

Marx: Excerpts on Social Classes & Class Conflict¹

From: Capital Vol. III Part VII; Revenues and their Sources; Chapter 52. Classes²

The owners merely of labour-power, owners of capital, and land-owners, whose respective sources of income are wages, profit and ground-rent, in other words, wage-labourers, capitalists and land-owners, constitute then three big classes of modern society based upon the capitalist mode of production.

In England, modern society is indisputably most highly and classically developed in economic structure. Nevertheless, even here the stratification of classes does not appear in its pure form. Middle and intermediate strata even here obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere (although incomparably less in rural districts than in the cities). However, this is immaterial for our analysis. We have seen that the continual tendency and law of development of the capitalist mode of production is more and more to divorce the means of production from labour, and more and more to concentrate the scattered means of production into large groups, thereby transforming labour into wage-labour and the means of production into capital. And to this tendency, on the other hand, corresponds the independent separation of landed property from capital and labour, or the transformation of all landed property into the form of landed property corresponding to the capitalist mode of production.

The first question to be answered is this: What constitutes a

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²[<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/ch52.htm>]

class? — and the reply to this follows naturally from the reply to another question, namely: What makes wage-labourers, capitalists and landlords constitute the three great social classes?

At first glance — the identity of revenues and sources of revenue. There are three great social groups whose members, the individuals forming them, live on wages, profit and ground-rent respectively, on the realisation of their labour-power, their capital, and their landed property.

However, from this standpoint, physicians and officials, e.g., would also constitute two classes, for they belong to two distinct social groups, the members of each of these groups receiving their revenue from one and the same source. The same would also be true of the infinite fragmentation of interest and rank into which the division of social labour splits labourers as well as capitalists and landlords-the latter, e.g., into owners of vineyards, farm owners, owners of forests, mine owners and owners of fisheries.

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From: A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right³

It is not the radical revolution, not the general human emancipation which is a utopian dream for Germany, but rather the partial, the merely political revolution, the revolution which leaves the pillars of the house standing. On what is a partial, a merely political revolution based? On part of civil society emancipating itself and attaining general domination; on a definite class, proceeding from its particular situation; undertaking the general emancipation of society. This class emancipates the whole of society, but only provided the whole of society is in the same situation as this class — e.g., possesses money and education or can acquire them at will.

No class of civil society can play this role without arousing a

³[<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>]

moment of enthusiasm in itself and in the masses, a moment in which it fraternizes and merges with society in general, becomes confused with it and is perceived and acknowledged as its general representative, a moment in which its claims and rights are truly the claims and rights of society itself, a moment in which it is truly the social head and the social heart. Only in the name of the general rights of society can a particular class vindicate for itself general domination. For the storming of this emancipatory position, and hence for the political exploitation of all sections of society in the interests of its own section, revolutionary energy and spiritual self-feeling alone are not sufficient. For the revolution of a nation, and the emancipation of a particular class of civil society to coincide, for one estate to be acknowledged as the estate of the whole society, all the defects of society must conversely be concentrated in another class, a particular estate must be the estate of the general stumbling-block, the incorporation of the general limitation, a particular social sphere must be recognized as the notorious crime of the whole of society, so that liberation from that sphere appears as general self-liberation. For one estate to be par excellence the estate of liberation, another estate must conversely be the obvious estate of oppression. The negative general significance of the French nobility and the French clergy determined the positive general significance of the nearest neighboring and opposed class of the bourgeoisie.

But no particular class in Germany has the constituency, the penetration, the courage, or the ruthlessness that could mark it out as the negative representative of society. No more has any estate the breadth of soul that identifies itself, even for a moment, with the soul of the nation, the geniality that inspires material might to political violence, or that revolutionary daring which flings at the adversary the defiant words: I am nothing but I must be everything. The main stem of German morals and honesty, of the classes as well as of individuals, is rather that modest egoism which asserts its limitedness and allows it to be asserted against itself. The relation of the various sections of German society is therefore not dramatic but epic. Each of them begins to be aware of itself and begins to camp beside the others with all its particular claims not as soon as it is oppressed, but as soon as the circumstances of the

time, without the section's own participation, creates a social substratum on which it can in turn exert pressure. Even the moral self-feeling of the German middle class rests only on the consciousness that it is the common representative of the philistine mediocrity of all the other classes. It is therefore not only the German kings who accede to the throne *mal à propos*, it is every section of civil society which goes through a defeat before it celebrates victory and develops its own limitations before it overcomes the limitations facing it, asserts its narrow-hearted essence before it has been able to assert its magnanimous essence; thus the very opportunity of a great role has passed away before it is to hand, and every class, once it begins the struggle against the class opposed to it, is involved in the struggle against the class below it. Hence, the higher nobility is struggling against the monarchy, the bureaucrat against the nobility, and the bourgeois against them all, while the proletariat is already beginning to find itself struggling against the bourgeoisie. The middle class hardly dares to grasp the thought of emancipation from its own standpoint when the development of the social conditions and the progress of political theory already declare that standpoint antiquated or at least problematic.

In France, it is enough for somebody to be something for him to want to be everything; in Germany, nobody can be anything if he is not prepared to renounce everything. In France, partial emancipation is the basis of universal emancipation; in Germany, universal emancipation is the *conditio sine qua non* of any partial emancipation. In France, it is the reality of gradual liberation that must give birth to complete freedom, in Germany, the impossibility of gradual liberation. In France, every class of the nation is a political idealist and becomes aware of itself at first not as a particular class but as a representative of social requirements generally. The role of emancipator therefore passes in dramatic motion to the various classes of the French nation one after the other until it finally comes to the class which implements social freedom no longer with the provision of certain conditions lying outside man and yet created by human society, but rather organizes all conditions of human existence on the premises of social freedom. On the contrary, in Germany, where practical life is as

spiritless as spiritual life is unpractical, no class in civil society has any need or capacity for general emancipation until it is forced by its immediate condition, by material necessity, by its very chains.

Where, then, is the positive possibility of a German emancipation?

Answer: In the formulation of a class with radical chains, a class of civil society which is not a class of civil society, an estate which is the dissolution of all estates, a sphere which has a universal character by its universal suffering and claims no particular right because no particular wrong, but wrong generally, is perpetuated against it; which can invoke no historical, but only human, title; which does not stand in any one-sided antithesis to the consequences but in all-round antithesis to the premises of German statehood; a sphere, finally, which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all other spheres of society and thereby emancipating all other spheres of society, which, in a word, is the complete loss of man and hence can win itself only through the complete re-winning of man. This dissolution of society as a particular estate is the proletariat.

The proletariat is beginning to appear in Germany as a result of the rising industrial movement. For, it is not the naturally arising poor but the artificially impoverished, not the human masses mechanically oppressed by the gravity of society, but the masses resulting from the drastic dissolution of society, mainly of the middle estate, that form the proletariat, although, as is easily understood, the naturally arising poor and the Christian-Germanic serfs gradually join its ranks.

By heralding the dissolution of the hereto existing world order, the proletariat merely proclaims the secret of its own existence, for it is the factual dissolution of that world order. By demanding the negation of private property, the proletariat merely raises to the rank of a principle of society what society has raised to the rank of its principle, what is already incorporated in it as the negative result of society without its own participation. The proletarian then finds himself possessing the same right in regard to the world which is coming into being as the German king in regard to the world which has come into being when he calls the people his people, as he calls the horse his horse. By declaring the people his private property,

the king merely proclaims that the owner of property is king.

As philosophy finds its material weapon in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its spiritual weapon in philosophy. And once the lightning of thought has squarely struck this ingenuous soil of the people, the emancipation of the Germans into men will be accomplished.

Let us sum up the result:

The only liberation of Germany which is practically possible is liberation from the point of view of that theory which declares man to be the supreme being for man. Germany can emancipate itself from the Middle Ages only if it emancipates itself at the same time from the partial victories over the Middle Ages. In Germany, no form of bondage can be broken without breaking all forms of bondage. Germany, which is renowned for its thoroughness, cannot make a revolution unless it is a thorough one. The emancipation of the German is the emancipation of man. The head of this emancipation is philosophy, its heart the proletariat. Philosophy cannot realize itself without the transcendence [Aufhebung] of the proletariat, and the proletariat cannot transcend itself without the realization [Verwirklichung] of philosophy.

From: **Manifesto of the Communist Party**⁴

The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first 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. 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.

⁴[<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>]

At this stage, the labourers still form an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country, and broken up by their mutual competition. If anywhere they unite to form more compact bodies, this is not yet the consequence of their own active union, but of the union of the bourgeoisie, which class, in order to attain its own political ends, is compelled to set the whole proletariat in motion, and is moreover yet, for a time, able to do so. 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, 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.

But 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. 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. The growing competition among the bourgeois, and the resulting commercial crises, make the wages of the workers ever more fluctuating. The increasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon, the workers begin to form combinations (Trades' Unions) against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there, the contest breaks out into riots.

Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry, and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralise the numerous local struggles, all of the same character,

into one national struggle between classes. But every class struggle is a political struggle. And that union, to attain which the burghers of the Middle Ages, with their miserable highways, required centuries, the modern proletariat, thanks to railways, achieve in a few years.

This organisation of the proletarians into a class, and, consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier. 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.

Altogether collisions between the classes of the old society further, in many ways, the course of development of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie finds itself involved in a constant battle. At first with the aristocracy; later on, with those portions of the bourgeoisie itself, whose interests have become antagonistic to the progress of industry; at all time with the bourgeoisie of foreign countries. In all these battles, it sees itself compelled to appeal to the proletariat, to ask for help, and thus, to drag it into the political arena. The bourgeoisie itself, therefore, supplies the proletariat with its own elements of political and general education, in other words, it furnishes the proletariat with weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie.

Further, as we have already seen, entire 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.

Finally, 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.

**From: The Poverty of Philosophy; Chapter Two: The
Metaphysics of Political Economy; Strikes and
Combinations of Workers**

Large-scale industry concentrates in one place a crowd of people unknown to one another. Competition divides their interests. But the maintenance of wages, this common interest which they have against their boss, unites them in a common thought of resistance – combination. Thus combination always has a double aim, that of stopping competition among the workers, so that they can carry on general competition with the capitalist. If the first aim of resistance was merely the maintenance of wages, combinations, at first isolated, constitute themselves into groups as the capitalists in their turn unite for the purpose of repression, and in the face of always united capital, the maintenance of the association becomes more necessary to them than that of wages. This is so true that English economists are amazed to see the workers sacrifice a good part of their wages in favor of associations, which, in the eyes of these economists, are established solely in favor of wages. In this struggle – a veritable civil war – all the elements necessary for a coming battle unite and develop. Once it has reached this point, association takes on a political character.

Economic conditions had first transformed the mass of the people of the country into workers. The combination of capital has created for this mass a common situation, common interests. This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle, of which we have noted only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle.

In the bourgeoisie we have two phases to distinguish: that in which it constituted itself as a class under the regime of feudalism and absolute monarchy, and that in which, already constituted as a class, it overthrew feudalism and monarchy to make society into a bourgeois society. The first of these phases was the longer and

necessitated the greater efforts. This too began by partial combinations against the feudal lords.

Much research has been carried out to trace the different historical phases that the bourgeoisie has passed through, from the commune up to its constitution as a class.

But when it is a question of making a precise study of strikes, combinations and other forms in which the proletarians carry out before our eyes their organization as a class, some are seized with real fear and others display a transcendental disdain.

From: Manifesto of the Communist Party⁵

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. Thus the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population.

From: The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. Karl Marx 1852; VII⁶

The small-holding peasants form an enormous mass whose members live in similar conditions but without entering into manifold relations with each other. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. The isolation is furthered by France's poor

⁵[<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>]

⁶[<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch07.htm>]

means of communication and the poverty of the peasants. Their field of production, the small holding, permits no division of labor in its cultivation, no application of science, and therefore no multifariousness of development, no diversity of talent, no wealth of social relationships. Each individual peasant family is almost self-sufficient, directly produces most of its consumer needs, and thus acquires its means of life more through an exchange with nature than in intercourse with society. A small holding, the peasant and his family; beside it another small holding, another peasant and another family. A few score of these constitute a village, and a few score villages constitute a department. Thus the great mass of the French nation is formed by the simple addition of homologous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes. Insofar as millions of families live under conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests, and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. Insofar as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests forms no community, no national bond, and no political organization among them, they do not constitute a class.

From: Karl Marx. Capital Volume One; Chapter Fifteen: Machinery and Modern Industry; Section 6., The Theory of Compensation as Regards the Work People Displaced by Machinery⁷

The immediate result of machinery is to augment surplus-value and the mass of products in which surplus-value is embodied. And, as the substances consumed by the capitalists and their dependents become more plentiful, so too do these orders of society. Their growing wealth, and the relatively diminished number of workmen required to produce the necessities of life beget, simultaneously with the rise of new and luxurious wants, the means of satisfying those wants. . . .

⁷<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch15.htm>

Lastly, the extraordinary productiveness of modern industry, accompanied as it is by both a more extensive and a more intense exploitation of labour-power in all other spheres of production, allows of the unproductive employment of a larger and larger part of the working-class, and the consequent reproduction, on a constantly extending scale, of the ancient domestic slaves under the name of a servant class, including men-servants, women-servants, lackeys, &c. According to the census of 1861, the population of England and Wales was 20,066,244; of these, 9,776,259 males, and 10,289,965 females. If we deduct from this population all who are too old or too young for work, all unproductive women, young persons and children, the “ideological” classes, such as government officials, priests, lawyers, soldiers, &c.; further, all who have no occupation but to consume the labour of others in the form of rent, interest, &c.; and, lastly, paupers, vagabonds, and criminals, there remain in round numbers eight millions of the two sexes of every age, including in that number every capitalist who is in any way engaged in industry, commerce, or finance. . . .

All the persons employed in textile factories and in mines, taken together, number 1,208,442; those employed in textile factories and metal industries, taken together, number 1,039,605; in both cases less than the number of modern domestic slaves. What a splendid result of the capitalist exploitation of machinery!

From: Capital Vol. III Part V; Division of Profit into Interest and Profit of Enterprise. Interest-Bearing Capital; Chapter 36. Pre-Capitalist Relationships⁸

The circumstance that a man without fortune but possessing energy, solidity, ability and business acumen may become a capitalist in this manner — and the commercial value of each individual is pretty accurately estimated under the capitalist mode of production — is greatly admired by apologists of the capitalist system. Although this circumstance continually brings an unwelcome number of new soldiers of fortune into the field and

⁸[<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/ch36.htm>]

into competition with the already existing individual capitalists, it also reinforces the supremacy of capital itself, expands its base and enables it to recruit ever new forces for itself out of the substratum of society. In a similar way, the circumstance that the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages formed its hierarchy out of the best brains in the land, regardless of their estate, birth or fortune, was one of the principal means of consolidating ecclesiastical rule and suppressing the laity. The more a ruling class is able to assimilate the foremost minds of a ruled class, the more stable and dangerous becomes its rule.

From: Theories of Surplus Value, Marx 1861-3; [Chapter XVIII] Ricardo's Miscellanea; Machinery⁹

Ricardo struggles in this chapter. What he forgets to emphasise [XIII-746] is the constantly growing number of the middle classes, those who stand between the workman on the one hand and the capitalist and landlord on the other. The middle classes maintain themselves to an ever increasing extent directly out of revenue, they are a burden weighing heavily on the working base and increase the social security and power of the upper ten thousand.

From: Karl Marx in the New York Tribune 1852; The Elections in England — Tories and Whigs¹⁰

Up to 1846 the Tories passed as the guardians of the traditions of Old England. They were suspected of admiring in the British Constitution the eighth wonder of the world; to be laudatores temporis acti,[2] enthusiasts for the throne, the High Church, the privileges and liberties of the British subject. The fatal year, 1846, with its repeal of the Corn Laws, and the shout of distress which this repeal forced from the Tories, proved that they were enthusiasts for nothing but the rent of land, and at the same time

⁹[<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1863/theories-surplus-value/ch18.htm>]

¹⁰[<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/08/06.htm>]

disclosed the secret of their attachment to the political and religious institutions of Old England. These institutions are the very best institutions, with the help of which the large landed property — the landed interest — has hitherto ruled England, and even now seeks to maintain its rule. The year 1846 brought to light in its nakedness the substantial class interest which forms the real base of the Tory party. The year 1846 tore down the traditionally venerable lion's hide, under which Tory class interest had hitherto hidden itself. The year 1846 transformed the Tories into Protectionists. Tory was the sacred name, Protectionist is the profane one; Tory was the political battle-cry, Protectionist is the economical shout of distress; Tory seemed an idea, a principle; Protectionist is an interest. Protectionists of what? Of their own revenues, of the rent of their own land. Then the Tories, — in the end, are Bourgeois as much as the remainder, for where is the Bourgeois who is not a protectionist of his own purse? They are distinguished from the other Bourgeois, in the same way as the rent of land is distinguished from commercial and industrial profit. Rent of land is conservative, profit is progressive; rent of land is national, profit is cosmopolitical; rent of land believes in the State Church, profit is a dissenter by birth. The repeal of the Corn Laws of 1846 merely recognized an already accomplished fact, a change long since enacted in the elements of British civil society, viz., the subordination of the landed interest under the moneyed interest, of property under commerce, of agriculture under manufacturing industry, of the country under the city.. Could this fact be doubted since the country population stands, in England, to the towns' population in the proportion of one to three? The substantial foundation of the power of the Tories was the rent of land. The rent of land is regulated by the price of food. The price of food, then, was artificially maintained at a high rate by the Corn Laws. The repeal of the Corn Laws brought down the price of food, which in its turn brought down the rent of land, and with sinking rent broke down the real strength upon which the political power of the Tories reposed.

What, then, are they trying to do now? To maintain a political power, the social foundation of which has ceased to exist. And how can this be attained? By nothing short of a Counter-Revolution, that

is to say, by a reaction of the State against Society. They strive to retain forcibly institutions and a political power which are condemned from the very moment at which the rural population found itself outnumbered three times by the population of the towns. And such an attempt must necessarily end with their destruction; it must accelerate and make more acute the social development of England., it must bring on a crisis.

The Tories recruit their army from the farmers, who have either not yet lost the habit of following their landlords as their natural superiors, or — who are economically dependent upon them, or who do not yet see that the interest of the farmer and the interest of the landlord are no more identical than the respective interests of the borrower and of the usurer. They are followed and supported by the Colonial Interest, the Shipping Interest, the State Church Party, in short, by all those elements which consider it necessary to safeguard their interests against the necessary results of modern manufacturing industry, and against the social revolution prepared by it.

Opposed to the Tories, as their hereditary enemies, stand the Whigs, a party with whom the American Whigs[3] have nothing in common but the name.

The British Whig, in the natural history of politics, forms a species which, like all those of the amphibious class, exists very easily, but is difficult to describe. Shall we call them, with their opponents, Tories out of office? or, as continental writers love it, take them for the representatives of certain popular principles? In the latter case we should get embarrassed in the same difficulty as the historian of the Whigs, Mr. Cooke, who, with great naïveté confesses in his “History of Parties” that it is indeed a certain number of “liberal, moral and enlightened principles” which constitutes the Whig party, but that it was greatly to be regretted that during the more than a century and a half that the Whigs have existed, they have been, when in office, always prevented from carrying out these principles. So that in reality, according to the confession of their own historian, the Whigs represent something quite different from their professed-liberal and enlightened principles.” Thus they are in the same position as the drunkard brought up before the Lord Mayor who declared that he represented

the Temperance principle but from some accident or other always got drunk on Sundays.

But never mind their principles; we can better make out what they are in historical fact; what they carry out, not what they once believed, and what they now want other people to believe with respect to their character.

The Whigs as well as the Tories, form a fraction of the large landed property of Great Britain. Nay, the oldest, richest and most arrogant portion of English landed property is the very nucleus of the Whig party.

What, then, distinguishes them from the Tories? The Whigs are the aristocratic representatives of the bourgeoisie, of the industrial and commercial middle class. Under the condition that the Bourgeoisie should abandon to them, to an oligarchy of aristocratic families, the monopoly of government and the exclusive possession of office, they make to the middle class, and assist it in conquering, all those concessions, which in — the course of social and political development — have shown themselves to have become unavoidable and undelayable. Neither more nor less. And as often as such an unavoidable measure has been passed, they declare loudly that herewith the end of historical progress has been obtained; that the whole social movement has carried its ultimate purpose, and then they “cling to finality.” They can support more easily than ‘the Tories, a decrease of their rental revenues, because they consider themselves as the heaven-born farmers of the revenues of the British Empire. They can renounce the monopoly of the Corn Laws, as long as — they maintain the monopoly of government as their family property. Ever since the “glorious revolution” of 1688 the Whigs, with short intervals, caused principally by the first French Revolution and the consequent reaction, have found themselves in the enjoyment of the public offices. Whoever recalls to his mind this period of English history, will find no other distinctive mark of Whigdom but the maintenance of their family oligarchy. The interests and principles which they represent besides, from time to time, do not belong to the Whigs; they are forced upon them. by the development of the industrial and commercial class, the Bourgeoisie. After 1688 we find them united with the Bankocracy, just then rising into

importance, as we find them in 1846, united with the Millocracy. The Whigs as little carried the Reform Bill of 1831, as they carried the Free Trade Bill of 1846. Both Reform movements, the political as well as the commercial, were movements of the Bourgeoisie. As soon as either of these movements had ripened into irresistibility; as soon as, at the same time, it had become the safest means of turning the Tories out of office, the Whigs stepped forward, took up the direction of the Government, and secured to themselves the governmental part of the victory. In 1831 they extended the political portion of reform as far as was necessary in order not to leave the middle class entirely dissatisfied; after 1846 they confined their Free Trade measures so far as was necessary, in order to save to the landed aristocracy the greatest possible amount of privileges. Each time they had taken the movement in hand in order to prevent its forward march, and to recover their own posts at the same time.

It is clear that from the moment when the landed aristocracy is no longer able to maintain its position as an independent power, to fight, as an independent party, for the government position, in short, that from the moment when the Tories are definitively overthrown, British history has no longer any room for the Whigs. The aristocracy once destroyed, what is the use of an aristocratic representation of the Bourgeoisie against this aristocracy?

It is well known that in the middle ages the German Emperors put the just then arising towns under Imperial Governors, “advocati,” to protect these towns against the surrounding nobility. As soon as growing population and wealth gave them sufficient strength and independence to resist, and even to attack the nobility, the towns also drove out the noble Governors, the advocati.

The Whigs have been these advocati of the British Middle Class, and their governmental monopoly must break down as soon as the landed monopoly of the Tories is broken down. In the same measure as the Middle Class has developed its independent strength, they have shrunk down from a party to a coterie.

It is evident what a distastefully heterogeneous mixture the character of the British Whigs must turn out to be: Feudalists, who are at the same time Malthusians, money-mongers with feudal prejudices, aristocrats without point of honor, Bourgeois without industrial activity, finality — men with progressive phrases,

progressists with fanatical Conservatism, traffickers in homeopathical fractions of reforms, fosterers of family — nepotism, Grand Masters of corruption, hypocrites of religion, Tartuffes of politics. The mass of the English people have a sound aesthetical common sense. They have. an instinctive hatred against everything motley and ambiguous, against bats and Russellites. And then, with the Tories, the mass of the English people, the urban and rural proletariat, has in common the hatred against the “money-monger.” With the Bourgeoisie it has in common the hatred against aristocrats. In the Whigs it hates the one and the other, aristocrats and Bourgeois, the landlord who oppresses, and the money lord who exploits it. In the Whig it hates the oligarchy which has ruled over England for more than a century, and by which the People is excluded from the direction of its own affairs.

The Peelites (Liberals and Conservatives) are no party, they are merely the souvenir of a partyman, of the late Sir Robert Peel. But Englishmen are too prosaic, for a souvenir to form, with them, the foundation for anything but elegies. And now, that the people have erected brass and marble monuments to the late Sir R. Peel in all parts of the country, they believe they are able so much the more to do without those perambulant Peel monuments, the Grahams, the Gladstones, the Cardwells, etc. The so-called Peelites are nothing but this staff of bureaucrats which Robert Peel had schooled for himself. And because they form a pretty complete staff, they forget for a moment that there is no army behind them. The Peelites, then, are old supporters of Sir R. Peel, who have not yet come to a conclusion as to what party to attach themselves to. It is evident that a similar scruple is not a sufficient means for them to constitute an independent power.

**From: Karl Marx in the New-York Herald Tribune 1852;
Free Trade and The Chartists¹¹**

While the Tories, the Whigs, the Peelites — in fact, all the parties we have hitherto commented upon — belong more or less

¹¹[\[http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/08/25.htm\]](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/08/25.htm)

to the past, the Free Traders (the men of the Manchester School, the Parliamentary and Financial Reformers) are the official representatives of modern English society, the representatives of that England which rules the market of the world. They represent the party of the self-conscious Bourgeoisie, of industrial capital striving to make available its social power as a political power as well, and to eradicate the last arrogant remnants of feudal society. This party is led on by the most active and most energetic portion of the English Bourgeoisie — the manufacturers. What they demand is the complete and undisguised ascendancy of the Bourgeoisie, the open, official subjection of society at large under the laws of modern, Bourgeois production, and under the rule of those men who are the directors of that production. By Free Trade they mean the unfettered movement of capital, freed from all political, national and religious shackles. The soil is to be a marketable commodity' and the exploitation of the soil is to be carried on according to the common commercial laws. There are to be manufacturers of food as well as manufacturers of twist and cottons, but no longer any lords of the land. There are, in short, not to be tolerated any political or social restrictions, regulations or monopolies, unless they proceed from "the eternal laws of political economy," that is, from the conditions under which Capital produces and distributes. The struggle of this party against the old English institutions, products of a superannuated, an evanescent stage of social development, is resumed in the watchword: Produce as cheap as you can, and do away with all the faux frais of production (with all superfluous, unnecessary expenses in production). And this watchword is addressed not only to the private individual, but to the nation at large principally.

Royalty, with its "barbarous splendors," its court, its civil list and its flunkies — what else does it belong to but to the faux frais of production? The nation can produce and exchange without royalty; away with the crown. The sinecures of the nobility, the House of Lords? faux frais of production. The large standing army? faux frais of production. The Colonies? faux frais of production. The State Church, with its riches, the spoils of plunder or of mendicity? faux frais of production. Let parsons compete freely with each other, and everyone pay them according to his own

wants. The whole circumstantial routine of English Law, with its Court of Chancery? faux frais of production. National wars? faux frais of production. England can exploit foreign nations more cheaply while at peace with them.

You see, to these champions of the British Bourgeoisie, to the men of the Manchester School, every institution of Old England appears in the light of a piece of machinery as costly as it is useless, and which fulfils no other purpose than to prevent the nation from producing the greatest possible quantity at the least possible expense, and to exchange its products in freedom. Necessarily, their last word is the Bourgeois Republic, in which free competition rules supreme in all spheres of life; in which there remains altogether that minimum only of government which is indispensable for the administration, internally and externally, of the common class interest and business of the Bourgeoisie; and where this minimum of government is as soberly, as economically organized as possible. Such a party, in other countries, would be called democratic. But it is necessarily revolutionary, and the complete annihilation of Old England as an aristocratic country is the end which it follows up with more or less consciousness. Its nearest object, however, is the attainment of a Parliamentary reform which should transfer to its hands the legislative power necessary for such a revolution.

But the British Bourgeois are not excitable Frenchmen. When they intend to carry a Parliamentary reform they will not make a Revolution of February. On the contrary. Having obtained, in 1846, a grand victory over the landed aristocracy by the repeal of the Corn Laws, they were satisfied with following up the material advantages of this victory, while they neglected to draw the necessary political and economical conclusions from it, and thus enabled the Whigs to reinstate themselves into their hereditary monopoly of government. During all the time, from 1846 to 1852, they exposed themselves to ridicule by their battle-cry: Broad principles and practical (read small) measures. And why all this? Because in every violent movement they are obliged to appeal to the working class. And if the aristocracy is their vanishing opponent the working class is their arising enemy. They prefer to compromise with the vanishing opponent rather than to strengthen

the arising enemy, to whom the future belongs, by concessions of a more than apparent importance. Therefore, they strive to avoid every forcible collision' with the aristocracy; but historical necessity and the Tories press them onwards. They cannot avoid fulfilling their mission, battering to pieces Old England, the England of the Past; and the very moment when they will have conquered exclusive political dominion, when political dominion and economical supremacy will be united in the same hands, when, therefore, the struggle against capital will no longer be distinct from the struggle against the existing Government — from that very moment will date the social revolution of England.

We now come to the Chartists, the politically active portion of the British working class. The six points of the Charter which they contend for contain nothing but the demand of Universal Suffrage, and of the conditions without which Universal Suffrage would be illusory for the working class; such as the ballot, payment of members, annual general elections. But Universal Suffrage is the equivalent for political power for the working class of England, where the proletariat forms the large majority of the population, where, in a long, though underground civil war, it has gained a clear consciousness of its position as a class, and where even the rural districts know no longer any peasants, but only landlords, industrial capitalists (farmers) and hired laborers. The carrying of Universal Suffrage in England would, therefore, be a far more socialistic measure than anything which has been honored with that name on the Continent.

Its inevitable result, here, is the political supremacy of the working class.

From: Manifesto of the Communist Party¹²

The history of all hitherto existing society(2) is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master(3) and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and

¹²[<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>]

oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. 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.

The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinct feature: it has simplified class antagonisms. 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.

**From: Karl Marx in the Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung;
Moralising Criticism and Critical Morality; A Contribution
to German Cultural History; Contra Karl Heinzen¹³**

Having provided such profound insights into “the connection between politics and social conditions” and between “class relations” and the power of the state, Herr Heinzen cries out in triumph:.

“The ‘narrow-minded communist view’ which only treats people in terms of ‘classes’ and incites them against one another according to their ‘craft’, is something I must confess I have been innocent of in my revolutionary propaganda, because I make allowance for the ‘possibility’ that ‘humanity’ is not always determined by ‘class’ or the ‘size of one’s purse’.”

“Grobianist” common sense transforms the distinction between

¹³[<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/10/31.htm>]

classes into the “distinction between the size of purses” and class contradictions into “craft-bickering”. The size of one’s purse is a purely quantitative distinction whereby any two individuals of the same class may be incited against one another at will. That the medieval guilds opposed each other “according to their craft” is common knowledge. But it is equally common knowledge that modern class distinctions are by no means based upon “craft” but rather that the division of labour brings about very different modes of work within the same class. . . .

It is perfectly “possible” that what individual persons do is not “always” determined by the class to which they belong, although this is no more crucial to the class struggle than an aristocrat going over to the tiers-état was crucial to the French Revolution. . . .

However, if Herr Heinzen believes that whole classes which are based on economic conditions independent of their own will and are forced into the most virulent contradiction by these conditions, can by means of the quality of “humanity”, which attaches to all men, shed their real relationships, how easy must it be for one particular prince to rise by the power of “humanity” above his “princely condition”, above his “princely craft”? . . . [T]he “narrow-minded” Communists . . . see not only the political difference between prince and subject but also the social difference between classes. . . .

It is common knowledge that shortly after the July revolution, the victorious bourgeoisie, in the September Laws, made the “incitement of the various classes of the nation against each other” a serious political offence, probably for reasons of “humanity” too, with penalties of imprisonment, fines, etc.[145] it is also common knowledge that the English bourgeois journals know no better way of denouncing the Chartist leaders and Chartist writers than by accusing them of inciting the various classes of the nation against each other. It is even common knowledge that German writers are lying in deep dungeons for this incitement of the various classes of the nation against each other.

Is not Herr Heinzen now speaking the language of the French September Laws, of the English bourgeois papers and the Prussian criminal code?

So Herr Heinzen divides German humanity into princes and

subjects. . . .
