

Introduction to our critical Marxism - Alex Merlo

1. Ernest Mandel, *The Place of Marxism in History*, "Appendices":
"The Eight Main Periods of the "History" of Marx" and "A Few
Events of Marx's Time", IIRE, Amsterdam, 1983
2. Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, 1845
3. Karl Marx, "Preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political
Economy* (extract), 1859
4. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (extracts),
Also:, 1846
5. León Trotsky, "Ninety Years of the Communist Manifesto", 1937



Ernest Mandel

The Place of Marxism in History

The Eight Main Periods of the “History” of Marx

1. 1837-1843: radical democracy
 - Doctoral thesis: The differences between the philosophy of nature of Democritus and Epicurus, 1838-1841.
 - Editorial work on the Rhineland newspaper Rheinische Zeitung, 1842-1843.
 - Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, 1843.
2. 1843-1844: from political emancipation to social emancipation
 - The Jewish Question, 1843-1844 (Franco-German Yearbook).
 - Introduction to Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right 1844.
 - Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (Manuscripts of 1844), 1844.
3. 1845-1847: foundations of historical materialism
 - The Holy Family, 1844-1845.
 - Theses on Feuerbach. 1845.
 - The German Ideology, 1846.
 - Letter to Annenkov, 1846.
 - The Poverty of Philosophy, 1847.
4. 1848-1850: from the bourgeois revolution to the proletarian revolution ("permanent revolution")
 - The Communist Manifesto, 1848.
 - Wage Labour and Capital, 1849.
 - Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League, 1850.
5. 1850-1852: balance sheet of the revolutionary wave, class struggles and political struggles
 - Class Struggles in France (three essays published in the review Neue Rheinische Zeitung), 1850.
 - The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, 1852.
6. 1853-1859: preparation of Capital
 - Articles (political commentary) for the New York Daily Tribune, 1852-1862.
 - Grundrisse (Foundations of a critique of political economy), 1857-1858.
 - Critique of Political Economy, 1859.
7. 1860-1867: completion of his economic work and creation of the First International
 - Mister Vogt, 1860.
 - Theories of Surplus-Value, 1862-1863.
 - Capital (Manuscript Volume III), 1865.
 - Inaugural Address of the International Workingmen's Association, 1864.
 - Capital (Volume I published), 1867.
 - Capital (Manuscript Volume II), 1869-1879.
8. 1867-1883: the proletarian revolution on the march ... and the workers parties
 - The Two Addresses on the Franco-Prussian War, 1870.
 - The Civil War in France, 1871.
 - Critique of the Gotha Program, 1875.
 - Anti-Dühring (by Engels), 1878.
 - Letter to the Leaders of German Social-Democracy, 1879.
 - Letter to Vera Zasulich, 1881.
 - Preface to the second Russian edition of the Communist Manifesto, 1882.

A Few Events of Marx's Time

Economic developments, Political and military events

1757: British Empire established in India after the battle of Plessey

1770-1830: Industrial revolution: birth of modern factories, first in England, then Belgium, France, Switzerland, the United States, Germany, etc.

1791-1815: French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Europe, Santo Domingo, Egypt. Consolidation of the British Empire.

1815: Defeat of Napoleon and dominance of the Holy Alliance.

1846: Potato famine in Ireland.

1846-1848: Mexican-American War.

1848-1873: Expansion of industrial capitalism, free trade and competition in Britain, France, Germany, Belgium.

1854-1856: Crimean War (Tsarist Russia versus the rest of Europe) followed by the emancipation of the serfs in Russia in 1861.

1861-1867: French intervention in Mexico.

1859-1866-1870: Unification of Italy.

1870-1871: Franco-Prussian War and unification of Germany.

1873-1893: Generalisation of colonialism; rapid development of industrialisation in the USA, Japan, Russia Italy, Austria-Hungary.

Class struggles and revolutions

1776: American revolution.

1789: French revolution; Bastille prison falls on July 14.

1792-1793: Highpoint of French revolution; dictatorship of the Jacobins.

1794 (July 27): Thermidor, victory of the political counter-revolution.

1795-1805: Revolution of the slaves of Santo Domingo.

1810-1824: Liberation Wars (first revolution) of Latin America against the Spanish Empire.

1830: Revolutions in France and Belgium; national insurrection in Poland; birth of the "July Monarchy" under Louis Philippe in France.

1848: Revolutions in France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Italy.

1849: Defeat of these revolutions.

1851: Definitive victor of political counter-revolution in France.

1853: Chinese revolution of the Taipings.

1857: Sepoys' insurrection in India.

1857-1867: Second Mexican revolution (Reforma).

1864-1865: Civil War (second revolution) in the United States. Abolition of slavery.

1871: Paris Commune.

1886: Beginning of struggle for the eight-hour day in the United States, then around the world; May 1 becomes international day of struggle.

Workers' movement

1796: Babeuf and the Conspiracy of the Equals.

1819: Peterloo Massacre, near Manchester.

1828: Creation of local labour parties in Philadelphia and New York.

1831: First workers' insurrection, in Lyons.

1830-1848: Blanqui and Blanquism.

1843: Silesian weavers' insurrection (Germany).

1847: Marx and Engels join the Communist League.

1848: Rise of Chartism in Britain.

1848: Communist Manifesto is written.

June 1848: Workers' insurrection in Paris.

1863: Foundation of the General Association of German Workers by Lassalle.

1864: Foundation of the First International.

1867: Publication of Capital, Volume One, by Marx. Bebel and Liebknecht elected to the German parliament (Reichstag).

1874: Dissolution of the First International.

1875: Unification of German social-democracy.

1883: Death of Marx.

1889-1891: Foundation of the Second International.

1895: Death of Engels.

Theses On Feuerbach

Karl Marx, 1845

I. The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism – that of Feuerbach included – is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively. Hence, in contradistinction to materialism, the active side was developed abstractly by idealism – which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such.

Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from the thought objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as objective activity. Hence, in *The Essence of Christianity*, he regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and fixed only in its dirty-judaical manifestation. Hence he does not grasp the significance of “revolutionary”, of “practical-critical”, activity.

II. The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth — i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question.

III. The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.

The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice.

IV. Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-alienation, of the duplication of the world into a religious world and a secular one. His work consists in resolving the religious world into its secular basis.

But that the secular basis detaches itself from itself and establishes itself as an independent realm in the clouds can only be explained by the cleavages and self-contradictions within this secular basis. The latter must, therefore, in itself be both understood in its contradiction and revolutionized in practice. Thus, for instance, after the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then itself be destroyed in theory and in practice.

V. Feuerbach, not satisfied with abstract thinking, wants contemplation; but he does not conceive sensuousness as practical, human-sensuous activity.

VI. Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual.

In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.

Feuerbach, who does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence, is consequently compelled:

To abstract from the historical process and to fix the religious sentiment as something by itself and to presuppose an abstract – isolated – human individual.

Essence, therefore, can be comprehended only as “genus”, as an internal, dumb generality which naturally unites the many individuals.

VII. Feuerbach, consequently, does not see that the “religious sentiment” is itself a social product, and that the abstract individual whom he analyses belongs to a particular form of

society.

VIII. All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.

IX. The highest point reached by contemplative materialism, that is, materialism which does not comprehend sensuousness as practical activity, is contemplation of single individuals and of civil society.

X. The standpoint of the old materialism is civil society; the standpoint of the new is human society, or social humanity.

XI. The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.

Abstract from the Preface of A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (extract) Karl Marx, 1859

(...)

The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, became the guiding principle of my studies, can be summarised as follows.

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.

The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or — what is but a legal expression for the same thing — with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters.

Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic — in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social productive forces and the relations of production.

No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces

for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. Therefore mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the tasks itself arises only when the material conditions of its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation.

In broad outlines Asiatic[A], ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production — antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonisms, but of one arising from the social conditions of life of the individuals; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation brings, therefore, the prehistory of society to a close.

(...)

The German Ideology (extracts)

First Premises of Materialist Method

The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way.

The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus the first fact to be established is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. Of course, we cannot here go either into the actual physical nature of man, or into the natural conditions in which man finds himself — geological, hydrographical, climatic and so on. The writing of history must always set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men.

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life.

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their

production.

This production only makes its appearance with the increase of population. In its turn this presupposes the intercourse [Verkehr] of individuals with one another. The form of this intercourse is again determined by production.

(...)

[4. The Essence of the Materialist Conception of History. Social Being and Social Consciousness]

The fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into these definite social and political relations. Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production. The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life-process of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they really are; i.e. as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will.

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. — real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the starting-point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness.

Finally, from the conception of history set forth by us we obtain these further conclusions: 1) In the development of productive forces there comes a stage when productive forces and means of intercourse are brought into being which, under the existing relations, only cause mischief, and are no longer productive but destructive forces (machinery and money); and connected with this a class is called forth which has to bear all the burdens of society without enjoying its advantages, which is ousted from society and [23] forced into the sharpest contradiction to all other classes; a class which forms the majority of all members of society, and from which emanates the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution, the communist consciousness, which may, of course, arise among the other classes too through the contemplation of the situation of this class. 2) The conditions under which definite productive forces can be applied are the conditions of the rule of a definite class of society, whose social power, deriving from its property, has its *practical-idealistic* expression in each case in the form of the state and, therefore, every revolutionary struggle is directed against a class which till then has been in power.* 3) In all previous revolutions the mode of activity always remained unchanged and it was only a question of a different distribution of this activity, a new distribution of labour to other persons, whilst the communist revolution is directed against the hitherto existing *mode* of activity, does away with *labour,*** and abolishes the rule of all classes with the classes themselves, because it is carried through by the class which no longer counts as a class in society, which is not recognised as a class, and is in itself the expression of the dissolution of all classes, nationalities, etc., within present society; and 4) Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a *revolution*; the revolution is necessary, therefore, 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.*

Ninety Years of the Communist Manifesto

Leon Trotsky

(October 1937)

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 twenty-nine, Engels twenty-seven) were able to look further into the future than anyone before them, and perhaps than anyone since them.

As early as 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 to be not only 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 substituted the struggle of material interests for "common welfare," "national unity," and "eternal moral truths" as the driving force of history. They were later joined by recruits from the ranks of the labor movement itself, by the so-called revisionists, i.e., the proponents of reviewing ("revising") Marxism in the spirit of class collaboration and class conciliation. Finally, in our own time, the same path has been followed in practice by the contemptible epigones of the Communist International (the "Stalinists"): the policy of the so-called People's Front flows wholly from the denial of the laws of the class struggle. Meanwhile, it is precisely the epoch of imperialism, bringing all social contradictions to the point of highest tension, which gives to the Communist Manifesto its

supreme theoretical triumph.

3. The anatomy of capitalism, as a specific stage in the economic development of society, was given by Marx in its finished form in *Capital* (1867). But even in the Communist Manifesto the main lines of the future analysis are firmly sketched: the payment for labor power as equivalent to the cost of its reproduction; the appropriation of surplus value by the capitalists; competition as the basic law of social relations; the ruination of intermediate classes, i.e., the urban petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry; the concentration of wealth in the hands of an ever-diminishing number of property owners, at the one pole, and the numerical growth of the proletariat, at the other; the preparation of the material and political preconditions for the socialist regime.

4. The proposition in the Manifesto concerning the tendency of capitalism to lower the living standards of the workers, and even to transform them into paupers, had been subjected to a heavy barrage. Parsons, professors, ministers, journalists, Social Democratic theoreticians, and trade union leaders came to the front against the so-called "theory of impoverishment." They invariably discovered signs of growing prosperity among the toilers, palming off the labor aristocracy as the proletariat, or taking a fleeting tendency as permanent. Meanwhile, even the development of the mightiest capitalism in the world, namely, US capitalism, has transformed millions of workers into paupers who are maintained at the expense of federal, municipal, or private charity.

5. As against the Manifesto, which depicted commercial and industrial crises as a series of ever more extensive catastrophes, the revisionists vowed that the national and international development of trusts would assure control over the market, and lead gradually to the abolition of crises. The close of the last century and the beginning of the present one were in reality marked by a development of capitalism so tempestuous as to make crises seem only "accidental" stoppages. But this epoch has gone beyond return. In the last analysis, truth proved to be on Marx's side in this question as well.

6. "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." This succinct formula, which the leaders of the Social Democracy looked upon as a journalistic paradox, contains in fact the only scientific theory of the state. The democracy fashioned by the bourgeoisie is not, as both Bernstein and Kautsky thought, an empty sack which one can undisturbedly fill with any kind of class content. Bourgeois democracy can serve only the bourgeoisie. A government of the "People's Front," whether headed by Blum or Chautemps, Caballero or Negrin, is only "a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." Whenever this "committee" manages affairs poorly, the bourgeoisie dismisses it with a boot.

7. "Every class struggle is a political struggle." "The organization of the proletariat as a class [is] consequently its organization into a political party." Trade unionists, on the one hand, and anarchosyndicalists, on the other, have long shied away – and even now try to shy away – from the understanding of these historical laws. "Pure" trade unionism has now been dealt a crushing blow in its chief refuge: the United States. Anarchosyndicalism has suffered an irreparable defeat in its last

stronghold – Spain. Here too the Manifesto proved correct.

8. The proletariat cannot conquer power within the legal framework established by the bourgeoisie. “Communists openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions.” Reformism sought to explain this postulate of the Manifesto on the grounds of the immaturity of the movement at that time, and the inadequate development of democracy. The fate of Italian, German, and a great number of other “democracies” proves that “immaturity” is the distinguishing trait of the ideas of the reformists themselves.

9. For the socialist transformation of society, the working class must concentrate in its hands such power as can smash each and every political obstacle barring the road to the new system. “The proletariat organized as the ruling class” – this is the dictatorship. At the same time it is the only true proletarian democracy. Its scope and depth depend upon concrete historical conditions. The greater the number of states that take the path of the socialist revolution, the freer and more flexible forms will the dictatorship assume, the broader and more deepgoing will be workers’ democracy.

10. The international development of capitalism has predetermined the international character of the proletarian revolution. “United action, of the leading civilized countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat.” The subsequent development of capitalism has so closely knit all sections of our planet, both “civilized” and “uncivilized,” that the problem of the socialist revolution has completely and decisively assumed a world character. The Soviet bureaucracy attempted to liquidate the Manifesto with respect to this fundamental question. The Bonapartist degeneration of the Soviet state is an overwhelming illustration of the falseness of the theory of socialism in one country.

11. “When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character.” In other words: the state withers away. Society remains, freed from the straitjacket. This is nothing else but socialism. The converse theorem: the monstrous growth of state coercion in the USSR is eloquent testimony that society is moving away from socialism.

12. “The workingmen have no fatherland.” These words of the Manifesto have more than once been evaluated by philistines as an agitational quip. As a matter of fact they provided the proletariat with the sole conceivable directive in the question of the capitalist “fatherland.” The violation of this directive by the Second International brought about not only four years of devastation in Europe, but the present stagnation of world culture. In view of the impending new war, for which the betrayal of the Third International has paved the way, the Manifesto remains even now the most reliable counselor on the question of the capitalist “fatherland.”

Thus, we see that the joint and rather brief production of two Young authors continues to give irreplaceable directives upon the most important and burning questions of the struggle for emancipation. What other book could even distantly be compared with the Communist Manifesto? But this does not imply that after ninety years of unprecedented development of productive forces

and vast social struggles, the Manifesto needs neither corrections nor additions. Revolutionary thought has nothing in common with idol-worship. Programs and prognoses are tested and corrected in the light of experience, which is the supreme criterion of human reason. The Manifesto, too, requires corrections and additions. However, as is evidenced by historical experience itself, these corrections and additions can be successfully made only by proceeding in accord with the method lodged in the foundation of the Manifesto itself. We shall try to indicate this in several most important instances.

1. Marx taught that no social system departs from the arena of history before exhausting its creative potentialities. The Manifesto excoriates capitalism for retarding the development of the productive forces. During that period, however, as well as in the following decades, this retardation was only relative in nature. Had it been possible in the second half of the nineteenth century to organize economy on socialist beginnings, its tempos of growth would have been immeasurably greater. But this theoretically irrefutable postulate does not invalidate the fact that the productive forces kept expanding on a world scale right up to the world war. Only in the last twenty years, despite the most modern conquests of science and technology, has the epoch of out-and-out stagnation and even decline of world economy begun. Mankind is beginning to expend its accumulated capital, while the next war threatens to destroy the very foundations of civilization for many years to come. The authors of the Manifesto thought that capitalism would be scrapped long prior to the time when from a relatively reactionary regime it would turn into an absolutely reactionary regime. This transformation took final shape only before the eyes of the present generation, and changed our epoch into the epoch of wars, revolutions, and fascism.

2. The error of Marx and Engels in regard to the historical dates flowed, on the one hand, from an underestimation of future possibilities latent in capitalism, and, on the other, an overestimation of the revolutionary maturity of the proletariat. The revolution of 1848 did not turn into a socialist revolution as the Manifesto had calculated, but opened up to Germany the possibility of a vast future capitalist ascension. The Paris Commune proved that the proletariat, without having a tempered revolutionary party at its head, cannot wrest power from the bourgeoisie. Meanwhile, the prolonged period of capitalist prosperity that ensued brought about not the education of the revolutionary vanguard, but rather the bourgeois degeneration of the labor aristocracy, which became in turn the chief brake on the proletarian revolution. In the nature of things, the authors of the Manifesto could not possibly have foreseen this “dialectic.”

3. For the Manifesto, capitalism was – the kingdom of free competition. While referring to the growing concentration of capital, the Manifesto did not draw the necessary conclusion in regard to monopoly, which has become the dominant capitalist form in our epoch and the most important precondition for socialist economy. Only afterwards, in *Capital*, did Marx establish the tendency toward the transformation of free competition into monopoly. It was Lenin who gave a scientific characterization of monopoly capitalism in his *Imperialism*.

4. Basing themselves on the example of “industrial revolution” in England, the authors of the Manifesto pictured far too unilaterally the process of liquidation of the intermediate classes, as a wholesale proletarianization of crafts, petty trades,

and peasantry. In point of fact, the elemental forces of competition have far from completed this simultaneously progressive and barbarous work. Capitalism has ruined the petty bourgeoisie at a much faster rate than it has proletarianized it. Furthermore, the bourgeois state has long directed its conscious policy toward the artificial maintenance of petty-bourgeois strata. At the opposite pole, the growth of technology and the rationalization of largescale industry engenders chronic unemployment and obstructs the proletarianization of the petty bourgeoisie. Concurrently, the development of capitalism has accelerated in the extreme the growth of legions of technicians, administrators, commercial employees, in short, the so-called "new middle class." In consequence, the intermediate classes, to whose disappearance the Manifesto so categorically refers, comprise even in a country as highly industrialized as Germany about half of the population. However, the artificial preservation of antiquated petty-bourgeois strata in no way mitigates the social contradictions, but, on the contrary, invests them with a special malignancy, and together with the permanent army of the unemployed constitutes the most malevolent expression of the decay of capitalism.

5. Calculated for a revolutionary epoch the Manifesto contains (end of Chapter II) ten demands, corresponding to the period of direct transition from capitalism to socialism. In their preface of 1872, Marx and Engels declared these demands to be in part antiquated, and, in any case, only of secondary importance. The reformists seized upon this evaluation to interpret it in the sense that transitional revolutionary demands had forever ceded their place to the Social Democratic "minimum program," which, as is well known, does not transcend the limits of bourgeois democracy. As a matter of fact, the authors of the Manifesto indicated quite precisely the main correction of their transitional program, namely, "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the readymade state machinery and wield it for its own purposes." In other words, the correction was directed against the fetishism of bourgeois democracy. Marx later counterposed to the capitalist state, the state of the type of the Commune. This "type" subsequently assumed the much more graphic shape of soviets. There cannot be a revolutionary program today without soviets and without workers' control. As for the rest, the ten demands of the Manifesto, which appeared "archaic" in an epoch of peaceful parliamentary activity, have today regained completely their true significance. The Social Democratic "minimum program," on the other hand, has become hopelessly antiquated.

6. Basing its expectation that "the German bourgeois revolution ... will be but a prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution," the Manifesto cites the much more advanced conditions of European civilization as compared with what existed in England in the seventeenth century and in France in the eighteenth century, and the far greater development of the proletariat. The error in this prognosis was not only in the date. The revolution of 1848 revealed within a few months that precisely under more advanced conditions, none of the bourgeois classes is capable of bringing the revolution to its termination: the big and middle bourgeoisie is far too closely linked with the landowners, and fettered by the fear of the masses; the petty bourgeoisie is far too divided and in its top leadership far too dependent on the big bourgeoisie. As evidenced by the entire subsequent course of development in Europe and Asia, the bourgeois revolution, taken by itself, can no more in general be

consummated. A complete purge of feudal rubbish from society is conceivable only on the condition that the proletariat, freed from the influence of bourgeois parties, can take its stand at the head of the peasantry and establish its revolutionary dictatorship. By this token, the bourgeois revolution becomes interlaced with the first stage of the socialist revolution, subsequently to dissolve in the latter. The national revolution therewith becomes a link of the world revolution. The transformation of the economic foundation and of all social relations assumes a permanent (uninterrupted) character.

For revolutionary parties in backward countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa, a clear understanding of the organic connection between the democratic revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat – and thereby, the international socialist revolution – is a life-and-death question.

7. While depicting how capitalism draws into its vortex backward and barbarous countries, the Manifesto contains no reference to the struggle of colonial and semicolonial countries for independence. To the extent that Marx and Engels considered the social revolution "in the leading civilized countries at least," to be a matter of the next few years, the colonial question was resolved automatically for them, not in consequence of an independent movement of oppressed nationalities but in consequence of the victory of the proletariat in the metropolitan centers of capitalism. The questions of revolutionary strategy in colonial and semicolonial countries are therefore not touched upon at all by the Manifesto. Yet these questions demand an independent solution. For example, it is quite self-evident that while the "national fatherland" has become the most baneful historical brake in advanced capitalist countries, it still remains a relatively progressive factor in backward countries compelled to struggle for an independent existence.

"The Communists," declares the Manifesto, "everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things." The movement of the colored races against their imperialist oppressors is one of the most important and powerful movements against the existing order and therefore calls for the complete, unconditional, and unlimited support on the part of the proletariat of the white race. The credit for developing revolutionary strategy for oppressed nationalities belongs primarily to Lenin.

8. The most antiquated section of the Manifesto – with respect not to method but to material – is the criticism of "socialist" literature for the first part of the nineteenth century (Chapter III) and the definition of the position of the Communists in relation to various opposition parties (Chapter IV). The movements and parties listed in the Manifesto were so drastically swept away either by the revolution of 1848 or by the ensuing counterrevolution that one must look up even their names in a historical dictionary. However, in this section, too, the Manifesto is perhaps closer to us now than it was to the previous generation. In the epoch of the flowering of the Second International, when Marxism seemed to exert an undivided sway, the ideas of pre-Marxist socialism could have been considered as having receded decisively into the past. Things are otherwise today. The decomposition of the Social Democracy and the Communist International at every step engenders monstrous ideological relapses. Senile thought seems to have become infantile. In search of all-saving formulas the prophets in the epoch of decline

discover anew doctrines long since buried by scientific socialism.

As touches the question of opposition parties, it is in this domain that the elapsed decades have introduced the most deepgoing changes, not only in the sense that the old parties have long been brushed aside by new ones, but also in the sense that the very character of parties and their mutual relations have radically changed in the conditions of the imperialist epoch. The Manifesto must therefore be amplified with the most important documents of the first four congresses of the Communist International, the essential literature of Bolshevism, and the decisions of the conferences of the Fourth International.

We have already remarked above that according to Marx no social order departs from the scene without first exhausting the potentialities latent in it. However, even an antiquated social order does not cede its place to a new order without resistance. A change in social regimes presupposes the harshest form of the class struggle, i.e., revolution. If the proletariat, for one reason or another, proves incapable of overthrowing with an audacious blow the outlived bourgeois order, then finance capital in the struggle to maintain its unstable rule can do nothing but turn the petty bourgeoisie ruined and demoralized by it into the pogrom army of fascism. The bourgeois degeneration of the Social Democracy and the fascist degeneration of the petty bourgeoisie are interlinked as cause and effect.

At the present time, the Third International far more wantonly than the Second performs in all countries the work of deceiving and demoralizing the toilers. By massacring the vanguard of the Spanish proletariat, the unbridled hirelings of Moscow not only pave the way for fascism but execute a goodly share of its labors. The protracted crisis of the international revolution, which is turning more and more into a crisis of human culture, is reducible in its essentials to the crisis of revolutionary leadership.

As the heir to the great tradition, of which the Manifesto of the Communist Party forms the most precious link, the Fourth International is educating new cadres for the solution of old tasks. Theory is generalized reality. In an honest attitude to revolutionary theory is expressed the impassioned urge to reconstruct the social reality. That in the southern part of the Dark Continent our cothinkers were the first to translate the Manifesto into the Afrikaans language is another graphic illustration of the fact that Marxist thought lives today only under the banner of the Fourth International. To it belongs the future. When the centennial of the Communist Manifesto is celebrated, the Fourth International will have become the decisive revolutionary force on our planet.