

## READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the difference between “natural price” and “market price.”
2. Given a free market (that is to say no minimum wage laws or other government interference) for labor and a surplus of laborers, what would, according to Ricardo, happen to wages?
3. Why do you think Ricardo argues that the Poor Laws, which were intended “to amend the condition of the poor,” conversely “deteriorate the condition of both poor and rich; instead of making the poor rich, they are calculated to make the rich poor”?
4. To what extent did the mechanization of manufacturing and the replacement of skilled handicraft workers by semi-skilled “machine tenders” reinforce Ricardo’s argument?

## DOCUMENT 23-2

## KARL MARX AND FRIEDRICH ENGELS

*From The Communist Manifesto*

1848

*Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) are credited as the founders of communism. In formulating their theories, Marx and Engels drew on the work of earlier economists, particularly Adam Smith and David Ricardo, and on Thomas Malthus’s demographic theories, as well as their familiarity with living and working conditions in England’s industrial centers. Their Communist Manifesto, first published in London as a pamphlet (written in German), opens with the proclamation that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” The authors predict the eventual triumph of the working class (proletariat) over the middle class (bourgeoisie) and the establishment of a classless society in which wealth is equally distributed.*

A specter is haunting Europe — the specter of communism. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this specter:

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, in Arthur P. Mendel, *The Essential Works of Marxism* (New York: Bantam, 1961), 13–17, 19, 23, 40–44.

Pope and Czar, Metternich and Guizot,<sup>4</sup> French Radicals and German police-spies. . . .

Communism is already acknowledged by all European powers to be itself a power.

It is high time that Communists should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies, and meet this nursery tale of the specter of communism with a Manifesto of the party itself. . . .

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. . . .

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

The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part.

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors,” and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment.” It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade. In a 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, and the man of science into its paid wage-laborers.

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

<sup>4</sup>**Metternich and Guizot:** Prince Klemens von Metternich (1773–1859) was foreign minister and chancellor of the Austrian Empire (1809–1848), and François Guizot (1787–1874) was a French politician who served at a variety of government posts, including prime minister from 1847 to 1848.

The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life. . . .

The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarcely one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. . . .

But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons — the modern working class — the proletariat.

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

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

The socialist and communist systems properly so called, those of Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen,<sup>5</sup> and others, spring into existence in the early undeveloped period, described above, of the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie. . . .

Such fantastic pictures of future society, painted at a time when the proletariat is still in a very undeveloped state and has but a fantastic conception of its own position, correspond with the first instinctive yearnings of that class for a general reconstruction of society.

But these socialist and communist publications contain also a critical element. They attack every principle of existing society. . . .

<sup>5</sup> Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen: Claude Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon (1760–1825), was an early advocate of socialism, as was Charles Fourier (1772–1837). Robert Owen (1771–1858) was an industrialist, utopian socialist, and trade union advocate. These socialist predecessors believed that capitalists and workers could overcome their antagonism and work cooperatively for the common good. As Marx and Engels believed “class struggle” to be the engine that drove history, they imply that these other socialists were naive to the point of delusory, hence the “fantastic pictures” jibe that follows.

The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary [*i.e.*, current] interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement. . . .

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

In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things.

In all these movements they bring to the fore, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time.

Finally, they labor everywhere for the union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries.

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

WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

#### READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do Marx and Engels cite as their reasons for writing the *Manifesto*? What is its purpose?
2. How would you describe the power relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and how is it changing?
3. Why, in a manifesto exhorting the proletariat to rise up against their bourgeoisie oppressors, do you think Marx and Engels devoted space to *praising* the latter? For example, “during its rule of scarcely one hundred years, [the bourgeoisie] has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together.”
4. Why, according to Marx and Engels, was a working-class revolution against the capitalist middle class *inevitable*?