ON THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO: IDEAS FOR THE NEWLY RADICALIZING PUBLIC

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Abstract: A large number of people around the world now support the idea of socialism and are critical of capitalism. These numbers, though growing, are not yet enough to end capitalism, but they form the basis for a movement to win over more people to socialism and away from a system dominated by capitalist market relations. Besides, many of those who have a favourable view of socialism may not exactly know what it is or they may not exactly know how/why capitalism is the cause of their misery. A socialist movement requires ideas that not only defend socialism but also show how capitalism works and why it is harmful to the majority. Many of these ideas are present in The Communist Manifesto written by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels almost 175 years ago, in a context where people were turning to revolutionary ideas and practices in Europe. If, as Lenin said, a revolutionary movement needs revolutionary ideas, The Communist Manifesto is indeed a fertile source of some of these ideas. It makes two main kinds of knowledge claim: knowledge claims to describe and explain the world, and knowledge claims to critique the world and show that an alternative world is necessary and possible. Keeping in view the newly radicalizing elements of the public, including the youth, this article presents the ideas of The Communist Manifesto in terms of precise and systematically organized knowledge claims that cover three main areas of Marxism (historical materialism, political economy, and communist/socialist practice).

Key words: Marx; capitalism; class; communism; revolution

1. Introduction

Interest in anti-capitalism as well as socialism is growing in many parts of the world. According to a poll conducted in 28 countries, including the United States,
France, China, and Russia, 56% agree that “capitalism as it exists today does more harm than good in the world” (John 2020). A June 2021 poll indicates that 36% of Americans have a negative view of capitalism; this number is much higher among the youth: 46% of 18–34-year-olds and 54% of those aged 18–24 view capitalism negatively (Gustavo 2021). Conversely, and interestingly, 41% of respondents from all ages have a positive view of socialism. This number is higher for the younger people: 52% of 18–24-year-olds and 50% of young adults aged 25–34 have a positive view of socialism (Gustavo 2021). An October 2021 poll shows that 53% of Americans have a negative view of big business. According to this poll, among Democrats/Democratic-leaners, the number of those with a positive view of socialism has been rising: from about 55% in 2010 to a massive 65% in 2021 (Jones 2021).

The situation outside of the United States within the advanced capitalist world is similar. According to an August 2021 poll in Canada, a majority of Canadians (53%) believe that “we need to radically transform our economy,” and 35% favour “moving away from capitalism,” while only 25% oppose or strongly oppose such an idea (Thompson 2021). The poll reveals that opposition to capitalism is higher among the youth than among the general public in Canada too: 49% of women and 43% of men aged 18–34. Interestingly, opposing capitalism (35%) is more popular than voting for one of the main parties: Liberal (20%), Conservative (21%), and the mildly social-democratic NDP (11%). The European situation is not dissimilar to the North American one. In 2016, 47% of Britons and 39% of Germans held an unfavourable view of capitalism, while 36% of Britons and 45% of Germans had a favourable view of socialism (the corresponding numbers for the United States were 27% and 29% respectively in 2016) (Dahlgreen 2016).

It would be safe to say that in advanced capitalist countries, those who are anti-capitalist and those who support some forms of socialism are relatively substantial segments of the population, and the numbers seem to be generally rising. Two points need to be made. Firstly, it is true that these numbers are not enough to end capitalism, but they form the basis for a movement to win over more people to the cause of socialism and away from capitalism. Secondly, many of those who have a favourable view of socialism (especially in the United States) may not exactly know what it is, or they may not exactly know how/why capitalism is bad. A proper socialist movement—a movement for a prosperous socialist democracy that meets the needs of all in a socially equitable and ecologically sustainable manner—requires ideas that are ruthlessly and consistently critical of capitalism and that passionately and scientifically defend socialism.¹ The Communist Manifesto written by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels almost 175 years ago (Marx and Engels 1848) provides some of those ideas. This article celebrates its achievements on its upcoming 175th anniversary.
There have been many discussions on *The Communist Manifesto* in the last 25 years or so (Amin 2018; Carver and Farr 2015; Harvey 2008; Panitch and Leys 1998; Wood 1998). But these discussions generally aim to pick out one or another element of the text to expand on and/or critique. This is a defensible approach. But this is a partial approach. Given the theoretical and political importance of the text, I argue, there is a need to see the text *as a totality*, and to articulate its central defensible ideas, from the standpoint of its potential educational value for the newly radicalizing elements in the public and especially, among the youth. People are radicalizing based on their experience of misery that capitalism has been inflicting. But this may be a spontaneous anti-capitalist consciousness more than an awareness that is a conscious reflection of capitalism with the help of certain ideas. Experience can certainly teach. It does teach a great deal. But experience can only teach so much. So, people who are experiencing difficult lives under capitalism require, and may be in search of, knowledge about why capitalism must end and why socialism is a good idea. This is the kind of knowledge that is present in *The Communist Manifesto* (henceforward, Manifesto).

It is interesting that the popularity of Manifesto seems to have been greater than Marxism itself. It is, in fact, noteworthy that while the popularity of Marxism as a whole appears to have fallen since the early 1980s (except that since the 2008 crisis, Marxism seems to be attracting enhanced attention), the popularity of Manifesto itself, as a major text of the Marxist project, appears to have risen (Figures 1–2).

It may not be out of place to provide a piece of evidence about its importance: the Indian state has been repressing the various revolutionary groups influenced by Maoism. When asked how a Maoist is identified, a senior police official told reporters: “Anyone caught with a copy of *The Communist Manifesto* or Mao’s *Red Book* becomes a suspicious character. We then watch him and often find clinching evidence.”

Figure 1. Popularity of Manifesto

There are different kinds of knowledge claim, says the philosopher of science, Andrew Sayer (Sayer 1992). One type of knowledge claim makes “propositions about the world” and is referential (Sayer 1992, 15). Another kind of knowledge claim produces critique of the world. As Sayer says, “much of our knowledge and our uses of language . . . have a directly social function providing the means by which we question, command, argue, confer respect or distribute contempt, establish relationships” and so on (Sayer 1992, 21). Critique is necessary because the world fails to meet common people’s needs owing to its exploitative structures and because ideas about the world help reproduce such a world rather than radically transform it (Das 2014). Manifesto presents both types of knowledge claims that the newly radicalizing people—the younger generation—would benefit from enormously.

In Manifesto, there are propositional claims (as stylized or empirical generalizations across times and places), which take the form of: X is generally Y. Many claims in Manifesto take the form, or should be seen as taking the form, of causal claims too. These claims about causal tendencies do not mean that a given process is complete, nor that a given process is uniform in time and space. Causal claims mean that unless there are specifiable counter-acting conditions/processes, the mechanism X, which exists by virtue of certain social relations, will cause Y as an outcome/effect, which is then experienced by people (albeit differently in different times and places). The claim that capitalist relations have caused globalization does not mean that the world is completely globalized (globalization is a completely finished process) or that all countries are equally globalized. In addition, there are claims that present critiques of the existing world and of the ideas about it. It is interesting that Manifesto’s views of capitalism and what needs to be done are shaped by its critique of certain socialistic ideas.

Marxism has four main interconnected components: materialist-dialectical philosophy, historical materialism (social theory), political economy (of capitalism),

Figure 2. Popularity of Marxism
Source: Google Ngram Viewer.
and ideas that directly inform communist practice/programme, including the
vision of communist society5 (Das 2014). Manifesto’s knowledge claims cover the
last three components. It does not specifically talk about the first component (i.e.,
philosophy), although it is informed by it.6 It is important to note that Manifesto
was written three years after Marx and Engels had developed their materialist
philosophy in The German Ideology, so Manifesto cannot but be informed by that
philosophy.

In terms of historical materialism (discussed in Section 2), Manifesto of Marx
and Engels (henceforward, Marx) makes a series of claims about the key concepts
in Marxist social theory: class; the relation between social relations of production
and productive forces; class struggle; class nature of public power; and so on. In
terms of political economy, Manifesto makes claims about the functioning of capi-
talism, globalization of capitalism, and capitalism’s crisis-proneness. This is dealt
with in Section 3. Manifesto also discusses the miserable experience of workers
and their economic struggle, which capitalism both prompts and impedes, as
explained in Section 4. With reference to the communist practice, Manifesto
makes wide-ranging claims,7 which are covered in Section 5. These claims are
about: why there is a need to go beyond capitalism, the vision of communism, the
necessity for revolution and for the rejection of reformism but not the pursuit of
reforms, the measures to be taken by the proletariat following its conquest of
power, and the distinctiveness of the proletariat as the key and leading anti-
capitalist revolutionary agent.8

2. Manifesto’s Historical Materialism: Theory of Class and the
State across Class Societies

People should be seen in terms of classes, and not merely as people or as human
beings as such. Marx is critical of all those who talk about human beings “in gen-
eral,” who belong “to no class” and who exist “only in the misty realm of philo-
sophical fantasy” (Marx and Engels 1848, 30).9 So, he is also critical of all those
who talk about “not the interests of the proletariat, but the interests of Human
Nature” (30). He therefore rejects the idea that it is possible to “appeal to society
at large, without the distinction of class” (32). In the context of national oppres-
sion, however, people may be seen in terms of cultural-geographical aggregate,
i.e., nation. And the nation, in turn, is to be seen in terms of the classes (and class-
fractions) that constitute it. (Such a view of class and nation has implications for
the Manifesto’s view of communism, as we shall see).

Classes as (large) groups of men and women presuppose relationships between
classes: one class is what it is because of its relation to another class. These relations
are objective. And class relations are antagonistic because one class controls
property,\textsuperscript{10} while another class has very limited, or non-existent, control over property. So the question of property—who owns/controls it and who does not—is a central aspect of the existence of classes. Class relations are also antagonistic because of exploitation, i.e., appropriation of surplus product/labour, of the property-less class by the propertied class. Class antagonisms that characterize all of written history have “assumed different forms at different epochs” (and places), but “whatever form they may have taken, one fact is common to” them all, i.e., “the exploitation of one part of society by the other” (Marx and Engels 1848, 26). For exploitation to happen, a certain objective (i.e., economic/material) condition must be present: productive forces are developed to such an extent that a surplus is produced, without which “the lavish existence” of the exploiting class cannot be guaranteed (20).\textsuperscript{11}

Classes do not exist merely objectively. They are subjective forces too. Antagonistic class relations and the objective conditions of existence of classes have a tendency to give rise to class struggles. That is why Manifesto memorably says: “The history of all hitherto existing society [with a written history] is the history of class struggles” (Marx and Engels 1848, 14).

Class struggle is in two forms: class struggle is from the top and from the bottom. This means that slave owners and slaves, the nobility/aristocrats and commoners, lords and serfs, independent medieval producers and their subordinate workers/apprentices, and capitalists and workers, or “in a word, oppressor and oppressed” have been engaged in class struggle (Marx and Engels 1848, 14). In this sense, what the ruling class (and its state) do to counter/pre-empt the class struggle of the oppressed (i.e., class struggle from the bottom) is class struggle too. It is class struggle from above. So, the scope of the term, class struggle, is not exhausted by the struggle of the oppressed.

As long as there are classes, class struggle goes on, even if it may not always be observable: classes always have “stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on in an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight” (Marx and Engels 1848, 14).\textsuperscript{12} However, the outcome of class struggle is not pre-determined: it is not necessary that the ruling class, or the exploited class, will win in a given situation. Indeed, the fight between classes has “each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes” (14). Marx’s point is that the outcome of class struggle in capitalism could be barbarism or socialism, even if he, like Lenin, did ardently advocate communism, and even if they thought communism would be inevitable.\textsuperscript{13}

Implicit in Manifesto is the idea that every form of society can be seen in terms of a \textit{mode of production in a broad sense}. The latter refers to the combination of two elements: social relations among people under which production and exchange occur, and the actual techniques of production and the associated development of productive forces.\textsuperscript{14} In \textit{class} society, social relations of production and exchange
become the relations between classes (and intra-class relations), or broadly speaking, they become “unequal” and exploitative relations of production and exchange. The development of productive forces and antagonistic relations between classes are interconnected. A given level of the development of productive forces allows society to produce a surplus above its minimum means of subsistence, the surplus that allows classes to exist. In turn a given set of social relations of production (inter-class relations combined with intra-class relations) can promote, or fetter, the development of productive forces. Changes occur in society partly because of the changes in the mode of production in “the narrow sense,” i.e., the ways in which, and the efficiency with which, means of subsistence and production are produced. Society has been going through “a long course of development,” or “a series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange” (Marx and Engels 1848, 15).

For a period of time, there is more or less a smooth and harmonious development of productive forces. But a time comes when the development of productive forces beyond a limit becomes incompatible with the existing relations of production (existing inter-class and intra-class relations), which become a fetter on the further development of productive forces. This incompatibility (or contradiction) takes different forms in different class societies, and results in a crisis of production and subsistence. This crisis, under favourable political conditions, contributes to one mode of production giving way to another. Consider slavery and feudalism. The feudal system of production was superior to, and superseded, the slavery-based mode of production (where the ruling class had to constantly monitor the slaves who were a part of the means of production). But feudalism, within which bourgeois relations were developing, went into crisis because: “the conditions under which feudal society produced and exchanged, the feudal organisation of agriculture and manufacturing industry, in one word, the feudal relations of property became no longer compatible with the already developed productive forces; they became so many fetters” (Marx and Engels 1848, 17). So, “They had to be burst asunder; they were burst asunder” (17). But the theory of historical change is not yet complete: more than economics is at play.

When the development of productive forces is fettered, this adversely affects the economic interest of contending classes, and fuels class struggle. Class struggle, of course, always goes on because of exploitation, as we have seen. But when class struggle happens in a context of society-wide crisis of production and exchange, then the importance of class struggle is valorized. The exploited class wants to be free from the crisis through emancipation from the ruling class. And the ruling class, whose economic interest in the continuation of the appropriation of wealth from the labour/income of the exploited class is negatively affected by the crisis of production and exchange, wishes to shift the burden of the crisis to the exploited class and to hold on to its control over the means of production. So, apart
from the *structural* contradiction, and resultant economic crisis, of feudal production, *class struggle* against feudal forms of production and exchange contributed to the emergence of capitalism. “The French Revolution . . . abolished feudal property in favour of bourgeois property” (Marx and Engels 1848, 20). Every class struggle is ultimately “a political struggle” (19). This is because the existence of classes is connected to state power.

Indeed, no class society can exist without the public power, the state, whose main role is to keep the exploited in check. “Political power, properly so called,” i.e., the state, “is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another” (Marx and Engels 1848, 27). The class that controls the means of production, more or less, controls public political power. The degree of separation of the state from the ruling class, at the level of agency or personnel, is a contingent matter. In other words, economic processes underlie political and cultural processes. *Manifesto’s* social theory (historical materialism) represents an application of Marx and Engels’s materialist dialectics. This is indicated by Engels who says in his “Preface to The 1883 German Edition” of *Manifesto*:

The basic thought running through the Manifesto . . . [is] that economic production, and the structure of society of every historical epoch necessarily arising therefrom, constitute the foundation for the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently (ever since the dissolution of the primaeval communal ownership of land) all history has been a history of class struggles, of struggles between exploited and exploiting, between dominated and dominating classes at various stages of social evolution; that this struggle, however, has now reached a stage where the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) can no longer emancipate itself from the class which exploits and oppresses it (the bourgeoisie), without at the same time forever freeing the whole of society from exploitation, oppression, class struggles. (Marx and Engels 1848, 6)

Thus, taken together, the claims of *Manifesto* as a *totality* advocate an approach where a) economics, politics, and culture are interconnected, with the ultimate primacy of the economic, and b) these building blocks comprise the totality that is society (politics and culture will be discussed in greater details below).

### 3. Political Economy of Capitalism

#### 3.1. Capitalist Economic System and World-Market

As mentioned earlier, “the development of class antagonisms” has historically “assumed different forms at different epochs” or in different historically-existing
class societies (Marx and Engels 1848, 26). Capitalism is one of the different forms of class society. Like any other form of (class) society, the capitalist society should be seen in terms of distinctive “relations of production, of exchange and of property” (17). The capitalist society is a society under the rule of capital (money invested in production and exchange to make more money). And capital is a social power. The capitalist owns property (means of production) as personal property, but this property is actually social property, one that has been created by members of a society, and taken control over by the capitalist. “Capital is a collective product, and . . . only by the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion . . . Capital is therefore not only personal; it is a social power” (23).

Capitalism, the modern society under the rule of the bourgeoisie, is a progressive mode of production in many ways. One is that it promotes an immense development of the productive forces, and the consequent potential flourishing of human abilities. Manifesto makes the following stunning claim about a causal tendency of capitalist relations: “The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production” (Marx and Engels 1848, 16). There is proof of this. It has created wealth on a scale unimagined in previous societies: “The bourgeoisie has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together” (17). It has thus “been the first [among all ruling classes] to show what man’s activity can bring about” (16). It has awakened humanity’s “productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour” (17). Its admirable achievements include: “Subjection of Nature’s forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation . . . [and] canalisation of rivers” (17).

The bourgeoisie (of advanced countries) has achieved all these wonderful things in two major ways (of course, a major factor is the imperialist plunder which Manifesto does not talk about). One is that capitalist relations of production and exchange, once they start developing, have a tendency to unsettle precapitalist relations of production and thus to remove the relations that fetter the development of productive forces. The capitalist relations “put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations” and pitilessly tear asunder “the motley feudal ties that bound man” to his “natural superiors” (Marx and Engels 1848, 15). Secondly, driven by competitive relations, the bourgeoisie has resorted to a systematic (not sporadic or one-time) application of knowledge/science and the consequent transformation of nature–society relations. And, as the bourgeoisie causes the development of the productive forces (Marx abstracts from the environmental damage caused to nature by capital), this development contributes to its class power: “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” (15).
The fact that the bourgeois society is able to revolutionize the means of production in a systematic and unimaginable way is what distinguishes it from pre-capitalist societies. There is another major difference. “In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank” (Marx and Engels 1848, 14). However, the class structure of capitalist society (or the map of class relations) is a little clearer: “the epoch of the bourgeoisie . . . has simplified class antagonisms” (15). This is in the sense that “Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other—Bourgeoisie and Proletariat” (15). Associated with the claim about the simplified class structure of the capitalist society is the important claim that the bourgeoisie has produced its own grave-digger in the form of the proletariat (more on this later).

The development of productive forces under the rule of the capitalist class, like everything else, has taken a specific geographical form. Side by side with the concentration of property in a few hands, there has been geographical agglomeration of production and exchange at multiple scales (in a few localities in given countries, and in a few countries, and so on) in place of pre-capitalist localized system of production and exchange. Within countries, capitalism has had its origin in rural areas and in cities or city-regions (a city and its surrounding rural areas). In terms of its origin in the urban areas, Manifesto says: “From the serfs of the Middle Ages sprang the chartered burghers of the earliest towns. From these burgeses the first elements of the [urban] bourgeoisie were developed” (Marx and Engels 1848, 15). With the tendency towards the urbanization of productive forces and of capitalists and workers—i.e., their concentration in cities—emerges the town–country inequality: “The bourgeoisie has subjected the country [rural areas] to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural . . . [It] has made the country dependent on the towns” (Marx and Engels 1848, 17). The urbanization of capitalism is a part of an overall (spatial) agglomerative tendency within capitalism.

The bourgeoisie keeps more and more doing away with the scattered state of the population, of the means of production, and of property. It has agglomerated population, centralised the means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. (Marx and Engels 1848, 1)

Indeed, the scale of capitalist production and exchange has increased from the local to the national and the global. By connecting production and exchange as well as people of different countries, capitalism has thus created an essential condition for a socialist society, so capitalism is progressive in a second sense.
On the global scale, capitalism, in fact, originated in a few countries and then spread. In its very origin, capitalism has been a global phenomenon. There is a reason for this. Driven by competition which promotes productivity-enhancing technological change, a massive amount of product is produced in a country, but the effective demand for it may not exist in that country (at a given level of investment), so the bourgeoisie is forced to sell things abroad. But what if other countries, which may or may not be capitalist or capitalist enough, do not need products from another country? One answer is competitive price: if a country can produce things at a lower price, it can break open the markets of foreign countries. Besides, production for the world-market leads to the demand for foreign sources of raw materials (and energy), and this process contributes to capitalist development in the exporting countries. “Modern industry has established the world market . . . [which] 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” (Marx and Engels 1848, 15). The concomitant impulse to the development of transportation and communication technologies, under the impact of mercantile and later industrial capitalist relations, contributes to international trade and thus to capitalism’s globalness.22

There is probably no better account of globalization by an author who lives in a time when the tendencies towards globalization (and indeed towards advanced capitalism itself) were not yet fully manifested than Marx. Marx says: “The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere” (Marx and Engels 1848, 16). “The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country” (Marx and Engels 1848, 16). 23 This means that “In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations” (Marx and Engels 1848, 16) in the material sphere (production, exchange, and consumption). “The cheap prices of commodities are the heavy artillery with which it [the bourgeoisie of an advanced country] batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians’ [less developed countries’] intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate” (Marx and Engels 1848, 16).24 This is partly how

It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image. (Marx and Engels 1848, 16)
By promoting “the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication,” the capitalist class “draws all, even the most barbarian [under-developed] nations into the orbit of its rule” (Marx and Engels 1848, 16). There is more: a major effect of globalization is that capitalism has made less developed countries dependent on more developed ones, “nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West” (Marx and Engels 1848, 17). This dependence would be theorized as a part of imperialism by Lenin (1916).

While capitalism has promoted the development of productive forces within countries and at the global scale, such a process cannot be a linear affair. Capitalism experiences a crisis of production, which is expressed as what Marx called at the time: “the epidemic of over-production” or “commercial crises” (Marx and Engels 1848, 17). In *Manifesto*, Marx’s explanation for capitalist crisis is the one that applies to all class societies, albeit in different forms: a contradiction between productive forces and production relations. Under bourgeois property relations, wealth is produced only when profit will be made, but if profit cannot be made, wealth production is fettered. The colossal productive forces developed under “the conditions of bourgeois property . . . have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered” (17). In other words, “The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them” (17).

Everything comes to a standstill when crises occur. Not just that. “In these crises, a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed” (Marx and Engels 1848, 17). The periodic crises, which are unheard of in pre-capitalist societies “put the existence of the entire bourgeois society on its trial, each time more threateningly” (17).

Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation, had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed . . . [because] there is . . . too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce. (Marx and Engels 1848, 17)

But this is how—through creative destruction—the crisis is temporarily resolved. “The weapons,” i.e., the efficient production techniques, “with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself” (Marx and Engels 1848, 18). So,

the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeois and of its rule. (Marx and Engels 1848, 18)
The situation is one where the capitalist class has succeeded in creating something (i.e., massive development of productive forces) that it fails to control:

Modern bourgeois society . . . [which] has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. (Marx and Engels 1848, 18)

There are two ways in which the capitalist system responds to the crisis. One is the “enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces” (Marx and Engels 1848, 18) and of products, just referred to above. The other is globalization. Thus, the global scale of production/exchange and crisis-proneness are interconnected. A major reason for globalization is the crisis-proneness of capitalism, while globalization makes the crises more difficult to deal with. Capitalism seeks to resolve its crisis by “the conquest of new markets,” and by “the more thorough exploitation of the old ones” (18). This in turn paves “the way for more extensive and more destructive crises” and diminishes “the means whereby crises are prevented” (18). Crises become global. Originating in one country, they spread to other countries, because capitalism has linked together all the countries.

3.2. Capitalism and Culture

Capitalism’s impacts are not confined to the economic realm (production relations and productive forces, etc.). It produces enormous cultural impacts too: “The bourgeoisie . . . has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous ‘cash payment.’” “It has resolved personal worth into exchange value” (Marx and Engels 1848, 15–16). Traditionally, people in certain occupations enjoyed a degree of prestige. No longer. “The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers” (16). Even “Law, morality, religion, are . . . so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests” (16).

By fetishizing the cash nexus, the capitalist system has produced an impoverished view of human beings: “From the moment when labour can no longer be converted into capital, money, or rent into a [monopolizable] social power,” that is, “from the moment when individual property can no longer be transformed into bourgeois property, into capital, from that moment,” according to the bourgeoisie, “individuality vanishes” (Marx and Engels 1848, 23). In other words, one’s individuality is one that is bourgeois (or bourgeois-like), or else, one has no individuality. The capitalist relations have impacted the family too, which used to be a realm of extra-economic
inter-personal relations, one that is beyond the considerations of cash nexus. However, that has changed: “The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation” (16).

The capitalist system has not only increased the geographical/spatial scope of life and increased the scale of human interaction from the more local to the more global. It has quickened the pace of life. Time appears to pass quickly. Unlike the pre-capitalist times, the bourgeois epoch is characterized by “Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation,” so much so that “ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions . . . are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify” (Marx and Engels 1848, 16). In one word: “All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned” (16). Of course, these are the tendencies emanating from the structure of the relations of capitalism, the actual outcomes of which are not characterized by the finality that is suggested here by Marx. There are residues or remnants from the past that are combined with modern capitalist development in specific times and places. But overall, capitalist culture dominates pre-capitalist (type) culture.

Capitalism has brought enormous changes in the culture of consumption and consumption of culture. First of all, people in one country consume things from other countries: “In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes” (Marx and Engels 1848, 16). Then in place of a national culture and literature there is a tendency towards the formation of a world literature (that coexists with national and sub-national traditions). There is thus a tendency toward cultural globalization that exists with a tendency towards economic globalization, which produces a world-market or world-economy. There is a general universalization of human interaction, socially and culturally, and not just materially: “The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property” of [multi-national] humanity (16). “National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature” (16). In fact, Manifesto itself is an exemplar of world literature, with its un-ceasing popularity (see Figure 1).

3.3. Capitalism and the State

The bourgeois is not just in control of the economic and cultural conditions of society. It also controls politics and the state. It is the economic and cultural master. It is also the political master. “Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class” (Marx and Engels 1848, 15). It was an oppressed class under “the sway of the feudal nobility,” but “since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world market,
[it] conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway” (15). In fact, Manifesto famously claims: “The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie” (15). Implicit in the above claim is the idea that the state, over the long term, looks after the common affairs of the class of capitalists (at the expense of those of the masses), and not necessarily the interests of every single capitalist. Also implicit is the idea that to meet the common affairs, the state may need a degree of independence vis a vis individual competing capitalists, including capitalists of different regions and sectors.

Just as the spatial scale of the system of production and exchange has got larger, so has the scale of public power (i.e., the political regulation of society’s common affairs). The scalar character of economy and that of politics have got connected. We have seen that the capitalist class has geographically “agglomerated population, centralised the means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands” (Marx and Engels 1848, 17). The necessary consequence of this economic process of centralization is “political centralization”: “Independent, or but loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments, and systems of taxation, became lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class-interest, one frontier, and one customs-tariff” (17). Of course, this process is geographically uneven and an ongoing process (especially in the Global South).

4. Political Economy of the Working Class

4.1. Workers’ Experience of Misery and Exploitation

The working class comprises men and women “who must sell themselves piecemeal” (Marx and Engels 1848, 18), as they have little to no property. The political economy of the capitalist class (in terms of what it does and what can happen to it) is internally connected to the political economy of the working class. “The essential conditions for the existence and for the sway of the bourgeois class is the formation and augmentation of capital,” and “the condition for capital is wage-labour” (21), which is the source of surplus value or profit converted to capital. So, “In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed” (18). There cannot be capital without wage-labour.

The proletariat as a class has multiple class origins, like the bourgeoisie itself. The proletariat “is recruited from all classes of the population” (Marx and Engels 1848, 18). Small-scale property owners become proletarianized as they cannot compete with capitalist production and as their specialized skills are no longer
needed.\textsuperscript{33} Even a capitalist proper can be proletarianized because they cannot successfully compete with their brothers and sisters.\textsuperscript{34}

The early proletarians were men. Gradually, the class has got feminized partly because of the progress of mechanization, which lessens the demand for “muscular” energy.\textsuperscript{35} “The less the skill and exertion of strength implied in manual labour, in other words, the more modern industry becomes developed, the more is the labour of men superseded by that of women” (Marx and Engels 1848, 18). Among other things, this indicates that capitalism is, more or less, gender neutral at an abstract (general) level: “Differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class. All are instruments of labour, more or less, expensive to use, according to their age and sex” (Marx and Engels 1848, 18). This claim anticipates Lenin (1914), who said: “it makes no difference to the hired hand” whether he (or she) is exploited chiefly by the white male capitalists rather than the black female bourgeoisie.\textsuperscript{36} All men, women and children are tendentially reduced to one objective identity: all of them must sell their ability to work or starve.\textsuperscript{37}

The proletariat experiences a life of misery. The experience of workers is one of exploitation. The working class is subject to primary exploitation in the workplace (“exploitation proper”), and secondary exploitation. Exploitation, or primary exploitation, fundamentally refers to the appropriation of surplus labour from workers by capitalists, which implies that capitalists materially benefit at the expense of workers. “[T]he cost of production” of workers “is restricted, almost entirely, to the means of subsistence” that they require for their maintenance (Marx and Engels 1848, 18), and for their generational reproduction, so workers’ wage at best covers the cost of their reproduction. But the net product that they produce is more than what they receive in the form of wages (which are often less than what is needed to meet basic needs). On the one hand, the price of labour power, like that of any commodity, “is equal to its cost of production,” and on the other hand, the nature of work is such that workers require “only the simplest, the most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack” (18). Therefore, for the working class as a whole, “In proportion . . . as the repulsiveness of the work increases, the wage decreases” (18).

For most people, individual skills and intellectual ability are meaningless. The work life of the common people is charmless; it is not a source of enjoyment. Workers become an appendage of the machine, the purpose of which is to increase profit for capitalists, and not necessarily to decrease the burden of the toil of workers.

Workers’ life is one of insecurity, or precarity, in terms of employment and wages. Workers “live only so long as they find work,” and they “find work only so long as their labour increases capital” (Marx and Engels 1848, 18). “The increasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their
livelihood more and more precarious” as people lose their employment and as employment becomes increasingly irregular (19). This means that sometimes, being exploited is better than not being exploited. The identity of the working class is that of a class which exists for the sake of, and in the interest of, the capitalist class. As the owner of commodity labour power, workers are “exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market” (18). It is not just that wages are low and are driven downward. Wages fluctuate enormously: “The growing competition among the bourgeois, and the resulting commercial crises, make the wages of the workers ever more fluctuating” (19).

Capitalists resort to various mechanisms to extract more labour from the working class every hour and every day. These include: “prolongation of the working hours” and “the increase of the work exacted in a given time or by increased speed of machinery, etc.” (Marx and Engels 1848, 18). Apart from being economically exploited, workers at work are subjected to the despotic power of the capitalists. This power is directly exercised—i.e., bureaucratically—by capitalists or by those whom capitalists appoint. Crowded into the workplaces, workers “are organised like soldiers” (18). “As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants” (18). Capitalists also use machines to control labour.38 As “slaves of the bourgeois class,” workers “are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine” (18). Such control over men and women in the workplace is necessary to increase exploitation and reduce resistance to exploitation. And “[t]he more openly this despotism [in the workplace] proclaims gain to be its end and aim, the more petty, the more hateful and the more embittering it is” (18).

Workers are also subjected to secondary exploitation, which happens outside of the workplace: “No sooner is the exploitation of the labourer by the manufacturer [capitalist in the workplace], so far, at an end, that he receives his wages in cash, than he is set upon by the other portions of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker, etc.” (Marx and Engels 1848, 18).39 And, apart from being exploited in the sphere of economy, workers are subjected to subjugation in the political sphere. Workers are slaves not only of the bourgeois class but also “of the bourgeois State” (18). This is illustrated by the fact that when workers go on a strike, they often encounter the full force of the state in the form of the police, courts, etc.

4.2. Proletarian Struggle

The proletariat is not just a suffering class. It is also a fighting class: Marx rejects the reformers’ idea that the working-class people suffer from the lack of “any historical initiative or any independent political movement” (Marx and Engels 1848, 32) to change their own conditions.40 In fact, “With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie” (18).
The anti-capitalist struggle does not appear at once. It is a protracted process. And it is a temporally and geographically uneven process. And the struggle takes different forms at different stages of its political development: “The proletariat goes through various stages of development” (Marx and Engels 1848, 18). Initially, “the contest is carried on by individual labourers, then by the workpeople of a factory, then by the operative of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them” (18). This is still the pre-trade union state of proletarian struggle. With the progress of capitalist development, “the workers begin to form combinations (Trades’ Unions) against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages” (19). They also establish “permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts” (19). And “Here and there, the contest breaks out into riots” (19). Gradually, “the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes” (19; italics added). A scalar transformation of workers’ politics happens: as proletarian struggles are transformed from more localized struggles to struggles at the national scale, what are merely economic struggles between a group of workers and their employers (within a factory or within a trade or sector) become class struggle “proper.” After all, at the national scale is concentrated state power that defends the basic interests of the bourgeois class against the masses.

Workers exist as a class objectively—after all, capitalism cannot exist without them. But they may not always exist in a form in which they can fight in their own interests vis-á-vis the capitalist class. There are factors that undermine their organization and action. One is the geography of workers’ life: the fact that labourers are “scattered over the whole country” (Marx and Engels 1848, 19). Another is “the isolation of the labourers, due to competition” among them for jobs, etc. (21). Indeed, “[T]he organisation of the proletarians into a class, and, consequently into a political party, is continually being upset . . . by the competition between the workers themselves” (19). Besides, there are sections of the proletariat—the lumpen elements which are hardly employed and who are part of the lowest layers of society—that may serve as “a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue” (20), even if they “may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution” (20). They can indeed be agents of capitalist politics.

However, there are many processes that promote unity among workers too. The bourgeoisie needs workers. “[T]he condition for capital is wage-labour” (Marx and Engels 1848, 21), so capitalist accumulation increases the number of workers who are concentrated in cities and city-regions. This increases its fighting power: “with the development of industry, the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more” (19). Workers’ unity is “helped on by the improved means of
communication that are created by” capitalism in its own interest, which “place the workers of different localities in contact with one another” (19). This process helps to “centralise the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes” (19).44

Besides, the capitalist competition that drives mechanization, and expansion of capitalist production and exchange, has a tendency to create similar working-class conditions in different places and countries. This homogenization process can promote unity among workers. “The various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalised, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labour, and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level” (Marx and Engels 1848, 19). In all nations, workers have no property or very little of it; and all nations are the same as regards “modern subjection to capital,” which tends to strip the working class “of every trace of national character” (20). In addition, intra-propertied class conflicts can politicize the working class. In some contexts, the bourgeoise unites and politicizes the working class by mobilizing it in its own fight against non-proletarian classes (and this is especially true in the Global South). In many ways, “collisions between the classes of the old society further . . . the course of development of the proletariat” (19).45

The bourgeoise itself is split into many factions. One faction fights another and in the process politicizes the working class. One faction fights “with those portions of the bourgeoise itself, whose interests have become antagonistic to the progress of industry” (Marx and Engels 1848, 19). The bourgeoise of one country fights “at all times with the bourgeoise of foreign countries” (19). And, in all these battles with non-proletarian classes, including with foreign capitalists, the bourgeoise of a country is “compelled to appeal to the proletariat, to ask for help, and thus, to drag it into the political arena” (19). This is how the bourgeoise itself unwittingly “supplies the proletariat with its own elements of political and general education; in other words, it furnishes the proletariat with weapons for fighting the bourgeoise” (19).

The bourgeoise is a very small minority, so it is forced to rule in the name of the proletariat even if most of the things it does in its own interests hurt the proletarians: “Free trade: for the benefit of the working class. Protective duties: for the benefit of the working class. Prison Reform: for the benefit of the working class” (Marx and Engels 1848, 32). In other words, “the bourgeois is a bourgeois—for the benefit of the working class” (32). In its own interests, the bourgeoise appeals to the proletariat, and in the process contributes to the proletariat’s politicization. This politicization is also helped partly by the fact that sometimes, sections of the capitalist class—in particular, some bourgeois ideologists—get de-classed and go over to the proletariat and contribute to the working-class politics, at least intellectually.46
The working-class struggle produces some concessions (e.g., pro-worker legislation). “It compels legislative recognition of particular interests of the workers, by taking advantage of the divisions among the bourgeoisie itself. Thus, the ten-hours’ bill in England was carried” (Marx and Engels 1848, 19). In their struggle against capitalism, “Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time” (19). However, “The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers” (19), because ultimately the aim of the struggle is a revolution against capitalism, against wage-slavery.

5. From Economic Class Struggle to Revolution

5.1. Need to Go beyond Capitalism

Capitalism is based on the creation and expansion of the proletariat. The proletariat in turn can become capitalism’s grave-diggers. By objectively subjecting workers to abject exploitation, the bourgeoisie drives them to fight against capitalism: “What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers” (Marx and Engels 1848, 21). In fact, “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 proletarians” (18), and this is the third sense in which capitalism is progressive. But: why—why can workers not fight for only small reforms?

In previous societies, “All the preceding classes” (e.g., slaves, serfs, petty-bourgeoisie, etc.) “that got the upper hand sought to fortify their already acquired status by subjecting society at large to their conditions of appropriation” (Marx and Engels 1848, 20). For example, “The serf, in the period of serfdom, raised himself to membership in the commune, just as the petty bourgeois, under the yoke of the feudal absolutism, managed to develop into a bourgeois” (20). The proletariat as the rising class of the capitalist society is different. Workers’ struggle that is merely economic will not meet its needs within the limit of capitalist society. The proletarians have no property. “They have nothing of their own to secure and to fortify; their mission is to destroy all previous securities for, and insurances of, individual property” (20). Their ability to work is the only thing they have, but this cannot be put to work unless it is combined with the means of production that they lack. “The proletarians cannot become masters of the productive forces” in a future society, “except by abolishing their own previous mode of appropriation, and thereby also every other previous mode of appropriation” (20). Their conditions cannot be improved durably and significantly under capitalist property relations:

The modern labourer . . . instead of rising with the process of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes
a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth. (Marx and Engels 1848, 20)

This means that the bourgeoisie is unfit to rule:

It becomes evident, that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society . . . because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie, in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society. (Marx and Engels 1848, 21)

In class societies, there is class struggle. All oppressed classes have engaged in class struggle. The proletarian class struggle within and against capitalism is different in that its aim is to remove class relations from the map of human history. In self-emancipating, the proletariat emancipates the whole society.

5.2. Proletarian Vision of Communism

A new society has to be a communist/socialist society. “The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property” (Marx and Engels 1848, 22). In capitalism, “private property is already done away” or almost done away “with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths” (23). Communism wishes “to do away with a form of property, the necessary condition for whose existence is the non-existence of any property for the immense majority of society” (23). So, communism is the abolition of private property in its capitalist form, which “is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few” (23).

In capitalism, “What . . . the wage-labourer appropriates by means of his labour, merely suffices to prolong and reproduce a bare existence” (Marx and Engels 1848, 23). This “personal appropriation of the products of labour” will not be abolished, but what will be abolished is “the miserable character of this appropriation, under which the labourer lives merely to increase capital, and is allowed to live only in so far as the interest of the ruling class requires it” (23). In contrast to bourgeois society, where “living labour is but a means to increase accumulated labour,” under communism, accumulated labour will be “but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the labourer” (23). Communism will not deprive people “of the power to appropriate the products of society” (24). But communism will deprive people “of the power to subjugate the labour of others by means of such appropriations” (24).
Communism will vanish that view of individuality where an individual is seen as “no other person than the bourgeois, than the middle-class owner of property” (Marx and Engels 1848, 24), one who monopolizes the social power of wealth produced by the whole society and who transforms individual private property to capitalist private property. Under communism, “This person must, indeed, be swept out of the way, and made impossible” (24; italics added). Communism will replace “the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms” with “an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” (27).

Communism is also a society where there is no class exploitation nor is there national (or racial) oppression:

In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another will also be put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end. (Marx and Engels 1848, 25)

5.3. Need for Communist Revolution
Communism can be only achieved by revolution, which is the ultimate point of proletarian class struggle:

The Communists [those who fight for communism] 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. (Marx and Engels 1848, 26)

Because of the comprehensive vision of change in the existing society that drives it, “The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involved the most radical rupture with traditional ideas” (Marx and Engels 1848, 26).

Communist revolution—preparation for it—is a process. It does involve fighting for reforms. As revolutionists, communists, however, reject the pursuit of reforms as the only and final goal of class struggle. Communists reject those who wish to merely pursue reforms in the economic conditions, the reforms “that in no respect affect the relations between capital and labour, but, at the best, lessen the cost, and simplify the administrative work, of bourgeois government” (Marx and Engels 1848, 31). They therefore reject reformist approaches according to which communist class struggle is “destructive” (31). These approaches include the idea
that: capitalism can be regulated to redress social grievances;49 material conditions of existence can be changed by administrative reforms, without the revolutionary abolition of the bourgeois relations of production; small-scale (commercial) production can be promoted to solve society’s problems; and one should try to “improve the condition of every member of society, even that of the most favoured” and therefore “all political, and especially all revolutionary action” should be rejected and conditions can be improved “by peaceful means” (Marx and Engels 1848, 32).

The communists do, and must, fight for reforms within capitalism: “The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class,” but their approach to the fight for reforms is not reformist because: “in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement” (Marx and Engels 1848, 34). “In all these movements, they bring to the front, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time” (Marx and Engels 1848, 34). The aim of the communist class struggle is not merely to get some concessions within capitalism but the “overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat” (Marx and Engels 1848, 22) and the establishment of a proletarian state: “the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class” (Marx and Engels 1848, 26). This is because, as Marx and Engels write in the “Preface to The 1872 German Edition” after their careful reflection on the experience of the Paris Commune, “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes” (Marx and Engels 1848, 4). The capitalist state cannot wither away. It—at least all of its anti-workers or anti-people apparatuses—has to be smashed. This is the point Lenin (1949) developed in his The State and Revolution.

Communist struggle is multi-scalar. But ultimately, it is international or global. The working people have no country, because in all countries they are, more or less, property-less and experience capitalist subjugation and misery.

Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word. (Marx and Engels 1848, 25; italics in the original)

So, its struggle initially takes a national form: “Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie” (Marx and Engels 1848, 20). And, such a struggle, given
Marx’s internationalist approach to economy and politics, would have to be *a part of* the multi-scalar, and indeed, international, struggle for communism, because even if successful, a struggle against the capitalist class in one country cannot produce communism in that country isolated from the rest of the world. Communism cannot be established in a single country, poor or rich, given the global character of capitalist production and exchange (and finance).

In some cases, the communists have to fight along with less revolutionary forces, and enter into an alliance with social-democratic forces.\(^\text{50}\) But if they do, “they never cease, for a single instant, to instill into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat” (Marx and Engels 1848, 34). So, while communists are the most radical, they reject sectarianism. This advice is prescient given the extreme disunity among Marxists/communists in the world today (on Marx’s politics as basically non-sectarian class politics, see Das 2019). Communists, Marx says, “have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole,” nor do they “set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement” (Marx and Engels 1848, 22). “In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries,” communists “bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality” (Marx and Engels 1848, 22). And “In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole” (Marx and Engels 1848, 22). “In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things” (Marx and Engels 1848, 22).

The communist revolution is a sharp break with the existing society, but the construction of communist society will happen in interconnected “stages” (not to be conflated with the idea of democratic revolution (in some form) now, and socialist revolution in future) on the basis of specific measures that the proletariat, the new ruling class, will take.

The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degree, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organised as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible. (Marx and Engels 1848, 26)

On taking power the proletariat will make “despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production” and it will do this “by means of [certain] measures” (Marx and Engels 1848, 26).\(^\text{51}\) These measures will, of course, be different in different countries. In the context of most advanced countries, these measures would include: abolition of property in land and application of
all rents of land to public purposes; a heavy progressive or graduated income tax; abolition of rights of inheritance; confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels; centralization of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly; centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state; extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state; the bringing into cultivation of waste-lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan; equal liability of all to work; combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries, and gradual abolition of all the distinction between town and country by a more equitable distribution of the populace over the country; free education for all children in public schools, and abolition of children’s factory labour in its present form, and so on (Marx and Engels 1848, 26–27). Many of these measures apply to the Global South, and many of these measures have been taken in, for example, contemporary China, where the current state owes its origin to a communist revolution in 1949.52

5.4. Who Will Bell the Capitalist Cat? The Question of Key Revolutionary Agent53

While the proletariat’s interest is in the communist revolution, who will bring about such a revolution? The proletariat is not the only suffering class. Many other classes and groups suffer. Could another class or strata bring about such a revolution? No. Non-proletarian suffering masses cannot be truly revolutionary:

The lower middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are therefore not revolutionary . . . they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. (Marx and Engels 1848, 20)

Sometimes the non-proletarian classes/strata can be revolutionary, but their revolutionary purpose and action are limited to reproducing capitalism in a modified form, i.e., capitalism without landlords, usurers, greedy merchants, authoritarian officers/politicians, etc.

If by chance, they are revolutionary, they are only so in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat; they thus defend not their present, but their future interests, they desert their own standpoint to place themselves at that of the proletariat. (Marx and Engels 1848, 20)

The proletariat is the only revolutionary class. “Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary
class... [T]he proletariat is its special and essential product” (Marx and Engels 1848, 20). If “the condition for capital is wage-labour” (21), i.e., if wage-labour is the source of capitalist wealth, then this class can also stop the production of that wealth. This ability to challenge capitalism is helped by the fact that the proletarians have the numbers to their advantage: men and women who dominantly depend on wages to live—proletarians—are the majority in most of the large countries. This lends a unique character to the proletarian movement against capitalism: “All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority” (20). The proletariat can meet its needs only under communism. And the main agent to fight for that society can only be the proletariat when it achieves class consciousness and is politically organized.54 There can be no substitute for the proletariat even if the proletariat may have to be allied with independent, non-exploiting small-scale producers of goods and services (in rural and semi-rural areas) (as Lenin was to emphasize later).

6. Conclusion

The two kinds of knowledge claim in Manifesto—propositional/referential and critical-political—remarkably anticipate two things: 1) Marx’s and Engels’s thinking in their “mature” work, 2) many claims of 20th-century revolutionary Marxism of Lenin and his legacy. Besides, many claims of Manifesto speak to the actuality of the capitalist world as observed in the 20th century and now, to a much larger extent than during the time when it was written. Manifesto anticipates the capitalist world of the 20th and 21st centuries rather well. Its claims speak to the processes that had just begun in the mid-19th century and are ongoing. These claims are schematically presented in the Appendix in extremely brief and empirically verifiable and/or conceptually defensible forms, reflecting a summary of the foregoing discussion.

The lessons of Manifesto for the newly radicalizing public, including specially the youth, are clear. Manifesto takes a class approach to society: society should be seen in terms of the exploiting and exploited classes that constitute it. The relations between classes are objective and antagonistic as they involve a) differential control over property (a minority controls property and the majority do not) and b) exploitation of the property-less (or property-poor) by the propertied. Capitalism is a form of class society. It is revolutionary, and it is better, relative to precapitalism: it promotes the development of productive forces, it simplifies class structure, and it brings into being a class (the proletariat) which can emancipate itself and in the process emancipate all other oppressed classes, and which can politically lead the non-proletarian suffering masses. The proletarian
revolutionary struggle process does not exclude the fight for reforms, and it must shed sectarianism. Socialism/communism is more than egalitarianism or a few pro-worker policies. The fight for socialism requires more than the fight for reforms. The fight for socialism/communism requires working-class unity based on principles that are informed by a revolutionary class theory of society.

Appendix

Selected Theses from The Communist Manifesto

1. People should be seen in terms of classes and not as people or humans as such. In the context of national oppression, people may be seen in terms of a nation which in turn is seen in terms of the classes (and class-fractions) that constitute the nation.

2. Classes have antagonistic relations, which exist because the class that has control over property (means of production) appropriates surplus product from the class that does not.

3. The class that controls property, more or less, controls political power, which is the organized power of one class for oppressing another.

4. Antagonistic class relations cause class struggle, but its outcome is not fixed, as it can cause a revolutionary reconstitution of society or the common ruin of classes.

5. One class society changes into another when production relations fetter the development of productive forces, causing a crisis, which increases the impact of class struggle.

6. Capitalism is a form of class society, which is more and more splitting into two great hostile classes, the bourgeoisie, which controls property, and the proletariat, which does not.

7. Driven by competitive relations, capitalism promotes an immense development of productive forces and the potential flourishing of human abilities.

8. Capitalism has caused an agglomeration of production and exchange in a few areas/ countries. The urbanization of capitalism is a part of this agglomerative tendency.

9. It produces uneven development between villages and cities and between nations.

10. The need to expand markets and the consequent development of transportation and communication technologies contribute to capitalism’s globalness.

11. Driven by competition, capitalism experiences a crisis of production, which is expressed as the epidemic of “over-production.”
12. Capitalism seeks to resolve its crisis partly by conquering foreign markets, which advanced countries break open by the artillery of their lower prices (and coercion).

13. Global capitalism has made less developed countries dependent on more developed ones.

14. Capitalism has produced immense cultural impact as it reduces human social relations, including in the family, to relations based on naked self-interest and money relations.

15. With its tendency to constantly revolutionize economic production and ideas, capitalism has quickened the pace of life. “All that is solid” today “melts into air” tomorrow.

16. There is a general universalization of human interaction, socially and culturally, and not just materially. There is universal interdependence among nations.

17. Capitalism has changed the consumption of culture and culture of consumption, as people in one country consume material and cultural products from other countries.

18. In place of a national literature, a world literature is forming; Manifesto is an example.

19. By controlling the economy, the capitalist state controls the state. The capitalist state is but a committee for the purpose of managing the common affairs of the bourgeois class.

20. The working class comprises men and women who must sell their ability to work. The bourgeois class depends on the augmentation of capital, which depends on wage-labour.

21. The proletariat is recruited from small-scale property owners who cannot compete with capitalist production and whose skills are no longer in demand because of mechanization.

22. The working class has got progressively feminized, partly thanks to mechanization. But at a general level, capital is relatively indifferent to the gender of the workers it exploits.

23. Working men and women are subjected to primary exploitation in the workplace and secondary exploitation outside it (by landlords, shopkeepers, pawnbrokers, etc.).

24. Capitalists increase the extraction of labour from workers by making them work longer hours and by increasing the work exacted per hour or by increasing the speed of machinery.

25. Work life is not a source of enjoyment because of the extensive use of machinery, which enslaves the worker, and the division of labour causing extreme specialization.
26. Placed under the command of a hired hierarchy of officers in the workplace, workers are subjected to despotic control to increase the amount of work and reduce their resistance.

27. The proletariat is not just a suffering class. The conditions created by capitalism compel it to be a fighting class too.

28. The working-class struggle produces some concessions (e.g., pro-worker legislation). But ultimately the aim of the struggle is a revolution against capitalism, as capitalism cannot meet the needs of the working class.

29. Its struggle goes through many stages: pre-trade union struggle, trade union struggle and political struggle against wage-slavery itself.

30. Capitalism impedes working-class struggle. Competition for work imposed by capitalism on workers disunites them. Lumpen elements are hired as capitalist agents.

31. Capitalism also promotes working-class struggle by increasing the number of workers and concentrating them in a few areas/cities and by improved means of communication.

32. Expansion of capitalist production and exchange tends to create similar working-class conditions in different places/countries, and this can promote workers’ unity.

33. There are non-proletarian classes who suffer but cannot be revolutionary against capitalism: they only try to save themselves from extinction and want a better capitalism.

34. The proletariat is the only potentially revolutionary class. Its conditions cannot be durably and significantly improved without the abolition of wage-slavery.

35. The fight for reforms is important, but it has to be a part of the fight to abolish capitalism, i.e., the fight for communism, a society without class exploitation or national oppression.

36. The construction of communism can only begin when the proletariat by overthrowing the capitalist state in a revolutionary process becomes the new ruling class and takes a series of measures, which involve making inroads into capitalist private property.

Notes

1. Lenin was right to insist: “Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement” (Lenin 1902, 12).

2. This time coincides with the rise of postmodernism, identity politics, etc., the kind of projects that are antithetical to Marxism.
3. According to Wikipedia:

The Google Ngram Viewer . . . charts the frequencies of any set of search strings using a yearly count of n-grams found in sources printed between 1500 and 2019 in Google's text corpora in English, Chinese (simplified), French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Russian, or Spanish.


5. I am not distinguishing between “communist” and “socialist” in this article.

6. In Marxist philosophy, “things” in the world are seen as constituted by their internal relations, and as they emerge/develop/exist through processes, the relations and processes are seen as containing contradictions which drive change. This philosophy stresses the importance of objective material conditions over thinking and over political processes, both of which in turn influence objective conditions (for a recent discussion of these ideas, see Ollman 2003; Das 2017b, 175–211).

7. Marx (1859) implies in his famous Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy that it is difficult to produce claims about the political aspects of society “with the precision of natural science,” something that is possible with claims about “the material transformation of the economic conditions of production.” The political realm is an extremely concrete realm, and making general statements that apply to all circumstances is fraught with danger.

8. Sections 3–4 suggest that Manifesto’s approach to labour is dialectical (it explores its economic and political life in relation to the capitalist class and the capitalist system) in contrast to the approach to labour in the academic subdisciplines such as labour geography, labour sociology, labour history, etc., which generally take a more voluntarist approach to labour (for a critique, see Das 2017b, chap. 4).

9. All page references to The Communist Manifesto are from Marx and Engels (1848).

10. Property is understood as property in the means of production, the things that are used to produce other things, including means of production and subsistence.

11. Marx and Engels wrote:

Hitherto, every form of society [with a written record] has been based . . . on the antagonism of oppressing and oppressed classes. But in order to oppress a class, certain conditions must be assured to it under which it can, at least, continue its slavish existence. (Marx and Engels 1848, 20)

12. The question is never: why is there no class struggle? Class struggle happens always. The question is, why is it that class struggle is overt now and covert at another time, and why do its intensity and forms vary across times and places?

13. Marx says one of his own contributions to class theory was to show “that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat” (Marx 1852; italics added). “[T]he Marxian doctrine . . . indicates the tasks facing this class [i.e., the working class] and demonstrates the inevitable replacement (by virtue of economic development) of the present system by a new order” (Lenin 1908; italics added). The term “inevitable,” to me, simply means that: unless class struggle leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, communism cannot be achieved (Marx), and unless the present system (capitalism) is replaced by communism, humanity’s problems cannot be solved (Lenin). Whether the intended outcomes are actually realized depends on the outcome of class struggle. After all, “the emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself,” Engels emphasized this view of Marx and his, in his preface to the 1888 English edition of Manifesto (Marx and Engels 1848, 8). So, Marxism is not teleological. To enthusiastically expect X to happen does not mean that X is the purpose of history that is independent of the structural causation and of human/class agency. To say that under certain conditions, X will tend to cause Y (and not Z) is not teleological either.
14. The development of productive forces is indicative of humanity’s control over nature and signifies the ease with which human society is able to produce its conditions of existence (both means of subsistence and means of production, including raw materials extracted from nature and tools used).

15. The fettering happens when productive forces, instead of developing, stagnate, or go backward, or when the rate of growth in the development of productive forces slows down. Fettering can be (approximately) expressed as stagnant rate of economic growth in production and exchange, negative economic growth, and deceleration in the rate of growth. On the fettering concept in the recent Marxist theoretical literature, see Cohen (2000).

16. Marx and Engels wrote:

The feudal system of industry, in which industrial production was monopolised by closed guilds, now no longer sufficed for the growing wants of the new markets. The manufacturing system took its place. The guild-masters were pushed on one side by the manufacturing middle class; division of labour between the different corporate guilds vanished in the face of division of labour in each single workshop. (Marx and Engels 1848, 15)

Meantime the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever rising. Even manufacturer no longer sufficed. Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionised industrial production. The place of manufacture was taken by the giant, Modern Industry; the place of the industrial middle class by industrial millionaires, the leaders of the whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois. (Marx and Engels 1848, 15)

17. Marx and Engels (1848, 16) wrote, “It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former Exodus of nations and crusades.”

18. One can, of course, add to the list, all the more powerful achievements in the last 200 years or so (e.g., computers, biotechnology, AI, space science, neuroscience, modern medicine, including messenger RNA [mRNA] vaccines that teach human body cells how to make a protein that triggers an immune response, etc.).

19. Marx and Engels (1848, 14) wrote, “In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations.”

20. The phrase “more and more” speaks to a causal tendency (explained below), the outcome of which is uneven in time and space, and implies that there are classes other than these two major classes. Marx discussed various classes other than capital and labour, in his own political studies of, for example, France, England, etc. Lenin ([1899] 1964) and Mao (1933) after him did the same in their own studies of class relations in Russia and China, respectively. In the recent Marxist literature, scholars (e.g., Wright) have drawn attention to non-proletarian and non-capitalist classes (managers; those who “own” monopolizable skill/expertise, etc.). For a critique of this literature, see Das (2017b).

21. It was Harvey who admirably theorized the urbanization of capital.

22. Marx and Engels wrote:

The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonisation of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development. (Marx and Engels 1848, 15)
23. Marx and Engels wrote:

[It] has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. (Marx and Engels 1848, 16)

24. Of course, Marx here abstracts from colonial or colonial type coercion. Apart from using the heavy artillery of cheap prices to batter down “Chinese walls” (i.e., economies of less developed countries), the bourgeoisie of advanced countries also uses coercive methods for the purpose: a case in point is the Opium War against China that the Western powers fought in order to break open the Chinese market. In recent times, coercive policies—these include war or threat of war, economic sanctions, loan conditionalities, etc.—of imperialist states and of imperialist state-like institutions (e.g., World Bank, IMF, NATO, WTO, etc.) are made use of in order to break open national economies in the Global South.

25. Marx wrote about an economic crisis like this decades before he presented his mature theory of crisis in Capital, vol. 3 as rooted in the tendency for the rate of profit to fall.

26. A young girl asks her father, “Why is it so cold in the house?” “We don’t have any coal,” he says. “But why is there no coal?” she wants to know. “Because I lost my job,” he replies. Still unsatisfied, she asks one more time—“And why did you lose your job?” To which he answers, “Because there is too much coal” (as told by: Professor Bertell Ollman).

27. This has potential implications for environmental damage and for a decline in soil fertility (which is mentioned later): when forests and farmland are forced to meet the demands of capitalist export markets, they tend to be subjected to more intense exploitation.

28. In recent times, online socialist literature, including the massive www.wsws.org, is an example of world literature, which reflects and shapes the recent growing trend towards radicalization of the masses. Wikipedia is another example of world literature.

29. Consider how the state has dealt with the 2008 economic crisis (it has basically bailed out the capitalist class) as opposed to the COVID-19 crisis that has been killing millions.

30. These ideas about the state, including the state as an “agent” of the capitalist class, are defended in Das (2022a), where the state and the capitalist class are conceptualized as two arms of the body of the capitalist class relationship (Marx and Engels 1848).

31. In some countries, the ways in which cities are administered (including how they earn taxes and how they spend) are fairly uniform, while in the United States, there is a lot of variation in this across cities.

32. It comes from various strata/classes: landlords; serfs; petty-bourgeoisie; merchants, etc. One can also add another layer: middle-class professionals (doctors and engineers, accountants, etc.) and government officers and politicians.

33. Marx and Engels wrote:

The lower strata of the middle class—the small tradespeople, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants—all these sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which Modern Industry is carried
on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly because their specialised skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production. (Marx and Engels 1848, 18)

34. Marx and Engels (1848, 19) wrote, “[E]ntire sections of the ruling class are, by the advance of industry, precipitated into the proletariat, or are at least threatened in their conditions of existence. These also supply the proletariat with fresh elements of enlightenment and progress.”

35. Of course, this is not the only reason for the feminization of the working class.

36. As a contemporary British Marxist, Eagleton (2011, 213) says: capitalism is characterized by “relative indifference to gender, ethnicity, social pedigree and so on when it comes to whom it can exploit or to whom it can peddle its wares.”

37. Of course, this does not mean that there is no need for the capitalist class to subject women to discrimination. On the capitalist logic of oppression of women (and racialized minorities), in part based on the work of Marx and Lenin, see Das (2022b).

38. In our times, various surveillance mechanisms and artificial intelligence are weapons in the hands of capitalists to control labour in the workplace.

39. One can add: real estate agents, and financial institutions (including payday loan institutions) lending money to buy houses, etc.

40. Some reformers “are conscious of caring chiefly for the interests of the working class, as being the most suffering class. Only from the point of view of being the most suffering class does the proletariat exist for them” (Marx and Engels 1848, 32).

41. Marx and Engels wrote:

They direct their attacks not against the bourgeois conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported wares that compete with their labour, they smash to pieces machinery, they set factories ablaze, they seek to restore by force the vanished status of the workman of the Middle Ages. (Marx and Engels 1848, 18)

42. Marx and Engels (1848, 21) wrote, “Wage-labour rests exclusively on competition between the labourers.”

43. Consider how these elements can be hired by the capitalist class and/or agents of its state to kill leaders of trade unions and working-class leaders.

44. Marx and Engels (1848, 19) wrote, “[T]hat union, to attain which the burghers of the Middle Ages, with their miserable highways, required centuries, the modern proletarian, thanks to railways, achieve in a few years.”

45. Marx and Engels wrote:

[T]he bourgeoisie . . . in order to attain its own political ends, is compelled to set the whole proletariat in motion . . . At this stage, therefore, the proletarians do not fight their enemies, but the enemies of their enemies, the remnants of absolute monarchy, the landowners, the non-industrial bourgeois, and the petty bourgeois. Thus, the whole historical movement is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie; every victory so obtained is a victory for the bourgeoisie. (Marx and Engels 1848, 19)

46. Marx and Engels wrote:

[In times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the progress of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. Just as, therefore, at an earlier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the
proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole. (Marx and Engels 1948, 19–20)

47. Revolutionaries are opposed to “social quacks who, by all manner of tinkering, professed to redress, without any danger to capital and profit, all sorts of social grievances, in both cases men outside the working-class movement, and looking rather to the ‘educated’ classes for support” (Marx and Engels 1848, 8).

48. Engels says, in his “Preface to The 1883 German Edition” of The Communist Manifesto, the struggle of the workers against the capitalists

has now reached a stage where the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) can no longer emancipate itself from the class which exploits and oppresses it (the bourgeoisie), without at the same time forever freeing the whole of society from exploitation, oppression, class struggles—this basic thought belongs solely and exclusively to Marx. (Marx and Engels 1848, 6)

49. Marx and Engels wrote (1848, 31), “A part of the bourgeoisie is desirous of redressing social grievances in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society.”

50. Marx provides many examples. “In France, the Communists ally with the Social-Democrats against the conservative and radical bourgeoisie, reserving, however, the right to take up a critical position in regard to phases and illusions traditionally handed down from the great Revolution” (Marx and Engels 1848, 34). “In Switzerland, they support the Radicals, without losing sight of the fact that this party consists of antagonistic elements, partly of Democratic Socialists, in the French sense, partly of radical bourgeois” (Marx and Engels 1848, 34). “In Poland, they support the party that insists on an agrarian revolution as the prime condition for national emancipation” (Marx and Engels 1848, 34). “In Germany, they fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy, and the petty bourgeoisie” (Marx and Engels 1848, 34). Of course, the idea that the proletariat can fight along with, or support, progressive bourgeois factions against, say, feudal-type forces, is a contentious issue. This not only goes against Marx’s own principle that the proletarians must maintain their political independence. This also betrays the fact that the bourgeoisie turns to reaction when mass struggle against feudal-type forces intensifies. On the other hand, when fascism is knocking on the door, the communist forces fighting by the side of social-democratic workers within a united front, this remains a useful tactic.

51. They “appear economically insufficient and untenable,” but “in the course of the movement,” they will “outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionising the mode of production” (Marx and Engels 1848, 26).

52. The Global South has a specificity: in some parts of the South, property owners appropriate surplus in ways that are not exactly capitalist. In this context, the land question—agrarian revolution—is very important. In the South, given that the bourgeoisie is linked to the feudal-type classes and given that it is scared that any struggle against non-capitalist exploiters might spill over to be an anti-capitalist struggle, the bourgeoisie will not support any struggle to eliminate the feudal remnants, so the land question and any pre-capitalist sources of oppression can be eliminated only by a proletarian government that comes on the back of the communist revolution.

53. This is an important question given that many Marxists (David Harvey, Leo Panitch, Erik Wright, Stephen Resnick, and Richard Wolff, among others) do not accept the key and leadership role of the proletariat in the fight against capitalism (see Das 2017b for a critique).

54. This is the class that produces the wealth in its capitalist form, without which there is no capitalism nor the capitalist class, which is why only the proletariat, when adequately organized, can stop the production of that wealth.
References


