

Karl marx essay sample

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Karl Marx and his developed theory of Marxism played a vital role in influencing Lenin's efforts to overthrow the Provisional Government eventually leading to the Russian Revolution of 1917.

“ A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of Communism.”¹ the opening sentence to The Communist Manifesto written by Karl Marx and Frederich Engels. Karl Marx was a German philosopher, journalist and revolutionary socialist whose famous works include The Communist Manifesto and Das Kapital. Historians have largely credited Marx's works for influencing the key figures that went on to lead the Russian Revolution. The Russian Revolution took place in 1917 and disassembled the Tsarist monarchy, preparing for the creation of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, commonly referred to as the Soviet Union or USSR. Although there were many factors that contributed to the Russian Revolution of 1917, Karl Marx and his developed theory of Marxism played a vital role in influencing Lenin's efforts to overthrow the Provisional Government eventually leading to the Russian Revolution of 1917.

The Russian Empire was a state that existed from 1721 until the Russian Revolution of 1917. It stretched from Europe to the Pacific Ocean and included people with diverse cultures and traditions.² Russia was a land of disparity and contradiction by the turn of the 20th century. It was caught in between two worlds: the traditional world of the peasantry and the modern world of the westernized elite.³ As these two world coexisted, their values, culture, and way of life extremely differed. Regardless of the persistence of a rural society and economy, Russia became exposed to profound urban and industrial growth during the second half of the 19th century.⁴ Many peasants

surfing out into the urban cities in search of employment as factory workers, laborers, servants, waiters, and clerks. Toward the end of the century the government embarked on a campaign to promote Russia's industrialized growth. The tsarist regime requested foreign investment, promoted the development of manufacturing and took exporting grain to pay for the technology needed for industrialization. 5 By the 1900's Russia became a great industrial power.

In 1906 Imperial Russia had a vast population that consisted of mostly peasants. Before 1861 these peasants had been serfs who worked hard labor for large land owners or government-owned land. The serfs lived in very primordial conditions and had few law rights as they were slaves. 6 As they started attempting to revolt, Tsar Alexander II, ruling from 1855 to 1881, issued an emancipation proclamation in 1861 which freed the serfs. They were liberated entirely from the rule of the landowners and now owned land themselves. However, the system implemented was not as simple as it seemed; the Tsarist Russian Government had bought the territory from the noble owners and through a mortgage agreement sold the land to the peasants. This required the peasants to pay the government back over years, as there was interest to be paid as well as taxes. This system prevented the peasants from obtaining full ownership of the land as they were only a little better off.

The sudden death of Tsar Alexander III resulted in Tsar Nicholas II's reign from 1894 until his abdication in 1917. Between the years of 1895 and 1903, Nicholas sired four daughters and in 1904, a son, Alexis; Imperial Russia

finally had her heir. 7 It was soon to be discovered, however, that Alexis had hemophilia – a life threatening disease that he inherited from his mother. It is a medical condition that causes one’s blood to clot making it easier for them to bleed when injured. After several bleeding episodes, the doctors were unable to put a stop to them. At the end of the February Revolution of 1917 Nicholas II abdicated the throne. There had already been unrest and a sense of urgency among the Russian people at the time due to the Bolsheviks’ rise of power, several revolts and rebellions, the stampede that stained the Coronation and the Russian – Japanese War. These events along with Nicholas II being informed by the doctors that his son would not survive, leaving Russia with in no heir to the throne, all weakened Nicholas’ reign as Tsar of Russia leaving him no choice but to abdicate.

The growing unrest among the Russian people provided the perfect platform for Karl Marx’s various communist publications to trigger a revolution. Marx was a german philosopher, journalist and revolutionary socialist who died in 1883, approximately 35 years before the Russian Revolution took place. Marx met Friedrich Engels in 1844 as they both believed that society needed to be altered due to economic issues. They called their form of socialism “ scientific socialism” and as they worked through it logically, it would eventually lead to Communism. Communism is simply defined as “ give what you can, take what you need” 8; from each according to his abilities to each according to his need, this will eventually eliminate the need for government. This led to the writing of The Communist Manifesto. Within weeks of the Manifesto publication in 1848, revolutions coincidentally broke out in France, Italy, and Austria. 9 This indicated that at that time,

throughout many countries in Europe, the working class opposed the way their government ran and were striving for a revolution and a different way of life. Marx was convinced that a revolution had to take place in an industrialized country, and that it could only be brought on by workers seizing control of the means of production.

The Communist Manifesto was a condensed and insightful summary discussing the world-view that Marx and Engels had expanded during their political involvement over the past years. The first section summarizes the political aspects of history portraying it to be driven by the constant conflict between those who control the means of production, and those who do not. This first section of the Manifesto establishes the Bourgeois as being the employers of wage labour and owners of means of social production, labeling them as modern Capitalists, while the Proletarians, having no means of production of their own, are forced into reducing their labour power in order to live. 10 The second section of the Manifesto explains that the communists did not oppose other working-class parties, as the proletariats were their interest as a whole.

Marx and Engels write that the two factors that distinguish communists from other working class groups is that they were international and that they understood the importance of the proletarian movement. Critics who object communism claim that it deprives people the right of acquiring their own property through means of hard work. Marx and Engels respond by saying that the proletariat do not have property anyway and that the capital, which is a result of united actions of all society, should be owned collectively. 11

The third section discusses the particular position for the Communist League by exposing the rivalries of socialism – the reactionary, the bourgeois and the utopian. It is important to note that the reactionary were the main rivals of the Communist League. ¹² In the fourth and final section of the Manifesto, Marx and Engels deal with how communists perceive opposition parties in various European countries. It distinctively predicted that an approaching bourgeoisie revolution would be followed instantly by a proletarian revolution in Germany. This demonstrated Engels and Marx's view that history moved in insistent stages and that conditions for socialism had to develop within a bourgeois society.

Vladimir Lenin was greatly influenced by Karl Marx and Marxism as his ongoing philosophical developments helped produced Leninism, and later lead to the overthrowing of the Provisional Government by the Bolshevik Party. Vladimir Lenin was born in 1870 and died 1924. He was a Russian communist revolutionary, politician, and political theorist born in 1870. After being expelled from school Lenin began to study works that greatly influenced his brother when he was alive. ¹³ This particularly included the famous works of Karl Marx. After reading Marx's works, Lenin became a convinced marxist.

The revolution Lenin hoped for was the one predicted by Karl Marx. However, Marx's ideas posed a theoretical problem for Russian revolutionaries. Marx believed that the socialist revolution would occur in a developed nation, such as Germany or England, when the oppressed working masses revolted against the capitalists who were exploiting them. Marx specifically rejected

Russia of a site for revolution because it was very underdeveloped. 14 Lenin solved this theoretical problem by rewriting Marxism – insisting that a revolutionary elite should lead the peasant masses. A very un-Marxist idea, but quickly embraced by the Russian radicals. Lenin became convinced that the revolution in Russia had to be sparked by a leadership or organization and had to be achieved in a conscious manner.

In 1903 when the Russian socialists held a congress in Brussels, Lenin launched an attack and conveyed one faction of socialists to walk out of the meeting. He then gained control of the congress, achieved the name Bolsheviks for his part and called the rest Mensheviks. 15 When the first world war began in 1914, Lenin saw it as a great revolutionary opportunity. The Tsar seized into war and led the nation into battlefield. However, they lost every battle and millions of soldiers died, while in the city inflation wiped out people's savings as there were many food shortages. On February 23, 1917 the wrath of Russia spilled into the streets alongside mobs roaming with guns as crowds broke into prisons releasing prisoners. 16 The capital was in chaos and within a week the Tsar abdicated his rule while all of Russia celebrated. Two groups began to form that would fight for power: The Provisional Government and the Workers Soviets. The provisional government was Lenin's adversary, lead by Alexander Kerensky, this moderate group composed of leaders of the Duma.

The Workers Soviet were representatives of workers, soldiers and peasants elected by the trade unions. Lenin's goal was to keep the revolution alive and overthrow the Provisional Government. After Lenin's supporters where

free from prison and armed, Kereknsky was without military support. 17 The Bolsheviks were now at the point of coming to power without violence as the Provisional Government crumbled. Once in power Lenin moved with shocking speed to abolish the democratic gains won by the February Revolution. He dissolved the democratically elected consensually assembly, shut down the opposition newspapers and outlawed all the political parties except the Bolsheviks, renaming them the Communist Party. 18 The revolution of 1905 was the introduction to the communist revolution of 1917. Both of these revolutions and the government of the Soviet Union were influenced by rulers, who were in turn, influenced by Marx's theories.

To conclude, Karl Marx and his developed theory of Marxism played a large role in influencing Lenin's efforts to overthrow the Provisional Government, which later led to the Russian Revolution of 1917. Marx's publication of The Communist Manifesto discussed what he believed to be wrong with society as it introduced his theory of Marxism. Vladimir Lenin was influenced greatly by Marxism as the revolution he hoped for was the one predicted by Karl Marx. But he was convinced that a revolutionary movement could not depend on just the working class, taking a much different approach than Marx. As Lenin formed The Bolshevik party, his goal was to overthrow the Provisional Government. The revolution of 1905 was the introduction to the communist revolution of 1917, and both of these revolutions were influenced by Marx's theories. The Bolsheviks founded the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic which would later become the Soviet Union ruled under Joseph Stalin for the majority of its existence.

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