

FROM FRANK CHAPMAN'S NOTEBOOK AND STUDY GUIDE FOR HIMSELF AND FRIENDS WHO ARE STEEPED IN STRUGGLE BUT HAVE INQUIRING MINDS.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNISM AS FIRST
ELABORATED BY
KARL MARX AND FREDRICH ENGELS IS ALL WE ARE CONSIDERING IN
THIS DOCUMENT

WHAT IS COMMUNISM?

I

What is communism? “Communism is the is the doctrine of the conditions of the liberation of the proletariat.”—Friedrich Engels

For hundreds of thousands of years human beings lived in societies where the means for producing food, shelter and clothing were held in common. There was no slavery, no wars, no jails no private property. There was a division of labor but no exploitation of labor based on class oppression since there were no classes. The state, the principal organ of oppression, with its various agents of coercion such as prison, police, standing armies etc. did not yet exist. In other words, for hundreds of thousands of years human beings existed in what might be called a state communism, it was as W.E.B. DuBois once said, the only way of human life. Human beings as a species emerged about 500, 000 years ago yet class societies did not emerge until about 5 to 10,000 years ago and full-blown civilization perhaps 5,000 years ago. Private property as a legal concept, as an institution, defined and enforced by a given country's political system is concomitant with the emergence of class societies and the rise of civilization. In England property did not have a legal definition until the 17th century.

For the purposes of this discussion let us simply acknowledge that human society has moved through the following stages: communalism

(primitive communism), slavery, feudalism, and capitalism. The emergence of capitalism about 500 years ago evolved and created the material condition (about 150 years ago) for the emergence of socialism or the first stage of modern communism. We believe that there are countries (such as China, Cuba, Vietnam), that have embarked upon the socialist stage of development.

Each of the above stated stages of human development was accompanied by its own social consciousness or ideology that explained and rationalized its social being. Engels, one of the founders of the doctrine of modern communism, states that “...(ever since the dissolution of the primeval 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—this basic thought belongs solely and exclusively to Marx...This proposition which in my opinion, is destined to do for history what Darwin’s theory has done for biology...”

Therefore, according to Engels “Communism is the doctrine of the conditions of the liberation of the proletariat.”

II

Who or what is the proletariat? “The proletariat,” said Engels, “is that class which lives entirely from the sale of its labor and does not draw profit from any kind of capital; whose weal and woe, whose life and death, whose sole existence depends on the demand for labor....”

Unlike the slave the proletariat is not owned by a particular capitalist

boss like chattel or an article of commerce. The proletariat of Europe was once looked upon as landless peasants forced to sell themselves to capitalist bosses for a given wage or starve. The proletariat today is the working class of the world and the principal producer of all the wealth in the world yet the more wealth this class produces the more impoverished and destitute it becomes.

III

Proletarians have not always existed. They sprung up in Europe as a direct consequence of the free unbridled competitions during the Africa slave trade and the commercial warfare at its core. The profits accumulated out of the African slave trade financed the industrial revolution and ushered into being the modern industrial proletariat.

IV

England the chief benefactor and perpetrator of the African slave trade was the first country to experience the industrial revolution which was brought about by the invention of the steam engine and a host of mechanical devices which could only be purchased by the big monied capitalists. These changes in the instruments of production radically altered the entire mode of production and displaced thousands of workers because the new machines turned out cheaper and better commodities in mass. With these machines industry was delivered into the hands of the big capitalists rendering obsolete the once meager property or tools of workers such as looms. Now the capitalists had everything in their hands, the workers nothing. The factory system became the basis of the textile industry and it quickly spread to every branch of industry. The division of labor among the workers sharply increased reducing the activity of a single worker to simple repetitive mechanical motions. The small master craftsmen were replaced by

huge workshops that saved expenses and permitted elaborate divisions of labor.

This is how the factory system came to dominate all branches of work in handicrafts and manufacture, this is how the handicraftsmen and the old middle class of the mercantile era were ruined and how the class of big capitalists and the class of the wholly propertyless proletariat became the two classes that swallowed up all the other classes.

V

In order to deepen our understanding of what Communism is we must understand with scientific precision how the capitalist bosses buy labor as a commodity and exploit workers as human beings.

Given that labor is a commodity it can be purchased and consumed the same as any other commodity and is subject to the same laws as other commodities. Under the conditions of capitalist production or free competition, the price of a commodity is generally determined by its cost of production. Therefore, the price of labor would be equal to its cost in production.

How then is the cost of the production of labor determined? It is precisely determined by the quantity of the means of subsistence necessary to maintain the workers ability to work and their existence as workers. By bare subsistence we mean only that which prevents the working class from dying out. By this iron law of wages the price of labor is only the minimum required for the worker to stay alive.

But being that the demand for labor depend upon the vicissitudes of the market the worker will sometimes get more or less for his labor, however, like the industrial capitalist on the average he gets no more and no less than his minimum. This process is called the economic law

of wages which tends to operate with iron necessity when big industry has taken possession of all branches of production.

VI

It is important to note what the working class looked like before the industrial revolution, that is, before the emergence of the industrial proletariat.

Working classes, like ruling classes have existed throughout the various stages of societal development, living in different circumstances and in different relations to each other.

In ancient times workers were owned as slaves. In the early, commercial stages of capitalist development, slavery was used extensively in the colonies of the Americas, as well as Asia and Africa. So, coming right on up to the industrial revolution slavery was a significant economic category.

In the Middle Ages in Europe there were serfs held in bondage by the land-owning nobility. Capitalism developed in the womb of feudalism so right on up to the industrial revolution and afterwards there were serfs, and journey-men in the towns who worked for the petty bourgeoisie. During the early stages of capitalism many of the serfs were driven off the land and as manufacture developed journeymen turned into factory workers. This is one of the bloodiest chapters in English history demonstrating how merciless the ruling classes were to their own indigenous people while at the same time they were plying the African slave trade and turning Africa into a commercial warren for the hunting of Black people.

When the 17th Century African slave expanded in the Americas it was still not yet synonymous with Black African for the Muslim rulers of Egypt were buying white slaves by the thousands in Europe and Asia

and bringing them to Palestine and the Valley of the Nile (see W.E.B. DuBois, the chapter on “The Rape of Africa” in the 1948 edition of *The World and Africa*). But the character of world commerce was rapidly changing and what was needed in the “New World” was not gold or silver but human labor to raise sugar, tobacco and cotton. Africa was the place from where cheap labor was literally stolen and sold for a profit. It was precisely this blood-soaked soil of oppression that gave rise to a budding capitalist system. Everywhere cheap labor was being sought and revolt was becoming common place. DuBois speaks of this in his previously cited work *The World and Africa*, said he:

“Investment called for labor, and cheap labor, if the profit was to be high; but labor was beginning to be conscious and to revolt. This was the meaning of the Peasant War in Germany in the sixteenth century. But there was revolt and revolutionary thought not only in Europe; indeed it may be insisted that the revolt of labor against its modern degradation began in America rather than in Europe. This was the meaning of five slave revolts among the blacks in America and the beginning of the fateful dynasty of Maroons, or free Negroes, hiding in organized rebellion in the mountains of Cuba, Jamaica, and Haiti, in Mexico and Brazil. In the seventeenth century, with the increased importation of slaves, there were nine revolts, leading to pitched war in Jamaica and Barbados and Haiti and to the independent state of Palmares in Brazil.”

So, a large part of the working class prior to the industrial revolution was the slave populations in the colonies and the peasants of Europe. When the industrial revolution became full blown by the mid-nineteenth century slavery persisted in the Americas, and especially in industrial North America. The feudal oppression of peasants persisted in the Slavic countries of Europe, namely Russia, Poland and Hungary. Russia didn't emancipate her serfs until 1861.

VII

DuBois is right the first slave revolts were also the first labor revolts against this most beastly form of capitalist exploitation. Also, since Slaves and Proletarians have existed side by side under capitalism it is important to note how they differ from one another.

The primary difference is that the slave can be sold once and for all to a given master and is totally dependent on that master for his existence; whereas the proletarian must sell his labor daily to the capitalist who has need of it. The individual slave is the property of one master. The proletarian individual is the property of the bourgeoisie as a class who buys his/her labor only when someone has need of it. The slave's existence as an individual is assured; the proletarian's existence is assured as a class but not as an individual. The slave is chattel, a thing not considered a member of society. The proletarian is considered a member of society who may through individual thrift and hard work go from rags to riches. But no amount of individual effort can free the proletariat as a class.

Engels makes this important point: "The slave frees himself when, of all the relations of private property, he abolishes only the relation of slavery and thereby becomes a proletarian; the proletarian can free himself only by abolishing private property in general."

Marx saw the particular relationship between slave and proletarian as part of the dynamic of the class struggle and that is why he maintained that labor in white a skin cannot be free while it is branded and sold in a black skin.

VIII

How do proletarians differ from serfs? Serfs are tied to land. They possess and use the land as an instrument of production. In exchange

the serf gives up part of his crop or part of the services of his labor for continued use of the land. The serf's existence is assured, for the serf laborer, unlike the proletarian worker, lives outside the competition of the capitalist market.

According to Engels, "The serf liberates himself in one of three ways: either he runs away to the city and there becomes a handicraftsman; or, instead of products and services, he gives money to his lord and thereby becomes a free tenant; or he overthrows his feudal lord and himself becomes a property owner. In short, by one route or another, he gets into the owning class and enters into competition. The proletarian liberates himself by abolishing competition, private property, and all class differences."

IX

Another non-proletarian worker prior to the industrial revolution is the handicraftsman who, at best, is a temporary member of the proletariat. The goal of the handicraftsman is to acquire capital in order to exploit other workers. In the 18th century this was doable where guilds still existed or where freedom from guild restrictions had not led to the introduction of factory-style methods. As soon as the factory system is introduced the handicraftsman morphs into a proletarian or becomes bourgeois. If the handicraftsman joins the proletariat he can free himself by more or less being involved in the communist movement.

X

The manufacturing worker of the period 16th to the 18th centuries still possessed an instrument of production such as the family spinning wheel or a small plot of land he cultivates in his spare time. Big capital eliminates this patriarchal relation and so the manufacturing worker loses whatever property he still has and becomes a proletarian. Marx

and Engels correctly characterized this process when he maintained that “The bourgeoisie, where-ever it has gotten the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his ‘natural superiors,’ and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous ‘cash payment.’...”

XI

The immediate impact of the industrial revolution on the then existing class society at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century was the division of society into bourgeoisie and proletariat. We have seen how the introduction of machine labor lowered the prices of industrial products and totally destroyed the old system of manufacture based on hand labor.

All the less developed countries with antiquated non-industrial economies were violently forced out of their isolation and into the international market of capitalist competition. They were forced to buy cheap commodities from England while their own manufacturing workers were ruined. India and China as a result of the industrial revolution were now on the path to revolution. Mainly through the exportation of commodities during the mercantile period, and later capital in the wake of the industrial revolution all the people of the world were merged into one world market. Capitalism brought into a being an international working class and international working-class movement while at the same time it was colonizing, plundering less developed nations and indigenous people. Now what happened in England or the industrialized countries of Europe would have consequences around the world. Hence, it seemed to logically follow that if the workers of France or England liberated themselves that the

workers in the colonies and oppressed nations would sooner or later liberate themselves.

By the 19th century it became abundantly clear that whenever big industries (i.e. the grand bourgeoisie) displaced manufacture the bourgeoisie as a class increased in wealth and power. By various means, but mainly by violent revolution the bourgeoisie smashed the power of the nobility, abolished entailment of estates thus making landed property subject to purchase and sale and doing away with special privileges of the nobility. Along with this the power of guildmasters was destroyed by doing away with guilds and handicraft privileges.

The increase in power increased along these lines:

“Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class. An oppressed class under the sway of the feudal nobility, an armed and self-governing association in the medieval commune; here independent urban republic (as in Italy and Germany), there taxable ‘third estate’ of the monarchy (as in France), afterwards, in the period of manufacture proper, serving the semi-feudal or the absolute monarchy as a counterpoise against the nobility, and, in fact, corner-stone of the great monarchies in general, the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern industry and of the world market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.”

In the place of guilds and handicraft privileges we now have competition where everyone has the right, providing they also have the capital, to enter into any branch of industry. Capital has now become the decisive power and the bourgeoisie have become the undisputed

ruling class. To establish their political power they destroyed the political power of the nobility and guildmasters. There were different government forms used by the bourgeoisie to introduce a representative system based on equality before the law. In France there was the republican form of government, while in England there was a constitutional monarchy. The right to vote was restricted to people of property; in this way the bourgeoisie were the voters.

The proletariat is also growing and developing step by step with the bourgeoisie. But whereas the bourgeoisie is growing in wealth the proletariat is growing in numbers. As the proletariat becomes more concentrated in the urban areas they become conscious of their strength in numbers right at the moment when their condition as workers becomes unbearable. Dissatisfaction abounds, and the proletariat prepares for social revolution.

XII

Now let's talk about how the industrial revolution precipitated a crisis in overproduction. What the invention of the steam engine and other machines did is that they created the means of endlessly expanding industrial production under conditions of limited demand thus rapidly exceeding the narrow bounds of the purchasing power of the masses. Increased mass production of commodities at lower cost attracted "a multitude of capitalists" expanding the production of the means of production like never before, a sign of unprecedented technological progress but at the same time aggravating the fundamental contradiction that drives capitalism as a system. Increased production of consumer goods is limited by depressed wages (a natural tendency under capitalism) and so periodically we get an economic crisis of overproduction. It was Karl Marx who first pointed that while the final goal of production is consumer goods the cause of the crisis is of

overproduction is the poverty and limited purchasing power of the masses. He further pointed out what lies at the root of this problem is the basic contradiction of capitalism, namely, the contradiction between the social character of production and the private capitalist form of appropriation. In short, the exploitation of the workers, i.e., wage slavery.

Prior to 1825 in England the world had never seen anything like this. Engels, wrote: "...Factories had to be closed, their owners went bankrupt, and the workers were without bread. Deepest misery reigned everywhere. After a time, the superfluous products were sold, the factories began to operate again, wages rose, and gradually business got better than ever." From 1825 forward crises occurred on the average of every ten years. Between 1825 and 1938 England experienced 13 economic crises. Crises appeared in every capitalist country that embarked on large-scale industrialization.

"...A crisis," said Marx, "always forms the starting point of large new investments. Therefore, from the point of view of society as a whole, a new material basis for the next turnover cycle."

But still another problem arises for workers. The introduction of large-scale machine industry which brings about dramatic improvements in agriculture and every other branch of the economy reduces the number of jobs to produce a given quantity of products. In other words, capital expended for the means of production increases while capital expended for labor-power (to employ workers) decreases. Instead of technological advances creating leisure for workers and greater wealth to be distributed among the members of society as a whole it creates unemployment and mass impoverishment of the proletariat, farmers, some section of the grand bourgeoisie and large sections of the petit bourgeoisie. And this happens despite the fact that industrial workers

grow as capitalism develops. Technological progress hurls millions of workers into the ranks of the unemployed creating a sort of permanent industrial reserve army of the proletariat. The only way out of this crisis is to replace by revolutionary means the private ownership of the means of production by public ownership. This what we Communists advocate then and now.

XIII

For the purpose of having an historical understanding of how Communists first worked out the principles of Communism we have been using the pamphlet *Principles of Communism* by Fredrich Engels. What we are addressing here then is industrial capitalism in its earliest stage when it created free competition. But as soon as it was introduced it was outgrown. Even though the imperialist stage of capitalism hadn't emerged, yet Communists had still arrived at the conclusion that big industry, competition and generally the individualistic organization of production had "become a fetter which it must and will shatter." It became clear to Engels, Marx and the Communists of this era "...that the very qualities of big industry" which in capitalist society "produce misery and crises are those which, in a different form of society, will abolish this misery and these catastrophic depressions."

Communists see with the greatest clarity that the evils we see under present day capitalism are to be ascribed to a social order which no longer corresponds to the real requirements of society because the material conditions exist for a new social order capable of doing away with theses evils altogether.

XIV

What in general will this new social order look like? While we have no utopian expectations about the future we do believe that we must fight for the future we envision now, in this present moment of history. While the Now for Engels is not the same as the Now for us I think the principles are the same. First of all a new social order brought into being by revolutionary means will have to take control of industry, that is, take it out of the hands of “mutually competing individuals, and instead institute a system in which all of these branches of production are operated by society as a whole—that is, for the common account, according to a common plan, and with the participation of all members of society...”

A socialist revolution led by Communists according to Engels, one of the founders of the first Communist Party and co-author with Karl Marx of the Communist Manifesto said the following measures should be instituted to commence the building of socialism;

- 1) That all branches of production be taken out of the hands of individual capitalists and operated for society as a whole.
- 2) That private property must be abolished and in its place must come the common utilization of all instruments of production and the distribution of all products according to common agreement—in a word communal ownership of goods.

The abolition of private property in the means of production has historically been the main demand advanced by the communist movement since around 1848.

Revolutions occur when the ruling class can no longer rule in the old way and the masses refuse to be ruled in the old way. These aforementioned conditions are sufficient to agitate into being a revolutionary uprising of the workers as happened in Germany and Italy toward the end of World War I. But to be victorious there must

be a Communist Party taking the helm. For working people and colonized people such a revolution occurred in Russia in 1917. The struggle between the ruling classes and the workers and peasants had reached maximum intensity. The will-power and emotional energy of the masses politically organized by the Communist Party of Russia demonstrated that the people are quite capable of becoming active creators of a new social order. This has been demonstrated again in China, Cuba, Vietnam and is presently being demonstrated in the Philippines, South America and Southern African in places where communists have led socialist revolutions to victory and in places (like the Philippines and South Africa) where they are still fighting to overturn capitalism/imperialism. Class struggle is the engine of revolution and revolutions as Marx so correctly put it are “the locomotives of history”.

XV

Could private property had been abolished at an earlier time? According to a law of social development first discovered and articulated by Karl Marx every social/political revolution is the necessary consequence of the creation of new productive forces which no longer fit into the old property relations.

As we have stated earlier private property has not always existed. Out of over 500,000 years of human existence private property has only been around for a few thousand if years. During the Middle Ages in Europe private property in land and livestock had an even shorter history. It was toward the end of the Middle Ages that a new mode of production emerged in the very womb of feudalism. This manufacture which had outgrown the old property relations created a new property form, private property. For the early manufacture

and big industry this was the only possible form, capitalism was the only possible social order.

Up until this particular juncture of human history it was not even possible to produce enough for everyone with a surplus left over for expanding social capital and the forces of production. Consequently, a ruling class claiming to be ordained by God quite naturally directed the use of society's productive forces while administering a poor oppressed class. But there was arising a new merchant class that took off like a rocket with the discovery and colonization of the Americas and the African Slave trade.

Toward the end of the Middle Ages in the countryside of England and France there exist a seemingly stable and idyllic arrangement of the baron and the serf. In the budding cities and sea-ports there's the guildmaster and the journeyman and day laborer with the dock workers. By the 17th Century manufacturing is carrying the day and Liverpool is starting to wax fat off of the African slave trade. Then comes the closing of the 18th Century. In 1775 James Watt invented a practical steam engine, which was an improvement on earlier steam engines. Now comes the era of the big factory owner and industrial proletarians.

Also coming out of the industrial revolution about twenty years behind the steam engine was the invention of the cotton gin, which was a simple machine that made cotton king. Slavery which had been on the wane was now boosted back up to economic prominence. What a paradox: a dramatic increase in the industrial proletariat on one side of the Atlantic and the rejuvenation of chattel slavery on the other side and both as a consequence of the industrial revolution. Paradoxical yes but Communists did not fail to recognize that they were duty bound to give unconditional support

to the Black slaves in their battle for freedom. The Communists have left us a splendid historical record of their deeds both in declarations as abolitionists and soldiers in the Union army. For Marx and Engels slavery revealed an economic fact that wages concealed.

Human beings as private property could have been abolished before the industrial revolution but not the means of production as private property.

It became clear after the industrial revolution that humankind had embarked upon a new era where science and technical inventions endlessly expanding the forces of production had given us the means to produce unprecedented social wealth, but ownership of the means of production was concentrated in the hands of a few big capitalists. This also created the unprecedented phenomena of prosperity in the midst of poverty. The rich get richer while the poor get poorer. Clearly the extended forces of production had outgrown private property, periodically unleashing violent disturbances of the social order. Clearly revolutionary technological advances had created the material condition where the abolition of private property was not only possible but necessary.

XVI

Will the peaceful abolition of private property be possible? Given the intensity of the class struggle in the last 150 years, two world wars, the present wars of imperialist aggression, austerity programs or the violence of government enforced poverty, rise in state violence in the form of torture and murder, the genocidal violence inspired by white supremacy, plant closings, oil spills, refusal of government to deal with environmental catastrophes such as Puerto Rico, unprecedented unleashing of state violence against national liberation struggles in Palestine, the Philippines, the assassination of

the African leader Muammar Gaddafi and selling Africans into slavery, threat of violence in Venezuela, and the threat of nuclear war with North Korea; given all of this posing this question may seem ridiculous. We do not raise this question because of our failure to understand the ruthlessness and propensity toward violence of the ruling class and its ability to violently resist the abolition of private property. We raise this question because for us peaceful abolition would be desirable. We actively struggle for peace, we don't want our people murdered and slaughtered, so we use all possible peaceful methods to advance the struggle. We know from long and bitter experiences that revolutions are not simply made intentionally and arbitrarily, we are not voluntarists. We know that everywhere revolutions have been the necessary consequence of conditions which are independent of individual parties and even entire classes. When our opponents refuse to change and violently resist the democratic demands of the people and the oppressed are driven to take up arms then we communists must stand with the oppressed and the workers in deeds and words.

XVII

Our discussion thus far has been based on a pamphlet prepared by Engels in 1847 for some English workers who wanted to know about communism. What we have tried to do is provide some good background information which can actually serve as an introduction to the Communist Manifesto. The Manifesto came quickly after Engels' pamphlet on The Principles of Communism. It is the first document issued by the first Communist Party which sets forth the views and aims of the Party. Here is how the question what is Communism is answered in the Manifesto:

“The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of private property, but the abolition of bourgeois private property. But modern bourgeois private is the final most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on the exploitation of the many by the few.

“In this sense, theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.

“We have been reproached with the desire of abolishing the right of personally acquired property as the fruit of a man’s own labor, which property is alleged to be the groundwork of all personal freedom, activity and independence.

“Hard-won, self-earned property! Do you mean the property of the petty artisan and of the small peasant that preceded the bourgeois form? There is no need to abolish that; the development of industry has to a great extent already destroyed it, and is still destroying it daily.

“Or do you mean modern bourgeois private property?

“But does wage labor create any property for the laborer? Not a bit. It creates capital, i.e., that kind of property which exploits wage-labor, and which cannot increase except upon condition of begetting a new supply of wage-labor for fresh exploitation. Property, in its present form, is based on the antagonism of capital and wage-labor. Let us examine both sides of this antagonism.

“To be a capitalist, is to have not only a purely personal, but a social status in production. Capital is a collective product, and only by the united action of many members, nay the last resort, only by the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion.

“Capital is, therefore, not a personal, it is a social power.

“When, therefore, capital is converted into common property, into the property of all members of society, personal property is not thereby transformed into social property. It loses its class character.

“Let us now take wage-labor.

“The average price of wage-labor is the minimum wage, i.e., that quantum of the means of subsistence, which is absolutely requisite in bare existence as a laborer. What, therefore, the wage-laborer appropriates by means of his labor, merely suffices to prolong and reproduce a bare existence. We by no means intend to abolish this personal appropriation of the products of labor, an appropriation that is made for the maintenance and reproduction of human life, and that leaves no surplus wherewith to command the labor of others. All that we want to do away with, is the miserable character of this appropriation, under which the laborer lives to merely to increase capital, and is allowed to live only insofar as the interest of the ruling class requires it.

“In bourgeois society, living labor is but a means to increase accumulated labor. In Communist society, accumulated labor is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the laborer.

“In bourgeois society, therefore, the past dominates the present; in Communist society, the present dominates the past. In bourgeois society capital is independent and has no individuality.

“And the abolition of this state of things is called by the bourgeois, abolition of individuality and freedom! And rightly so. The abolition of bourgeois individuality, bourgeois independence, and bourgeois freedom is undoubtedly aimed at.

“By freedom is meant, under present bourgeois conditions of production, free trade, free selling and buying. But if selling and buying

disappears, free selling and buying disappears also. This talk about free selling and buying, and all the other ‘brave words’ of our bourgeoisie about freedom in general, have a meaning, if any, only in contrast with restricted selling and buying, with the fettered traders of the Middle Ages, but have no meaning when opposed to the Communistic abolition of buying and selling, of the bourgeois conditions of production, and the bourgeoisie itself.

“You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society, private property is already 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. You reproach us, therefore, with intending 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.

“In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend.

“From the moment when labor can no longer be converted into capital, money, or rent, into a social power capable of being monopolized, i.e., from the moment when individual property can no longer be transformed into bourgeois property, into capital, from that moment, you say individuality vanishes.

“You must, therefore, confess that by ‘individual’ you mean no other person than the bourgeois, than the middle-class owner of property. This person must, indeed, be swept out of the way, and made impossible.

“Communism deprives no... [one] of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive... [people] of the power

to subjugate the labor of others by means of such appropriation.”
(Quoted from Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*).

So, there you have it. This is what the Communist movement that emerged in 1848 in the crucible of class struggle and revolution was all about.

Bare in mind that all we are attempting here is to historically demonstrate how the Communist movement based on the doctrine of Marxism came about. At the same time, we are also showing that Marxism as a set of analytic concepts and political strategies was not cast in stone. We have talked about Marx’s discovery of laws of social development and class struggle so let us quickly state our meaning.

According to Marx abstract laws of social development do not exist. There are no general laws of economic life, or class struggle, that are one and the same whether they are applied to present or past circumstances. We deny the existence of abstract laws. Every historical period, every stage of human development, has its own laws and is therefore driven by its own peculiar contradictions. This can be formulated in a general by saying there are laws of growth and laws of decay. As soon as something reaches its pinnacle of development and is passing over from one stage to another it begins to be subject to new laws. The old is dying and the new is being born—social conditions and the laws governing them change.

Our inquiry (using the dialectical method of analysis) must disclose the origin, development and death of the existing social order and its replacement by another more developed one.

“...the method of presentation,” wrote Marx in the second edition of *Capital*, “must differ in form from that of inquiry. The later has to

appropriate the material in detail, to analyze its different forms of development, to trace out their inner connection. Only after this work is done can the actual movement be adequately described.”

We have adopted this method in presenting an answer to the question:
What is Communism?

Yours in united struggle, Frank Chapman