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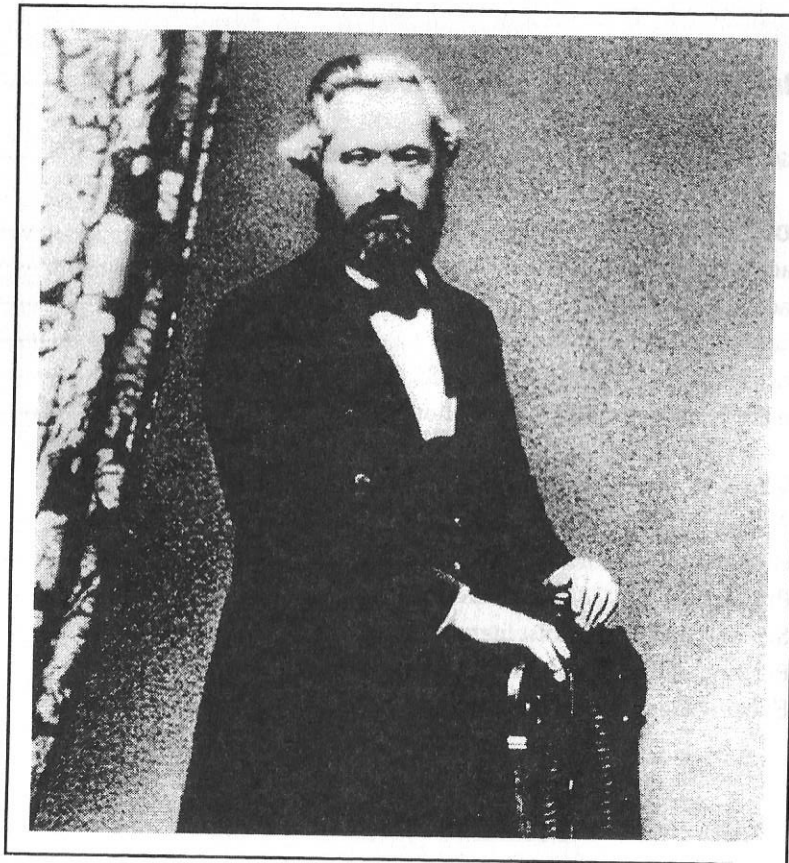
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Karl Marx (1848)

Introduction

By Doug Lorimer

1

THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO is the most famous of all documents produced by the socialist movement. It appeared in February 1848, on the eve of an explosion of popular revolutionary struggles in France and Germany — revolutionary mass movements that the Manifesto had foreseen. The authors of the document, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, had started their political lives as radical democrats, fighters for constitutional rights in Germany, and especially for freedom of the press, popular representation and abolition of feudal privileges. In the mid-1840s these two German intellectuals had evolved into militant socialists, or communists as they called themselves — advocates of a classless society based on common ownership of productive wealth to be achieved through the revolutionary overthrow of the existing capitalist political and economic order. The Communist Manifesto was a concise summary of their views.

2

The Manifesto's authors were not the first to develop and advance a vision of a classless society. As they themselves later noted, earlier thinkers had developed “in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Utopian pictures of ideal social conditions; in the eighteenth, actual communistic theories...[in which] it was not simply class privileges that were to be abolished, but class distinctions themselves”.¹ The great achievement of Marx and Engels was to discern the real historical process by which socialism could become a material reality. That is, they created a *scientific* socialism. “To make a science of socialism”, Engels pointed out in his 1880 pamphlet *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, “it had first to be placed on a real basis”.²

This “real basis” was the materialist conception of history, which demonstrated

Doug Lorimer is a member of the National Executive of the Democratic Socialist Party.

that socialism would not be brought about through the moral persuasion of all humanity to a vision of a classless society, but through the conquest of political power by a definite class, the proletariat. This was the central conclusion of the first work in which Marx and Engels elaborated the principles of the science of historical materialism — *The German Ideology*.

Written between November 1845 and April 1846, *The German Ideology*, which was never published in Marx and Engels' lifetimes, pointed out that it is the contradiction between the development of humanity's productive forces and outdated forms of ownership of the productive forces that is the material basis of the change from one social system to another. It pointed out that this objective contradiction was the root cause of the class struggle between the wage-earning proletariat and their capitalist exploiters, a struggle that could only be resolved by a proletarian, communist revolution.

Earlier in his 1845 *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx had formulated the idea that through revolutionary practice human beings change not only their material circumstances but themselves. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels stressed that a qualitatively new social order can only be brought into being through a social revolution. The revolution is necessary, they wrote, "not only because the *ruling* class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class *overthrowing* it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew".³

The first step in the communist social revolution, *The German Ideology* explained, was the conquest of political power by the proletariat. It formulated this idea thus: "Every class which is aiming at domination, even when its domination, as is the case with the proletariat, leads to the abolition of the old form of society in its entirety and of domination in general, must first conquer political power."⁴

It is often assumed that the central contribution that Marx made to socialist thinking was the idea that history is the product of the struggle between social classes. However, Marx himself disputed this view. In a letter written on March 5, 1852, Marx explained exactly what was distinctively new in the doctrine that has subsequently borne his name:

"As to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering either the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did that was new was to demonstrate: 1) that the *existence of classes* is merely linked to *particular historical phases in the development of production*, 2) that class struggle necessarily leads to

the *dictatorship of the proletariat*, 3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*."⁵

Lenin, who quoted this statement in his brilliant August 1917 commentary on Marx's theory of proletarian revolution, *The State and Revolution*, remarked that "in these words, Marx succeeded in expressing with striking clarity, firstly, the chief and radical difference between his theory and that of the foremost and most profound thinkers of the bourgeoisie; and secondly, the essence of his theory of the state".⁶

Lenin went on to explain that it is not correct to say that the main point in Marx's theory is the class struggle. This had been taught before Marx by the ideologists of the rising capitalist class and was, generally speaking, acceptable to the bourgeoisie. What Marx taught that was new, and unacceptable to bourgeois thinkers, was the recognition that the class struggle in modern, i.e., capitalist, society can be ended only through the conquest of state power by the exploited class of wage-workers. This, Lenin wrote, constituted the central idea in Marx's political doctrine.

While not formulated as such in *The German Ideology*, this theoretical conclusion defined the real task of socialists which, as Lenin put it in 1899, was "not to draw up plans for refashioning society, not to preach to the capitalists and their hangers-on about improving the lot of the workers, not to hatch conspiracies, *but to organise the class struggle of the proletariat and to lead this struggle, the ultimate aim of which is the conquest of political power by the proletariat and the organisation of a socialist society*".⁷

In a letter written to a Danish socialist in 1889, Engels pointed out that "the proletariat cannot conquer political power, the only door to the new society, without violent revolution. For the proletariat to be strong enough to win on the decisive day it must — and Marx and I have advocated this ever since 1847 — form a separate party distinct from all others and opposed to them, a conscious class party".⁸

3

Having found themselves in 1844-45 in agreement on some basic principles of scientific socialism and having elaborated these in more detail through their joint work in 1845-46 in drafting *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels set out in early 1846 to attempt, as Engels later put it, "to win over the European and in the first place the German proletariat".⁹

In early 1846, they set up the Brussels Communist Correspondence Committee, the aim of which was to establish literary contact with radical working-class and socialist leaders throughout Western Europe and to facilitate the dissemination of

scientific socialist ideas among them. The committee's membership was made up of a small number of emigre Germans, included the former Breslau teacher Wilhelm Wolff and the former Prussian artillery officer Joseph Weydemeyer.

Marx and Engels sought to set up similar committees elsewhere, particularly in Germany. Through Wolff they established contact with communist-inclined intellectuals in Silesia, while Weydemeyer made efforts to establish communist correspondence committees in Westphalia and the Rhine province.

In charting a tactical line to be followed by the Communists in Germany, Marx and Engels advised them to support the bourgeois demands for a democratic Constitution, freedom of the press, assembly, etc., for if these demands were achieved "a new era will dawn for communist propaganda".¹⁰ Consequently, the Communists had to take an active part in mass action against the feudal absolutist regimes in Germany and help the victory of bourgeois-democratic revolutions there so as to create more favourable conditions for the proletariat's struggle against the bourgeoisie. This was the tactical line that Marx and Engels and their associates later sought to implement during the 1848 revolutions in Germany.

Among those who received the lithographed circulars and pamphlets issued from Brussels were the leaders of the League of the Just — a secret society of emigre German artisans, mainly tailors, that had been formed in 1836.

Several years earlier both Marx and Engels had met leaders of the League in Paris and London respectively, and had been invited by them to join the organisation. However at that time the League was heavily influenced by romantic and objectively reactionary petty-bourgeois views of instantaneously achieving a classless society through the introduction by a revolutionary government of an egalitarian distribution of consumer goods. This revolutionary government was not to come into existence through the taking of political power by a mass revolutionary movement of the workers, but — following the ideas of the French utopian communist August Blanqui — through a *coup d'etat* by a tight-knit, secret society of revolutionary conspirators. Rejecting both the aim and means then advocated by the League of the Just as contrary to proletarian socialism, Marx and Engels refused to join it.

4

Towards the end of 1846 there was a change in the ideological outlook of leading members of the League of the Just. They had become dissatisfied with the various utopian socialist schemes because they failed to provide answers to the practical problems of the working-class movement that they faced. At the same time, they

began to see that the ideas of scientific socialism being propagandised from Brussels by Marx and Engels could set the working-class movement on the right course.

In November 1846, the executive committee of the League — among whose members were the shoemaker Heinrich Bauer, the watchmaker Joseph Moll and the typesetter Karl Schapper — issued a call for an international congress of communists to be held in London in May 1847. In January 1847, Moll was sent with official instructions to see Marx in Brussels and Engels in Paris and to arrange the terms on which the two men could join the League and participate in preparing the documents for the congress. They were promised full freedom of expression. Under such circumstances, Marx and Engels, who had been looking for a larger and more cohesive organisation to work in, decided to join. "After all, the fellows are a couple of hundred men strong", Engels had written to Marx in December 1846.¹¹

In February 1847, the executive committee of the League sent out a second call, which reflected the impact upon the League's leaders of Moll's discussions with Marx and Engels. It held up the Chartist movement in Britain as an example to communists who, it noted, "we are sorry to say, do not yet form a party".¹² It postponed the congress from May to June to give more time for preparation. The agenda for the congress included a complete reorganisation of the League, the drawing up of new rules, consideration of a program, and a printed periodical.

The congress was held from June 2-7, 1847. Marx was unable to attend because of lack of money. Engels, now a member of the organisation, came as a representative from the Paris branches, while Wolff came as a representative of its Brussels branches.

5

For all intents and purposes, the congress was a constituent one and inaugurated a totally new organisation, with new ideological principles and structure and a new name, the *Bund der Kommunisten*, or League of Communists. It adopted as the basis of the League's program, which was to be finalised at its next congress, Engels' outline in the form of a revolutionary catechism, a form then popular among workers' societies and decided to circulate it for discussion among its local branches.

New rules were drafted with the direct participation of Engels and Wolff and these were also to be circulated for discussion by the local branches before being adopted by the next congress. In accordance with the agreement reached between Marx and Moll, the Communist League discarded all practices of a conspiratorial society, namely, the semi-mystical rituals of swearing in new members, the oath of allegiance, the petty regulation of duties, and the excessive concentration of all decision-making powers in

the hands of unelected leadership bodies.

Under the new rules the highest decision-making body of the Communist League was the congress, made up of delegates elected by local organisations. A clause in the draft rules giving the local organisations the right to accept or reject congress decisions was subsequently deleted upon Marx's insistence. Between congresses, the executive organ of the organisation was the Central Authority, a committee of at least five members elected by the "circle" or district where the congress was seated. The members of the Central Authority were to be seated at the congress without a deciding vote.

The basic unit of the organisation was called the "community" and was to consist of at least three and at most twenty members. Each community was to elect two officers — a chairperson who presided over its meetings and a deputy chairperson who was responsible for the community's funds. Two or more communities would be grouped together as a "circle", the executive organ of which would consist of the elected officers of the communities comprising it and would be headed by an elected president. The various circles in a country or province were subordinated to a "leading circle", elected by the congress and responsible to the Central Authority.

The communities, circle authorities and the Central Authority were to meet at least once every fortnight. The members of the circle authorities and the Central Authority were to be elected for one year, and could be re-elected and recalled by their electors at any time. The Central Authority was empowered to issue calls for discussions among the entire League membership.

Prospective members who had acquainted themselves with the rules were to be admitted to the League with the consent of their local community. Regulations were also provided for expulsion of members who violated the conditions of membership, with expelled members only being readmitted upon the approval of the Central Authority on the proposal of the circle.

Members of the League were required to recognise the principles of the League, conduct a "way of life and activity which corresponds"¹³ to the League's aim, subordinate their activity to the decisions of the League, observe public secrecy concerning internal League affairs, and not participate in anti-communist political associations and to inform the immediately superior authority of the League of their participation in any other political association. The latter requirement was written into the rules sometime later, once again on Marx's initiative, instead of the draft rules' initial sectarian ban on League members joining any other political association.

Marx later observed that: "This democratic constitution, utterly unfit for

conspiratorial secret societies, was at any rate not incompatible with the tasks of a propaganda society."¹⁴

The first congress of the Communist League also decided to drop the old, petty-bourgeois democratic motto "All People Are Brethren!" and replace it with the new rallying cry put forward by Engels: "Proletarians of All Countries, Unite!"

Nevertheless, despite all the ideological advances registered at the first congress, there continued to be hanger-overs of the League of the Just's petty-bourgeois outlook. Thus the draft rules declared that the League's aim was "the destruction of people's enslavement by the dissemination of the theory of the community of goods and its practical introduction as soon as possible."¹⁵

6

Considering the existing conditions in Germany and the obstacles encountered by emigrants in their political activity in countries with "liberal" regimes such as Belgium and France, the Communist League had to remain a secret organisation, but Marx fought to ensure that it did not inherit the isolation and lack of contact with the masses of workers of its predecessor organisation. He believed that the League's secret organisation of vanguard workers should be surrounded and work within a network of open workers' societies, like the German Workers' Educational Society in London. The Communist League was either to establish contact with existing educational societies or set up new ones.

This idea was soon put into practice, with a German Workers' Educational Society being set up by the Communist League in Brussels at the end of August 1847. Its initial membership of 37 rose within a few months to almost 100. The Society organised libraries, lectures for workers on various subjects and social events. Marx later observed: "The League which stood behind the open workers' societies and directed them found in them its immediate field of activity for open propaganda while also replenishing and enlarging itself with their most capable members."¹⁶

As for the first congress's plans for a regular League periodical, only one issue appeared, in September 1847. Named *Kommunistische Zeitschrift*, its articles, most of which were written by Schapper, criticised utopian socialist ideas and elaborated the Communists' views on the tactical issues facing the workers' movement in Germany. Lack of funds prevented the publication of a second issue. By the end of 1847, however, the leaders of the Communist League in Brussels had managed to takeover editorial control of an already existing twice-weekly emigrant newspaper, the *Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung*. From then until the final issue appeared on February 27, 1848 this paper was

the unofficial organ of the Communist League.

7

A further step in the ideological and organisational consolidation of the Communist League was its second congress, held in London from November 28 to December 8, 1847. This time both Marx and Engels were present. The program was the main point on the agenda, Marx and Engels had to use all their powers of persuasion over the course of the 10-day congress to convince the majority of the correctness of their views. But they won out.

This was reflected in a change of Article 1 of the League's rules. The old aim of an idyllic "community of goods" was replaced by a new formulation. The new aim of the League was "The overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the domination of the proletariat, the abolition of bourgeois society based on class antagonisms and the establishment of a new society without classes and without private property."¹⁷

As a result of the debates, the congress gave Marx and Engels the responsibility of drafting a "detailed theoretical and practical party programme".¹⁸ They accepted, and thus came to write the Communist Manifesto.

The Manifesto is divided into four sections. The first, opening with the classical statement: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles", outlines the rise of the capitalist class out of the decay and decline of feudalism. It argues that that the powerful productive forces created by the bourgeoisie — mechanised production and socialised labour — are no longer compatible with the existing production relations based on private ownership of productive resources. The proletariat, the class of propertyless wage earners that the bourgeoisie itself has created, is the new revolutionary class which embodies socially cooperative labour and which alone can take control of the socially cooperative productive forces for the further advance of human welfare. But whereas the victory of the bourgeoisie over the feudal classes involved the replacement of the social rule of one exploiting minority by another, the victory of the proletariat in the class struggle will bring to power an exploited majority whose conditions of social liberation require the abolition of all class exploitation and oppression.

The second section explains the role of the Communists in the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

The third section takes issue with other existing schools of political thought that present themselves as socialist: the feudal aristocratic critics of capitalism, the anti-capitalist representatives of the ruined rural and urban petty-proprietors, the bourgeois

social-reformists, and the idealist utopian socialist sects.

The fourth section is a brief exposition of the position of the Communists in regard to other radical democratic movements and the immediate tasks of the Communists in relation to the impending bourgeois-democratic revolution in Germany.

8

Despite the fact that the program of the Communist League was called the *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx and Engels recognised that the League was only the germ or nucleus of the party they aspired to build.

The Manifesto set out only the most general terms Marx and Engels' conception of a working-class party. In the first section of the Manifesto, they referred to the proletarian party as the "organisation of the proletarians into a class", which "compels legislative recognition of particular interests of the workers, by taking advantage of the divisions among the bourgeoisie itself".

The immediately following reference to the legislative passage of the 10-hour workday bill in England, makes it clear that Marx and Engels were simply describing the actual historical development of the first and, up to that time, only mass working-class political movement — the National Charter Association in England. The Chartist movement was a loose united front of pure trade unionists, fighters for the 10-hour work day, radical democrats and bourgeois philanthropists, which reached the zenith of its activity in 1842 and collapsed in 1848.

In his 1847 book polemicising against the French anarchist Pierre Proudhon, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx had described how in their struggle, first in trade unions, and then also by constituting "a large political party under the name of Chartists", the English workers had developed from an amorphous, fragmented "class *in* itself" into a nationally cohesive, combative "class *for* itself".¹⁹

Such a concept flowed from Marx's view that "every struggle of class against class is a political struggle".²⁰ By this Marx did not mean that every struggle by small groups of workers against their employers was a political struggle. Rather, as he explained later in a letter written on November 23, 1871, only when the workers organise to fight for their general interests against the collective power, the political power, of the capitalist class does their struggle become a real *class* struggle. The task of the Communists was to train the working class "to undertake a decisive campaign against the collective power, i.e., the political power, of the ruling classes" though "continual agitation against this power and by a hostile attitude toward the policies of the ruling classes". Wherever the working class lacks this revolutionary training, Marx added,

“it remains a plaything” in the hands of the political representatives of the bourgeoisie.²¹

The second section of the Manifesto was devoted to answering the question “In what relations do the Communists stand to the proletarians as a whole?” It gave the following answer: “The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties”. This was because they “have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole”. They thus shared the same “immediate aim” as “that of the other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat”.

What distinguished the Communists from other working-class political currents, the Manifesto explained, was that “1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality” and “2. In the various stages of the 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.”

Consequently, the Manifesto states, the Communists in practice “are the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others”. This is because the Communists “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.”

This last point was a restatement of the view Marx had articulated a year earlier in his polemic against Pierre Proudhon, where Marx had described the socialists and communists as “the theoreticians of the proletarian class”.²²

Thus, in the Manifesto statements about the relationship between the Communists and the working class as a whole (i.e., that the Communists have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole and that they are the theoretical vanguard of the working class) are combined with statements about how the Communist League, as a tiny organisation of revolutionary cadres with a few hundred members spread throughout Western Europe, should relate to existing, far larger working-class political formations such as the 40,000-member Chartist organisation in England. The cadres of the Communist League, while retaining their own organisation, should join any existing, larger working-class organisations and seek to win their members to the Communists’ theoretical views.

It was though pursuing such a tactical orientation that Marx and Engels believed the tiny Communist League could be transformed into a mass Communist Party.

The Communist League itself collapsed in 1852 under the impact of the wave of reaction and repression that swept Europe in the aftermath of the failed bourgeois-democratic revolutions of 1848-49.

In the years preceding its collapse the Communist League was wracked by a sharp factional struggle between Marx and Engels and their supporters, on the one hand, and Schapper and August Willich and their supporters on the other.

The factional struggle broke out in late 1850, when Marx and Engels came to the conclusion that the economic concessions granted by the absolutist monarchies in Germany had cleared the way for a prolonged expansion of capitalist production. Up until the middle of 1850 Marx and Engels believed that a new economic crisis like that of 1847 would come soon and that the new crisis would spark a new outbreak of revolutionary struggle in Europe. However, as they deepened their study of economics, they came to the conclusion that this forecast was unjustified.

Marx and Engels also abandoned their earlier expectations that a proletarian revolution was imminent in France, and that under its impact a bourgeois revolution in Germany could be rapidly and easily transformed into a socialist one. This premature forecast had been based on an overestimation of the maturity of capitalism in Europe and of the development of the material conditions for a revolutionary transition to socialism. In a preface to Marx’s 1850 work *The Class Struggles in France*, Engels wrote in 1895: “History has proved us, and all who thought like us, wrong. It has made it clear that the state of economic development on the Continent at the time was not, by a long way, ripe for the elimination of capitalist production.”²³

Flowing from their new assessment of the objective situation, Marx and Engels concluded that the main tasks of the Communist League for some time to come would be to preserve and gradually accumulate proletarian cadres, to give them a firm theoretical grounding, to strengthen their ties with any existing broader working-class organisations, and to take every opportunity to propagate the ideas of scientific socialism.

The majority of the London members of the Communist League disagreed with this perspective. They denied the need for any material prerequisites for a proletarian, communist revolution, and argued that such a revolution could be accomplished in Germany alone through an effort of will by a handful of revolutionary militants.

The counterposed views were summed up as follows by Marx in a speech made at an extraordinary meeting of the League’s Central Committee on September 15, 1850: “A German national point of view was substituted for the universal outlook of the

Manifesto and the national feelings of the German artisans were pandered to. The materialist standpoint of the Manifesto has given way to idealism. The revolution is not seen as the product of realities of the situation but as the result of an effort of *will*. Whereas we say to the workers: You have 15, 20, 50 years of [veiled] civil war to go through in order to alter the situation and to train yourselves for the exercise of power, it is said: We must take power *at once*, or else we may as well take to our beds."²⁴

At the meeting it was agreed the League's Cologne District, where Marx and Engels' views enjoyed an overwhelming majority, should constitute the Central Committee. However the Schapper-Willich faction in the London district refused to abide by the Cologne Central Committee's decisions. When the London district adopted a decision to expel Marx and Engels and their supporters from the League and set up a rival Central Committee, the Cologne Central Committee expelled all the supporters of the Schapper-Willich faction from the League. This faction subsequently dwindled in numbers and disintegrated.

The split in the Communist League came on the eve of a wave of arrests across Germany, in which the police particularly targeted the followers of Marx and Engels. In a secret report written in April 1852, Berlin's chief of police wrote: "It can now rightly be said of the Marx-Engels party that it stands far above all the emigrants, agitators and central committees, because it is unquestionably the strongest in knowledge and ability. Marx himself is well-known personally, and everyone realises that he has more intellectual power in the tip of his finger than the rest of the crowd have in their heads."²⁵

The arrests and subsequent conviction of the Communist League members in Germany destroyed the League as an organisation on the Continent. In London, its membership had been reduced to a mere handful as a result of the split there. At a meeting of the League's London district on November 17, 1852, a motion by Marx to dissolve the local organisation was adopted.

10

The Communist Manifesto is, as Marx and Engels noted in their preface to its second German edition published in 1872, a historic document and which therefore has to be understood against the political background of the period in which it was written. Marx and Engels, in 1872, were convinced that the general principles laid down in the Manifesto were on the whole correct then as when they were written in 1848. These general principles are summarised by the introductory essay that follows, written by Russian Marxist revolutionary Leon Trotsky and first published in February

1938.

In the 150 years since the Manifesto was written there have been tremendous changes in the world, but none of them refute the basic ideas contained in the Manifesto. Indeed, the "really existing" capitalist world today is much closer to the "abstract" model of capitalism that is portrayed in the first section of the Manifesto than the actually existing world of 1848. At that time, the capitalist system of production was truly dominant only in Britain. Outside of Britain, the modern proletariat, the class of wage-workers employed in large mechanised industrial and commercial enterprises, constituted only a tiny fraction of the population in the rest of the world. Most of the world's peoples were peasant farmers exploited by pre-capitalist landowners headed by despotic, hereditary monarchs.

Today dependent wage and salary earners, compelled to sell their labour power, amount to over 80% of the economically active population in the developed capitalist countries of Europe, North America, Japan and Australasia. On a world scale, urban and rural wage earners and their dependents now constitute a majority of the world's population. Not only do a few hundred super-rich capitalist families dominate the economic life of the developed capitalist countries, through the giant transnational industrial and finance corporations which they own, they also concentrate in their hands the majority of the wealth of the capitalist world economy. The productivity of labour has increased to such an extent that socially cooperative production subordinated to the private greed and enrichment of these families has become absurd beyond anything Marx and Engels could have foreseen in the middle of the 19th century.

The catastrophic economic and social crises that this contradiction repeatedly generates cries out for the replacement of the anarchistic, private-profit-driven "market economy" with a planned management of productive resources to satisfy humanity's needs on the basis of consciously and democratically chosen priorities. As long as this contradiction continues to exist, working men and women will be impelled to struggle against the capitalist exploiters and the Communist Manifesto — as the first document to provide a scientific explanation of the cause of these recurrent crises and to outline the strategic line of march required to bring them to an end — will continue to provide inspiration and guidance to the workers of the world.

Notes

- 1 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow 1970), Vol. 3, pp. 116-117.

- 2 *ibid.*, p. 126.
- 3 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works* (Moscow 1981), Vol. 5, p. 53.
- 4 *ibid.*, p. 49.
- 5 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow 1975), p. 64.
- 6 V.I. Lenin, *Selected Works* (Moscow 1975), Vol. 2, p. 261.
- 7 V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow 1977), Vol. 4, p. 211.
- 8 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 386.
- 9 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 179.
- 10 Quoted in P. N. Fedoseyev, *Karl Marx: A Biography* (Moscow 1977), p. 117.
- 11 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 92.
- 12 Quoted in D. Struik, *The Birth of the Communist Manifesto* (New York 1971), p. 57.
- 13 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 533-538.
- 14 *ibid.*, Vol. 17, p. 78.
- 15 *ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 586.
- 16 *ibid.*, Vol. 17, pp. 78-79.
- 17 *ibid.*, Vol. 6, 633.
- 18 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 98.
- 19 K. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Moscow 1973), p. 150.
- 20 *ibid.*, p. 150.
- 21 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 254-255.
- 22 K. Marx, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
- 23 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 191-192.
- 24 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 626.
- 25 Fedoseyev, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

90 years of the Communist Manifesto¹

By Leon Trotsky

IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE that the centennial of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* is only ten years away! This pamphlet, displaying greater genius than any other in world literature, astounds us even today by its freshness. Its most important sections appear to have been written yesterday. Assuredly, the young authors (Marx was 29, Engels 27) were able to look further into the future than anyone before them, and perhaps than anyone since them.

Already in their joint preface to the edition of 1872, Marx and Engels declared that despite the fact that certain secondary passages in the *Manifesto* were antiquated, they felt that they no longer had any right to alter the original text inasmuch as the *Manifesto* had already become a historical document, during the intervening period of twenty-five years. Sixty-five additional years have elapsed since that time. Isolated passages in the *Manifesto* have receded still further into the past. We shall try to establish succinctly in this preface both those ideas in the *Manifesto* which retain their full force today and those which require important alteration or amplification.

1. The materialist conception of history, discovered by Marx only a short while before and applied with consummate skill in the *Manifesto*, has completely withstood the test of events and the blows of hostile criticism. It constitutes today one of the most precious instruments of human thought. All other interpretations of the historical process have lost all scientific meaning. We can state with certainty that it is impossible in our time not only to be a revolutionary militant but even a literate observer in politics without assimilating the materialist interpretation of history.

2. The first chapter of the *Manifesto* opens with the following words: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." This postulate, the most important conclusion drawn from the materialist interpretation of history, immediately became an issue in the class struggle. Especially venomous attacks were directed by reactionary hypocrites, liberal doctrinaires, and idealistic democrats against the theory which replaced "common welfare," "national unity", and "eternal moral