

Karl marx (1818-1883) explained historical change



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by using and adapting a theory that was first developed by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770 - 1831). According to Hegels theory, in any period of history there is a conflict between contrary and opposing forces. For Marx, although not for Hegel, these opposing forces were exclusively economic classes.

For Marx, in any period of history up to and including the Industrial Revolution and modern capitalism, there has always been a dominant economic class, which has exploited a lower economic class, this situation is stressed in capitalism. Marx states that the economic classes need to be abolished. Each successive period of history is brought into being by the breakdown of the previous one. According to Marx, each period of history is unstable, being destined by the class conflict within it to break down into a new period of history, which will again be unstable because of opposing economic classes. This period will then break down and the cycle will continue. This accounts for historical change, each period of history being rendered unstable by opposing economic class interests, therefore each period of history has within itself the means of its own destruction.

Under capitalism the power of the exploiting class (the bourgeoisie) comes from its ownership of the means of production (factories, mines, farms, railways). The lowered exploited class (the proletariat) own nothing and only provide labor for the bourgeoisie. Peoples entire life and values in society will be shaped and determined by their class background. The government can not provide public interest or common good because under this system there is no common interest between classes. The government predictably

promotes the interests of the ruling class, and the ruling class predictably controls the government.

The time in history when capitalism is greatest will also cause a revolution that ends capitalism. According to Marx, it is inherent in the nature of capitalism that it creates the best conditions for a revolution. When this happens the workers will seize the means of production by force and support a government that will promote their interests. Eventually class distinctions will be abolished and Communism will be brought into effect. The Government's role will be greatly diminished and everyone will produce only to their ability and receive only to their needs. The government will no longer only represent one class because there are no classes and no government.

There are many critics of Karl Marx and of the Communist Manifesto some of them agree while others disagree. An example of a very pro-Communist review of the Manifesto can be seen in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia. In The Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels defined for the first time in the social sciences the place of the capitalist formation in human history, showing its progressive character by comparison with preceding formations and the inevitability of its downfall. The Communist Manifesto opened the way to a new era in the history of mankind and initiated the great revolutionary movement for the socialist transformation of the world. This opinion as seen in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia was written by G. D. Obichkin. We can see that this would be the most common view about the Manifesto from someone who is living in a Communist state.

On the other hand if we look to a more neutral opinion we look to the

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International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences. Since World War I Marx's theories have not only stimulated sociological work in general but have also given impetus to a new field of sociological inquiry.

As we can see from the opinions expressed The Communist Manifesto is one of the most famous pieces of literature available on class distinctions and the theory Communism and it shows a great theory. By looking at these two opinions the first coming from a person who lives in a society that was greatly influenced by The Communist Manifesto we can see that there is much support. In the second opinion however even though the Manifesto is praised it is still not as acclaimed to that great of extent.

I think that the Communist Manifesto is an amazing theory and after reading it I could see many of the points that Marx made to be true. I am not going as far to say that I am a Communist, but I can understand many of his points. Especially the ones that deal with the links and the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. I think this was especially true in the 1800s in England as seen by the workhouses and the many hours' people worked for little pay. The Communist Systems that exist today are a long way away from the system that Marx envisioned and the fact that the Communist system has failed many times does not show sign of promise. I think that the idea behind the book The Communist Manifesto is an excellent one but I am not sure if it would be able to withstand today's society.