The closing years of the nineteenth century were marked by the extraordinary growth of socialistic parties whose fundamental contention was that poverty is caused, first and foremost, by the ownership by private individuals of the land, mines, machinery, etc., necessary for production. This "bourgeois" system, as they called it, enables the capitalists to keep the workingmen in poverty by appropriating from their labor an inordinate amount of profit. Two of the founders of modern socialism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, in the Communist Manifesto published in 1848, declared that the socialistic movement was simply part of a great historical process extending through a long period, and that the industrial revolution would inevitably create in each country a vast proletariat which in time was destined to overthrow the capitalist system just as the bourgeoisie had destroyed feudalism. This notion of socialism as a historical prophecy is stated in the following extracts:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. In the earlier epochs we find almost everywhere a complicated organization of society into various orders. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs.

The modern bourgeois society, which has sprung from the ruins of feudal society, has not done away with class antagonisms. It has only established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones. Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeois, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other,—Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.

The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh fields for the rising bourgeoisie. The East Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, gave to commerce, navigation, and industry an impulse never before known. The feudal system of industry, under which industrial production was monopolized by close guilds, now no longer sufficed for the growing demands of the new markets. The manufacturing system (on a small scale) took its place. The guild masters were pushed to one side by the manufacturing middle class; division of labor between the different corporate guilds vanished in the face of the division of labor in each single workshop.

Meantime the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever increasing. Production by hand no longer sufficed. Thereupon steam and machinery revolutionized industrial production. The place of handwork was taken by that giant, Modern Industry; the place of the industrial middle class, by industrial millionaires, the leaders of whole industrial armies,—the modern bourgeoisie. We see, therefore, how the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange.
The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors," and has left no other tie between man and man than naked self-interest, callous "cash payment." It has drowned the heavenly ecstasies of religion, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of selfish business calculation. The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage laborers.

Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation, distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier periods. All fixed relations, with their ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away; all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can solidify. All that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with clear vision and without illusion his real conditions of life and his relations with his fellow-men.

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid spread of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws even the most barbarous peoples into civilization. The low prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it softens the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it forces them to introduce what it calls "civilization" into their midst, i.e. to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.

The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the stupidity of rural life. Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semibarbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeoisie, the East on the West.

The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of Nature's forces to man, machinery, the application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation,—what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor?

The arms with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself. It has not only forged the weapons for self-destruction; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons,—the modern working class,—the proletarians. In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e. capital, is developed, in the same proportion proletariat, i.e. the modern working class, developed,—a class of laborers, who live only so long as they find work, and
who find work only so long as their labor increases capital. These laborers, who must sell
themselves, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed
to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market.

Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labor, the work of the proletarians has
lost all individual character, and, consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an
appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily
acquired knack that is required of him.

Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of
the industrial capitalist. Masses of laborers, crowded into the factory, are organized like soldiers.
Not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois State; they are daily and
hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overseer, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois
manufacturer himself. The less skill and exertion of strength is implied in manual labor, in other
words, the more modern industry becomes developed, the more is the labor of men superseded by
that of women.

But with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes
concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more. The unceasing
improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more
precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more
the character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations
(trades unions) against the bourgeoisie; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages.
Here and there the contest breaks out into riots.

Just as, in an earlier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion
of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and, in particular, that portion of the bourgeois
idealists who have raised themselves to the point of comprehending theoretically the historical
movement as a whole.

All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The
proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority. The
proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself without the
whole super-incumbent strata of official society being blown into the air.

It has become evident that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society and to
impose its conditions of existence upon it. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an
existence to its slave in his slavery, because it cannot prevent his sinking into such a state that it
has to feed him instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie; in
other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society.

The essential condition for the existence and sway of the bourgeois class is the creation and
increase of capital; the condition for capital is wage labor. Wage labor rests exclusively on
competition between the laborers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the laborers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of modern industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation of capitalist production and distribution of wealth. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own gravediggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are inevitable.