Excerpts from
*The Communist Manifesto*,
by Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels (1848)

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

Our epoch [era], the epoch of the bourgeoisie [the small class of industrial property-owners], possesses, however, this distinct feature: it has simplified class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other – bourgeoisie and proletariat [the large class of industrial wage-earning laborers]....

The bourgeoisie has at least, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative state, political sway. ....
[The bourgeoisie] has left no other nexus [link] between people than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment."

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

...[N]ot 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....

These laborers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes [changes] of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market.

Owing to the extensive use of machinery, and to the division of labor, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage [a lesser part attached to something] of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack, that is required of him....

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 onlooker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself....

What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable....

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

The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest [take away by force], by degree, all capital [wealth, whether in money or property] 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 productive forces as rapidly as possible....

Nevertheless, in 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 rights of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
5. Centralization of credit in the banks 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 and manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of all the distinction between town and country by a more equable [even] distribution of the populace over the country.
10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labor in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, etc.

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

WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

Questions for Understanding “the Communist Manifesto”

1. What is the Marxist interpretation of history? Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. What 2 classes are in struggle with one another in this industrial era? How do you define each class?
3. What are Marx's main arguments against the bourgeoisie class?
4. According to Marx, how are proletarians treated under a capitalist, industrial system of life?
5. Who, does Marx argue, will bring an end to the bourgeoisie class and the capitalist economic system? How will this be achieved?
6. In general terms, what will a communist society look like once the proletarians have successfully revolted?