

1 What is Communism?

Communism is the doctrine of the conditions of the liberation of the proletariat.

2 What is the Proletariat?

The proletariat is that class in society which lives (*independence*) entirely from the sale of its labor and does NOT draw profit from any kind of capital;

whose weal (*happiness*) and woe,
whose life and death,
whose sole existence depends

- on the demand for labor, hence,
- on the changing state of business,
- on the vagaries of unbridled competition.

The Proletariat, or the class of the proletarians, is, in a word, the working class of the 19th century.

3 Proletarians, then, have NOT always Existed?

No.

(Although) There have always been

- poor (*classes*)
- and working classes;

and the working class
have mostly been poor.

BUT there have NOT always been workers and poor people
living under **conditions** as they are **today**;
in other words,
there have NOT always been proletarians,
any more than there has always been

- free,
- (*rapacious, and*)
- unbridled

competitions.

4 How did the Proletariat Originate?

(FIRST quarter)

The Proletariat originated in the industrial revolution, which took place in England in the last half of the last (18th) century, and which has since then been repeated in all the civilized countries of the world.

This industrial revolution was precipitated by the discovery of

- the steam engine,
- various spinning machines,
- the mechanical loom,
- and a whole series of other mechanical devices.

These

- could be bought ONLY by big capitalists,
- altered the whole mode of production
- and displaced the former workers, because the machines turned out cheaper and better commodities than the workers could produce with their inefficient spinning wheels and hand looms.

(continued)

The machines delivered industry
wholly into the hands of the big capitalists
and rendered entirely worthless
the meagre property of the workers (tool, looms, etc.).

The result was that the capitalists
soon had everything in their hands
and nothing remained to the workers.

This marked the introduction of the factory system
into the textile industry.

4 How did the Proletariat Originate? (continued)**(SECOND quarter)**

Once the impulse to the introduction of

- machinery
- and the factory system

had been given,

this system spread quickly

to all other branches of industry,

especially

- cloth- and book-printing,
- pottery,
- and the metal industries.

Labor was more and more divided
among the individual workers

so that the worker who previously had done a complete piece of work
now did ONLY a **part** of that piece.

This division of labor
made it possible
to produce things

- faster
- and cheaper.

(continued)

It reduced the activity of the individual worker to

- simple,
- endlessly repeated
- mechanical motions

which could be performed

NOT only as well (*by a machine*)

BUT much better by a machine.

In this way,

all the industries fell,

one after another,

under the dominance of

- steam,
- machinery ,
- and the factory **system**,

just as spinning and waving

had already done.

4 **How did the Proletariat Originate?** (*continued*) (*THIRD quarter*)

But at the same time,
they also fell into the hands of big capitalists,
and their workers were deprived
of whatever independence remained to them.

Gradually,

- not only genuine manufacture
- but also handicrafts

came within the province of the factory system
as big capitalists increasingly displaced
the small master craftsman

by setting up huge workshops,
which saved many expenses
and permitted an elaborate division of labor.

4 **How did the Proletariat Originate?** *(continued)* *(FOURTH quarter)*

This is how it has come about
that in civilized countries
at the present time
nearly all kinds of labor
are performed in **factories**...

and, in nearly all branches of work,

- handicrafts
- and manufacture

have been superseded.

This process has,
to an ever-greater degree,
ruined the old middle class,
especial the small handicraftsmen;

it has entirely transformed
the condition of the workers;
and two new classes
have been created
which are gradually swallowing up
all the others.

(continued)

These are:

- (i) The class of big capitalists,
who, in all civilized countries,
are already in almost exclusive possession of all
 - the means of subsistence
 - and of the instruments (machines, factories)
 - and materials necessary for
the production of the means of subsistence.This is the bourgeois class, or the bourgeoisie.

- (ii) The class of the wholly propertyless,
who are obliged to sell their labor to the bourgeoisie
in order to get, in exchange,
the means of subsistence for their support.
This is called the class of proletarians, or the proletariat.

**5 Under what Conditions
does this Sale of the Labor
of the Proletarians
to the Bourgeoisie
Take Place?**

(FIRST third)

Labor is a commodity

like any other,
and its price
is therefore determined
by exactly the same laws
that apply to other commodities.

In a regime

- of big industry
- or of free competition

as we shall see,
the two (*labor and commodities*)
come to (*mean*) the same thing
the price of a commodity is,
on the average,
always equal to its cost of production.

Hence,
the price of labor
is also equal to the cost of production
of the labor.

**5 Under what Conditions
does this Sale of the Labor
of the Proletarians
to the Bourgeoisie
Take Place?**

(SECOND third)

BUT, the costs of production of labor consist of precisely the quantity of means of subsistence necessary to enable the worker to continue working, and to prevent the working class from dying out.

The worker will therefore get NO more for his labor than is necessary for this purpose; the price of labor, or the wage, will, in other words, be the lowest, the minimum, required for the maintenance of life.

**5 Under what Conditions
does this Sale of the Labor
of the Proletarians
to the Bourgeoisie
Take Place?**

(FINAL third)

However, since business
is sometimes better and sometimes worse,
it follows that the worker sometimes gets more
and sometimes gets less
for his commodities (*of labor*).

But, again,
just as the industrialist, on the average of good times and bad,
gets NO more and NO less for his commodities
than what they cost,
similarly on the average
the worker gets NO more and NO less
than his **minimum** (*sustenance*).

This economic law of wages
operates the more strictly
the greater the degree
to which big industry has taken **possession**
of all branches of production

6 What Working Classes were there before the Industrial Revolution?

The working classes have always, according to the different stages of development of society, lived in different circumstances and had different relations

- to the owning
- and ruling classes.

In antiquity, the workers were the **slaves** of the owners, just as they still are in many backward countries and even in the southern part of the United States.

(**continued**)

In the Middle Ages,
they were the (*agricultural*) **serfs** of the land-owning nobility,
as they still are in Hungary, Poland, and Russia.

In the Middle Ages,
and indeed right up to the industrial revolution,
there were also (*trade*) **journey men** in the cities
who worked in the service of the petty bourgeois masters.

Gradually, as manufacture developed,
these journeymen became **manufacturing workers**
who were even then employed by larger capitalists.

**7. In what way
do Proletarians
Differ from Slaves?**

(FIRST half)

The slave is sold once and for all;
the proletarian must sell himself

- daily
- and hourly.

The individual slave,
property of one master,
is assured an existence,
however miserable it may be,
because of the master's interest.

The individual proletarian,
property as it were of the entire bourgeois class
which buys his labor only when someone has need of it,
has NO secure existence.
This existence is assured only to the class as a whole.

**7. In what way
do Proletarians
Differ from Slaves?**

(SECOND half)

The slave is outside competition;
the proletarian is in it
and experiences ALL its vagaries (*whims*).

The slave counts as a thing,
NOT as a member of society.

Thus, the slave can have a better existence
than the proletarian,
while the proletarian belongs to a higher stage of social development
and, himself, stands on a higher social level than the slave.

The slave frees himself when,
of ALL the relations of private property,
he abolishes only the relation of slavery
and thereby becomes a proletarian;

the proletarian can free himself
only by abolishing private property in general.

8. In what way do Proletarians Differ from Serfs

The serf **possesses** and uses an instrument of production, a piece of (*his feudal lord's*) land, in exchange for which

- he gives up a part of his product
- or part of the services of his labor.

The proletarian **works** with the instruments of production of another, for the account of this other, in exchange for a **part** of the product.

The serf **gives up**, the proletarian **receives**.

The serf has an **assured** existence, the proletarian has **NOT**.

The serf is **outside competition**, the proletarian is **in it** (*competition*).

(*continued*)

The serf liberates himself in one of three ways:

- either he runs away to the city and there becomes a handicraftsman;
- or, instead of products and services,
he gives money to his lord and thereby becomes a free tenant;
- or he overthrows his feudal lord and himself becomes a property owner.

In short, by one route or another,
he gets into the owning class
and enters into competition,

The proletarian liberates himself by abolishing

- competition,
- private property,
- and ALL class differences.

**9. In what way
do Proletarians
Differ from
Handicraftsmen?**

In contrast to the proletarian,
the so-called handicraftsman,
as he still existed almost everywhere in the **past** (eighteenth) century
and still exists here and there at present,
is a **proletarian** at most **temporarily**.

His **goal** is to acquire **capital** himself
wherewith to exploit other workers.

(continued)

He can often achieve this goal

- where guilds still exist
- or where freedom from guild restrictions has NOT yet led to the introduction of factory-style methods into the crafts NOR yet to fierce competition.

BUT

- as soon as the factory system has been introduced into the crafts
- and competition flourishes fully,

this perspective dwindles away

and the handicraftsman becomes more and more a **proletarian**.

The handicraftsman therefore frees himself by

- becoming either **bourgeois** or entering the middle class in general (*the petty bourgeois*),
- or becoming a proletarian because of competition (as is not more often the case).

In which case he can **free** himself
by joining the proletarian movement,
i.e., the more or less **communist** movement.

**10 In what way
Do Proletarians Differ
from Manufacturing Workers?**

The manufacturing

(continued)

1