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). In the end, the impact of Marx far transcended the bounds of socialist development, affecting a significant portion of subsequent political, economic, and social thought and action, in both the East and West.

By contrast, his early years were quite unremarkable and gave
little hint of his future role. The son of a middle-class lawyer, Marx was brought up in conventional circumstances in the Rhenish town of Trier. The one discordant note in his background was provided by the position of his family, formerly Jewish, as new arrivals to the state church of Prussia. As a child, he was distinguished by several strong characteristics: a considerable intelligence bent on discovering truth, independence, stubbornness, and a hot temper, traits which he was to carry with him all through life. To this may be added the influence of his father, who cherished the ideals of the Enlightenment and offered his son a faith in reason and progress. Although Marx was to rebel against any simple belief in the automatic achievement of human perfection, his hope for a better lot for mankind may stem from the outlook of his family.

Although urged by his father to prepare for a career in law, Marx decided to abandon legal studies in favor of history and philosophy. This change, in turn, reflected a deeper transformation. His whole thinking and interests underwent a decisive encounter with Hegelian thought at the University of Berlin. In particular, his later philosophy of history clearly bears the imprint of Hegel, although opposed in important respects to the latter's theories. To the extent that divergence existed, this was supported by Marx's association with a group of intellectuals known subsequently as the Young (or Left) Hegelians. Insisting that Hegelianism was more than a tool for understanding the past, they sought to apply it to future development. In this, the Young Hegelians stood for revolutionary changes in existing ideas and institutions. Although Marx eventually broke with them, there is little question that he was influenced by their approach.

In 1841 Marx completed his formal education, obtaining a doctor's degree from the University of Jena. Through continued study he finally reached the philosophical position he was to hold for the remainder of his life. Following graduation, he became the editor of a newspaper in Cologne, and used his position to launch a persistent attack on the policies of the Prussian government. In 1843 the government answered by suppressing the paper. Marx's year in Cologne was, nevertheless, productive. It was here that he first read the ideas of contemporary French socialists and communists and became acquainted with current political problems. Convinced that he needed to possess greater knowledge in the field of economic thought, he began a systematic study of the writings of such men as Quesnay, Adam Smith, Ricardo, and Sismondi. He also continued his interest in history and read Machiavelli's Prince. However, of all the books Marx read in his formative period, the most influential was Feuerbach's Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy (1839).

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) filled a crucial gap in Marx's developing outlook. In opposition to prevailing Hegelian thought, he rejected the idealistic metaphysical doctrine that ideas and behavior are caused by the spirit of an age in human history. Rather, he insisted on the primacy of material factors in determining man's thinking and actions. Thus, Feuerbach could argue, and evidently enjoy the pun: "Der Mensch ist was er isst." (Man is what he eats.) Although Marx differed sharply with him on some points, his own materialist position owes much to the work of Feuerbach.
Following his marriage in 1843, Marx settled in France, continuing his journalistic activity and completing his basic study of French socialism. In this process, he met leading intellectuals who gathered in the French capital. It was at this time, moreover, that he made the friendship of his lifelong collaborator, Friedrich Engels, Engels, the son of a wealthy German cotton manufacturer, later emigrated to England and worked in Manchester for an affiliate of his father’s firm. His writings lacked the brilliance and originality of Marx, but were perhaps more lucid. Together with his other work, they established Engels as one of the founders of modern socialism.

Marx's stay in Paris lasted until 1845. Falsely implicated in the publication of articles critical of the Prussian monarchy, he was expelled by the French government after protest by Prussia. For the next three years he lived in Brussels, writing extensively and making contact with various German and Belgian socialists and communists. This marked the beginning of the dual career he was to pursue until his death: theorist and revolutionary. Seeking to form a cosmopolitan revolutionary movement, he established communication with a German group in London called the Communist League. It was for this organization, expanded under his leadership, that Marx and Engels drew up the famous statement of objectives known as the Communist Manifesto (1848).

Marx achieved immediate but limited notoriety with the publication of the Communist Manifesto. As a direct consequence, he was expelled from Belgium on the eve of the revolutions of 1848. Marx went to Paris, but soon returned to his native Rhineland when revolution broke out in Germany. He reestablished his former paper in Cologne and threw himself wholeheartedly into the revolution, seeking to further the aims of the Communist League. Using agents to gather information and foment unrest in industrial centers, Marx published biting attacks on the Prussian government. When the government restored its authority, the newspaper was suppressed and Marx was arrested for incitement to sedition. Although acquitted at his trial, he was expelled from the Rhineland, returning to Paris in 1849. Asked to leave France, he went into an exile in England that was to last for the remainder of his life.

In London he lived for the outbreak of a revolution which he was convinced would soon sweep Europe, hopefully seeing signs at various times when popular discontent flared up on the Continent. To prepare for this event he studied the revolutions of 1848, seeking the reasons for their failure. Marx's conclusions represented a major change in his theories. He rejected the possibility that a small elite group could capture and hold power unless the masses were prepared in advance for revolution and the inevitable resistance of the entrenched forces of society. This called for a broad program of education and the establishment of an open party which would popularize Marxian socialist doctrine (In the Communist Manifesto Marx used "communism" to distinguish his socialism from the utopian. In subsequent writings he reverted to the word "socialism" to describe his ideas). A second conclusion he reached
was that any cooperation with the bourgeoisie was bound to prove fatal to the proletariat. In any revolution the middle classes necessarily would be unreliable allies, for their interests in the preservation of capitalism soon would cause them to turn on the working people.

Marx now devoted himself to the tasks of indoctrination and the organization of overt socialist movement. With the major outlines of his philosophy already formulated, it remained only to elaborate his basic theories in an almost ceaseless stream of writings. In his organizational work, Marx was successful in dominating the International Working Men's Association (or First International), founded in 1864 by English and French trade unionists. This phase of his activities will be considered more fully in the following section.

In his daily life Marx spent long hours on research and writing, becoming a regular reader in the British Museum in London. He considered this an ideal vantage point for a study of bourgeois society, and insisted in later years that his fellow socialists make use of it to pour over government documents and other materials which would expose the workings of capitalism. At the same time, he dedicated many years to a comprehensive analysis of the capitalist system, publishing his Critique of Political Economy in 1859 and the first volume of Capital in 1867. The latter was completed after his death by devoted followers, especially Engels, who edited his notes.

Meanwhile, he eked out a precarious existence. Although a frequent contributor to the New York Tribune from 1852 to 1861, he depended otherwise on chance windfalls from writings, small inheritances from relatives, and gifts from Engels. Relieving his poverty were the moments of happiness he derived from love of his family and his friendship with Engels. Such were transient moments, however, under the conditions in which he lived. Within six years after he arrived in England, three of his children died. His wife later suffered from cancer, while he himself was often unwell. Until his death at sixty-five, Marx was a martyr to his work.

With this brief sketch of Marx's life, it now is possible to turn to a consideration of his major ideas. At the outset it is important to view the basic philosophical position which found expression in several of his works, but nowhere received complete treatment. Consequently, an understanding of Marx's thought requires a piecing together of excerpts chosen from various writings. A convenient starting point is to be found in the following, taken from the preface of A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859):

The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, continued to serve as the leading thread in my studies, may be briefly summed up as follows: In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these
relations of production correspond to a definite stage of
development of their material powers of production. The sum
of these relations of production constitutes the eco-
structure of society -- the real foundation, on which
rise legal and political superstructures and to which corre-
spond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of
production in material life determines the general character
of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It
is not the consciousness of men that determines their exist-
ence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines
their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development,
the material forces of production in society come in conflict
with the existing relations of production, or -- what is but a
legal expression for the same thing -- with the property rela-
tions within which they had been at work before. From forms
of development of the forces of production these relations
turn into their fetters. Then comes the period of social
revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the
entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly trans-
formed. In considering such transformations the distinction
should always be made between the material transformation of
the economic conditions of production which can be determined
with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political,
religious, aesthetic or philosophic -- in short ideological
forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight
it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on
what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a
period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the con-
trary, this consciousness must rather be explained from the
contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict
between the social forces of production and the relations of
production. No social order ever disappears before all the
productive forces, for which there is room in it, have been
developed; and new higher relations of production never appear
before the material conditions of their existence have matured
in the womb of the old society. Therefore, mankind always
takes up only such problems as it can solve; since, looking at
the matter more closely, we will always find that the problem
itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for
its solution already exist or are at least in the process of
formation. In broad outlines we can designate the Asiatic, the
ancient, the feudal, and the modern bourgeois methods of pro-
duction as so many epochs in the progress of the economic for-
formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are
the last antagonistic form of the social process of production
-- antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but
of one arising from conditions surrounding the life of individ-
uals in society; at the same time the productive forces
developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material
conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social
formation constitutes, therefore, the closing chapter of the
prehistoric stage of human society. *

It is clear that Marx distinguished his own outlook from that of previous materialists. Thus he wrote in the Theses of Feuerbach (1845):

In so far as Feuerbach is a materialist, he ignores history, in so far as he takes history into account, he is no materialist.

The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism — that of Feuerbach included — is that the object, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively....

In practice man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the "this-sidedness" of his thinking.... The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and upbringing forgets that the educator must himself be educated. Hence this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, of which one towers above society (in Robert Owen, for example).... Social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which mislead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.... The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point however is to change it.

A final aspect of Marx's materialism may be seen in the Communist Manifesto (1848), probably the most widely read of all his works. The manifesto, moreover, presents most of the leading ideas of Marxian socialism:

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 Czar, 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 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?

Two things result from this fact:
I. Communism is already acknowledged by all European powers to be itself a power.
II. It is high time that Communists should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies, and meet this nursery tale of the specter of communism with a manifesto of the party itself.

To this end, Communists of various nationalities have assembled in London, and sketched the following manifesto, to be published in the English, French, German, Italian, Flemish, and Danish languages.
I. Bourgeois and Proletarians

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

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

The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society, has not done away with class 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 distinctive feature: It has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other -- bourgeoisie and proletariat.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The bourgeoisie has played a most revolutionary role in history.

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

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

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

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

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the 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 newly-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism
to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself.
But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that
bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the
men who are to wield those weapons -- the modern working class
-- the proletarians.

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

Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division
of labor, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual
character, and, consequently, all charm for the workman. He
becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most
simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack, that
is required of him. Hence, the cost of production of a work-
man is restricted, almost entirely, to the means of subsistence
that he requires for his maintenance, and for the propagation
of his race. But the price of a commodity, and therefore also
of labor, is equal to its cost of production. In proportion,
therefore, as the repulsiveness of the work increases, the wage
decreases. Nay more, in proportion as the use of machinery
and division of labor increases, in the same proportion the
burden of toil also increases, whether by prolongation of the
working hours, by increase of the work exacted in a given time,
or by increased speed of the machinery, etc.
Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of laborers, crowded into the factory, are organized like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants. Not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois state; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overseer, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself. The more openly this despotism proclaims gain to be its end and aim, the more petty, the more hateful and the more embittering it is.

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

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

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

The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first the contest is carried on by individual laborers, then by the work people of a factory, then by the operatives of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them. They direct their attacks not against the bourgeois conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported wares that compete with their labor, they smash machinery to pieces, they set factories ablaze, they seek to restore by force the vanished status of the workman of the Middle Ages.

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

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

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

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

Altogether, collisions between the classes of the old society further the course of development of the proletariat in many ways. The bourgeoisie finds itself involved in a constant battle. At first with the aristocracy; later on, with those portions of the bourgeoisie itself whose interests have become antagonistic to the progress of industry; at all times with the bourgeoisie of foreign countries. In all these battles it sees itself compelled to appeal to the proletariat, to ask for its help, and thus, to drag it into the political arena. The bourgeoisie itself, therefore, supplies the proletariat with its own elements of political and general education, in other words, it furnishes the proletariat with weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie.

*This thing is inevitable. If this is inevitable, why should anyone resist?*
Further, as we have already seen, entire sections of the ruling classes are, by the advance of industry, precipitated into the proletariat, or are at least threatened in their conditions of existence. These also supply the proletariat with fresh elements of enlightenment and progress.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.

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

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

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

II. Proletarians and Communists

In what relation do the Communists stand to the proletarians as a whole?

The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other
They have no interest 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: 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. 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 line 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 the other proletarian parties: Formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat.

The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes. The abolition of existing property relations is not at all a distinctive feature of communism.

All property relations in the past have continually been subject to historical change consequent upon the change in historical conditions.

The French Revolution, for example, abolished feudal property in favor of bourgeois property.

The distinguishing feature of communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property. But modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few.

In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.

We Communists have been reproached with the desire of abolishing the right of personally acquiring property as the fruit of a man's own labor, which property is alleged to be the groundwork of all personal freedom, activity, and independence.

Hard-won, self-acquired, self-earned property! Do you mean the property of the petty artisan and of the small peasant, a form of property that preceded the bourgeois form? There is no need to abolish that; the development of industry has to a great extent already destroyed it, and is still destroying it...
daily.

Or do you mean modern bourgeois private property? But does wage-labor create any property for the laborer? Not a bit. It creates capital, i.e., that kind of property which exploits wage-labor, and which cannot increase except upon condition of begetting a new supply of wage-labor for fresh exploitation. Property, in its present form, is based on the antagonism of capital and wage-labor. Let us examine both sides of this antagonism.

To be a capitalist, is to have not only a purely personal, but a social status in production. Capital is a collective product, and only by the united action of many members, nay, in the last resort, only by the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion.

Capital is therefore not a personal, it is a social, power. When, therefore, capital is converted into common property, into the property of all members of society, personal property is not thereby transformed into social property. It is only the social character of the property that is changed. It loses its class character.

Let us now take wage-labor. The average price of wage-labor is the minimum wage, i.e., that quantum of the means of subsistence which is absolutely requisite to keep the laborer in bare existence as a laborer. What, therefore, the wage-laborer appropriates by means of his labor, merely suffices to prolong and reproduce a bare existence. We by no means intend to abolish this personal appropriation of the products of labor, an appropriation that is made for the maintenance and reproduction of human life, and that leaves no surplus wherewith to command the labor of others. All that we want to do away with is the miserable character of this appropriation, under which the laborer lives merely to increase capital, and is allowed to live only insofar as the interest of the ruling class requires it.

In bourgeois society, living labor is but a means to increase accumulated labor. In Communist society, accumulated labor is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the laborer.

In bourgeois society, therefore, the past dominates the present; in Communist society, the present dominates the past. In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality.

And the abolition of this state of things is called by the bourgeois, abolition of individuality and freedom! And rightly so. The abolition of bourgeois individuality, bourgeois independence, and bourgeois freedom is undoubtedly aimed at.

By freedom is meant, under the present bourgeois conditions of production, free trade, free selling and buying.

But if selling and buying disappears, free selling and buying disappears also. This talk about free selling and buying, and all the other brave words of our bourgeoisie about freedom in general, have a meaning, if any, only in contrast with restricted selling and buying, with the fettered traders of the
Middle Ages, but have no meaning when opposed to the Communist abolition of buying and selling, of the bourgeois conditions of production, and of the bourgeoisie itself.

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 nonexistence 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 nonexistence of any property for the immense majority of society.

In a 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 mean of such appropriation.

It has been objected, that upon the abolition of private property all work will cease, and universal laziness will overtake us.

According to this, bourgeois society ought long ago to have gone to the dogs through sheer idleness; for those of its members who work, acquire nothing, and those who acquire anything, do not work. The whole of this objection is but another expression of the tautology: There can no longer be any wage-labor when there is no longer any capital.

All objections urged against the Communist mode of producing and appropriating material products, have, in the same way, been urged against the Communist modes of producing and appropriating intellectual products. Just as, to the bourgeois, the disappearance of class property is the disappearance of production itself, so the disappearance of class culture is to him identical with the disappearance of all culture.

That culture, the loss of which he laments, is, for the enormous majority, a mere training to act as a machine.

But don't wrangle with us so long as you apply, to our intended abolition of bourgeois property, the standard of your bourgeois notions of freedom, culture, law, etc. Your very ideas are but the outgrowth of the conditions of your bourgeois production and bourgeois property, just as your jurisprudence is but the will of your class made into a law for all, a will whose essential character and direction are determined by the economic conditions of existence of your class.

The selfish misconception that induces you to transform into
eternal laws of nature and of reason, the social forms springing from your present mode of production and form of property -- historical relations that rise and disappear in the progress of production -- this misconception you share with every ruling class that has preceded you. What you see clearly in the case of ancient property, what you admit in the case of feudal property, you are of course forbidden to admit in the case of your own bourgeois form of property.

Abolition of the family? Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the Communists.

On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution.

The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital.

Do you charge us with wanting to stop the exploitation of children by their parents? To this crime we plead guilty.

But, you will say, we destroy the most hallowed of relations when we replace home education by social.

And your education! Is not that also social, and determined by the social conditions under which you educate, by the intervention of society, direct or indirect, by means of schools, etc.? The Communists have not invented the intervention of society in education; they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class.

The bourgeois claptrap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation of parent and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of modern industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labor.

But you Communists would introduce community of women, screams the whole bourgeoisie in chorus.

The bourgeoisie sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion than that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to the women.

He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.

For the rest, nothing is more ridiculous than the virtuous indignation of our bourgeoisie at the community of women which, they pretend, is to be openly and officially established by the Communists. The Communists have no need to introduce community of women; it has existed almost from time immemorial.

Our bourgeois, not content with having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the great pleasure in seducing each other's
Bourgeois marriage is in reality a system of wives in common and thus, at the most, what the Communists might possibly be reproached with is that they desire to introduce, in substitution for a hypocritically concealed, an openly legalized community of women. For the rest, it is self-evident, that the abolition of the present system of production must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from that system, i.e., of prostitution both public and private.

The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality.

The workingmen have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.

National differences and antagonisms between peoples are vanishing gradually from day to day, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto.

The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster. United action, of the leading civilized countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat.

In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end.

The charges against communism made from a religious, a philosophical, and, generally, from an ideological standpoint, are not deserving of serious examination.

Does it require deep intuition to comprehend that man's ideas, views, and conceptions, in one word, man's consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life?

What else does the history of ideas prove, than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed? The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class.

When people speak of ideas that revolutionize society, they do but express the fact that within the old society the elements of a new one have been created, and that the dissolution of the old ideas keeps even pace with the dissolution of the old conditions of existence.

When the ancient world was in its last throes, the ancient religions were overcome by Christianity. When Christian ideas succumbed in the eighteenth century to rationalist ideas, feudal society fought its death-battle with the then revolutionary bourgeoisie. The ideas of religious liberty and freedom of conscience, merely gave expression to the sway of free competition.
within the domain of knowledge.

"Undoubtedly," it will be said, "religion, moral, philosophical and juridical ideas have been modified in the course of historical development. But religion, morality, philosophy, political science, and law, constantly survived this change."

"There are, besides, eternal truths, such as Freedom, Justice, etc., that are common to all states of society. But communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis; it therefore acts in contradiction to all past historical experience."

What does this accusation reduce itself to? The history of all past society has consisted in the development of class antagonisms, antagonisms that assumed different forms at different epochs.

But whatever form they may have taken, one fact is common to all past ages, viz., the exploitation of one part of society by the other. No wonder, then, that the social consciousness of past ages, despite all the multiplicity and variety it displays, moves within certain common forms or general ideas, which cannot completely vanish except with the total disappearance of class antagonisms.

The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas.

But let us have done with the bourgeois objections to communism.

We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to establish democracy.

The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.

Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionizing the mode of production.

These measures will of course be different in different countries.

Nevertheless in the most advanced countries, the following will be pretty generally applicable.

1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all right of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly.
6. Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state.

7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state; the bringing into cultivation of waste lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.

8. Equal obligation of all to work. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.

9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of the population over the country.

10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of child factory labor in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, etc.

When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organize itself as a class; if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms, and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.

In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all........

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

Section II has made clear the relations of the Communists to the existing working class parties, such as the Chartists in England and the Agrarian Reformers in America.

The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate gains, for the enforcement of the momentary interest of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement. In France the Communists ally themselves with the Social-Democrats, against the conservatives and radical bourgeoisie, reserving, however, the right to take up a critical position in regard to phrases and illusions traditionally handed down from the great Revolution.

In Switzerland they support the Radicals, without losing sight of the fact that this party consists of antagonistic elements, partly of Democratic Socialists, in the French sense, partly of radical bourgeois.

In Poland they support the party that insists on an agrarian revolution as the prime condition for national emancipation, that party which fomented the insurrection of Cracow in 1846.
In Germany they fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy, and the petty bourgeoisie.

But they never cease, for a single instant, to instill into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, in order that the German workers may straightway use, as so many weapons against the bourgeoisie, the social and political conditions that the bourgeoisie must necessarily introduce along with its supremacy, and in order that, after the fall of the reactionary classes in Germany, the fight against the bourgeoisie itself may immediately begin.

The Communists turn their attention chiefly to Germany, because that country is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution that is bound to be carried out under more advanced conditions of European civilization and with a much more developed proletariat than what existed in England in the seventeenth and in France in the eighteenth century, and because the bourgeois revolution in Germany will be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution.

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 case, 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 forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at the Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

Workingmen of all countries, unite!

An appraisal of Karl Marx necessarily is complicated by the many controversies which have centered on his thought. Nevertheless, amid the sectarian criticism, the differing interpretations offered by disinterested scholars, and the distortions created by propagandists of varying persuasions, an assessment of his role in the development of Western Civilization still may be possible.

Taken singly, Marx' ideas were largely unoriginal, primarily a reformulation of the work of the utopian socialists in France and England, the revolutionary tradition of Babeuf and Blanqui, the criticism of the classical economists, and the idealism of Hegelian philosophy modified by the materialism of Feuerbach. While Marx did not always acknowledge his debt to previous thinkers, he never maintained that all he had asserted was unique. Nevertheless, in a letter written in 1852, he laid claim to the following contributions: (1) classes are related to historic stages in the development of production; (2) the class struggle must culminate in a dictatorship
Marx's work may be evaluated from a broader perspective, however, recognizing both his use of older socialist ideas and his originality. From this point of view, all thought has its antecedents in previous history and Marx's contribution may be seen as the creation of an all-encompassing system of thought out of the disparate elements constituting its parts. Moreover, the striking expression of his ideas and the polemical style of his writing added a dynamic quality to socialist literature.

Apart from this question, a second consideration lies in a distinction between the ideas of Marx and those of his followers. As his doctrines were presented to an ever-growing audience, they were simplified. In that form they constituted an understandable philosophy known as Marxism, in which assumptions, evidence, and conclusions could be isolated clearly and cited authoritatively. Thus, Marx joined the ranks of great men throughout history who have been enshrined in an "ism," almost a live entity functioning independently of its creator.

Marx himself, although inclined to dogmatism, was not as doctrinaire as the philosophy that bears his name. The materialist conception of history he considered a suggestive approach, a useful analytical tool, but no substitute for painstaking historical research. He was prepared, therefore, to admit exceptions to his theories. In his later years he wrote to an adherent in Russia that, under certain conditions, socialism in that country might be based on the age-old peasant communes, without society having to pass through intermediate stages of development. Viewing the growth of democracy in Great Britain, he tentatively accepted the possibility that socialism there could be realized by peaceful means, that revolution might not be necessary. In his economic writings, observers point out that statements in the third volume of Capital, in effect, contradict judgments made in the first volume. Altogether, Marx was ever more flexible, more open to change, than many of his most devoted disciples and determined opponents have been willing to admit.

Beyond this, an assessment of Marx cannot ignore the powerful influence he has exerted on modern thought and political action. Of all his work, his insistence on the pervasiveness of economic forces -- in the unfolding of history and in existing ideas and social institutions -- emphasized a factor which largely had been overlooked. He thereby stimulated all of the social sciences, contributing to a deeper understanding of Western man. Marx's influence on political history is more complex, involving movements which can be attributed to his inspiration, as well as nonsocialist groups which have had to give response to the challenge of his ideas.