

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNISM¹

Question 1: What is Communism?

Answer: Communism is the doctrine of the conditions of the liberation of the proletariat.

Question 2: What is the proletariat?

Answer: The proletariat is that class in society which draws its means of livelihood wholly and solely from the sale of its labour and not from the profit from any kind of capital;² whose weal and woe, whose life and death, whose whole existence depends on the demand for labour, hence, on the alternations of good times and bad in business, on the vagaries of unbridled competition. The proletariat, or class of proletarians, is, in a word, the working class of the nineteenth century.

Question 3: Proletarians, then, have not always existed?

Answer: No. Poor folk and working classes have always existed, and the working classes have mostly been poor. But there have not always been workers and poor people living under the conditions just stated; in other words, there have not always been proletarians any more than there has always been free and unbridled competition.

Question 4: How did the proletariat originate?

Answer: The proletariat originated in the industrial revolution which took place in England in the second half of the last [eighteenth] century and which has since then been repeated in all the civilized countries of the world. This industrial revolution was brought about by the invention of the steam-engine, various spinning machines, the power loom, and a whole series of other mechanical devices. These machines which were very expensive and hence could be bought only by big capitalists, altered the whole previous mode of production and ousted the former workers because machines turned out cheaper and better commodities than could the workers with their inefficient spinning-wheels and hand-looms. These machines delivered industry wholly into the hands of the big capitalists and rendered the workers' meagre property (tools, hand-looms, etc.) entirely worthless, so that the capitalists soon had everything in their hands and nothing remained to the workers. This marked the introduction of the factory system into the textile industry.

Once the impulse to the introduction of machinery and the factory system had been given, this system spread quickly to all other branches of industry, especially cloth- and book-printing, pottery, and the metalware industry. Labour was more and more divided among the individual workers, so that the worker who formerly had done a complete piece of work, now did only part of that piece. This division of labour made it possible to supply products faster and therefore more cheaply. It reduced the activity of the individual worker to a very simple, constantly repeated mechanical motion which could be performed not only as well but much better by a machine. In this way, all these industries fell one after another under the dominance of steam, machinery, and the factory system, just as spinning and weaving had already done. But at the same time they also fell into the hands of the big capitalists, and there too the workers were deprived of the last shred of independence. Gradually, not only did manufacture proper come increasingly under the dominance of the factory system, but the handicrafts, too, did so as big capitalists ousted the small masters more and more by setting up large workshops which saved many expenses and permitted an elaborate division of labour. This is how it has come about that in the civilized countries almost all kinds of labour are performed in factories, and that in almost all branches handicraft and manufacture have been superseded by large-scale industry. This process has to an ever greater degree ruined the old middle class, especially the small handicraftsmen; it has entirely transformed the condition of the workers; and two new classes have come into being which are gradually swallowing up all others, namely:

I. The class of big capitalists, who in all civilized countries are already in almost exclusive possession of all the means of subsistence and of the raw materials and instruments (machines, factories) necessary for the production of the means of subsistence. This is the bourgeois class, or the bourgeoisie.

II. The class of the wholly propertyless, who are obliged to sell their labour to the bourgeoisie in order to get in exchange the means of subsistence necessary for their support. This class is called the class of proletarians, or the proletariat.

Question 5: Under what conditions does this sale of the labour of the proletarians to the bourgeoisie take place?

Answer: Labour is a commodity like any other and its price is therefore determined by exactly the same laws that apply to other commodities. In a regime of large-scale industry or of free competition -- as we shall see, the two come to the same thing -- the price of a commodity is on the average always equal to the costs of production. Hence the price of labour is also equal to the costs of production of labour. But the costs of production consist of precisely the quantity of means of subsistence necessary to keep the worker fit for work and to prevent the working class from dying out. The worker will therefore get no more for his labour than is necessary for this purpose; the price of labour or the wage will therefore be the lowest, the minimum, required for the maintenance of life. However, since business is sometimes worse and some times better, the worker receives sometimes more and some times less, just as the factory owner sometimes gets more and sometimes less for his commodities. But just as the factory owner, on the average of good times and bad, gets no more and no less for his commodities than their costs of production, so the worker will, on the average, get no more and no less than this minimum. This economic law of wages operates the more strictly the greater the degree to which large-scale industry has taken possession of all branches of production.

Question 6: What working classes were there before the industrial revolution?

Answer: According to the different stages of the development of society, the working classes have always lived in different circumstances and had different relations to the owning and ruling classes. In antiquity, the working people were the *slaves* of the owners, just as they still are in many backward countries and even in the southern part of the United States. In the Middle Ages they were the *serfs* of the land-owning nobility, as they still are in Hungary, Poland and Russia. In the Middle Ages and right up to the industrial revolution there were also journeymen in the towns who worked in the service of petty-bourgeois masters. Gradually, as manufacture developed, there emerged manufacturing workers who were even then employed by larger capitalists.

Question 7: In what way does the proletariat differ from the slave?

Answer: The slave is sold once and for all; the proletariat must sell himself daily and hourly. The individual slave, the property of a

single master, is already assured an existence, however wretched it may be, because of the master's interest. The individual proletarian, the property, as it were, of the whole bourgeois *class*, which buys his labour only when someone has need of it, has no secure existence. This existence is assured only to the proletarian *class* as a whole. The slave is outside competition, the proletarian is in it and experiences all its vagaries. The slave counts as a thing, not as a member of civil society; the proletarian is recognized as a person, as a member of civil society. Thus, the slave can have a better existence than the proletarian, but the proletarian belongs to a higher stage of social development and himself stands on a higher level than the slave. The slave frees himself when, of all the relations of private property, he abolishes only the relation of slavery and thereby becomes a proletarian himself; the proletarian can free himself only by abolishing private property in general.

Question 8: In what way does the proletarian differ from the serf?

Answer: The serf enjoys the possession and use of an instrument of production, a piece of land, in exchange for which he hands over a part of his product or performs labour. The proletarian works with the instruments of production of another for the account of this other, in exchange for a part of the product. The serf gives up, the proletarian receives. The serf has an assured existence, the proletarian has not. The serf is outside competition, the proletarian is in it. The serf frees himself either by running away to the town and there becoming a handicraftsman or by giving his landlord money instead of labour and products, thereby becoming a free tenant; or by driving his feudal lord away and himself becoming a proprietor, in short, by entering in one way or another into the owning class and into competition. The proletarian frees himself by abolishing competition, private property and all class differences.

Question 9: In what way does the proletarian differ from the handicraftsman?^{*3}

Question 10: In what way does the proletarian differ from the manufacturing worker?

* Engels left half a page blank here in the manuscript. For the answer see Note 3. For background information, see Note 1. – *Ed.*

Answer: The manufacturing worker of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries almost everywhere still had the ownership of his instrument of production, his loom, the family spinning wheels, and a little plot of land which he cultivated in his free hours. The proletarian has none of these things. The manufacturing worker lives almost always in the countryside under more or less patriarchal relations with his landlord or employer; the proletarian dwells mostly in large towns, and his relation to his employer is purely a cash relation. The manufacturing worker is torn out of his patriarchal conditions by large-scale industry, loses the property he still owns and in this way himself becomes a proletarian.

Question 11: What were the immediate consequences of the industrial revolution and of the division of society into bourgeois and proletarians?

Answer: First, the lower and lower prices of industrial products brought about by machine labour totally destroyed in all countries of the world the old system of manufacture or industry based on manual labour. In this way, all semi-barbarian countries, which had hitherto been more or less strangers to historical development and whose industry had been based on manufacture, were forcibly dragged out of their isolation. They bought the cheaper commodities of the English and allowed their own manufacturing workers to be ruined. Countries which had known no progress for thousands of years, for example India, were thoroughly revolutionized, and even China is now on the way to a revolution. We have come to the point where a new machine invented in England today deprives millions of Chinese workers of their livelihood within a year's time. In this way large-scale industry has brought all the peoples of the earth into contact with each other, has merged all the small local markets into one world market, has everywhere paved the way for civilization and progress, and thus ensured that whatever happens in the civilized countries will have repercussions in all other countries. Therefore, if the workers of England or France free themselves now, this must set off revolutions in all other countries – revolutions which sooner or later will lead to the liberation of the workers there too.

Second, wherever large-scale industry displaced manufacture, the industrial revolution developed the bourgeoisie, its wealth and its power to the highest degree and made it the first class in the country. The result was that wherever this happened the bourgeoisie

took political power into its own hands and ousted the hitherto ruling classes, the aristocracy, the guild-masters and the absolute monarchy representing the two. The bourgeoisie annihilated the power of the aristocracy, the nobility, by abolishing entail, that is, the non-saleability of landed property, and all the nobility's privileges. It destroyed the power of the guild-masters by abolishing all guilds and craft privileges. In their place it put free competition, that is, a state of society in which each has the right to engage in any branch of industry, the only obstacle being a lack of the necessary capital. The introduction of free competition is thus a public declaration that from now on the members of society are unequal only to the extent that their capitals are unequal, that capital is the decisive power, and that therefore the capitalists, the bourgeoisie, have become the first class in society. Free competition is necessary for the establishment of large-scale industry because it is the only state of society in which large-scale industry can make its way. Having destroyed the social power of the nobility and the guild-masters, the bourgeoisie also destroyed their political power. Having risen to the first class in society, the bourgeoisie proclaimed itself the first class also in politics. It did this through the introduction of the representative system which rests on bourgeois equality before the law and the legal recognition of free competition, and in European countries takes the form of constitutional monarchy. In these constitutional monarchies, only those who possess a certain amount of capital are voters, that is to say, only the bourgeoisie; these bourgeois voters choose the deputies, and these bourgeois deputies, by using their right to refuse to vote taxes, choose a bourgeois government.

Third, everywhere the industrial revolution built up the proletariat in the same measure in which it built up the bourgeoisie. The proletarians grew in numbers in the same proportion in which the bourgeois grew richer. Since proletarians can only be employed by capital, and since capital can only increase through employing labour, the growth of the proletariat proceeds at exactly the same pace as the growth of capital. Simultaneously, this process draws the bourgeoisie and the proletarians together in large cities where industry can be carried on most profitably, and by thus throwing together great masses in *one* spot it gives the proletarians a consciousness of their own strength. Moreover, the more this process develops and the more machines ousting manual labour are invented, the more large-scale industry depresses wages to the minimum, as we have

indicated, and thereby makes the condition of the proletariat more and more unbearable. Thus, by the growing discontent of the proletariat, on the one hand, and its growing power on the other, the industrial revolution prepares the way for a proletarian social revolution.

Question 12: What were the further consequences of the industrial revolution?

Answer: Large-scale industry created in the steam-engine and other machines the means of endlessly expanding industrial production in a short time and at low cost. With production thus facilitated, the free competition which is necessarily bound up with large-scale industry soon assumed the most extreme forms; a multitude of capitalists invaded industry, and in a short while more was produced than could be used. The result was that the manufactured goods could not be sold, and a so-called commercial crisis broke out. Factories had to close, their owners went bankrupt, and the workers were without bread. Deepest misery reigned everywhere.

After a while, the superfluous products were sold, the factories began to operate again, wages rose, and gradually business got better than ever. But it was not long before too many commodities were produced again and a new crisis broke out, only to follow the same course as the previous one. Ever since the beginning of this [nineteenth] century the condition of industry has constantly fluctuated between periods of prosperity and periods of crisis, and a fresh crisis has occurred almost regularly every five to seven years, bringing in its train the greatest hardship for the workers, general revolutionary stirrings and the direst peril to the whole existing order of things.

Question 13: What follows from these periodic commercial crises?

Answer: *First*, that although large-scale industry in its earliest stage created free competition, it has now outgrown free competition; that for large-scale industry competition and generally the individualistic organization of industrial production have become a fetter which it must and will shatter; that so long as large-scale industry is conducted on its present footing, it can be maintained only at the cost of general chaos every seven years, each time threatening the whole of civilization and not only plunging the proletarians into

misery but also ruining large sections of the bourgeoisie; hence either that large-scale industry must itself be given up, which is an absolute impossibility, or that it makes unavoidably necessary an entirely new organization of society in which industrial production is no longer directed by mutually competing individual factory owners but rather by the whole society operating according to a definite plan and taking account of the needs of all.

Second, that large-scale industry and the limitless expansion of production which it makes possible bring within the range of feasibility a social order in which so much of all the necessaries of life is produced that every member of society is enabled to develop and to apply all his powers and faculties in complete freedom. It thus appears that the very qualities of large-scale industry which in present-day society produce all the misery and all the commercial crises are those which under a different social organization will abolish this misery and these catastrophic fluctuations.

It is therefore proved with the greatest clarity:

1. that all these evils are from now on to be ascribed solely to a social order which no longer corresponds to the existing conditions; and
2. that the means are ready at hand to do away with these evils altogether through a new social order.

Question 14: What kind of a new social order will this have to be?

Answer: Above all, it will generally have to take the running of industry and of all branches of production out of the hands of mutually competing individuals and instead institute a system in which all these branches of production are operated by society as a whole, that is, for the common account, according to a common plan and with the participation of all members of society. It will, in other words, abolish competition and replace it with association. Moreover, since the management of industry by individuals has private property as its inevitable result, and since competition is merely the manner and form in which industry is run by individual private owners, it follows that private property cannot be separated from the individual management of industry and from competition. Hence, private property will also have to be abolished, and in its place must come the common utilization of all instruments of production and the distribution of all products according to common agreement --

in a word, the so-called communal ownership of goods. In fact, the abolition of private property is the shortest and most significant way to characterize the transformation of the whole social order which has been made necessary by the development of industry, and for this reason it is rightly advanced by communists as their main demand.

Question 15: Was therefore the abolition of private property impossible at an earlier time?

Answer: Right. Every change in the social order, every revolution in property relations has been the necessary consequence of the creation of new productive forces which no longer fitted into the old property relations. Private property itself originated in this way. For private property has not always existed. When, towards the end of the Middle Ages, there arose a new mode of production in the form of manufacture, which could not be subordinated to the then existing feudal and guild property, this manufacture, which had outgrown the old property relations, created a new form of property, private property. For manufacture and the first stage of the development of large-scale industry, private property was the only possible property form; the social order based on it was the only possible social order. So long as it is impossible to produce so much that there is enough for all, with some surplus of products left over for the increase of social capital and for the further development of the productive forces, there must always be a dominant class, having the disposition of the productive forces of society, and a poor, oppressed class. The way in which these classes will be constituted will depend on the stage of the development of production. The Middle Ages depending on agriculture give us the baron and the serf; the towns of the later Middle Ages show us the guild-master, and the journeyman and the day labourer; the seventeenth century has the manufacturer and the manufacturing worker; the nineteenth century has the big factory owner and the proletarian. It is clear that hitherto the productive forces had never been developed to the point where enough could be produced for all, and that for these productive forces private property had become a fetter, a barrier. Now, however, when the development of large-scale industry has, *firstly*, created capital and the productive forces have been expanded to an unprecedented extent, and the means are at hand to multiply them without limit in a short time; when, *secondly*, these productive

forces are concentrated in the hands of a few bourgeois, while the great mass of the people are increasingly falling into the ranks of the proletarians and their situation is becoming more wretched and intolerable in proportion to the increase of wealth of the bourgeoisie; when, *thirdly*, these mighty and easily extended forces of production have so far outgrown private property and the bourgeoisie that they unleash at any moment the most violent disturbances of the social order -- only now, under these conditions, has the abolition of private property become not only possible but absolutely necessary.

Question 16: Will it be possible to bring about the abolition of private property by peaceful means?

Answer: It would be desirable if this could happen, and the communists would certainly be the last to oppose it. The communists know only too well that all conspiracies are not only useless but even harmful. They know all too well that revolutions are not made at will and arbitrarily, but that everywhere and at all times they have been the necessary consequence of conditions which were quite independent of the will and the direction of individual parties and entire classes. But they also see that the development of the proletariat in nearly all civilized countries has been forcibly suppressed, and that in this way the opponents of the communists have been working towards revolution with all their strength. If the oppressed proletariat is thereby finally driven to revolution, then we communists will defend the cause of the proletarians with deeds just as we now defend it with words.

Question 17: Will it be possible to abolish private property at one stroke?

Answer: No, no more than the existing productive forces can at one stroke be multiplied to the extent necessary for the creation of a communal society. Hence, the proletarian revolution, which in all probability is approaching, will be able gradually to transform existing society and abolish private property only when the necessary means of production have been created in sufficient quantity.

Question 18: What will be the course of this revolution?

Answer: Above all, it will establish a democratic constitution and thereby directly or indirectly the political rule of the proletariat. Directly in England, where the proletarians already constitute the

majority of the people. Indirectly in France and in Germany, where the majority of the people consists not only of proletarians but also of small peasants and petty bourgeois who are now in the process of falling into the proletariat, who are more and more dependent on the proletariat in all their political interests and who must therefore adapt themselves to the demands of the proletariat. Perhaps this will cost a second struggle, but the outcome can only be the victory of the proletariat.

Democracy would be quite valueless to the proletariat if it were not immediately used as a means for putting through measures directed against private property and ensuring the livelihood of the proletariat. The main measures, emerging as the necessary result of existing relations, are the following:

1. Limitation of private property through progressive taxation, heavy inheritance taxes, abolition of inheritance through collateral lines (brothers, nephews, etc.), forced loans, and so forth.

2. Gradual expropriation of land owners, factory owners, railway and shipping magnates, partly through competition by state industry, partly directly through compensation in the form of bonds.

3. Confiscation of the possessions of all émigrés and rebels against the majority of the people.

4. Organization of labour or employment of proletarians on publicly owned land, in factories and workshops, thereby putting an end to competition among the workers and compelling the factory owners, insofar as they still exist, to pay the same high wages as those paid by the state.

5. An equal obligation on all members of society to work until such time as private property has been completely abolished. Formation of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.

6. Centralization of the credit and monetary systems in the hands of the state through a national bank operating with state capital, and the suppression of all private banks bankers.

7. Increase in the number of national factories, workshops, railways, and ships; bringing new lands into cultivation and improvement of land already under cultivation -- all in the same proportion as the growth of the capital and labour force at the disposal of the nation.

8. Education of all children, from the moment they can leave their mothers' care, in national establishments at national cost. Education and production together.

9. Construction on national lands, of great palaces as communal dwellings for associated groups of citizens engaged in both industry and agriculture, and combining in their way of life the advantages of urban and rural conditions while avoiding the one-sidedness and drawbacks of either.

10. The demolition of all unhealthy and jerry-built dwellings in urban districts.

11. Equal right of inheritance for children born in and out of wedlock.

12. Concentration of all means of transport in the hands of the nation.

It is impossible, of course, to carry out all these measures at once. But one will always bring others in its wake. Once the first radical attack upon private property has been launched, the proletariat will find itself forced to go ever further, to concentrate increasingly in the hands of the state all capital, all agriculture, all industry, all transport, all commerce. All the foregoing measures are directed to this end; and they will become feasible and their centralizing effects will develop in the same proportion as that in which the productive forces of the country are multiplied through the labour of the proletariat. Finally, when all capital, all production, and all exchange have been brought together in the hands of the nation, private property will disappear of its own accord, money will become superfluous, and production will have so increased and men will have so changed that the last forms of the old social relations will also be sloughed off.

Question 19: Will it be possible for this revolution to take place in one country alone?

Answer: No. By creating the world market, large-scale industry has already brought all the peoples of the earth, and especially the civilized peoples, into such close relation with one another that none is independent of what happens to the others. Further, it has coordinated the social development of all civilized countries to such an extent that in all of them bourgeoisie and proletariat have become the two decisive classes of society and the struggle between them the main struggle of the day. The communist revolution, therefore, will be not merely a national one; it will take place in all civilized countries simultaneously, that is to say, at least in England, America, France and Germany. It will in each of these countries

develop more quickly or more slowly according as one country or the other has a more developed industry, greater wealth, a more significant mass of productive forces. Hence it will go most slowly and will meet most obstacles in Germany; most rapidly and easily in England. It will have a powerful impact on the other countries of the world and will radically alter and accelerate their course of development up to now. It is a universal revolution and so will have universal range.

Question 20: What will be the consequences of the final abolition of private property?

Answer: Society will take all the productive forces and means of commerce, as well as the exchange and distribution of products, out of the hands of private capitalists and will administer them in accordance with a plan based on the available resources and on the needs of the whole society. In this way, most important of all, the evil consequences which are now associated with the conduct of large-scale industry will be abolished. There will be no more crises; the expanded production, which for the present order of society is over-production and hence a prevailing cause of misery, will then be insufficient and in need of being expanded much further. Instead of generating misery, over-production will reach beyond the elementary requirements of society to assure the satisfaction of the needs of all; it will create new needs and at the same time the means of satisfying them. It will become the condition and the stimulus to new progress, it will achieve this progress without invariably, as heretofore, throwing the social order into confusion. Large-scale industry, freed from the pressure of private property, will undergo an expansion comparing with its present level as does the latter with that of manufacture. This development of industry will make available to society a mass of products sufficient to satisfy the needs of all. The same will be true of agriculture, which also suffers from the pressure of private property and the parcellation of land. Here existing improvements and scientific procedures will be put into practice and mark an entirely new upswing, placing at the disposal of society a sufficient mass of products. In this way such an abundance of goods will be produced that society will be able to satisfy the needs of all its members. The division of society into different mutually hostile classes will thus become unnecessary. Indeed, it will not only be unnecessary, but irreconcilable with the new social order.

The existence of classes originated in the division of labour and the division of labour as it has been known hitherto will completely disappear. For mechanical and chemical devices alone are not enough to bring industrial and agricultural production up to the level we have described; the capacities of the people setting these devices in motion must experience a corresponding development. Just as the peasants and the manufacturing workers of the last [eighteenth] century changed their whole way of life and became quite different people when they were impressed into large-scale industry, in the same way, the communal operation of production by society as a whole and the resulting new development of production will both require and generate an entirely different kind of human material. Communal operation of production cannot be carried on by people as they are today, when each individual is subordinated to a single branch of production, bound to it, exploited by it, and has developed only *one* of his faculties at the expense of all others, knows only *one* branch, or even one branch of a single branch of production as a whole. Even present-day industry is finding such people less and less useful. Communal planned industry operated by society as a whole presupposes human beings with many-sided talents and the capacity to oversee the system of production in its entirety. The division of labour which makes a peasant of one man, a cobbler of another, a factory worker of a third, a stock-market operator of a fourth, has already been undermined by machinery, and will completely disappear. Education will enable young people quickly to familiarize themselves with the whole system of production and to pass successively from one branch of production to another in response to the needs of society or their own inclinations. It will therefore free them from the one-sided character which the present-day division of labour impresses on every individual. Society organized on a communist basis will thus give its members the opportunity to put their many-sidedly developed talents to many-sided use. But when this happens classes will necessarily disappear. It follows that society organized on a communist basis is incompatible with the existence of classes on the one hand, and that the very building of such a society provides the means of abolishing class differences on the other.

A corollary of this is that the antithesis between town and country will likewise disappear. The running of agriculture and industry by the same people rather than by two different classes is, if only

for purely material reasons, a necessary condition of communist association. The dispersal of the agricultural population on the land, alongside the crowding of the industrial population into big towns, is a condition which corresponds to an undeveloped stage of both agriculture and industry and is already quite perceptible as an obstacle to all further development.

The general co-operation of all members of society for the purpose of joint planned exploitation of the productive forces, the expansion of production to the point where it will satisfy the needs of all, the ending of a situation in which the needs of some are satisfied at the expense of the needs of others, the complete liquidation of classes with their contradictions, the rounded development of the capacities of all members of society through the elimination of the present division of labour, through industrial education, through alternating activities, through universal sharing of the universally produced sources of enjoyment, through the fusion of town and country -- these are the main consequences of the abolition of private property.

Question 21: What will be the influence of the communist order of society on the family?

Answer: It will make the relations between the sexes a purely private matter which concerns only the persons involved, and in which society must not intervene. It can do this since it does away with private property and educates children on a communal basis, and in this way removes the two bases of marriage up to now -- the dependence of the wife on the husband and of the children on their parents resulting from private property. And here is the answer to the outcry of the highly moralistic philistines against the communistic "community of women." Community of women is a condition which belongs entirely to bourgeois society and which today finds its complete expression in prostitution. But prostitution is based on private property and falls with it. Thus communist society, instead of introducing community of women, in fact abolishes it.

Question 22: What will be the attitude of the communist society to existing nationalities?

– unchanged.⁴

Question 23: What will be its attitude to existing religions?

– unchanged.⁵

Question 24: How do communists differ from socialists?

Answer: The so-called socialists are divided into three categories.

The first category consists of adherents of a feudal and patriarchal society which has already been and is still daily being destroyed by large-scale industry and world trade and their creation, bourgeois society. This category concludes from the evils of existing society that feudal and patriarchal society must be restored because it was free of such evils.

By hook or by crook, all their proposals are directed to this end. This category of reactionary socialists, for all their seeming partisanship and their scalding tears for the misery of the proletariat, will nevertheless be energetically opposed by the communists for the following reasons:

1. It strives for something which is utterly impossible.
2. It seeks to establish the rule of the aristocracy, the guild-masters and the manufacturers, with their retinue of absolute or feudal monarchs, officials, soldiers and priests, a society which was, to be sure, free of the evils of present-day society but which brought with it at least as many evils without even offering to the oppressed workers the prospect of liberation through a communist society.
3. Whenever the proletariat becomes revolutionary and communist, these reactionary socialists show their true colours by immediately making common cause with the bourgeoisie against the proletarians.

The second category consists of adherents of present-day society whose fears for its future have been roused by the evils to which it necessarily gives rise. What they desire, therefore, is to maintain the existing order of society while getting rid of the evils which are inherent in it. To this end, some propose mere welfare measures while others come forward with grandiose schemes of reform which under the pretence of reorganizing society are in fact intended to preserve the foundations, and hence the life, of the existing order of society. The communists must unremittingly struggle against these *bourgeois socialists* because they work for the enemies of the communists and protect the society which the communists aim to overthrow.

Finally, the third category consists of democratic socialists, who favour some of the same measures the communists advocate,

as described in Question^{*}, not as part of the transition to communism, however, but rather as measures which they believe will be sufficient to abolish the misery and evils of present-day society. These *democratic socialists* are either proletarians who are not yet sufficiently clear about the conditions for the liberation of their class, or they are representatives of the petty bourgeoisie, a class which, prior to the achievement of democracy and the socialist measures to which it gives rise, has many interests in common with the proletariat. It follows that in moments of action the communists will have to come to an understanding with these democratic socialists and in general to follow as far as possible, for the time being, a common policy with them, provided these socialists do not enter into the service of the ruling bourgeoisie and attack the communists. It is clear that this form of co-operation in action does not exclude the discussion of differences with them.

Question 25: What is the relation of the communists to the other political parties of our time?

Answer: This relation is different in the different countries. In England, France, and Belgium, where the bourgeoisie rules, for the time being the communists still have a common interest with the various democratic parties, an interest which is all the greater the more closely the socialistic measures they now generally champion approach the aims of the communists, that is, the more clearly and definitely they represent the interests of the proletariat and the more they depend on the proletariat. In *England*, for instance, the Chartists^[6] consisting of members of the working class are infinitely closer to the communists than the democratic petty bourgeoisie or the so-called Radicals.

In *America*, where a democratic constitution has been established; the communists must make common cause with the party which will turn this constitution against the bourgeoisie and use it in the interests of the proletariat, that is, with the Agrarian National Reformers.

In *Switzerland* the Radicals, though a very mixed party, are as yet the only people with whom the communists can co-operate, and

* The manuscript has a blank space here. See answer to Question 8. --
Ed.

among these Radicals the Vaudois and Genevese are the most advanced.

In *Germany*, finally, the decisive struggle between the bourgeoisie and the absolute monarchy is still ahead. Since, however, the communists cannot enter upon the decisive struggle between themselves and the bourgeoisie until the latter is in power, it follows that it is to the interest of the communists to help the bourgeoisie to power as soon as possible in order the sooner to be able to overthrow it. Against the governments, therefore, the communists must always support the bourgeois liberal party but they must ever be on guard against the self-deceptions of the bourgeoisie and not fall for the enticing promises of benefits which a victory for the bourgeoisie would allegedly bring to the proletariat. The sole advantages which the communists will derive from a victory of the bourgeoisie will consist: (1) in various concessions which will facilitate the defence, discussion and spread of their principles for the communists and thereby the unification of the proletariat into a closely-knit, battle-worthy and organized class; and (2) in the certainty that the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletarians will start on the very day the absolute governments fall. From that day on, the communists' party policy will be the same as it now is in the countries where the bourgeoisie is already in power.

Written in October 1847

Translated from the German

First published as a separate edition in 1914

NOTES

[¹] In 1847 Engels wrote two draft programmes for the Communist League in the form of a catechism, one in June and the other in October. The latter, which is known as *Principles of Communism*, was first published in 1914. The earlier document, *Draft of the Communist Confession of Faith*, was found only in 1968. It was first published in 1969 in Hamburg, together with four other documents pertaining to the first congress of the Communist League, in a booklet entitled *Gründungsdokumente des Bundes der Kommunisten (Juni bis September 1847)* (*Founding Documents of the Communist League*).

At the June 1847 Congress of the League of the Just, which was also the founding congress of the Communist League, it was decided to issue a draft "confession of faith" to be submitted for discussion to the sections of the League. The document which has now come to light is almost certainly this draft. Comparison of the two documents shows that *Principles of Communism* is a revised version of this earlier draft. In *Principles of Communism*, Engels left three questions unanswered, in two cases with the notation "unchanged" (*bleibt*); this clearly refers to the answers provided in the earlier draft.

The new draft for the programme was worked out by Engels on the instructions of the leading body of the Paris circle of the Communist League. The instructions were decided on after Engels' sharp criticism at the committee meeting, on October 22, 1847, of the draft programme drawn up by the "true socialist" Moses Hess, which was then rejected.

Still considering *Principles of Communism* as a preliminary draft, Engels expressed the view, in a letter to Marx dated November 23-24, 1847, that it would be best to drop the old catechistic form and draw up a programme in the form of a manifesto. At the second congress of the Communist League (November 29- December 8, 1847) Marx and Engels defended the fundamental scientific principles of communism and were entrusted with drafting a programme in the form of a manifesto of the Communist Party. In writing the *Manifesto*, the founders of Marxism made use of propositions enunciated in *Principles of Communism*.

[2] In their works written in later periods, Marx and Engels substituted the more accurate concepts of "sale of labour power," "value of labour power" and "price of labour power" (first introduced by Marx) for "sale of labour," "value of labour" and "price of labour."

[3] In the *Draft of the Communist Confession of Faith*, the answer to the same question (Number 12) reads as follows: "In contrast to the proletarian, the so-called handicraftsman, as he still existed almost everywhere in the past [eighteenth] century and still exists here and there at present, is a proletarian at most temporarily. His goal is to acquire capital himself wherewith to exploit other workers. He can often achieve this goal where guilds still exist or where freedom from guild restrictions has not yet led to the introduction of factory-style methods into the crafts nor yet to fierce competition. But as soon as the factory system has been introduced into the crafts and competition flourishes fully, this perspective dwindles away and the handicraftsman becomes more and more a proletarian. The handicraftsman therefore frees himself by becoming either bourgeois or entering the middle class in general, or becoming a proletarian because of competition (as is now more

often the case). In which case he can free himself by joining the proletarian movement, i.e., the more or less conscious communist movement."

[4] Engels' notation "unchanged" obviously refers to the answer to this question in the June draft under No. 21 which reads as follows: "The nationalities of the peoples associating themselves in accordance with the principle of community will be compelled to mingle with each other as a result of this association and thereby to dissolve themselves, just as the various estate and class distinctions must disappear through the abolition of their basis, private property."

[5] Similarly, this refers to the answer to Question 22 in the June draft which reads: "All religions so far have been the expression of historical stages of development of individual peoples or groups of peoples. But communism is the stage of historical development which makes all existing religions superfluous and brings about their disappearance."

[6] The Chartists were participants in the political movement of the British workers which lasted from the 1830s to the middle 1850s and had as its slogan the adoption of a People's Charter, demanding universal franchise and a series of conditions guaranteeing voting rights for all workers. Lenin defined Chartism as the world's "first broad, truly mass and politically organized proletarian revolutionary movement." (*Collected Works*, Eng. ed., Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, Vol. 29, p. 309.) The decline of the Chartist movement was due to the strengthening of Britain's industrial and commercial monopoly and the bribing of the upper stratum of the working class ("the labour aristocracy") by the British bourgeoisie out of its super-profits. Both factors led to the strengthening of opportunist tendencies in this stratum as expressed, in particular, by the refusal of the trade union leaders to support Chartism.