**Karl Marx: The Communist Manifesto assignment**

Karl Marx’s *Communist Manifesto*, published in 1848, was a pamphlet which laid out the goals of Communism. Marx was very good at writing agitation literature, stoking the flames of envy and resentment. Why does your neighbor have a *bigger house*, and a *newer car*, than you do? Where is the *fairness* in life? Why do *they* get to own their own businesses and have property, while *you* have to work in a dirty factory and live in squalor? Marx was exceptionally good at writing short political pamphlets which spread *discontentment* and got people *agitated*. In the *Manifesto*, the “Bourgeoisie” are the oppressors who own the businesses and the capital - who take advantage of the “Proletarians”, the workers, the victims, the virtuous. With Communism, the Proletarians would rise up in violent revolution, eliminate the Bourgeoisie, take their property, and set up a new system where everything was shared equally, and Paradise on Earth would result.

Instructions:

Chapter 1 of Manifesto, “Bourgeois and Proletarians”, is the most famous and lays out the whole programme. Your assignment is to prepare an analysis or critique of some element of Chapter 1. Read it, do some Internet research on it, and then present your topic to me for approval. You can do your work in PowerPoint. Be prepared to present it in around 5 minutes at a future class.

You can find Ch. 1 of the Manifesto here <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/preface.htm>

Theme of Chapter 1:

The Bourgeoisie are the bad guys. They are the owners of capital. Today, you would call them the business owners, those who employ workers and make a profit (an evil, under Communism) off of their labor - off of their sweaty backs as it were. They own property (another evil) which they will defend. The Bourgeoisie are not necessarily 'the rich', but are the middle class businesspeople who employ others and make a profit off their sweat & toil. These are the oppressors, the bad guys. Proletarians are the good guys. They are the workers who don't own property, who don't control resources, who can only sell their labor in effect. They are the victims, the virtuous.

According to Marx, the world is messed up because of class conflict. All the crimes of history - everything rotten around us - can be explained through the lens of class conflict. The Bourgeoisie-class are the oppressors, while the Proletariat-class are the oppressed. Marx looked out his window each morning and apparently saw only victims and oppressors, a very gloomy outlook you might say. A more upbeat person would see entrepreneurs creating jobs, workers going to work and earning money and bettering their lives, new technology being developed to raise our standard of living, and so on. But in mid-1800's Britain and Germany, in the heyday of the industrial revolution, Marx could only see victims and oppressors. Marx’s conclusion: there needs to be a violent revolution. He thought a revolution was inevitable. It would happen soon. The Proletariat would violently rise up and eliminate the Bourgeoisie, taking their property. A new system would be set up wherein “The People" would then own all the stuff (all the factors of production), and everything would then be shared equally. The nobility (Kings, Czars) must be eliminated. The concept of the "family" must also be eradicated, because families represent authority above the state. “Religion", by which Marx and Engels meant "Christianity", must also be eradicated. “The State” would be the new religion, the new God; children must be turned over to the State, marriage must be conducted in a State ceremony; in essence, all the institutions of society must serve the State. Such an overturning of society would require a bloody revolution, of course! And the revolution must continue almost indefinitely, because the oppressors would always be lurking. The Bourgeoisie would not give up their property willingly! In this sense, Marxism must be an ongoing revolution. As it turned out, Marx never saw any of this happen in his lifetime. It would be 1917 before his ideas could be tested in the first country, the empire of Russia.

Basic question:  Is the world really messed up solely because of class conflict? Is class really the root cause of society's ills? .... Or could there be other causes, like the fact that people lie, cheat, and steal, man is basically self-centered, politicians are a dishonest bunch, generals like to start wars, people skim off the system without contributing, and political agitators go around spreading discontentment? Why, I thought society’s problems were caused by racism, and global warming, and drug abuse, and sexism, and white privilege, and people not wearing their Covid masks! Now you’re saying it’s class conflict?? (I’m just playing devil’s advocate, but you can see my point. You can look at *everything in life* through the lens of victims and oppressors, if you’re not careful).

​Be sure to present your theme/idea for approval before you start.

A few ideas:

Do we have class conflict of this sort today in the U.S.A?

Does a “middle class” prevent Communism from taking hold? How would you destroy the middle class if you were malevolent?

Wasn’t Jesus really a Communist? Didn’t he say we should be kind to the poor?

Is the Bible Communist? Does the Bible teach Communism?

Who is Communist today? Are their Communists?

What does the Communist Party U.S.A. espouse today?

What does Communist China stand for today?

Who are the Bourgeoisie and Proletariat today? Do they even exist today?

Who was Marx? Did he live his own life consistent with his preaching?

Who was Engels?

How has Marxism invaded the Universities?

What does Marxism teach about families? How would you destroy the family if you were trying to promote Communism?

I thought Czar Nicholas II (The Romanov family) was bad. What’s wrong with eliminating them and setting up something else in Russia (in 1917)?