

Marxist Literary Theory and the New Society

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ABSTRACT

This work looks into a quantum and in-depth dialectical materialism, the proletariat's attack on the bourgeoisie. Marxism, as a counterattack against the bourgeoisie by the proletariat, which was labelled the Bourgeoisie-Marxism, was considered. The communist manifesto sought to address the most multifarious social quacks, who, by all manner of tinkering, preferred to redress, without any danger to capital and profit, all sorts of social grievances, in both cases men outside the working-class movement, and looking rather to the "educated" classes for support. Class struggle creates enemies who happen to be such because of not only belonging to a class but also the struggle to control the other for selfish benefits, including resources and means of production, the reasons for constant fighting both in known and unknown modes. The new society and the new order exist, and class antagonism is revealed in literary works. Finally, there should be a total removal of federal character, and meritocracy should be enthroned.

Keywords: *Class struggle, dialectical materialism, Marxism, Communist Manifesto*

INTRODUCTION

Marxism is popular with Marx's class in his works, *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital*. Marx and Engels divide society into the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This was the economic expression of society. Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels are credited with Marxism. Karl Marx started the Marxian Theory in his 1958, groundbreaking work, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, which was completed by his student, Fredrick Engels. Marx and Engels divide society into the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Dutt (1963) under "Basis and superstructure" explains the constituent of the bourgeoisie and social relations and notes that "the idea of society (political, legal, philosophical, and religious), the institutions and organisations (State, Church, Political parties, etc) which arise on a given basis, constitute the superstructure of society". The proletariats also have their groups. In the language of

Dutt, “The workers sooner or later become conscious of themselves as a special class, they become aware of their common interests and of the incompatibility of these interests with those of the capitalists. Awareness of these interests results in the workers beginning to unite in a joint struggle against capitalists. The advanced section of the working class unites in a political party, trade unions and other mass organisations of the working people are created. Class solidarity develops among the workers, and they acquire a morality of their own that is opposed to the ruling bourgeoisie's morality.

This was the economic expression of society. This work takes a quantum leap from such consideration. Rather than an in-depth look into dialectical materialism, the proletariat's attack on the bourgeoisie, we consider Marxism as a counterattack from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat, which we labelled the Bourgeoisie-Marxism. In this case, Marxism was a struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie's suppression. The success of the proletariat is limited. Once the proletariat leaders lead the masses on a campaign to succeed and overthrow the bourgeoisie's power, they, the leaders themselves, immediately turn the bourgeoisie against the very proletariat they emerge from. Since they already know the mechanism of the proletariat, the power of the state in various ways to control the proletariat. The picture of the struggles, the emergence, and the subsequent re-emergence of the bourgeoisie is then the recurrent decimal in a world of constant struggle and suppression.

1.1 Background and Waves of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*

The Communist Manifesto in this work considers the Marxian Economic Theory where the capitalists engaged the proletariats in self-pleasure denial and concentrate on plugging back profit into business for the accumulation of wealth and the expansion of capital base for more profit because economic competition is a compelling force used and is submerged in by the capitalist rather the Bourgeoisie revolt against the proletariats and how power is utilized including methods draws in the concept of the bourgeoisie Marxism. The capitalist in his business believes that a strong capital base defeats a small capital base due to its large scale of production. This is experienced in the various continuous existences of multinationals in small-scale businesses.

The dogma of labour and labour value is not minimal when social superstructure runs in conflict with the substructure; the underground dogma foregrounds revolution. It is here that the class and state are imported to view. Beer, in his editorial introduction to *The Communist Manifesto*, explained that in the Marxian scheme, a class is a set of persons all of whom stand in the same objective relationship to the mode of production, the state, meaning by this both political institutions and the system of law, also determined by the mode of production.

Fredrick Engels' Preface to the English version of the 1888 *Manifesto of the Communist Party* declares that *the Manifesto was published as the platform of the communist league, a working men's association, first exclusively German, later on international, and under the political conditions of the continent before 1948, unavoidably a secret society. Before February 24, 1948, the French Revolution. The defeat of the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848, the first great battle between proletariat and bourgeoisie, drove again into the background, for a time, the social and political aspirations of the European working class. Thenceforth, the struggle for supremacy was again, as it had been before the revolution of February, solely between different sections of the propertied class; the working class was reduced to a fight for a political elbow-room, and the position of extreme wing of the middle-class Radicals* (1-2). Engels continues that anytime the proletariat showed indications of independent or autonomous life, they were ruthlessly hunted down; the police hunted out members who were arrested, and after eighteen months' imprisonment, they were tried and sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

The European working class was quelled for a while by the superstructure. After, the working class resurfaced under the International Working Men Association with the express aim of welding into one body the whole militant proletariat of Europe and America. It is against this backdrop that Karl Marx was mandated, and he brought out a programme that was widely accepted by the English trade union, by the followers of [Pierre Joseph] Proudhon in France, Belgium, Italy, and Spain, and by the [Ferdinand] Lass Leans in Germany. Engel again says the history of the *Manifesto* is the history of the modern working-class movement. The working class falls into the category of the proletariat, which is in a constant war for self-identification and freedom from superstructural power. *The communist manifesto sought* to address the most multifarious social ills, who, by all manner of tinkering, preferred to redress, without any danger to capital and profit, all sorts of social grievances, in both cases, men outside the working-class movement, and looking rather to the "educated" classes for support. Whatever portion of the working class had become convinced of the insufficiency of mere political revolutions, and had proclaimed the necessity of a total social change, called itself [Marxist].

Those who had come together continued to mature into a movement, and by 1847, two movements had surfaced: Socialism for the middle class and Communism for the working class, seeking freedom. *The Manifesto* is a Marxist document and Engels says the whole history of men has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; that the history of these class struggles form a series of evolutions in which, nowadays, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class – the proletariat – cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class – the bourgeoisie –

without at the same time, and once and for all, emancipation, oppression, class distinction and class struggles.

In later years, every aspect and principle of *The Communist Manifesto* were upheld by Marx and Engels except revolution. In their joint preface to the German edition of 1872, both declared that the practical application of the principles will depend, as the Manifesto itself states, everywhere and at all times, on the historical conditions for the time being existing, and, for that reason, no special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its purposes.

Brutality is an instrument of control by the bourgeoisie. In the slave period, records have shown how slaves, including black slaves, were maltreated in the sugar plantations in the Caribbean countries and even in Africa, where blacks were colonised. These experiences created struggles for freedom and independence. Dutt (1963) added that the brutal exploitation of the slaves evoked bitter opposition on their part. To restate brutality, Karl Marx, in his letter to the editor of “La Réforme”, explains that the Police punched Wolff in the right eye so that he lost sight. They tore off his glasses, spat in his face, kicked him, punched him, and abused him. In recent times, modern proletariats and modern slaves to the modern bourgeoisie and the modern bourgeoisie are using modern methods, including power-wielding in various ways, to perpetuate themselves in the superstructure. Dutt says to crush this opposition, a special apparatus of coercion – the state – had to be created. It is the function of the state to protect the property of the slave – owners (the Bourgeoisie).

1.2 Manifesto of the Communist Party

Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels open with a class system engaging binary opposition where one is vividly in confrontation with the other, and one is a trait of the other. Quickly, one experiences antagonism. Antagonism between the powerful and powerless, and in addition, name-calling. Marx and Engels query, Where is the party in opposition that has not been decried as communistic/[Marxist] by its opponent in power?. In other words, it is the mighty who label the frail “communistic”, possibly because they are in constant demand for a better living. The very choice of the word “hurl” by Marx in his discussion suggests unsteady balance and introduces a dystopian emblem. In this imbalance, Marx favours the party in opposition, as the party in power is facing more advanced opposition parties, which is a movement per se. These advanced opposition parties are the reactionary adversaries.

Marx and Engels put forward a society made up of the “Bourgeois” and the “proletariat.” Marx and Engels explain the concepts in their footnote thus: In French, bourgeois means a town-dweller. Proletarian comes from the Latin, Proletarians,

which meant a person whose sole wealth was his offspring (poles). By “bourgeoisie” is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labour; by “proletariat”, the class of modern wage-labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour to live. In this case, all employers of labour and owners of means of production, such as government, private companies or individuals that require the services of another, are the bourgeoisie. Those who offer services to survive are the proletariat. To Marx and Engels, in the class of the bourgeoisie belong freedom, patrician, Lords, guild-master, oppressors. They are in constant war of any kind with the proletariat, including slaves, plebeians, serfs, journeyman, oppressed, and more.

1.3 The Morbidity of Society

Class struggle creates enemies who happen to be such because of not only belonging to a class but the struggle to control the other for selfish benefits, including resources and means of production, the reasons for constant fight in known and unknown modes. The fight for Marx will come to a stop, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes. Society exists in its morbid form, occasioned by breaking society into classes. The morbidity of society includes a manifold gradation of social rank. This social rank, the social order, was based on a stratified class system, which was highly regarded as inevitable because it was divinely ordained. According to William Keach et al, “Defoe summarised the hierarchy in 1709 in this way:

There are seven groups in the England Society:

1. The Great, who live profusely.
2. The Rich, who live very plentifully
3. The Middle sort, who live well
4. The working trades, who labour hard, but feel no want.
5. The country people, farmers, etc, fare differently.
6. The poor, who fare hard
7. The miserable that pinch and suffer want”.

At the top of the hierarchy were hereditary nobility who were the wealthiest merchants and title owners, and land owners (squires) controlled Agriculture and administered justice. They were the defenders of the order, the established social order. Second in the hierarchy are professionals: the church, the law, the teachers, the doctors, and the military. They were regarded as parasites. The law by this time was badly criticised for not accommodating the poverty of the poor.

1.4 The New Society

The new society and the new order exist within class antagonism and are revealed in literary works. This time, Marx says the new society has established new classes, new conditions of oppression, and new forms of struggle. The new society has set for itself, in the words of Marx, a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie. In this new era, the committee managing society on behalf of the bourgeoisie is the government of any nation, its agencies, armed militants and parastatals, etc. One example of a literary text having a new society is Wole Soyinka's (1984) *A Play of Giants*, showing the five leaders in power. The bourgeoisie, in one way or another, has gained the upper hand in society. They form a "cabal" for themselves and only open their corridor door to those they want to cross from the margin to the centre, as in the case of Beatrice in Chinua Achebe's *Anthill of the Savannah*. With the line separating these two groups in society, the bourgeoisie exist for themselves and leave no other bond between man and man than naked self-interest as displayed in Soyinka's (1967) *Kongi's Harvest*. To achieve their "naked self-interest," they employ what Marx calls ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions. It has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation. This is true as pictured in Soyinka's *The Trial of Brother Jero* and Jero's *Metamorphosis*.

From the above analysis, it is clear that the aim of the bourgeoisie is personal interest while exploiting the proletariat and deceiving them through the instrument of religion, politics, war, sentiment, ego, and more. When the oppressed react, the bourgeoisie follows them up with force and brutality. The use of power is to let the bourgeoisie have a way to their self-worth. This upper class categorise the physicians, the lawyers, the priests, the poets, the men of science, into its paid wage labourers. The need to solve human needs has subjected every human to the quest for money, which calls for the selling of labour that the labourer can produce. The struggle for money through paid wages or modern-day salaries tears apart the family. In this case, the bourgeoisie has turned away from the family, its sentimental veil and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation as developed by Idemudia in Iyayi's (1979) *Violence*. Engels, in 1845, discusses the Condition of the Working Class in England and quotes Carlyle's Cash Payment is the only nexus between man and man. Even the relation between himself and his wife is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, mere "Cash Payment." Money determines the worth of the man (Marx and Engels, Nd).

The bourgeoisie destroys the natural habitats and the world of others. The natural habitats altered by the bourgeoisie are Marx's first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes: constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted

disturbance of all social conditions. In this case, the bourgeoisie's activities are destructive artificial sources and violence against the proletariat and nature, whether intentionally or not, are cultivated in the superstructure. They have so altered the world order such that all that is solid melts into air all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life and his relations with his kind.

To achieve their aims, the bourgeoisie use force on the proletariat and compel all to follow their *modus operandi*. Marx says the bourgeoisie uses heavy artillery with which it batters down all, with which it forces intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeoisie's mode of operation; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation. It creates a world after its image. Since they are the rulers now, they have made the ordinary people, the masses, the commoners, and the oppressed; they have not lived by the standard created for them by the bourgeoisie. By creating towns and cities, the bourgeoisie set standards that moved the rural dwellers to migrate from rural areas to towns. The migration, in turn, gives the bourgeoisie the opportunity for further exploitation.

The population explosion of towns gives room to political concentration. For this reason, the bourgeoisie create divisions and zones with laws which help the substructure to survive, as indicated in Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. Marx gives insight into how the bourgeoisie segment the nations, impose their rules, control the people, exploit them and maximise the proletariat for profit. In his words, Bourgeoisies create Independent, or loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments and systems of taxation, become humped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class interest, one frontier and one customs tariff. With all the aforementioned put together, the bourgeoisie have created the labour force for themselves and use them as a means of production. This is the means of economic growth for the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie rule the nations and the world forcefully since they own and control the means of production, which is the key to production, consumption, and survival of the world, the reason for Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, where the blacks are metaphors as a spade.

Marx intended to forcefully break the bourgeoisie, and so he boasted that the weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against them. But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons, the modern working class, the proletariat. Marx intended the proletariat to use force, weapons, and violence to command and control the bourgeoisie, to create a utopian society. Unfortunately, the bourgeoisie use the same instruments to control, suppress,

oppress and submerge the proletariat in the state of slavery to either fellow man or machine.

Marx says the proletariat must fight and get freed. How will they react, and to whom and what must they react to bring revolution? He says the reaction begins at birth and grows to individual labourers, workers, and unions of a particular place, which will eventually enlarge to a movement. The movement's reaction will not target persons such as the bourgeoisies but the reaction will be directed not only on the bourgeoisie conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves; they [will] destroy imported wares that compete with their labour, they [will] smash machinery to pieces, they [will] set factories ablaze, they [will] seek to restore by force the vanished status of the workman. Restoring the "vanished status" is the reason for the formation of trade unions and labour congresses to negotiate wages and salaries and constantly consider revolts, which will culminate in riots if not checked. Here, Chris Egharevba's (1989) *Canopy of Thunder* and *Voices of Thunder* suffice. For a trade union to survive time, it must possess traits including communication, which can be vertical and horizontal, to keep its struggles abreast. Marx describes every class struggle as a political party, such as Julius Sello Malem's Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party, that describes itself as radical and militant, bringing together revolutionary, militant activists, community-based organisations, as well as lobby groups under the umbrella of a political party pursuing the struggle of economic emancipation (n.p).

Marx projected that it is the proletariat that determines their future. He does not consider the futuristic determinism of the bourgeoisie because these sets of people have reduced the proletarians to a level where the social conditions of the old society no longer exist. The proletarian is without property; his relation to his wife and children has no longer anything in common with the bourgeois family relations, which have stripped him of every trace of national character. Law, morality, and religion are to him so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests. The only way the proletarians can survive this level of Capricorns is to self-consciously break loose from its yoke. This is possible when the unity of the majority is galvanised into a movement of social protest for their interest.

But the bourgeoisie must be informed and warned of their oppression or be made to know about it. The information given is to first settle matters with its bourgeoisie. Where settlement does not yield a positive result, the proletariat then traces the more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society, up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat. Marx suggests that where the bourgeoisie's grip is not broken, the proletariat will continue to remain in poverty, antagonism, an oppressed condition, and slavery. The oppressed must

develop themselves, rise above their level, break the class boundary and become the bourgeoisie. It is in this way that the proletarians seek to destroy capitalism and enthrone communism.

For communism, Marx says it works for common national goals and the interests of the majority. The Proletariat's primary aim is the Formation of the proletariat into a class, the overthrow of bourgeoisie supremacy, and the conquest of political power. It seeks to end the bourgeoisie's ownership of property, and so, the theory of communism may be summed up in a single sentence: Abolition of private property. Capitalists owned Private property. Marx says that to be a capitalist is to have not only a purely personal, but also a social status in production. Marx argues that proper capitalism is that which chameleoned its class trait to social, power and property; otherwise, minimum wage becomes the average price of the worker. What capitalists do is to pay the labourer only to continue to work for the capitalist, being unable himself to hire any labourer for a wage labour. Communists believe that the sole labour of the labourer should be and is to enrich the labourer, not the capitalist.

The bourgeoisie are chief in separating the proletariat by using both children and wives of the proletariat as cheap labour. Another aspect of destroying the proletariat is through education, which separates the family ties of the labourers. The bourgeoisie take delight in the sexual exploitation of the have-nots. Marx contends that "our bourgeoisie, not content with having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each other's wives, and this they do shamelessly in the open. In Iyayi's (1979) *Violence*, Idemudia's wife is sexually abused in a hotel by Idemudia's master before giving financial assistance to help pay his hospital bill. Marx says national hostility is one characteristic of the bourgeoisie. He proposes labourers having no nation and trade happening beyond borders.

Marxism and communism, having the same focus, deny and abolish the eternal truth of religion and morality. In Karl Marx's revolutionary approach, the proletariat must rise to the level of the bourgeoisie, establish/setup democracy, use political supremacy, create productive forces/channels, and enthrone despotism over the bourgeoisie. To set up the new world order for the good of the proletariat, Marx gave the following road map that will be used in the context of each country:

- i. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
- ii. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax
- iii. Abolition of all rights of inheritance
- iv. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
- v. Centralisation of credit in the hands of the state, using a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly.

- vi. Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state.
- vii. Extension of factories and instruments owned by the state; bringing into cultivation of waste lands; and the improvement of the soil generally by common plan.
- viii. Equal obligation and all to work. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
- ix. A combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by more equal distribution of the population over the country.
- x. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of child factory labour in its present form. A combination of education with industrial production, etc.

With the above articulation notwithstanding, the pressure of aristocrats of the world continued even when a serious political struggle was altogether out of the question. A literary battle alone remained possible.

1.5 The Role of Literature in People Struggles

Literature from the Restoration period becomes an avenue for class exploitation, oppression, and agitation against power-wielding to draw the attention of the world. If Marxism says that literature could aid Marxism in articulation of its tenets and aim, then this is possible by singing lampoons against its new mastery and whispering in his ears sinister prophecies of coming catastrophe and half lamentation, half lampoon; half echo of the past, half menace of the future; at times, by its bitter, witty, an incisive criticism, striking the bourgeoisie to the very heart's love, but always ludicrous in its effect through total incapacity to comprehend the march of modern history. The struggle continues to confuse the Proletariat, the bourgeoisie pretends to do any good reform in society for the good of the commoners, Marx sarcastically remarks that the bourgeoisie are bourgeoisie for the benefit of the working class".

Marxist literature is revolutionary and reactionary; it takes on the masses' ascetism, social equality, antagonism, struggle, unity, political grouping and portrays a suffering class of people who seek identity and social conscience, including emancipation. A Marxist seeks a utopian society in place of a dystopian one, and this can be achieved only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chain. They have a world to win.

CONCLUSION

In the new society, the above articulations may not be practical. The government can still ease the life of the proletariat by doing its responsibilities and making public co-operations work for the good of others. Much reduction of the cost of the means of communication and transport for the proletariats by the state; building of factories and instruments owned by the state for the accommodation of the masses hardship; the bringing into cultivation of waste lands; and the improvement of the soil generally under common plan; equal obligation and all to works based on merits and not on nepotism, tribalistic and ethnic sentiments. There should be a total removal of federal character, and meritocracy should be enthroned. Through development, there should be a gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equal distribution of the population over the country. Free education for all children in public schools should continue. Both children from rich and poor backgrounds should attend the same schools with equal employment opportunities. With the above and more, the new society will be less stressful.

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