THE TALE THAT NEVER ENDS

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I compiled 'The Tale that Never Ends' to mark the anniversary of the Communist Manifesto and the revolutions of 1848. The title is from William Morris' poem 'The Pilgrims of Hope'.

It was read at The Socialist Register's 'Celebrating and Moving On' event at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London on May 9th, 1998, by Tony Garnett, Jacquetta May, Maggie Steed and Harriet Walter. The compere was Roland Muldoon from Hackney Empire, and there were also readings, talks and songs from Julie Christie, James MacGibbon, Leo Panitch, John Saville and the Raised Voices choir. It was organised by The Socialist Register with help from the Lippman/Miliband trust, Merlin Press, Hackney Empire and Red Pepper Magazine. The publicity was done by Dave Timms.

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Part I: Manifesto!

'A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of Communism:

Frederick Engels, News from Prussia, June 1844:

'In the manufacturing district of Silesia... very serious riots have occurred. The workpeople of the neighbourhood depend almost entirely upon linen-manufacture... Oppressed by competition, machinery and greedy manufacturers, they at last arose. The military... fired on the rioters... Several were killed... But the enraged crowd rushed on against the soldiers... the commanding officer, who had been dragged from his horse and severely beaten, retreated... The military were repelled by the people and could only restore the peace after receiving reinforcements...’
When Frederick Engels' reports on the Silesian weavers appeared in the Chartist newspaper The Northern Star he was in Manchester, working in his father's firm and studying workers' conditions for the book he was writing. A tall, slender young man of twenty-four, with a military bearing and a diffident manner, he spoke nearly perfect English. He hated the world of business and deserted the dinner parties for the Owenite Hall of Science, joining the Chartist movement which was demanding manhood suffrage. He also met exiled German working-class revolutionaries who belonged to a secret society, the League of the Just, in London. This group, which later became known as the Communist League, was to commission Marx to write the Communist Manifesto in the autumn of 1847.

Bruno Hildebrand, a German economics professor, describes one of their educational meetings:

'We went through a beer shop and up a staircase into a room furnished with tables and benches which could accommodate about 200 people... Men were seated in little groups eating a very simple dinner or smoking one of the pipes of honour... with their pot of beer in front of them... The door was always opening to admit new arrivals. The clothes were very proper... most of the faces were evidently those of workers. The main language was German, but we could also hear French and English. At the end of the room was a grand piano with some music books on it — and this in a London that was so unmusical showed us that we had come to the right place.

'The room... filled up... When a solemn silence had been established and everyone had taken his pipe from his mouth... Citizen Schapper delivered a report on the week's events. His speech was eloquent, very detailed and full of interest... a strong communist tendency was always plain and the proletariat was the constant theme running through the entire speech. I admit that I can stand a good dose of liberalism, but certain passages made my hair stand on end...'

In August 1844 Frederick Engels visited Karl Marx in Paris. Marx, who had recently married the aristocratic Jenny von Westphalen, was trying to earn his living through journalism. Gustave Meyer, Engels' biographer, writes:

'If the urgent active spirit of Engels was like the mountain torrent, Marx was like the storm which blows unheeding whether it destroys or builds... Engels was... a more practical man, quicker at finding his bearings. He had a feeling for 'what was in the air': he could take up material which lay ready to hand. But Marx struggled with the spirit of his time as Jacob wrestled with the spirit of the angel.'

They found to their excitement that they had been moving in the same direction. Like many members of the German intelligentsia, Marx had
been profoundly affected by the revolt of the impoverished Silesian weavers and was searching for a means of resisting the fearful power of capital which appeared to be sweeping all before it. Both men were convinced that the workers were the catalyst. Engels introduced Marx to his Chartist friends, George Julian Harney and Ernest Jones, as well as the German communist exiles. Frederick Lessner, a member of the communist group, recollected:

'Marx was then still a young man, about 28 years old, but he greatly impressed us all. He was of medium height, broad-shouldered, powerful in build, and vigorous in his movements. His forehead was high and finely shaped, his hair thick and pitch black, his gaze piercing. His mouth already had the sarcastic curl that his opponents feared so much...'

Marx set up the Communist Corresponding Committee in Brussels, where he was now living. The idea was to keep everyone in touch. They were, however, an argumentative lot. And Marx presided with a heavy hand. Paul Annenkov, an admirer of Jenny Marx, describes how he dealt with an opponent, the socialist tailor Wilhelm Weitling, early in 1846:

'We took our places at the small green table. Marx sat at one end of it with a pencil in his hand and his leonine head bent over a sheet of paper, while Engels... made the opening speech... Engels had not finished when Marx raised his head, turned to Weitling, a handsome fair-haired young man in a coat of elegant cut and a coquettishly trimmed small beard, and said: 'Tell us, Weitling, you who have made such a noise in Germany with your preaching: on what grounds do you justify your activity and what do you intend to base it on in the future?'

With a serious, somewhat worried face, Weitling started to explain that his aim was to open the eyes of the workers to the horrors of their condition. He spoke for a long time... confusedly and not too well, repeating and correcting himself... He now had quite different listeners from those who generally surrounded him at his work... he therefore lost his ease of thought and of speech.

Marx checked him with an angry frown... Marx's sarcastic speech boiled down to this: to rouse the population without giving them any firm, well thought-out reasons for their activity would be simply to deceive them... and assumed on the one side an inspired prophet and on the other only gaping asses.

Weitling's pale cheeks coloured... In a voice trembling with emotion he started trying to prove that a man who had rallied-hundreds of people under the same banner in the name of justice, solidarity and mutual brotherly assistance could not be called completely vain and useless... his modest, spadework was perhaps of greater weight for the common cause than criticism and armchair analysis of doctrines far from the suffering and afflicted people.

On hearing these last words Marx finally lost control of himself and thumped so hard with his fist on the table that the lamp on it rung and shook. He jumped
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up saying: 'Ignorance never yet helped anybody!'

We followed his example and \textit{left} the table.'

\textbf{Weitling} to the German socialist Moses Hess, 1846:

'I see in Marx's head only a good encyclopaedia, but no genius. He owes his influence to other people. Rich men back him in journalism, that's all.'

Marx and \textbf{Engels} were young, in a \textbf{hurry} and completely certain that they were right.

\begin{quote}
Karl Marx on his work with \textbf{Engels} during 1846 and '47:

'We published... a series of pamphlets... in which we subjected to a merciless criticism the mixture of French-English socialism... and German philosophy, which at that time constituted the secret doctrine of the League...'
\end{quote}

But there was always some \textit{dreadful} new theory to combat. They had no sooner sent the utopian theorists such as Fourier and Saint-Simon packing, when the son of a French cooper, Pierre Joseph Proudhon, who had refused to join the Corresponding Committee in May 1846, forestalled them by studying works on economics and coming up with a cooperative financial plan. The German working class Communists were impressed.

\textbf{Engels} to Marx, Paris, September 1846:

'This new nonsense is really nonsense beyond bounds... What these people have in mind is nothing more or less than to buy up the whole of France... and later the whole world by dint of proletarian savings... would it not be a much shorter road to... coin five franc pieces out of silver contained on the shine of the moon... And those blockheads... (I mean the Germans) believe this \textit{piffle}. Blokes who cannot manage to keep six \textit{sous} in their pockets for drinks on the evenings they meet in the wine saloon want to buy up toute la belle France... It is an outrage that one must still take up the cudgels against such barbarous balderdash.'

The League of the Just were upset by Marx's intransigence. Its leaders Karl Schapper, Josef Moll and \textbf{Heinrich} Bauer wrote to him in June 1846, pleading for tolerance and suggesting an international conference:

'We believe that.. different orientations to communism must be expressed... If intellectuals and workers from all lands met together, then there is no doubt that a lot of barriers which still stand in the way would fall. In this congress all... types of communism could be discussed peacefully and without bitterness and the truth would certainly come through and win the day.'

The first draft of the Communist Manifesto originated in this congress which was held in London in June 1847. It was called 'A Communist
Confession of Faith:

'Are you a Communist?'
'Yes'.
'What is the aim of the Communists?'
'To organise society in such a way that every member of it can develop and use all their abilities...'

Engels to Marx, June 1847:

'I dealt with it point by point... the lads declared themselves satisfaits. Completely unopposed, I got them to entrust me with the task of drafting a new one...'

Engels urged Marx to attend the next congress, writing in November 1847:

'Think over the Confession of Faith a bit. I believe we had better drop the catechism form and call the thing: Communist Manifesto. As... history has got to be related in it, the form it has been in is quite unsuitable. I am bringing what I have done with me; it is in simple narrative form, but miserably worded, in fearful haste. I begin: What is Communism? And then straight to the proletariat—history of its origin, difference from former labourers, development of the antithesis between proletariat and bourgeoisie, crises, conclusions... I mean to get it through in a form in which there will be at least nothing contrary to our views.'

The artisan communists remained suspicious; there were complaints about an aristocracy of scholars. Jenny Marx encouraged Marx to become a member of the League and listened to the workers' grumbles with a certain sympathy, observing that when intellectuals met workers:

'They set off their learned bombs and wrap themselves up in a supernatural halo; they do not know how to gain the friendship of workers whom they repel instead of attracting.'

Jenny, now the mother of three small children, was no longer the sheltered beauty Marx had wooed in Trier. She was busy organising Christmas parties while copying out the Communist Manifesto. There was a world trade crisis, prices were rising. Marx had taken on too many lectures and was earning no money. Paul Annenkov provided money for the Marx family that Christmas. They celebrated New Year in style, dancing at the German Workers' Union banquet. The Deutsche Brusseler Zeitung reported:

'The banquet on New Year's Eve was another step toward fraternization and strengthening democracy in several countries. No discordant note disturbed this respectable and enjoyable party. A number of ladies in full evening dress took part
and we observed beautiful women applauding vigorously. The banquet was followed by music and then by a dramatic performance, where Madame Dr Marx showed a brilliant talent for recitation. It is very impressive to watch exceptionally gifted ladies trying to improve the intellectual faculties of the proletariat."

What with one thing and another the Manifesto was still not finished. By January 26 Schapper, Bauer and Moll were exasperated:

'The Central Committee charges its regional committee in Brussels to communicate with Citizen Marx, and to tell him that if the Manifesto of the Communist Party... does not reach London by February 1st of the current year further measures will have to be taken against him. In the event of Citizen Marx not fulfilling his task, the Central Committee requests the immediate return of the documents placed at Citizen Marx's disposal.'

Marx finally sent the manuscript off to London at the end of January 1848. The Communist Manifesto was published the following month.

Manifestus: struck by the hand
Manifestation: demonstration
Manifestieren: to declare
Manifestazione: performance
Manifestino: leaflet pamphlet broadside

Manifest: 'What is clear can be seen in all its bearings... what is evident is seen forcibly, and leaves no hesitation in the mind; what is manifest is evident in a very high degree, striking upon the mind at once with overpowering conviction.' (Websters' dictionary).

The Communist Manifesto described the transformatory power of capitalism with eloquence and passion.

'Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air...'

In writing their extraordinary synthesis Marx and Engels drew on
their own experiences of a society in turmoil in which values were being overturned and on the workers' movements around them.

Engels, on arriving in London, 1842:

'Hundreds of thousands of people from all classes and ranks of society... rush past each other as if they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another...
This isolation of the individual – this narrow-minded self-seeking – is everywhere the fundamental principle of modern society...'

‘... as the use of machinery and division of labour increases... the burden of toil also increases, whether by prolongation of the working hours, by increase of the work exacted in a given time or by increased speed of the machinery...’

The Address of the Female Chartists of Manchester to their Sisters of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Passed at a Public Meeting of their Sex, the Chartist Room, Tib St, Wednesday July 21st, 1841:

'Sisters, if ever there was a time when it was our duty to shake off our lethargy and engage in a grand struggle for liberty, surely it is now... Thousands of both males and females are walking the streets for want of employment... while we can scarcely get sufficient to keep body and soul together, for working twelve or thirteen hours per day.

Should such a state of things exist, when there is sufficient for every man, woman and child in existence? Justice and common sense say no!..Why is it that those who have produced everything that is valuable in society.. cannot get enough to quell the ravings of hunger? Why because they have no power to make the laws that influence the distribution of wealth...

Up then brave women of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and join us in the cry for the Charter, which will protect labour, and secure plenty, comfort and happiness to all!

Sisters in the cause of democracy we remain,
Yours, in the bonds of affection,
The Female Chartists of Manchester.
Hannah Leggeth, Treasurer.
Sarah Cowle, Secretary.'

'As the repulsiveness of the work increases, the wage decreases.'

The French socialist Louis Blanc on how work is auctioned:

'A contractor wants a workman; three present themselves.
'How much for your work?'
'Half a crown: I have a wife and children.'
'Well and how much for yours?'
'Two shillings; I have no children, but I have a wife.'
'Very well; and now how much for yours?'
'One and eightpence are enough for me; I am single.'

'Then you shall have the work.

It is done; the bargain is struck. And what are the other two workmen to do? It is to be hoped they will die quietly of hunger. But what if they take to thieving? Never fear; we have the police. To murder? We have the hangman. As for the lucky one, his triumph is only temporary. Let a fourth workman make his appearance, strong enough to fast every other day, and his price will run down still lower; there will be a new outcast, perhaps a new recruit for the prison.'

'The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.'

The Chartist Thomas Cooper addressed an immense crowd, standing on a chair outside the Crown Inn, Hanley, 1842:

'After we had sung 'Britannia's sons, though slaves ye be' and I had offered up a short prayer. I described how the conquerors of America had nearly exterminated the native races... I recounted how English and French and Spanish and German wars in modern history, had swollen the list of the slaughtered... I described our own guilty Colonial rule, and still guiltier rule of Ireland; and asserted that British rulers had most awfully violated the precept, 'Thou shalt do no murder.'

'The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal patriarchal relations... and left remaining no other nexus than naked self-interest.'

Engels in Manchester:

'One day I walked with one of these liberal middle class gentlemen into Manchester. I spoke to him of the miserable unhealthy methods of building that is to be found in the working-class districts and of the atrocious, disgraceful condition of those districts. I declared to him that never in my life had I seen so badly built a town. He listened to all this patiently and quietly, and at the corner of the street at which we parted he remarked: 'And yet there is a great deal of money made here. Good morning, Sir.'

'It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation.'

Paul Lafargue, Reminiscences of Marx; 1890:

'From time to time, he would lie on the sofa and read a novel; he sometimes read two or three at a time, alternating one with the other... In Don Quixote he saw the epic of dying out chivalry whose virtues were ridiculed and scoffed at in the emerging bourgeois world... He considered Balzac... as the prophetic creator of characters which were still in their embryo in the days of Louis Philippe and did
not fully develop until after his death, under Napoleon.'

'The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverence. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourers.'

Eleanor Marx remarked, in 1895, on her father's friendship with the German romantic poet Heinrich Heine:

'He would... make all sorts of excuses for Heine's political vagaries. Poets... were queer kittle-cattle, not to be judged by the ordinary, or even the extra-ordinary standards of conduct. My mother – for whose beauty and wit Heine had a profound admiration – was less lenient.'

'The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation.'

Marx to Arnold Ruge, 1843:

'I can assure you without any romanticism that I am head over heels in love'.

He had loved Jenny since he was a student. Though her father and mother liked him, he was seen as a wild young man with bad debts and no profession. The young couple had to wait for seven long years until they could marry and Marx had to sign a contract exempting Jenny for liability for his debts. They stayed in Kreuznach for their honeymoon. Jenny Marx's biographer H.E. Peters remarks:

'Jenny soon noticed that the honeymoon bedroom was turning into her husband's study. He had brought with him some twenty-four works in forty-five volumes dealing with French, English, German and American history and he was studying them carefully. Jenny was surprised by the numerous notes he took. He made notes from almost every page, and his notebook from the time of their Kreuznach honeymoon comprises 250 pages.'

They settled in Paris, which Jenny found exciting, though she disapproved of the easy-going morals in their revolutionary bohemian circle. In the summer of 1844 Jenny was forced to return to her mother in Trier because her first baby was ill. Marx's journalism was just not providing enough money for them to survive. She feared that he would be seduced in worldly Paris.

'I know it is bad and stupid to torture myself with all kinds of worries and forebodings... however the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.'

In The Communist Manifesto Marx was dismissing the charges of 'free love' which were associated with French socialism. His wife would have
approved. For Jenny, the connection between dignity and virtue was one certainty of her upbringing which she would never relinquish – whatever happened:

‘Lieutenant August Willich settled in with us as a communist frère et compagnon. He appeared in our bedroom early in the morning... and tried, with Prussian horse-laughs, to hold forth about 'natural' communism. But Karl made short work of his effort. And he did not fare any better with me when he tried to wheedle out the worm that is in every marriage'.

‘... the realpoint... is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.'

In the early nineteenth century radicals frequently linked the oppression of women with slavery. In 1843, the French socialist Flora Tristan, an engraver and author of Workers Union, argued that women's emancipation was inseparable from that of the working classes. She called on workers:

'Free the last slaves remaining in France, proclaim the Rights of Woman.'

‘The bourgeoisie has called into existence... the modern working class – the proletarians... These labourers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity'

The Chartist Ernest Jones' Song of the Lower Classes, 1852:

'We're low, we're low – we're very very low
Yet from our fingers glide
The silken flow – and the robes that glow,
Round the limbs of the sons of pride.
And what we get – and what we give,
We know – and we know our share.
We're not too low the cloth to weave -
But too low the cloth to wear.'

‘...The workers begin to form combinations... they found permanent associations... Here and there the contest breaks out into riots... The organisation of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ... rises up again, stronger, fiercer, mightier.'

Ernest Jones at a Chartist Council meeting, January 11, 1848:

'There are some gentlemen who tell the people that they must grow rich and then they will be free... Become rich! How? In the workhouse or the gaol? Become rich in the deer forests of our nobles?Become rich on six shillings a week?Become rich in the churchyards of famished Ireland ? (Applause) Go tell it to the unemployed
in Manchester – to the 20,000 destitute in Bradford. Go tell it to the Irish tenant dying by the light of his burning cottage set on fire by his landlord. Go tell it to the beggar at the doors of Grosvenor Square! Go tell him once for all to stay a slave; but do not insult his misery by telling him to become rich...

No, my friends, above all we need the vote... go in person and knock at the doors of St Stephen's, knock till your privileged debtors give you back, trembling, what they have owed you for centuries! So knock, and go on knocking until justice has been done. (Thunderous applause)'

'The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent.. the future of that movement.'

Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Mask of Anarchy*, 1819:

'Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you -
Ye are many – they are few.'

'The workers have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.'

George Julian Harney, 1846:

'The Fraternal Democrats call on all oppressed classes of every land... to unite themselves for the triumph of their common cause. 'Divide and rule' is the mono of the oppressor. 'Unite yourselves for victory' should be ours.'

'Modern bourgeois society... is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells.'

‘Workers of the World. Unite.’

*Part II: The Pilgrimage of Hope*

Alexis de Tocqueville, aristocratic conservative, Chamber of Deputies, Paris, January 29th, 1848:

'I am told that there is no danger because there are no riots; I am told that, because there is no visible disorder on the surface of society, there is no revolution at hand.

Gentlemen, permit me to say that I believe you are mistaken. True, there is no actual disorder; but it has entered deeply into men's minds. See what is preparing itself amongst the working classes... can you not see that their passions instead of political have become social?... Do you not listen to what they say to themselves each day? Do you not hear them repeating unceasingly that all that is above them is incapable and unworthy of governing them; that the distribution of goods prevalent until now throughout the world is unjust; that property rests on a
Jenny Marx, Brussels, early in February 1848:

'The police, the army, the militia, everybody was called up to serve; all were ready for battle. The German workers also thought it was time to look for weapons. Daggers, revolvers etc. were bought. Karl provided the means gladly, for he had just received some money.'

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Recollections*. The morning of February 24th:

'On leaving my bed-room, I met the cook, who had been out; the good woman was quite beside herself, and poured out a sorrowing rigmarole, of which I failed to understand a word except that the Government was massacring the poor people. I went downstairs at once, and had no sooner set foot in the street than I breathed for the first time the atmosphere of revolutions. The roadway was empty; the shops were not open: there were no carriages nor pedestrians to be seen; none of the ordinary hawkers' cries were heard; neighbours stood talking in little groups at their doors, with subdued voices with a frightened air; every face seemed distorted with fear or anger.'

Gustave Flaubert's novel *A Sentimental Education*, published in 1869, gives an account of romance amidst revolution:

'Men from the suburbs were going by armed with muskets and old sabres; some wore red caps and all were singing the *Marseillaise* or the *Girondins*. Here and there a National Guard was hurrying to his post at the town hall. Drums beat in the distance. They were fighting at the Porte Saint-Martin. There was something brave and martial in the air. Frederic went on walking. The ferment of the great city made him cheerful.

On the hill where Frascatih used to be he caught sight of Rosanette's windows; a mad idea crossed through his mind; his youth flared up. He crossed the boulevard.

The outer door was being closed; Delphine, the maid, was writing on it with a piece of charcoal: 'Arms already supplied'. She spoke rapidly: 'Madame is in such a state. She sacked the groom this morning for checking her. She thinks there's going to be looting all over the place. She's scared to death - particularly since the gentleman's cleared out!'

'What gentleman?'

'The prince'.

Frederic entered the boudoir. Rosanette appeared, in her petticoat, with her hair down her back, distracted with terror. 'Oh, thank you! You've come to save me. It's the second time and you never ask for your reward!' 'I beg your pardon', said Frederic, putting both arms round her waist.

'What! What are you doing?' stammered Rosanette, at once surprised and amused by his behaviour.

He answered: 'I'm in the fashion. I've reformed!'
She allowed herself to be pushed down on to the divan, and went on laughing under his kisses...

... A sudden rattle of musketry made him wake with a start; and, in spite of Rosanette's entreaties, Frederic insisted on going to see what was happening. He followed the sound of the firing down the Champs-Elysées. At the corner of Saint-Honoré he was met by a shout from some workmen in blouses: 'No! Not that way! To the Palais Royal!'

Frederic followed them. The railings of the Church of the Assumption had been pulled down... Suddenly, out of an alley, rushed a tall young man, with black hair hanging over his shoulders and wearing a sort of pea-green singlet. He carried a soldier's long musket; there were slippers on his feet and he was running on tip-toe, as lithe as a tiger, yet with the fixed stare of a sleep walker. Now and then explosions could be heard...

Men addressed crowds at street corners with frantic eloquence; others, in the churches, were sounding the tocsin with all their might; lead was melted, cartridges rolled; trees from the boulevards, public urinals, benches, railings, gas jets were torn down or overturned; by morning Paris was filled with barricades. Resistance was not prolonged; everywhere the National Guard intervened; so that by eight o'clock, through force or by consent, the people were in possession of five barracks, nearly all the town halls, and the most important strategic points. No great exertion was needed; through its own weakness the monarchy was swiftly tottering to its fall.'

On the evening of 24 February, Thomas Frost, a young Chartist painter from Croydon, was attending a meeting of the Fraternal Democrats in central London. He wrote in his autobiography:

'Suddenly the news of the events in Paris was brought in. The effect was electrical. Frenchmen, Germans, Poles, Magyars sprang to their feet, embraced, shouted and gesticulated in the wildest enthusiasm. Snatches of oratory were delivered in excited tones, and flags were caught from the walls, to be waved exultingly, amidst cries of Hoch! Elîjre! Vive la Republique! Then the doors were opened, and the whole assemblage descended to the street and, with linked arms and colours flying, marched to the meeting-place of the Westminster Chartists in Dean Street, Soho. There another enthusiastic fraternization took place, and great was the clinking of glasses that night in and around Soho and Leicester Square...'

In Brussels crowds gathered in squares, in cafes and in taverns; young orators demanded 'lïbertd' and 'dgÂlitd'. The authorities decided it was time to get rid of foreign agitators and began compiling lists of known German communists. In Paris the workers demanded the right to work. Louis Blanc issued the decree of 25 February:

'The provisional government of the French Republic undertakes to guarantee work for all citizens. It recognises that workers must form associations among themselves in order to enjoy the legitimate profits of their labour.'
De Tocqueville:

'From the 25th of February onwards, a thousand strange systems came issuing **pell-mell** from the minds of innovators, and spread among the troubled minds of the crowd. Everything still remained standing except Royalty and Parliament: yet it seemed as though the shock of the Revolution had reduced society itself to dust, and as though a competition had been opened for the new form that was going to be given to the edifice about to be erected in its place. Everyone came forward with a plan of his own: this one printed it in the papers, that other on the placards with which the walls were soon covered, a third proclaimed his **loud-mouthed** in the open air. One aimed at destroying inequality of education, a third undertook to do away with the oldest of inequalities, that between man and woman.'

*La Voix des Femmes* newspaper, 29 March:

'It will no longer be permissible for men to say that they are humanity. Along with the end of servitude of labour will go the servitude of women.'

Radical and socialist women set up newspapers and clubs. They demanded equal civil and political **rights**, equal pay, an end to low pay. They advocated work sharing as a **remedy** for unemployment and the democratisation of the National Workshops which provided work. They proposed public restaurants, nurseries, free medical care, provision for pregnant women. **They argued** for divorce law reform, voluntary motherhood, communal houses and an end to male dominance. Women endorsed the right to work, but they were envisaging the right to live.

Jeanne Deroin; former dress-maker and self-educated teacher:

'Liberty, equality and fraternity have been proclaimed for all. Why should women be left with only obligations to fulfil, without being given the rights of citizens?'

Desirée Gay; milliner, influenced by the Owenites and Saint-Simonians. Led protests for democratisation of National Workshops:

'If men enter into associations to produce wealth and defend liberty, then women must join with them... putting equality and fraternity into practice.'

Pauline Roland; teacher, influenced by Saint-Simonians. Advocate of free sexual unions. Organiser of the Fraternal Association of Socialist Male and Female Teachers and Professors:

'Woman is a free person... she must create her life by means of her own work, her own love, her own intelligence.'

On the night of March 4 the Brussels police raided the Hotel Bois Sauvage, arrested Marx for providing money for arms and flung a distraught Jenny in jail.
'It was the place where they put up homeless beggars, rootless wanderers, unfortunate lost women. I am pushed into a dark cell. I sob as I enter, and one of my unfortunate fellow sufferers offers me her bed. It was a hard wooden bunk. I fall down on it.'

King Leopold the First of Belgium to his niece Queen Victoria:

'I am very unwell in consequence of the _awful_ events at Paris.'

Queen Victoria to King Leopold:

'Since February 24 I feel an uncertainty in everything existing, which one never felt before. When one thinks of one's children, their education, their _future_ – and prays for them – I always think and say to myself, 'Let them grow up fit for _whatever_ station they may be placed in, _high_ or _low_.' This one never thought of before, but I do _always_ now.'

Revolution seemed to be infectious. From March 1848 rebellions erupted in the Austrian Empire, then in many of the German states; they spread though the Italian peninsula reaching the regions controlled by the Austrians. Nationalism mixed with liberal democratic demands for constitutional reforms and civil liberties. In the towns workers joined in, adding claims for free education and trade union rights. In Ireland, devastated by famine, there were sporadic revolts. The English responded by transporting the leaders of Young Ireland to Australia.

In April, Garth Wilkinson, a middle-class radical, reported to his wife:

'London is in a state of panic from the contemplated meeting of the Chartists, 200,000 strong on Monday; for myself, nothing that happened would surprise me...'

On April 10th London was packed with soldiers and police armed with cutlasses. The government had declared the demonstration illegal. The Chartist leaders were divided about what to do. Around 20,000 people assembled on Kennington Common, with a strong Irish contingent bearing banners 'Ireland for the Irish'. Their suffrage petition was presented. But the police broke up the demonstration to the House of Commons. Richard Whiting, then a schoolboy, recollected:

'When they came back at night, angry, hungry, footsore, they found the bridges barred and the sullen canon between them and the palaces, public offices, banks, and, what was more of a hardship... their miserable homes. They were filtered over in detachments at last and _kept_ on the run till they reached their hovels dead beat.'

April 23. The first French national election based on universal manhood suffrage returns a moderate majority.
May 15. Parisian workers, frustrated by continuing inequality, invade the National Assembly, demanding that the terrified deputies should send help to the cause of Polish independence.

De Tocqueville:

'As always happens in insurrections, the terrible was mingled with the ridiculous. The heat was so stifling that many of the first intruders left the Chamber; they were forthwith replaced by others who had been waiting at the doors to come in... I saw a fireman in uniform making his way down the gangway that passed dong my bench. 'We can't make them vote!' they shouted to him. 'Wait, wait,' he replied, 'I'll see to it, I'll give them a piece of my mind.' Thereupon he pulled his helmet over his eyes with a determined air, fastened the strap, squeezed through the crowd, pushing aside all who stood in his way, and mounted the tribune. He imagined he would be as much at his ease there as upon a roof, but he could not find his words and stopped short. The people cried, 'Speak up fireman!' but he did not speak a word and they ended by turning him out of the tribune.'

The new government announced on 21 June that young unemployed workers between 18-25 should join work teams in the provinces. The National Workshops were to be closed. That evening de Tocqueville met the novelist George Sand at a dinner; a supporter of revolution and a defender of women's rights, she was his political antithesis.

'I was strongly prejudiced against Madame Sand, for I loathe women who write, especially those who systematically disguise the weakness of their sex, instead of interesting us by displaying them in their true character. Nevertheless she pleased me. I thought her features rather massive, but her expression admirable: all her mind seemed to have taken refuge in her eyes, abandoning the rest of her face to matter... We talked for a whole hour of public affairs; it was impossible to talk of anything else in those days. It was the first time that I had entered into direct and familiar communication with a person able and willing to tell me what was happening in the camp of our adversaries. Political parties never know each other: they approach, touch, seize, but never see one another. Madame Sand depicted to me, in great detail and with singular vivacity, the condition of the Paris workmen, their organization, their numbers, their arms, their preparations, their thoughts their passions, their terrible resolves. I thought the picture overloaded, but it was not, as subsequent events clearly proved...'

When fighting broke out, Frederic, the hero of A Sentimental Education, is to be found making love to Rosanette outside Paris. He is too happy to heed the distant drums calling on the country people to defend Paris against the workers' uprising. However, when he sees the name of his friend Dussardier among the wounded in the newspaper, he is filled with remorse. Dussardier, a shop worker, had fought for the February revolution – now he is on the other side of the
barricades. Frederic hastens back to Paris to look for him:

'The Place du Pantheon was full of soldiers lying on straw. Day was breaking. The camp fires were going out.

The rising had left impressive traces in this district. The surface of the streets was broken from end to end into lumps and hummocks. Omnibuses, gas pipes and cart wheels were still lying on the ruined barricades; there were little black smears in certain places, which could only have been blood. The houses were riddled with bullets, and their inner framework could be seen through the splintered plaster. Blinds, hanging from a single nail, flapped like rags. Doors opened on to a void, where the staircase had fallen in. The inside of rooms could be seen, with their wallpaper in shreds; sometimes fragile objects had been preserved. Frederic noticed a clock, a parrot's perch, some prints.

Carriages were moving down the boulevard, and women in front of doorways were making lint. But the rebellion was conquered or nearly so; so declared a proclamation by Cavaignac which had just been posted. A company of Mobile Guards appeared at the top of the rue Vivienne. The wealthier citizens shouted with enthusiasm; they raised their hats, clapped their hands, tried to kiss the soldiers, and offered them drinks, while women threw flowers down from the balconies.'

The National Guard and the Mobile Guards showed no mercy to the artisans, labourers and unemployed who had rebelled. Thousands were killed. Thousands more were later to be deported to Algeria.

Despite the repression, the French workers, women as well as men, continued to set up newspapers and create cooperatives. The agitation for the Charter continued in England. Far away in the United States, the first Women's Rights Convention was held at Seneca Falls on July 19th and a new movement came into being.

Marx and Engels still anticipated revolution. In May 1849 Jenny Marx, stranded in gossipy Trier, wrote to her friend Lina Scholer in America after Marx was expelled from Germany:

'Life is not a bed of roses here I can tell you that dear, faithful Lina. I am completely at a loss to know what lies ahead of us. My dear Karl remains confident and cheerful and considers all the pressures that we have to endure only heralds of a coming and complete victory of our view of life.'

Gradually the extent of the defeat became evident. In December 1848, Louis Bonaparte, the nephew of Napoleon, was elected president. His rule was secured through a coup d'etat and plebiscite in 1851. Marx commented sardonically in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, 1852*:

'Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in
world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.'

In 1851 Jeanne Deroin and Pauline Roland wrote from prison greeting the second American Women's Rights Convention.

'Sisters of America! Your socialist sisters in France are united with you in the vindication of the right of woman to civil and political equality. We have moreover the profound conviction that only by the power of association based on solidarity – by the union of the working classes of both sexes to organise labour – can be acquired, completely and pacifically, the civil and political equality of women and the social right of all.

Faith, Love, Hope and our sisterly salutations.'

Jeanne Deroin went into exile in Britain. Pauline Roland was deported to Algeria and died on her return journey to France. Exile, prison and death took a terrible toll on the revolutionaries of 1848. Those who survived faced derision in the conservative decades that followed. A new generation had little sympathy for fossilised romantic rebels. 'The reaction after '48' wrote Flaubert, 'dug a gulf between one France and the other.'

At number 64 Dean St, Soho, Karl and Jenny Marx, their children, along with Helene Demuth, the servant who bore Marx's son Freddy, were crammed into two rooms in 1850. A Prussian spy has left us a description:

'Everything is broken, tattered and torn, finger-thick dust everywhere, and everything in the greatest disorder; a large old-fashioned table, covered with waxcloth, stands in the middle of the drawing-room, on it lie manuscripts, books, newspapers, then the children's toys, bits and pieces of the woman's sewing things next to it, a few teacups with broken rims, dirty spoons, knives, forks, candle-sticks, inkpot, glasses, dutch clay pipes, tobacco-ash, in a word all kinds of trash, and everything on one table; a junk dealer would be ashamed of it.'

Marx struggled to understand what had gone wrong. Surrounded by the children and domestic confusion, he wrote on. A decade of poverty was to follow. Three of their children died; illness, insecurity and privation became a way of life, as Marx grappled with the economic dynamics of this capitalism which was proving so tenacious, so contrary. In 1862, remorseful over Jenny's suffering, he told Engels:

'If only I knew how to start some kind of business! My dear friend, all theory is dismal, and only business flourishes. Unfortunately I have learnt this too late.'

After the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871, Jenny reflected:

'In all these battles we women have to bear the hardest, i.e. the pettiest pan. In the battle with the world the man gets stronger, stronger too in the face of his enemies, even if their number is legion; we sit at home and darn socks. That does not banish
the worries, and little daily cares slowly but surely gnaw away the courage to face life. I am talking from more than thirty years experience and I can say that I did not give up courage easily.'

Marx could not see this future when he wrote his Manifesto. Nor could he have imagined what was to be done in the name of communism or comprehended how the meaning of his words would be turned inside out. The World Bank's World Development report for 1996, From Plan to Market, quoted The Communist Manifesto, while celebrating the transition to capitalist market economies: 'Constant revolutionising of production... all that is solid melts into air...' Capital it seems has had the last word.

History however keeps on happening and is apt to surprise us all, as that canny observer, Alexis de Tocqueville, understood so well. In the early 1850s, as he jotted down the notes which were to be published in 1893 as his Recollections, de Tocqueville wondered:

'Will Socialism remain buried in the disdain with which the Socialists of 1848 are so justly covered? I put the question without making any reply. I do not doubt that the laws concerning the constitution of our modern society will in the long run undergo modification... But will they ever be destroyed and replaced by others? It seems to me impracticable. I say no more, because – the more... I consider... the different forms even now taken by the rights of property on this earth – the more I am tempted to believe that what we call necessary institutions are often no more than institutions to which we have grown accustomed, and that in matters of social constitution the field of possibilities is much more extensive than men now living in their various societies are ready to imagine.'

The Communist Manifesto opens such a field of possibilities. Marx's message remains far too subversive for the World Bank; never settle down with the injustices to which you have been made accustomed. And as we read, his words are joined by thousands and thousands and thousands of voices from far away and long ago: Look; Listen; Criticise; Remember; Understand; Organise; Imagine; Create; Hope.

The socialist movement did revive in the 1880s – the 'grand-children of the Chartists', Engels called them. And this time around they knew that defeats had to be taken into account. In his poem The Pilgrims of Hope, William Morris asks: 'How can I tell you the story of Hope and its defence?'

The very first 'pilgrim' in the poem is a French refugee from the 1848 revolution, who relates 'The battle of grief and hope with riches and folly and wrong.' His story becomes the source of renewal, 'the tale that never ends'.