The Communist Manifesto

by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

With an Introduction by Vladimir Pozner

The Communist Manifesto

by

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

With an Introduction by Vladimir Pozner

BANTAM BOOKS
NEW YORK • TORONTO • LONDON • SYDNEY • AUCKLAND

THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO
A Bantam Classic Book / June 1992

PUBLISHING HISTORY

The text of The Communist Manifesto *reproduced here is that of the English edition of 1888, edited by Friedrich Engles.*

ISBN 0-553-21406-3

Published simultaneously in the United States and Canada

Bantam Books are published by Bantam Books, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc. Its trademark, consisting of the words "Bantam Books" and the portrayal of a rooster, is Registered in U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and in other countries. Marca Registrada. Bantam Books, 1540 Broadway, New York, New York 10036.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OPM 19 18

Introduction

IT IS ONLY FAIR that I warn the reader who anticipates being treated to a solid dose of professorial wisdom that he or she will be disappointed.

I have no standing in academia.

I am neither a philosopher nor a political scientist.

I am a mere journalist. To be sure, one who has spent the larger part of his life—nearly forty years—in a country until recently called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, living in what was referred to as a *Communist* society (wrongly, but I will come to that). Not only did I live in that country (I use the past tense not because I have changed my place of residence, but because the country's name has changed; it is now called Russia), but I was a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for twenty-three years. Coming to Moscow via Paris, where I was born, New York, where I spent my formative years, and Berlin, where I came into early adulthood, my knowledge of Western society was not based on hearsay and my political outlook and inclinations were communistic precisely for that reason: the reality of what I witnessed and experienced in capitalist America prior to 1953 (the year my father moved the family to Moscow) struck me as being far less just, democratic, and humane than the theory

of socialism which, as my father never tired telling me, was practiced in the Soviet Union.

Of course, my father was wrong. The reality of everyday Soviet life could not but drive home the point that major discrepancies and contradictions existed between the theory I so admired and the practical application of that theory in the U.S.S.R. But having given myself to that idea, to that theory, with all my heart and soul, I was loath to part with it. And so I rationalized my belief. This was not very hard to do, especially at first. There were many things that I sincerely admired: the fact that everyone was guaranteed a job, everyone had, therefore, a means of sustenance; there were no homeless, all people enjoyed equal opportunity through free education at all levels, from preschool to graduate studies; all medical care was offered free of charge, everyone was guaranteed retirement pension, all working people had paid vacations. But that was not all. After nearly five years of the most horrendous and destructive war ever known, after having lost nearly thirty million people and seen one third of its national wealth go up in smoke, after Western experts had predicted it would take the Soviet Union fifty years to attain its prewar economic level, the nation achieved one of the most miraculous comebacks ever. By the time of my arrival, the country had surpassed its 1940 industrial output; only a few years later, in 1957, it ushered in the space age with *Sputnik*, the first artificial satellite in space; that was followed by Yuri Gagarin's spectacular flight—the world watched with awe and envy as the first-ever human being soared into space.

In the 1950s and 1960s the Soviet economy boomed; living standards improved rapidly, the national economy barreled along, all this leading Nikita Khrushchev to predict that the U.S.S.R. would soon catch up with and then surpass the United States as the world's number one economic power. Along with economic growth came political liberalization: In 1956, at the XX Congress of the Communist Party, Khrushchev denounced Stalin for the crimes he

had committed and special commissions were set up to free the millions of people incarcerated in the Gulag. All of these things served to boost my faith in the ideals of communism and in the ultimate triumph of its first and lower stage—socialism—in the U.S.S.R.

True, there was Budapest in 1956, when Soviet tanks crushed the Hungarian uprising in a bloodbath. Also true, the first dissident trials began under Khrushchev. But by weighing those digressions against the use of U.S. force in the Caribbean in support of dictatorial regimes, by comparing the dissident trials to the witch-hunts of the McCarthy period, I was able to present a plausible argument to myself: there were, I said, bad things in both systems, but at least one was trying to build a truly just society.

Thus, I hung on. And it took me a long time to let go.

It took me years and years before I could admit to myself, let alone to others, that the shortcomings of other societies could not serve to justify those of the one I lived in; and it took me even more time to conclude that the society I so profoundly believed in—or wished to believe in—was a sick society.

It took a chunk of my life before I could bring myself to resign from the Party.

All of the above has nothing to do with the subject of this introduction. What it has to do with, however, is furnishing an explanation as to why I accepted Bantam Books' offer to write it: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Marxism, socialism, communism—these are people and ideas I have spent more time thinking about than most do. Not only have they preoccupied my mind, they continue to do so; they have been part of my life and will probably always be a part of my life. So, while I was, and remain, mystified as to why Bantam Books saw fit to offer me this opportunity, you, the reader, should now not be surprised that I jumped at it. After all, what true Catholic could ignore the temptation of writing an introduction to the Bible?

"A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism. All the Powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre: Pope and Czar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies."

Thus begins *The Communist Manifesto,* written jointly by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in January 1848.

Think about it: nearly a century and a half ago the powers of Europe pooled their efforts, entered into an alliance to exorcise something that was not even there—a specter, a ghost. Today, almost 150 years later, the powers of a new Europe, of the American continent, of several other continents, are, like so many children, gleefully jumping up and down screaming, "It's gone, it's gone, communism is gone!" What a wonderfully interesting phenomenon. A ghost that never materialized (the Soviet Union notwithstanding), a mere idea, a concept that has terrified the high and mighty of the world for so long.

I sense the readers' indignation: "What do you mean, the Soviet Union notwithstanding?! You can't write off seventy-four years of communism and its ignoble failure as something that never existed!" While I fully understand those who would accuse me of trying to sidestep the entire Soviet experience, I hasten to assure one and all that that is not my intention; I must beg them to have patience with the understanding that I have every intention of discussing that topic—be it only because I am as interested in it as anyone else, if not more so.

At this point, however, I would like the reader to reflect on just what it was that so terrified the "Powers of old Europe," as well as those of contemporary times; what was it that galvanized them into joining forces, even though many, if not most, of them were traditionally opposed to any kind of joint activities? Very little had ever been written about communism before the appearance of the *Manifesto,* and nothing at all had been written that attempted to present communism as scientific theory rather

than utopian pie in the sky; the answer to our questions must, therefore, lie in that document. Here are two short quotes from the *Manifesto* which, I think, provide us with the answers we are looking for:

> All property relations in the past have continually been subject to historical change consequent upon the change in historical conditions.
>
> The French Revolution, for example, abolished feudal property in favour of bourgeois property.
>
> The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally but the abolition of bourgeois property. But modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few.
>
> In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.
>
> The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.
>
> "Working men of all countries, unite!"

And the ruling classes trembled.

Now, I think we can all agree that while unfounded fear certainly does exist, it tends to disappear as soon as the lack of basis for that fear becomes apparent. Once one knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that specters and ghosts do not exist, one ceases to fear them. The same approach may be applied to what Marx and Engels wrote. If their views were a true reflection of reality, then, indeed, they were justifiably terrifying for the ruling classes. If they were, on the other hand, preposterous figments of

these two men's tortured imaginations, they would be more suited for clinical psychological studies or for political satire.

Judging by their reaction, the ruling classes, or, if you prefer a less Marxist definition, the Establishments of the world, did not and still do not seem to have that view. In fact, their reaction would seem to say they took and take Marx and Engels very seriously.

The authors of the *Manifesto* made a statement based on historical fact, namely: that property and power go hand in hand; that whatever class owns (controls) the property is in fact the ruling class; and that no class relinquishes its grasp on power/property without a struggle. Expressed in somewhat different terms, they were stating the view that the history of human social development is nothing less than the history of class struggle between the haves and the have-nots. That view—at least its latter part—was certainly not a Marxist discovery. As early as the first century B.C. Plato spoke about there always being two cities, the city of the poor and the city of the rich, which were forever at war with each other. Plato did not call this class struggle, but that is essentially what it amounts to.

Whether it was the slave fighting the slave owner over the thousands of years of the slave system's existence; whether it was the serf, or the bondsman, or the trader fighting the king and the aristocracy in feudal society; whether it was (and is) the worker fighting big business in a capitalist (bourgeois) society, the issue always has been property: who owns it and the refusal of those who own it to relinquish it without a life-and-death struggle.

Make no mistake about it: Marx and Engels based their conclusions on a most rigorous examination of history, of economic and social relationships. One might argue with some, or even with all, of their conclusions, but no one in his or her right mind would deny the honesty and the seriousness, as well as the scientific approach, of these two men. The fear their conclusions instilled in the ruling class, a fear that even today continues to be evidenced,

testifies to that class's acknowledgment of the Marxist argument's plausibility.

As one reads Marx, one would do well to ask what it was that pushed him to write what he wrote, what goaded him on, what made him run risks, including the risk of angering the authorities of his native Germany to the point at which he had to flee to England, where he remained in exile until his death in 1883? The answer is: the living conditions of the workingman. Few people today have even the remotest idea of the horrors of mid-nineteenth-century labor. But why go so far back? As late as 1928 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the steel mills ran on *two twelve-hour shifts, seven days a week.* Marx was sickened by what he saw, as were many others, among them Charles Dickens. But differing from everyone else, Marx set out to discover whether there was any rhyme or reason for this situation, any basic underlying motive for this state of affairs, anything resembling a law. After all, nature had her laws, one of which was the law of evolution so brilliantly demonstrated by Charles Darwin. But what about human society? Was its development the result of a law or a combination of laws? Or was it all unpredictable?

After years and years of laborious study, Marx answered in the affirmative: Yes, the law of social development existed and that law was economic in nature; it had to do with (1) who owned the means of production, (2) what kind of ownership prevailed, and (3) what was the method of production. In the simplest of terms, Marx proposed the following: Human society develops along certain lines; it progresses in a certain *predetermined* direction; it moves only one way, never going back, never regressing to a previously attained stage. Human society starts out as tribal, in which the means of production are collectively owned and the products of labor are equally and collectively shared by the tribe; it then moves to the next stage, that of slave-owning society, where the means of production—the slave and the land—are privately owned by the slave owner. The next stage is feudal society, where the princi-

pal owners (at times, the only owner) of everything are the king and the nobility. Feudal society is followed by capitalism, where the means of production (the factories, the land, the banks) are privately owned by the capitalist class. And so it goes, from one stage to another, the movement typified by the method of production (tribal, slave, feudal, capitalist) and by the type of ownership of the means of production (collective, private), which is the central issue.

With the exception of tribal society, where the products of collective labor are collectively shared, all other societies consist of haves and have-nots. None of these societies is capable of furnishing all its members with a decent livelihood, that is, of becoming a society consisting solely of haves. However, said Marx, such a society can be created. The way to do that is to abolish private ownership of the means of production (i.e., bourgeois private property) and turn it into public, collective property; in a way, that would be akin to returning to humankind's original state, but at a very different level of development, that of capitalist industrialization.

No matter how one may feel about Marx and his views, one cannot argue with the proposal that no society has been able to eradicate the have-nots, that is, do away with poverty. Whether or not his recipe for achieving that end through the abolishing of private property in favor of collectively owned property was correct or not remains to be seen. That judgment shall be made only when and if a society based on the collective ownership of the means of production is actually created. And that brings me to the subject of the Soviet Union which, as you recall, I promised to look into.

What certainly did occur in the U.S.S.R. was the abolishing of private property. The same happened in Albania, Bulgaria, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, the People's Republic of Korea, Poland, Romania, Vietnam. *But in none of them was public, collective property instituted.* What replaced

private ownership was *state ownership. All the means of production were both de jure and de facto owned, controlled, and run by the state.*

That fundamental and irreversible fact is what allows me to say unequivocally that neither socialism nor its supreme state of development, communism, ever existed in the Soviet Union or in any of the other so-called Communist countries. Yes, there did exist elements of a Socialist policy, especially in what concerned and concerns social security; but those elements were no more pronounced in the Soviet Union than they are in Sweden or, for that matter, in Germany, neither of which qualifies as being Socialist/Communist countries. The contest, therefore, between the "democratic" world, symbolized by the United States, and the "Communist" world, embodied by the U.S.S.R., was in fact not a struggle between democracy and communism; it was a struggle between two forms of ownership: private and state. State ownership lost. It might even be said that the struggle was between two forms of capitalism—bourgeois capitalism and state capitalism, with the former proving to be the stronger.

When Marx proposed his law of social development, he insisted that the transition from one social stage to the next could happen only when a given society had reached the limits of its development within a particular stage. Thus, the move to socialism, as Marx saw it, could happen and would happen only after capitalism in a given country had run its full course. No society could skip a stage. This to Marx was an expression of historical logic. It was akin to saying that one cannot become an adult without first passing through adolescence.

In their preface to the Russian edition of the *Manifesto,* written thirty-four years later, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels made the following observations:

> Step by step the small and middle landownership of the [American—V.P.] farmers . . . is succumbing to the competition of giant farms; simultaneously, a mass of prole-

tariat and a fabulous concentration of capitals are developing for the first time in the industrial regions. . . . But in Russia we find, face-to-face with the rapidly developing capitalist swindle and bourgeois landed property just beginning to develop, more than half the land owned in common by the peasants. Now the question is: Can the Russian *obshchina*, though greatly undermined, yet a form of the primeval common ownership of land, pass directly to the higher form of Communist common ownership? Or, on the contrary, must it first pass through the same process of dissolution as constitutes the historical evolution of the West?

The only answer to that possible today is this: If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting-point for a Communist development.

Marx and Engels were alluding to the anti-czarist movement of those times in Russia which they thought would lead to a bourgois revolution (as it did in February 1917); they were not talking about a proletarian revolution in Russia, for that country was not ready for one. The United States, however, was moving in that direction, what with the growth of monopolies and the gradual wiping out of small farms and businesses. Juxtaposing those two countries, Marx and Engels asked themselves whether or not the *obshchina*, the ancient Russian way of practicing the collective ownership of land, might not serve the West—the United States in particular—as a starting-point for communistic development. The *obshchina* could, of course, serve Russia for the same purpose—but only if it were preserved and did not have to "pass through" a "process of dissolution" as Russia capitalism developed; neither of the authors were at all sure that would be the case.

Although most people have become accustomed to the hyphenated expression Marxism-Leninism, I find that combination both misleading and objectionable. Leninism has,

as a matter of fact, very little in common with Marxism. As the British historian Paul Johnson put it, Lenin "completely ignored the very core of Marx's ideology, the historical determinism of the revolution" and believed that "the decisive role was played by human will: his." Lenin "developed" Marxist theory by advancing the proposition that a proletarian revolution could occur in what he called capitalism's weakest link; it was there that the "chain" would be broken, that is, an economically backward country would turn out to be the most advanced politically. That country, as Lenin saw it, was Russia. He was right insofar as engineering a successful uprising was concerned: On November 7, 1917, the Communists seized power. But by the time Lenin died only seven years later, he could not but have realized the ultimate futility and folly of having attempted to move Russia to socialism prior to that country's having fully experienced capitalist development. The ensuing state monopoly on all property, the institution of central planning (something Marx never mentioned, let alone proposed), the concentration of power in one party and, ultimately, in the hands of one man, totalitarian dictatorship—all of these were the results of Lenin's mistake. Lenin bears the responsibility for what followed (not that he would have supported it); Lenin, not Marx.

In a very interesting article on Karl Marx published in the November 25, 1991, issue of *The Wall Street Journal* the author asks: "Can Marx, who sometimes did suggest imposing the new order by force, be blamed for Communist totalitarianism? Can a visionary be held responsible for his followers' actions many years later? . . . Would the Man who gave the Sermon on the Mount really have favored the Spanish Inquisition?" The question begs a negative answer. But I would even argue that the question does not really address the issue properly. First of all, while Marx did call for the use of force to impose the new order, his reasoning had nothing to do with totalitarianism. He felt certain that the ruling class would never relinquish its grip on power/property without a struggle. Was he

wrong? I don't think so. Even a most recent example serves to confirm Marx's view, that of Allende's election to power in Chile and his subsequent overthrow by counterrevolutionary forces supported by the C.I.A. The change to a Socialist form of government in Chile happened through the ballot box, but the ruling class did not accept being democratically voted out of power and used force to overthrow the legitimate government, murder the president, and then kill thousands of his supporters while instituting the most oppressive form of government: a military dictatorship. Second of all, the question is not about whether Marx can or should be held responsible for the action of his followers; the question is, can Marx be held responsible for those who used his name while completely disregarding his most basic principles?

In that same issue of *The Wall Street Journal* Samuel Bowles, a Marxist economist at the University of Massachusetts, is quoted as saying: "The main upshot of the events in Eastern Europe was the collapse of public ownership of the means of production. So, there is a lot of rethinking about socialist economies . . ." Professor Bowles says further that Marx "overlooked the dictatorial potential of the State . . . that was a huge mistake."

One should certainly not look to Marx for guidance as to the workings of a Socialist economy. He had very little to say about that subject. His forte was capitalism. So, indeed, there is much to "rethink" about Socialist economies —especially considering that, as I pointed out earlier, they have never existed. What collapsed in Eastern Europe was not the system of public ownership, may I repeat, but the system of state ownership. Finally, Marx did not foresee the dictatorial potential of the state because in the society that he envisaged, the state could not be dictatorial, for it would not have any ownership and its power would be derived from those who did in fact own the means of production: the people. What Marx did not foresee and what might be called "a huge mistake" was that self-styled Marxists would make use of his teachings for

their own ends, distorting them beyond recognition in the process.

Earlier, when touching on Marx's views of social development, I brought up the issue of haves and have-nots and the concept of "decent livelihood." These were all very central to Marx's thinking—but certainly not only to him. Look at the Declaration of Independence, written well before Marx was born. It tells us that all people are endowed with certain inalienable rights and (please pay attention) *among them* are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. "Among them" means that there are other inalienable rights. These, it seems to me, might be formulated in the following way: All people are endowed with certain inalienable rights, that of life, liberty, and whatever else a person needs in order to pursue happiness. In other words, a decent livelihood. None of the other inalienable rights can be exercised without a person's enjoying a decent livelihood, a notion that must include a decent subsistence, a healthy living and working environment, access to medical care as well as to education, aesthetic development, and leisure.

Where Marx differed from Thomas Jefferson and most other thinkers was in his certainty that a decent livelihood (the pursuit of happiness) was not possible without two basic elements: political equality and economic equality. Political equality applies to a society where the people are governed by their own consent with the voice of their own government—something that cannot exist without universal suffrage. Some have more power than others, namely, those who are elected to office. But all are politically equal in the sense of being able to elect or be elected. Political equality is democracy, and democracy is not egalitarian. Economic equality is socialism, that is to say, a system by which a decent livelihood is secured for all. This does not mean identical wages for one and all, but it does mean sufficient subsistence for one and all to enjoy the inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness. In short, socialism is

a society where some have more, some have less, but there are no have-nots, a system that could be called nonegalitarian equality. That is the society Marx predicted would follow capitalism because capitalism was not and is not capable of creating a "decent livelihood" for all. Capitalism gives neither political nor economic equality to the people. The number of have-nots in all capitalist societies is quite high—and these are both economic and political have-nots. The reason for that, according to Marx, is the private ownership of the means of production.

Some accuse Marx of being afflicted with "liberal delusions", i.e., of believing that good people in power would bring good results. Nothing could be further from the truth. Marx believed that good results could be achieved only when society itself changed, when ownership of the means of production would become collective. He may have been an idealist in believing that once the conditions of human existence were changed, once private ownership of property was abolished, once exploitation disappeared, people would change as well. He believed that in a society where there were no have-nots, where one's livelihood did not depend on struggling to make money, where instead of competing against one another people worked together, in such a society human nature would undergo serious changes. Indeed, that may have been a delusion—although it certainly is far too early in the game to make that conclusion.

There were many things Marx did not foresee, among them, the ability of the capitalist system to reform itself by incorporating a whole series of socialistic elements—such as paid vacations, worker compensation, social security—measures specifically designed to help the poor. However, let it be said that all of these measures and a host of others were never a given, they were all the result of a continued struggle on the part of the working people; blood was shed, many were killed, many more thrown in jail before the ruling classes realized *it was in their interest* to grant these rights, that it was either that or a revolt. Most of