# COMMUNIST MANIFESTO and Its Origins

**(Continued from the last Issue)**

In time Darwin's theory, with certain modifications, was generally accepted, as, in spite of religious prejudices, it was found that it could be harmlessly digested. The theory of Marx did not fare too well because it shook the foundations of property. In spite of this, however, those who write history have been more and more compelled to adopt his theory in explaining historical movements and changes, though they rarely acknowledge the fact. The theory is contained in the preface to the "Critique." After giving a brief survey of his own political and economic studies Marx goes on:

"The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, continued to serve as the leading thread in my studies, may be briefly summed up as follows: in the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society — the real foundation, on which rise legal and political super structures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual process of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or — what is but a legal expression for the same thing — with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic, in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must rather be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social forces of production and the relations of production. No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces, for which there is room in it, have been developed; and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society. Therefore, mankind always takes up only such problems as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, we will always find, that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation. In broad outlines we can designate the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the modern bourgeois methods of production as so many epochs in the progress of the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production — antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism but in one arising from conditions surrounding the life of individuals in society; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation constitutes therefore, the closing chapter of the prehistoric stage of human society." (P. 11).



Those who really grasp this explanation of the part played by the production and distribution of wealth in historical movements have the key to the puzzling twists and turns in mankind's painful progress from savagery to atomic bombs, from internal harmony to internal strife, from the time when food in plenty meant ease and comfort to the time when food in plenty meant starvation and misery. All the previously incomprehensible contradictions of a highly developed civilisation are now understandable as deriving from a private property basis which produced a class struggle between the propertied and the propertyless classes. Henceforth the vanguard of the working class movement had in their hands a weapon which, if properly used, enabled them to carry on the struggle for Socialism in the only way that would bring success, and with the conviction that success would eventually crown their efforts. The Communist Manifesto had already indicated the theory in general terms; here it was briefly, definitely and completely proclaimed. Man himself need no longer be regarded as just the butt of economic circumstances; he was also a part of those circumstances; reacting on them and helping to produce new social arrangements. As Marx had already put it in the opening words of his 18th Brumaire, man makes his own history but he does not do so out of the whole cloth, he can only make his history out of material that is ready to his hand.

The Critique opens up with an analysis of commodities, followed by notes on the history of the theory of commodities and money, and sections on the medium of circulation and on money, concluding with a long section on Theories of the Medium of Circulation and Money. This was to have been the first portion of Marx's analysis of capitalist production but, after its publication, he came to the conclusion that he must alter the arrangement of his material in order that his analysis might be more easily followed.

For eight years he laboured assiduously and, as a result, produced the first volume of Capital. This included in its first chapter most of what had appeared in the Critique, but in a form easier to assimilate. In Capital Marx subjected modern methods of production and distribution to a searching analysis, disclosing in detail, for the first time, how the surplus value upon which the capitalist lives is legally abstracted from the labour of the worker. Apart from the main current of the subject, Capital teems with fruitful observations and suggestions that are monuments to the learning and penetration of the brilliant thinker who would have enriched the science of sociology to an even greater extent than he did, had his span of life been extended a little longer. His studies were frequently interrupted by spells of illness, and also by the immense amount of work that devolved upon him in the activity of the International Working Men's Association, which brought him out of retirement and into practical politics again.

After the collapse of the 1848 movements, and the hunting out of communists that followed, working class agitation declined for many years. Attention was diverted from open antagonism to the ruling powers into channels that were narrow, and led away from any revolutionary purpose. In England, innocuous unions, and the petty self help co-operative societies frowned on by Robert Owen; in France a Proudhonism that set the fears of the government at rest; and in Germany credit and loan societies. These activities occupied most of the erstwhile revolutionary enthusiasm. For the time being the vanguard of the working class movement gave up all attempts to conquer political power and revolutionise society, as the more active workers either fell victims to the law, turned into movements