**SOC 3150: Classical Sociological Theory**

**Lecture 8: Marx: The Communist Manifesto**

***The Communist Manifesto*** (1848) by Marx & Engels, one of the world's most influential political manuscripts, outlines an analytical approach to class struggle (historical and present) and the problems of capitalism

It outlines their theories about the nature of society and politics, presenting ideas on how the capitalist society of their time would eventually be replaced by socialism, then communism.

The *Manifesto* is broken into an introduction, 3 substantive sections, and a conclusion

**Introduction:**

The preamble states that the continent of Europe fears the “spectre of communism,” and the powers of old Europe (i.e the bourgeoisie, landed gentry, the emerging corporate world, and the papacy) are uniting in a “holy alliance intended to exorcise this spectre.”

Marx declares that "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 spectre of communism with a manifesto of the party itself."

### Bourgeois and Proletarian

Chapter 1 states Marx’s conception of history, that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles," and that past class struggles ended either with revolution that restructured society, or "common ruin of the contending classes." \*

It notes how the bourgeoisie emerged from former serfs, the chartered burghers of the Middle Ages, aided by the discovery of America, technological advancements, growing industry, exchange & trade\*

It explains that the bourgeois exist and exploit the proletariat with low wages because of private property, "the accumulation of wealth in private hands, the formation and increase of capital," and that competition amongst the proletariat creates wage-labour.

Each advance in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of the class \*

It states that, in capitalism, the working class (proletariat) are fighting a class struggle against the owners of the means of production (the bourgeois). In the place of “exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, (the bourgeoisie) has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.”

It claims the bourgeois exploits the proletariat by "constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones." Expanding markets, meanwhile, spread its influence worldwide.\*

Marx claims that the result has been the concentration of population, production, property, and political power, resulting in poverty/brutal working conditions for many and periodic crises.\*

All of this expands the ranks of the working class: “the advance of industry,…promoted by the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of labourers, due to competition, with their revolutionary combination, due to association.” \*

Marx explains the proletarians will eventually rise to power through class struggle: the bourgeoisie constantly exploits the proletariat for its manual labour and cheap wages, ultimately to create profit for the bourgeois; the proletariat rise to power through revolution against the bourgeoisie. \*

“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, is its own grave-diggers.”

The Communist Manifesto states that class struggle in society will enable capitalism to be overthrown by the proletariat; ultimately communism is the key to class equality amongst citizens.

**Proletarians and Communists**

The second section begins by stating the relationship of conscious communists to the rest of the working class, declaring that:

1. They will not form a separate party that opposes other working-class parties;
2. Will express the interests and general will of the proletariat as a whole; and
3. Will distinguish themselves from other working-class parties by expressing the common interest of the entire proletariat independent of nationalities

The section goes on to defend communism from various objections:

1. The claim that communists advocate “free love"
2. The claim that people will not work in a communist society because they have no incentive.

The section ends by outlining a set of short-term demands:

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 & rebels.
5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the state (i.e. a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly.
6. State centralization of the means of communication & transport
7. Extension of state factories & instruments of production; bringing waste-lands into cultivation, and improving the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.
8. Equal liability of all to labour. 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 equitable distribution of the population over the country.
10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labour in its present form and combination of education with industrial production.

Marx & Engels felt these policies would serve as a precursor to the stateless and classless society.

### Socialist and Communist Literature

The third section distinguishes communism from other socialist doctrines prevalent at the time. All are dismissed for advocating reformism and failing to recognize the preeminent role of the working class.

### Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Opposition Parties

The concluding section briefly discusses the communist position on struggles in specific countries in the mid-nineteenth century, declaring that Germany "is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution," and predicts that a world revolution will soon follow.

It ends by declaring an alliance with the social democrats, boldly supporting other communist revolutions, and calling the proletarians to action.

It ends with the famous line: "Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!”