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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF KARL MARX

by
Ernest Shepherd
(A. B., Ohio Wesleyan, 1931)

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

1933

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III. The Social Philosophy of Karl Marx: The
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INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

Engels in writing the preface to the Manifesto of the Communist Party asserted a prophecy about the effect of the main proposition of that bit of writing when he said:

This proposition which, in my opinion, is destined to do for history what Darwin's theory has done for biology. ¹

"Destined" is a strong word. Yet this year, the fiftieth anniversary of Marx's death, finds the present most nearer the prophecy than any other one. Starting with the First International, the Second and Third International have followed Marxian **INTRODUCTION** with the exception of a small anarchical movement in the United States the Socialists and Communist Parties have used the Marxian classics as text-books. Increasingly, scholars and laboring people are becoming aware of the cardinal ideas of this man's thought scheme, and when it is studied with open-mindedness, tremendous issues are discovered. That is why such a thesis as this has been difficult to write. The questions asked by such a man, the bold, logical analysis of history which he presents, his notion of historical causation, the conception of the role of classes, all raise such live problems that it is almost impossible

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The problem confronting most students of Marx is not a study of his economics, nor an understanding of the role of violent revolution, nor even his theory of the state; the confusion has appeared at the point of his basic assumptions, the materialistic conception of history and the class struggle. Differences about these are prominent among the scholars, and because they are underlying principles, the concepts resting on them have been in precarious positions. The task, therefore, set in this thesis is an exact, descriptive analysis of the two principles which are the foundation of the whole Marxist thought structure. And if this description can be relied on as objective and thorough, the approach to the other subjects will be with more certainty.

In the study of Marx's life, M. Beer's small volume, The Life and Teachings of Karl Marx, for clarity, conciseness and authoritativeness quite surpasses the larger volume of John Spargo's, Karl Marx. Since the main effort in the sections on theory was to give a description, my sources were as far as possible the writings of Marx. Because there is no single treatment of his theory of history, the material for it was culled from various writings. The Manifesto of the Communist Party and Civil War In France were the main sources for the study of the conception of the class struggle. If there is any one book

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In using these works and others, my method was first to read the writings of Marx himself, then to read the comments and explanations of other writers. The resulting interplay of different interpretations often made my understanding clearer.

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Chapter I

The Life and Work of Karl Marx

It is well to start any study of Karl Marx's social philosophy with a review of his life, especially pointing out the main steps in his intellectual development and showing some of the historical background which is his setting.

Karl Heinrich Marx, called the "outstanding working class theorist of the 19th century", the real author of "scientific socialism", was born in the city of Trier

CHAPTER ONE

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in Southwestern Germany, May 5, 1818. His father, coming from a noble Jewish rabbi's family, had succeeded in establishing for himself a fairly successful law practice, but never learned the art of saving money. Karl's mother was a Dutchwoman and came of a family by the name of Pressburg. It was later she who made the pungent statement about her son, "If Karl made a lot of Capital, instead of writing a lot about Capital, it would have been much better."¹ The family was a large one, but little is known about the rest of the children.

When Karl was six years old, the family embraced Christianity which was evidently no rarity at that time

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and brought no reproach upon them. Karl started his education in grammar schools of Treve showing considerable ability. He did not confine himself to his classrooms for he frequented the house of one L. Von Westphalen a Government Privy Councillor who was a cultured man, alert and interested in all the movements of his day. Many hours were spent in conversation with this man and his influence is shown when Marx dedicated to him his doctor's thesis describing him as a man:

Who welcomes every progressive movement with the the enthusiasm and sober judgment of a lover of Truth, and who is the living proof that Idealism is no imagination but the Truth.¹

This same man was to become Marx's father-in-law.

When his public school course was completed Marx, only seventeen years old, journeyed to the University of Bonn and was ready to study law because of his father's wishes. But in 1836 he transferred to the University of Berlin. Before his departure he became secretly engaged to Jenny Von Westphalen, the daughter of his friend, the Councillor.

Beer describes this period at Berlin as one of almost inhuman concentration. He says:

Giving up all social intercourse, he worked day and night, making abtstracts of what he read, translating from the Greek and Latin, working on philosophical systems, setting down a considerable number of his own thoughts, and drafting outlines of philosophy of jurisprudence, as well as writing three volumes of poetry.²

1. M. Beer, Life and Teachings of Karl Marx, p. 2.
 2. Ibid., p. 4.

All this intense concentration and work marks a critical period in the life of Marx; he was undecided in his philosophic position and vacillated from one to another, but finally found refuge in certain aspects of Hegel's philosophy. This was an important decision; for in so doing he rejected the abstract idealism of Kant and Fichte. Portions of a letter which he wrote to his father at this time, give a vivid view of what was happening. He writes:

As a result of these various activities, I passed many sleepless nights during my first term, engaged in many battles, and had to endure much mental and physical excitement; and at the end of it all I found myself not much better off, having in the meantime neglected nature, art, and society, and spurned pleasure: such was the comment my body seemed to make. My doctor advised me to try the country, and so, having for the first time passed through the whole length of the city I found myself before the gate on the Stralau Road....From the idealism which I had cherished so long I fell to seeking the ideal in reality itself. Whereas before the gods had dwelt above the earth, they had now become its very centre.

I had read fragments of Hegel's philosophy, the strange rugged melody of which did not please me. Once again I wished to dive into the depths of the sea, this time with resolute intention of finding a spiritual nature just as essential, concrete and perfect as the physical, and instead of indulging in intellectual gymnastics, bringing up pure pearls in the sunlight....

During my illness I had made acquaintance with Hegel from beginning to end, as also with most of his disciples. Through frequent meetings with friends in Stralau I got an introduction into the Graduate Club....In the discussions that took place many conflicting views were put forward, and more and more securely did I get involved in the meshes of the new philosophy which I had sought to escape; but everything articulate in me was put to silence.¹

1. Ibid., pp. 7-8.

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This shows an intellectual conversion, which, as is evident in the later studies of Marx, life-determining. Even then it caused him to throw away his poems, his short stories and start to revamp his whole life.

His father was anything but pleased with this change and with the life his son was living. It had been over his protest that Karl changed from law to philosophy, so this made the strain the more acute. He made an example of him:

Indeed these young men sleep quite peacefully except when they now and then devote the whole or part of a night to pleasure, whereas my clever and gifted son Karl passes wretched sleepless nights wearying body and mind with cheerless study, forbearing all pleasure with the sole object of applying himself to abstruse studies: but what he builds to-day he destroys tomorrow, and in the end he finds that he has what he already had, without having gained anything from other people. ¹

This period was not so devoid of results as Karl's father thought, for his son received his Doctor of Philosophy degree at the age of twenty-three, having written his thesis upon the subject of The Natural Philosophies of Democritus and Epicurus. This was conclusive in causing Marx to give up thoughts of an official career so he turned to look for a teaching position. But German universities were not particularly the hot-beds of liberalism, so Marx was not accepted at the University of Bonn. Finding this

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channel closed to him and also having his income from home cut off by the death of his father in May 1838, he turned to the rather indefinite future of free-lance journalism. Here Marx decided to use the weapon of criticism to bring about the freedom of his nation.

Just about this time the Liberals in the Rhine provinces published a newspaper, the purpose of which was to prepare the way for greater political and religious freedom. Significantly enough, many of the "Younger Hegelians" were kept in view for editorships and contributors. On the first of January, 1842, the first number of the Rheinische Zeitung appeared with Dr. Rutenburg, a friend of Marx's, as editor. He naturally invited the young scholar to write for the paper. The young student's contributions were so trenchant, that, on the retirement of the editor, Marx was offered the position which he accepted. He was forced by this to make his first serious study of economic questions. The interest arose out of a definite situation; the Diet of the Rhine Provinces had acted in regard to the parceling of land wood stealing, the farmers in the Moselle District, and had also staged some debates on Free Trade. These called for editorials which Marx did not think himself capable of writing, so he, taking the death of the journal as a chance to withdraw for serious study, started his first systematic review of economic questions.

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In spite of his contemplated marriage at this time, Marx continued his study of Socialist literature and in these years, 1843-1844, when he laid the foundations for his great doctrines, we have little writing from him, so consequently know little about them. This we do know: he became a thorough Socialist. In a letter which he wrote from Cologne in 1843, he said:

This system of acquisition and commercialism, of possession and exploitation of mankind, is leading even more swiftly than the increase of population to a breach within the present society, which the old system cannot heal, because indeed it has not the power either to heal or create, but only to exist and enjoy. ¹

Instead of conceiving his function to be that of building Utopias, he saw it as a function of criticism and "interpreting the struggles and aspirations of the ages." ²

By the winter of 1843, he had evidently come to many of the conclusions which were later the fundamental ideas in his system of thought. For instance, he believed that if any revolutionary change was to be brought about in industrial conditions, it would come through the efforts of the laborers, not the owners of industry. As he stated it in the introduction to his critical essay on Hegel's Philosophy of Law, the positive conditions for a German revolution were:

In the formation of a class in chains, a class which

1. Ibid., p. 15.

2. Ibid., p. 16.

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In the formation of a class in chains, a class which

finds itself in bourgeois society, but which is not a part of it, of an order which shall break up all orders....When the proletariat proclaims the dissolution of the existing order of things, it is merely announcing the secret of its own existence, for it is in itself the virtual dissolution of this order of things. When the proletariat desires the negation of private property, it is merely elevating as a general principle of society what it already involuntarily embodies in itself as the negative product of society. 1

Marx wrote this in Paris where he had gone with his young wife to take up the editorship of the Franco-German Year Books. A further declaration of his aim is found in a letter which he wrote to Arnold Ruge in September, 1843; Marx said:

The fearless criticism of all existing institutions - fearless in the sense that it does not shrink from its logical consequences, or from conflict with the powers that be. I am therefore not with those who would have us set up a standard of dogmatism; far from it; we should rather try to give what help we can to those involved in dogma, so that they may realize the implications of their own principles. So, for example, communism as taught by Cabot - and others is a dogmatic abstraction....We do not then proclaim to the world in doctrinaire fashion any new principles: 'this is the truth, bow down before it!' We do not say 'refrain from strife, it is foolishness!' We only make clear to men for what they are really struggling and to consciousness of this they must come whether they will or not. 2

So Marx defined his function as criticism rather than the pronouncements of dogmas. The dialectical influence of Hegel is plainly evident; the thinker was to set forth no new system of abstract thought, but was to look to the

1. Ibid., p.16-17.

2. Ibid., p. 18.

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So Marx defined his function as criticizer rather than the pronouncements of dogma. The dialectical influence of Hegel is plainly evident; the thinker was to set forth no new system of abstract thought, but was to look to the

future by examining the present and past.

As was true of many of Marx's journalistic ventures, the Year Books were not successful. One edition appeared (Spring, 1844). But in that one edition there was an article contributed by Frederick Engels, condemning the economic system in the name of justice but refusing to accept French Utopian Socialism.¹ This was the beginning of Marx's and Engels' contacts and also the genesis of a life-friendship. This friendship embraced an intimacy of ideas so close that it is difficult to distinguish the ideas of one from the other. It was through the generosity of Engels that Marx was able to continue his literary work.

1. Sketch of Engels' life:

Engels was born in Barmen, November 28, 1820, the son of a wealthy manufacturer and was raised in a conservative environment. Before graduation from a gymnasium in Elberfeld, he went into business with his father. Following his years of service in the Guard Artillery, he went to Manchester as agent for his father's firm. He became interested in the new industrial developments. On the way to England, Engels dropped into the offices of the Reinische Zeitung and met Marx. When he arrived in England he associated himself with the Chartist Movement, The Utopian Socialist and Trade Union Movements. On returning to the continent, collaboration with Marx on The Holy Family took place. In 1845 he gave up the mercantile business and went to Brussels where Marx was working. From then on the two were busy the rest of their lives studying, writing, carrying on research. In 1850 Engels entered business again to keep Marx at his literary work. They saw little of each other after this but had almost daily correspondence. On the death of his father Engels became a partner in the business. In 1869, he sold out his share and with the money moved to London where Marx was working. The two worked side by side until Marx's death. Engels died August 6, 1895. (Harry W. Laidler, History of Socialist Thought, pp. 156-157.)

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Each man's personality and abilities supplemented the other's; Marx was a theorist of a high order, but impractical when it came to such matters as clothing and money. In contrast, Engels was a successful, energetic business man, hardly endowed with the intellectual gifts of Marx but keenly sensitive to Marx abilities and the problems he faced. If Marx had never met Engels, Beer thinks, Engels would have remained a Utopian Socialist, more interested in condemning the present society in the name of justice than in discovering the source of progress. But the gifts weren't one-sided; without the financial help and literary aid that Engels gave Marx, he would have had a severe struggle for existence.

After the Year Books had definitely been closed as a literary project Marx felt himself through with his period of ideological speculation and ready to close some accounts with Bruno Bauer, his former teacher, and Bauer's brother, Edgar, who had not been able to break from Hegel. Marx does this in his book The Holy Family. Marx criticised Bruno Bauer, saying that it was impossible to understand any period of history "without having studied for example the industries of that period, the immediate means of production of life itself".¹ He maintained that ideas were potent in the development of society only as they represented

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the interests of the masses.

Otherwise ideas might indeed stir up enthusiasm but they could not achieve any results....Ideas have only effective results in so far as they correspond to class interests. The enthusiasm to which such ideas gave birth arose from the illusion that those ideas signified the liberation of mankind in general.¹

The quotation shows the tendency of the book; it gives the germs of the materialistic conception of history as well as the beginnings of his interpretation of the revolutionary role of the laboring class. When the discussion of these theories come later, quotations will be given from his source. The next bit of writing to appear was Marginal Notes, published in August 1844, in the Paris Vorwärts and was a lengthy charge against Ruge. It was also a defense of the German proletariat and Socialism.

In the midst of these activities, Marx and other contributors to the Paris Vorwärts were expelled from France at the behest of the Prussian government. Marx went to Brussels in 1845 and spent most of his time continuing his economic studies, for which Engels had loaned him his library. Marx embodied the results of this period in his famous book Misère de la Philosophie published in 1847. The results of his controversy with Proudhon, a French Socialist, stimulated the study; Marx had hoped to win him to Socialism but it was futile to try, so this was a

1. Quoted, Harry W. Laidler, History of Socialist Thought, p. 158.

full attack upon his position. Marx systematically attacked, first the economic theories of Proudhon, then his philosophical and social theories; the main object of all of which was to induce Socialists to give up their Utopianism. There were also passages which give clear indication that Marx had arrived at the full-grown conception of the class struggle.

Marx was not alone in his vigor and action; the 1840's were revolutionary days. They were characterized by large strikes in England, the rapid spread of Socialism in Germany, the outcropping of Socialistic groups in France. Among these, there was organized a league of workers anxious to propogandize for Socialism. Some of the members of this group called the organization's attention to Marx who, consequently, was invited to attend the second Congress of the group in 1847. Both Marx and Engels went, and were commissioned to write a new program. They did. It was The Manifesto of the Communist Party. The results of many years of study and research of both men were embodied in this document so that it now stands as a classic in the field of social philosophy. It is interesting to notice that at the time of the writing, Marx was twenty-nine and Engels was twenty-seven. Although the work was collaborated upon, Engels says:

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myself bound to state that the fundamental proposition which forms its nucleus, belongs to Marx. ¹

The Manifesto itself contained four parts or four main groups of ideas: (1) The history of the evolution of the middle class, its character, positive and negative achievements. (2) The doctrine of the class struggle and the role of the proletariat. (3) Revolutionary section by the Communists. (4) Criticism of other Socialist schools. The last section hardly interests us but the other three will be discussed in detail in the section of the thesis entitled The Class Struggle. However, the main proposition of the pamphlet should be stated. It is this:

The proposition is: that in every historical epoch the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggles, contest between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; that the history of these class struggles form a series of evolution in which, now-a-days, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed classes - 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, emancipating at large from all exploitations, oppression, class-distinction and class struggles. ²

When one reads this and other portions of this short piece of writing it is easy to say with Algernon Lee:

The Communist Manifesto....is a truly unique work.

1. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, p. 7.

2. Ibid., pp. 7-8.

In form it is the campaign address of a special group issued in a special emergency. But the campaign has proved to be an age-long one, and the group has grown into a world-wide class movement. Moreover while the writers of this proclamation of course could not foresee just how remote a victory might be.... they knew well enough that 1848 was to be but one battle in a very prolonged conflict....Accordingly when called upon to write a campaign document, they wrote not only as party leaders and agitators - but also as historians. 1

The Manifesto had hardly been written before the February revolutions broke in many German states. They did not result beneficially for Marx, because he was forced to move to Paris, to which he had been invited already by this letter, signed by one Ferdinand Flocon, a member of the Provisional Government:

Brave and Faithful Marx, the soil of the French Republic is a place of refuge for all friends of freedom. Tyranny has banished you; France the free opens to you her gates - to you and to all who fight for the holy cause, the fraternal cause of all people. 2

But Marx did not stay in Paris long. After gathering some Communists together, he procured the means for them and himself to return to Germany to take part in the German revolution. So the group travelled to the Rhineland and established a paper, the Neue Rheinische Zeitung, which appeared for the first time in June, 1848. The editorials that Marx wrote for this journal took on violent coloration; he had evidently come to feel that the path of peaceful revolution was closed to the workers and that the only means

1. Algernon Lee, The Essentials of Marx, p. 49.
2. M. Beer, Life and Teachings of Karl Marx, p. 49.

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The time seemed ripe for such actions so he wrote:

Already in the East a revolutionary army composed of warriors of all nationalities stands confronting the old Europe represented by and in league with the Russian army; already from Paris looms the Red Republic. ¹

Later Marx admitted that his views at that time had been wrong, hastily conceived; forty-five years afterward the same advice that Marx had given was tempered in Engels' Class Struggles in France.

Censorship, lawsuits and the failing of the revolution brought so much pressure on Marx that he sacrificed his assets to satisfy the creditors of the paper. This meant bankruptcy for him. But he still retained enough to travel to Paris where he had expected to see a revolution but arrived in time to see a counter-revolution, and to be banished from the country in July, 1849. He went to London where he spent the rest of his life.

The next few months he spent writing his views on the European revolutions. His Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte and Revolution and Counter Revolution were written at this time. In these he pointed out that the revolutions were brought by an industrial crisis and the return of industrial prosperity in 1848 had likewise

1. Ibid., p. 50.

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caused the defeat of the workers. He also showed that the mass of the workers were still close to medieval types of production, so that the class-struggle with its cause modern industry, was practically undeveloped. There was, therefore, no substantial foundation for revolt.

At this time the Marx family was close to the subsistence level. Marx only source of income was his few cents from his daily column in the New York Tribune, for which he was the London news correspondent. The income amounted to about a pound sterling. One time Marx had to sell his last coat to buy paper for his pamphlet on the Cologne Communist trial. Fortunately Engels came to the rescue and started to give him L350 annually, so, with the aid of a small legacy of L800 from Wilhelm Wolff, Marx was able to write the first volume of his famous Socialist criticism of political economy, Capital. With economic security, Marx had a comparatively happy time in London. Every day he would appear at the Library of the British Museum to carry on his research in economics and collect more material for his great work. It was during this same period that he published The Critique of Political Economy.

Six children were born to the Marxes, four girls and two boys, of whom only three of the girls grew up - Jenny who married Charles Lonquet; Laura, the wife of Paul Lafargue, and Eleanor who married Dr. Edward Aveling.

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September 25th, 1864 a conference of working men was held in London, and Marx always interested in any practical movements, attended and received an invitation to write the inaugural address. This he did. The address was a review of the history of the working classes in England from 1848 to 1864. It showed that they as a class won certain measures such as the Ten Hour Bill which, in the words of Marx was:

The first time in broad daylight the political economy of the middle classes succumbed to the political economy of the working classes. ¹

It is significant to notice that he closed his inaugural address by saying:

To conquer political power has become the great duty of the working class....one element they possess - numbers; but numbers weigh only in the balance if united by combination and led by knowledge. ²

From the group to which this was said came an international laboring organization which can probably be placed as Marx's greatest practical accomplishment. Another communication was published under the title, Value, Price and Profit embodying his theory of value. Later a schism arose in the International which caused Marx to withdraw from it.

In 1867 the first German edition of Das Kapital appeared with a subtitle that read "eine kritische

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Analyse der kapitalistischen Produktion." In using England as the horrible example, he says in the preface to the first edition:

Just as the American War of Independence in the eighteenth century sounded the tocsin for the middle classes of Europe, so the American Civil War in the nineteenth century has sounded the tocsin for the European working class. In England the revolutionary process is plain to all who have eyes to see. When it reaches a certain intensity it will react upon the continent. There it will take a more brutal or a more humane form according as the development of the working class varies....That is one of the reasons I have given so much space in the present work to a study of the history, the nature and the results of British factory legislation....When a society has discovered the natural laws which regulate its own movement....it can neither overleap the natural phases of evolution, nor shuffle them out of the world by decrees. But this much, at least, it can do; it can shorten and lessen the birth pangs. 1

The whole volume itself treats the nature of commodities, money, capital and their interrelation. Then it explains at length the author's theory of value, finally developing the law of capitalist accumulation. It can be stated in a few brief words: as capitalist production grows apace capital concentrates in fewer and fewer hands. There follows naturally from this the increase in the productivity of labor, the demand for additional labor decreases and with this decrease, the army of the unemployed increases and misery accumulates. This is based by Marx upon the fact that all the increasing social productivity of

1. Karl Marx, Capital, Vol.I, pp. 864-865.

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of labor is carried out at the cost of the individual laborer, and that the means of developing production become means of domination and exploitation of the producer. These necessarily mean the degradation of man, take away the charm of his work and make him and his family dependent upon the mercy of those who are using him. So poverty grows. This has been called in Marxian circles the Doctrine of the Accumulation of Misery.¹ Naturally from this social phenomenon comes the class struggle, the disintegration of Capitalism, its destruction by its own hand and violent revolution. All this is included in the first volume which was published in 1867.

After this Marx found his physical health failing. There were increasing ailments with increasing attempts at cures, but to no particular avail. During the years 1877-1878 there seemed to be a rallying sufficient to allow him to gather material for his second volume of Capital. This

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From day to day it grows clearer that the relations of production in which the bourgeoisie move have not a unique character, nor yet a simple character, but a duplex character; that in proportion wealth is produced poverty is produced likewise; and that to the same extent to which there occurs a development of the forces of production, there develops also a force productive of repression; that these relations do not produce bourgeois wealth that is to say, the wealth of the bourgeois class, except continually destroying the wealth of the individual members of that class, and by producing a proletariat which is continually growing in numbers. Karl Marx, Misère de la Philosophie, p. 116.

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Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution of organic nature, so Marx discovered the evolutionary laws of human history, the simple fact, hitherto hidden under ideological overgrowths, that above all things man must eat, drink dress and find shelter before they can give themselves to political science, art, religion, or any material necessities of life and the corresponding stage of economic evolution of a people or period provides a foundation upon which the national institutions, legal systems, art and even religious ideas of the people in question have been built, and upon which, therefore, their explanation must be based, a procedure the reverse of also the special law of motion for the modern capitalist production and for the middle society which it begets. With the discovery of surplus value light was at once thrown upon the subject, all the earlier investigations of which, whether by middle-class economists or Socialist critics, had been gropings in the dark..... 1

So clearly summarized is the thought contribution of Marx for the modern world. A few words of appraisal from a modern is not amiss:

In every country of the world where men have set themselves the task of social improvement, Marx has been always the source of inspiration and prophecy. Wherehe was also irresistably right was his prophecy that the civilization of his epoch was built upon sand. 2

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1. M. Beer, Life and Teachings of Karl Marx, p. 63.
 2. Harold Laski, Karl Marx, pp. 15-45; quoted, Harry W. Laidler, History of Socialist Thought, p. 197.

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Chapter II

The Social Philosophy of Karl Marx: The Materialistic Conception of History

The first step in a study of the social philosophy of Karl Marx is the materialistic conception of history, sometimes referred to as "historical materialism". It is the first foundation of the logical structure which Marx built. Its significance for us rests in the consistency with which he used it, in the employment of it by the Communist Party as a basis for the predictions of revolutions and the victory of the proletariat, and in its continued presence as

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Chapter II

The Social Philosophy of Karl Marx: The Materialistic Conception of History

The first step in a study of the social philosophy of Karl Marx is the materialistic conception of history, sometimes referred to as "historical materialism". It is the first foundation of the logical structure which Marx built. Its significance for us rests in the consistency with which he used it, in the employment of it by the Communist Party as a basis for the predictions of revolutions and the victory of the proletariat, and its continued presence as a key notion in "scientific socialism". Out of it arises the second main conception of Marx, the class struggle, so it is necessary that our study start with his theory of history. The word as to choice of terms in referring to this theory: sometimes it has been called "the economic interpretation of history" or "economic determinism" and ~~has~~ ^{that} been used by many reputable Marxist scholars. I have retained the phrase "materialistic conception of history" for several reasons: the first one is that this phrase is the oldest of the three; the second reason is that the word "economic" is too narrow for the meaning of the concept; the third reason is that determinism conveys an impression about motives which can hardly be supported by an examina-

tion of Marx's theory; the fourth reason is that economic determinism implies the idea that man, individually, is governed by an inescapable pain-pleasure calculus in his struggle for existence. While this may be supported by some Marxian students on other grounds, there is an open question whether it is good Marxism.

As a guide to his studies from 1843-44 onwards, Marx used the conception of history, or method of investigation, which - in contradistinction to the idealist conception of history of Hegel - was named materialistic. As its nature is dialectic - as it seeks to conceive in thought the evolving antagonisms of the social process - it is, like Hegel's dialectic, a conception of history and a method of investigation at the same time. 1

As this quotation would imply, an understanding of the materialistic conception of history as formulated by Marx necessitates an understanding of Hegel, for Marx was Hegel's pupil in a real sense, although he gave a twist to his teacher's doctrines that Hegel would probably have been the first to straighten. But it is almost impossible for us to overlook or over-estimate the contribution of Hegel to Marx. The dialectic method of thought served Marx as a key with which to open all the doors to the understanding of the phenomena of social life. It is true that the discovery of the materialistic conception of history did not depend on the dialectic. But it is equally true that it was the means of Marx's discovery; so any understanding of Marx must rest upon some review of Hegel.

1. M. Beer, Life and Teachings of Karl Marx, p. 65.

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George Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831) had an unusual task.¹ By the beginning of the nineteenth century a new idea had begun to make its way into the consciousness of thinking people, and that idea was evolution. According to it, all things were in flux, in a state of becoming, of appearing and disappearing, of being born and of dying. In view of this conception, the old formalistic logic was no longer adequate; rigid in nature, it could no longer deal with things that were in a state of change. So a new logic was sought, and it was Hegel who made one of the first thoroughly painstaking endeavors to formulate it.

It was natural for any philosophy, especially any philosophy of history, as far as Hegel was concerned to start with evolution. He insisted that the world of human experience was created by reason; and because reason is a principle of growth, its embodiment in facts is meaningless save as it is studied in the terms of development. But this is not materialistic. Hegel was an idealist; the origin

1. Digest of Hegel's life:

He was born in Stuttgart, 1770, studied theology and philosophy at Tübingen (1788-1801), and held private tutorships in Switzerland and in Frankfurt, from 1794-1801. In 1801 he established himself at Jena, receiving a professorship in 1805, which he was compelled to relinquish after the battle of Jena in 1806. After serving as editor of the newspaper in Bamberg (1806-1808) and as a director of the gymnasium at Nuremberg (1808-1816), he was called to the professorships of philosophy at Heidelberg and Berlin successively. In 1831, after exercising much influence, he died of cholera. Frank Thilly, History of Philosophy, p. 464.

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Frank Tilly, History of Philosophy, v. 484.

and essence of growth is to be sought, according to him, not in material forces at all, but in reason, the logical idea, the universal spirit, in God. He is the Idea which contains within itself all forms of being which he develops dialectically. The idea creates for itself material embodiment, first in inorganic nature, then in organic nature and finally in man when it appears in reason. When reason rises in the mind, and self-consciousness, and freedom, it becomes the idea again. One illustration of how this works is in Hegel's view of history; it is the slow development of the idea of freedom, and institutions are simply man's efforts to embody that idea. Institutions are in fact, the idea. Of course, each manifestation is partial and imperfect, so there arises within it a contradiction. There is a clash between the old manifestation of the idea and the new need, and a new idea results, the negation of the old by the contradictory need. So this process works through all of history and all of the world. There are partial embodiments of ideas, contradictions arise and a new form of the idea is brought out. So being is becoming.

This manner of conceiving things and beings, as in the process of changing, through the struggle of contradictory elements and their resolution, is what Hegel called the dialectic method. The whole emphasis is placed not upon the fact that a certain thing is but upon its becoming.

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and the new need, and a new idea results. The negation of
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tradiction, or the antithesis, which brings into being all the gifts of mankind. Only and only when the contradictory reveals itself are we able to have evolution and progress. The thing or being against which the contradiction operates is called by Hegel the Positive, and the antagonistic element is called the Negation. The third stage of the process is called the Negation of the Negation. In much more familiar language, we have the Thesis (the Positive) and the Antithesis (the Negation) and issuing from them the Synthesis (the Negation of the Negation). This is the famous dialectical process which served not only as a system of logic but as a method of investigation as well. A plain corollary of this is the belief that progress historically is the contradiction of one aspect by another. This lies back of Marx's thought that without feudalism there could have been no middle class; and without the middle class state there could have been no proletarian movement. Also it follows that the working out of the idea of private property is necessary to reveal its imperfections and its remedy, common ownership. That is to say, there comes a stage of history when the utility of an idea is completed; its antithesis begins the work of creative destruction and a new idea arises.

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with consummate mastery, grounding his class struggle theory upon it. He took the dialectic as his positive clue to all social phenomena and examined them. The notion that each age produces its own corrective, threw much light upon the problems that confronted Marx, so taking the dialectic away from Hegel, Marx applied it to the destruction of Capitalism as other thinkers such as Feuerbach and Strauss had applied it to the destruction of Christianity.

The materialistic conception of history was never formulated by Marx in any comprehensive manner, although it was constantly his assumption and at times he made direct references to it. Particularly evident is the conception in The Manifesto of the Communist Party and The Poverty of Philosophy. Marx had a projected book on logic in which he proposed to examine the theory in detail, but the book was never written. Hence, nowhere in Marx's extensive writings do we have a thorough-going elaboration of his thesis. But in the preface to his Critique of Political Economy Marx explains how in revising Hegel's Philosophy of Law he was led to the conclusion that:

Legal relations as well as forms of state could neither be understood by themselves, nor explained by the so-called general progress of the human mind, but that they are rooted in the conditions of life. ¹

This gives us one of the earlier statements of the interpretation. The following sections of the same passage

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1. Albritton loc. cit. The Essentials of Marx, p. 116.

give it more extensively:

The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, continued to serve as the leading thread in my studies may be briefly summed up as follows: In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relationships that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society the real foundation on which arises legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary their social existence determines their consciousness.

At a certain stage in their development, the material forces of production in society come into conflict with the existing relations of production - or, what is but a legal expression of that same thing - with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production, these turn into fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation, the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed.

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 No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room within it have developed; and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society. Therefore mankind always takes up only such problems as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, we will always find that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist or are at least in process of formation. ¹

I have quoted at length because this is one of the clearest statements of the position; the only statement that rivals it is Engels' in the preface of The Manifesto of the Communist Party. Briefly, Marx is saying that the modes of

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production and their changes determine the social relations of mankind. The hand mill created the feudal lord; the steam mill created the capitalist. As far as this scholar was concerned the prime motive power of human society which is responsible for changes in human consciousness and thought, or which causes various institutions or conflicts to arise, does not originate, primarily, in an idea or The Idea, or in some world spirit, but in the material conditions of life. The basis of human history is therefore material. The material conditions of life can be interpreted to mean the manner in which men as social beings, with the aid of their environing nature and their own nature, shape their material existence, provide for their own shelter, food and clothing, and exchange the goods that seem necessary to their livelihood. To interpret material conditions to mean this is selecting an interpretation that may be questioned, but the reasonableness of it will be evident I think when the concept of "powers of production" is described. Granting that this is one possible interpretation, it follows that ideas, laws, art and even religion are all determined by the material conditions of life. Marx was anxious to find out the causes, the impulses that produce the changes and revolutions, or create the tendencies thereto. What interested Marx was not origins but the development and change of things; he wanted to know the dynamic law of history, and this is his

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We have in the materialistic conception of history a doctrine, not of being, but of becoming. It sets out to explain not simply why things are as they are, but how they are in the process of becoming something different. The "powers of production" are changing as constantly as man's

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command over nature changes in nature and scope, and these changes in the "powers of production" call for corresponding changes in the social, political and legal structure of the age. As the "powers of production" change so will the organization of labor change; class relationships, property, laws, forms of government and ways of thinking. But these adaptations are not easily and smoothly made; the old order always has its defenders, men who have gathered around its particular institutions, and they are reluctant to see it pass from the scene. Therefore, the "relations of production" tend to lag behind the growth of the "powers of production" and they can only be brought forward by the sharp shock of revolution. A rereading of the statement of the doctrine quoted before, will lead one to this conclusion.

Marx's Hegelian inheritance is clearly revealed at this point. History, for him, as for Hegel, progresses by the method of the dialectic. There is thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Each social system based on a stage in the development of the "powers of production" is the thesis, which some day is to call into being an antithesis. Thus, at the present stage, the capitalist system is compelled, for the sake of the "powers of production", to call into existence its own antithesis, the organization of labor. It must, to make the most of the situation, place the workers together in factories and towns, subject them to a common

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discipline which always stimulates effort to organize labor. This occurs while capitalistic production still has room for development. Thus, in the future, Capitalism having done its work, will become the fetter upon the powers it has brought into being. The "powers of production" will demand a more highly coordinated form of "relations of production" than Capitalism is able to produce, so the working class, disciplined by its old master, will be ready, as the under-dogs to assume the leadership is destroying the old forms of relations. In fact, it is the only class that can; the others are tied hand and foot by the old relations. The capitalists will not surrender without struggle and with this clash there arises the conflict between thesis and antithesis out of which the synthesis, a classless society will arise. The reason that a classless society will come is the change in the nature of property that such a revolution will bring with it; hitherto there has been private property of some sort; now there will be a common ownership of property. That will make this difference: the synthesis, arising on the basis of the failure of private property, naturally moves to social ownership which leaves no class to exploit as did Capitalism when it absorbed the feudal lords. So Marx says of the death of Capitalism:

This social formation constitutes, therefore, the closing chapter of the prehistoric stages of human society. 1

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For further clarification there should be an examination of two important concepts in this theory, "powers of production", sometimes called "forces of production" or "modes of production"; and the concept "relations of production" sometimes called "conditions of production". Without an understanding of just what Marx meant by these, the materialistic conception can be badly misinterpreted. It should be admitted that we have little direct light. One sentence shows the importance of the concept "powers of production":

The mode of production in the material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual resources of life. ¹

What did Marx mean by the concept? Marx conceived his view as materialistic - in contrast with the idealism of Hegel. Are we therefore to think of this concept in purely material terms. I think one can be sure Marx meant technological developments and forces. In the Manifesto is this:

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. ²

Obviously he awards great powers to the instruments, but they are not the only causes; there is room left for other forces. Then, I think it is safe to add natural resources

1. Algernon Lee, Essentials of Marx, p. 176.

2. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, p. 16.

which might be classed with technological forces and named inanimate forces. The issue that is most debated though is whether Marx included labor forces in the concept. As near as I could discover the following quotation is one of the clearest:

The elementary factors of the labour process are: first, purposive activity, or the labour itself; secondly, its subject matter; and thirdly, its instruments. ¹

This is taken from the first volume of Capital, the volume in which Marx analyzes production. The labor process is the means of producing some use-values or commodities that are necessary to people. Man to do this struggles with nature, and as he wins victories, the process of production becomes more and more complicated, but the elements of the labor process remain those quoted above. About these Marx says:

If we regard the whole labor process from the outlook of its result, the product, then both the instrument of labour and the subject matter of labour assume the aspects of the means of production, and labour itself assumes the aspect of productive labour. ²

Labor is plainly counted a vital agency in production. It might be well to say that most of the Marxian scholars from whom I have read seem to think that Marx meant more than inanimate forces. ³ They are of the opinion that he meant things that might be classed as personal productive forces

1. Karl Marx, Capital, vol. I, p. 170.

2. Ibid., p. 173.

3. Cf. M. Beer, Life and Teachings of Karl Marx, pp. 66-67. Mandell M. Bober, Karl Marx's Interpretation of History, pp. 1-38.

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pp. 57-58, 68.

such as laborers, inventors, discoverers, engineers, and finally the qualities of the race. Unless a person is willing to say that Marx meant by this concept only those things which nature thrusts before a man's eyes, and is therefore bound to discover what is set before him, we have to say that this concept includes just such forces.

The mode of production is not synonymous....with technique. The concept is much wider; it subsumes the ensemble of three agencies, man, nature and technique.¹

Before I close this, the following section from an untranslated portion of a letter should be quoted because of the light it throws upon the concept:

Es ist überflüssig, hinzuzufügen, dass die Menschen nicht frei ihre Productivkräfte - welche die Grundlage ihrer ganzen Geschichte sind - wählen, denn jede Produktivkraft ist eine erworbene Kraft, das Produkt früherer Tätigkeit. Die Productivkräfte sind also das Resultat angewandter menschlicher Energie, aber diese Energie selbst ist bedingt durch die Verhältnisse, in denen sich die Menschen befinden, durch die schon erworbenen Productivkräfte, durch die soziale Form, die vor ihnen existiert, die sie sich schaffen, die das Erzeugnis der vorhergehenden Generation ist. Durch diese einfache Tatsache, dass jede folgende Generation die von der früheren erworbenen Productivkräfte vorfindet, die ihr als Rohmaterial zu neuer Produktion dienen, entsteht ein Zusammenhang in der menschlichen Geschichte, bildet sich eine Geschichte der Menschheit, die um mehr Geschichte der Menschheit ist, als die Productivkräfte der Menschen und damit auch ihre sozialen Beziehungen gewachsen sind. Daraus folgt notwendig: die soziale Geschichte der Menschen ist immer nur die Geschichte ihrer individuellen Entwicklung, ob sie sich dessen bewusst sind oder nicht. Ihre materiellen Beziehungen sind die Grundlage aller ihrer Beziehungen. Diese materiellen Beziehungen sind nur die notwendigen Formen, in denen ihre materielle und individuelle Tätigkeit sich verwirklicht.²

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1. Mandell M. Bober, Karl Marx's Interpretation of History, p. 17.
 2. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Über Historischen Materialismus, vol. II, pp. 20-21.

such as laborers, inventors, discoverers, engineers, and
finally the qualities of the race. Unless a person is
willing to say that Marx meant by this concept only those
things which nature trusts before a man's eyes, and is
therefore bound to discover what is set before him, we
have to say that this concept includes just such forces.

The mode of production is not synonymous....with
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1. Mandell M. Hober, Karl Marx's Interpretation of History, p. 14.
2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Über historische
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If this is correct then the concept can be interpreted to mean any force, personal or impersonal, which enables men to satisfy their needs.

The second concept, "relations of production" is certainly not as difficult as the other. At this point a statement of Marx's serves; it is this:

We thus see that the social relations within which individuals produce, the social relations of production, are altered, transformed, with the change and development of the material means of production, of the forces of production. The relations of production in their totality constitutes what is called the social relations, society, and, moreover, a society with a peculiar, distinctive character.¹

By this phrase Marx evidently means the legal and state forms, ordinances and laws, as well as the groupings of social classes and sections: thus, the social conditions amid which the production is carried on. A careful re-reading of the statement of the materialistic conception of history will show that Marx uses synonymously the following terms: "relations of production", "property relations" and "the economic structure of society", but the superstructure of society, its social, political and religious institutions are not included in the concept. So the "relations of production" or what is called often the "conditions of production" are the economic foundation of society, the environment for the productive forces, yet always determined by them.

1. Karl Marx, Wage-Labour and Capital, pp. 28-29.

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With the explanations, another illustration of how this conception of history can be used, might help to establish its meaning. Feudalism was based upon the possession of the lands by the nobles and the industrial labor of the corporations of the town. Then middle-class society arose. The new society was based on private property, and therefore endeavored to sweep away all communal, corporation and hereditary rights, to abolish all the institutions that were associated with feudalism such as the state church and the monastery. Any form of absolutism was in conflict with this new class, so it too was attacked. Now all this took place, not because of more intense thought or enlightenment, or the call of supernatural power but as a consequence of the influence of the material world, the economic foundation of society, primarily upon the mind, which translated and transformed the external forms into religious, juridical and economic conceptions.

The above is an illustration of a static case, according to this interpretation of history. In revolutionary changes there are two groups of causes: changes in productive forces and struggles between social classes, which naturally grows out of the first group. The process is something like this: as the productive forces expand, that is, as the skill of the worker increases, new labor processes are discovered such as tools or machines, and as better organiza-

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tion of trade and exchange take place so that the material basis or economic foundation of society is altered, then the old conditions of production cease to promote the interests of production. Since the old conditions or relations of production are adapted to the old forces or powers of production, a conflict, a purely objective conflict, arises between the economic structure and the forces of production. This conflict starts to influence the minds of men; some find trouble in making their system run as effeciently as they did; others feel they are confronted with something new; while others find their economic security destroyed. In this process social distinctions acquire a new significance. Certain classes which were formerly the "disinheirted" now gain economic and social power as did the middle-class when it moved into the towns, and other classes consequently declined as did the nobles. It is natural that the old conditions of production with their cultural entrenchment and traditional protectors are hard to dislodge. But men, with this conflict in their minds, start new trains of thought, formulate new ideas which correspond to the situation. Doubts then arise, then schisms, then revolutions and struggles. From these historical anatagonisms arise the intellectual and political anatagonisms of every age. Marx's concise statement of this is:

In broad outline, we can designate the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the modern bourgeois methods of production as so many epochs in the progress of

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A frequent charge placed against this theory, is that the economic factor as the sole factor is not sufficient to explain all of history. There is only one answer and it can be found in the direct words of Engels', who writing a letter printed in Der Sozialistische Akademiker of October 1, 1895, attempted to state Marx's and his position on this question. He wrote:

Marx and I are partly responsible for the fact that the younger men have sometimes laid more stress on the economic side than it deserves. In meeting the attacks of our opponents it was necessary for us to emphasize the dominant principles, denied by them; and we did not always have the time, place and opportunity to let other factors, which were concerned in the mutual action and reaction get their deserts. 2

More explicitly:

According to the materialistic conception of history the factor which in the last instance is decisive in history is the production and reproduction of actual life. More than that neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. But when anyone distorts this so as to read that the economic factor is the sole element, he converts the statement into a meaningless abstract absurd phrase. The economic condition is the basis

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1. M. Beer, Life and Teachings of Karl Marx, p. 77.
 2. Harry W. Laidler, History of Socialist Thought, p. 202.

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I quote this recognizing that they are not the direct words of Marx, but they come from one who worked so close to him, and so often worked for him that they can be given some serious consideration. Furthermore, the "forces of production" when made to include man's labor, seem to substantiate this position of Engels. Speaking roughly the materialistic interpretation of history says that man's task is prescribed by his environment and in that environment the economic interest is paramount because the means of life are simply the first things to which men pay attention. It would be correct to say that material factors are true causes but to use the word economic is to limit the causes to the "relations of production". Plainly Marx would not do that. First causes, or the basic motivation for social changes is in the "powers of production", and if these do not change it is quite useless to try change from some other angle.

If this is true it makes it hard to support the position

1. Ibid., p. 202.

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that Marx was a psychological hedonist. When men have placed this charge against his theory of historical causation, they have misunderstood him; Marx does not say very much about human motives, but confines himself to describing causation in terms of material forces. And even when he talks about them, selfishness is spoken of in a condemnatory way.¹ The quotations from Engels given before would make possible any number of motives. In further support of this, let me again refer to the quotation I made from Marx at the first of this section.² In that statement he applies his theory to social relations and social production; beyond these he does not go. A discussion of man's personal motives does not occur, and the importance of the economic factor arises in history only at the point where man has social production. Even then the causes are not motives, but objective forces in the social environment. Someone may say that hedonism is an implication of Marxism; about that there will be no discussion; my only statement is that Marx is not a hedonist is his interpretation of history.

It is observable that this cardinal conception in the thought of Marx can easily be misunderstood. And in closing this section it might be well for us to state again the theory. What Marx seems to be trying to say is that the

1. Cf. Karl Marx, Capital, vol. II, p. 843.

2. See p. 32.

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broad transformations of society from age to age arise from economic conditions, and that men, regardless of their motives, are in the mass guided by what they achieve in these conditions. This idea of historical evolution is more difficult to grasp than the idea of exploitation or the accumulation of capital or concept of value, but the grasping of this theory of history marks the period of a person's transformation from an ordinary rebel Socialist to a Marxian Socialist. In closing a statement about Marx's originality is not amiss.

If originality can be properly claimed only for those thinkers who not alone formulate a doctrine but first recognize its importance and implications, so that it thereby becomes a constituent element in their whole scientific system, there is no question that Marx must be recognized in the truest sense as the originator of the economic interpretation of history. ¹

1. E. R. A. Seligmann, Economic Interpretation of History, pp. 52-53.

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Chapter III

The Social Philosophy of Karl Marx: The Class Struggle

To use the phrase "class struggle" is to open a subject about which few people in practically any group know anything. Yet the phrase embodies one of the most important contributions Marx made to the comprehension of the role of classes, class struggles and class consciousness in historical change. And the concept symbolized by the phrase has served as an exact historical description, as a prophecy and as a method of realizing a desired end for one of the

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Historians and scholars prior to Marx recognized the part played by classes in political struggles and social upheavals, but Marx gave it a careful and critical survey resulting in a precise statement. The following statement refers to the subject in these terms:

The Socialist and Communist systems properly so-called those of St. Simon, Fourier, Owen and others, spring into existence in the early undeveloped period, described above, of the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie....

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decomposing elements in the prevailing form of society. But the proletariat, as yet in its infancy offers to them the spectacle of a class without any historical initiative or any independent political existence. 1

A personal letter of Marx's shows that he recognizes his lack of originality in selecting the idea; he wrote:

As far as I am concerned, I can't claim to have discovered the existence of classes in modern society or their strife against one another. Middle-class historians long ago described the evolution of the class struggles, and political economists showed the economic physiology of classes. 2

It remained to Marx to give the theory its revolutionary character, making it precise and unforgettable.

In the study of this section, The Manifesto of the Communist Party since it gives much of the theory, is quoted. Engels, writing in the preface of the Manifesto gives the first clear formulation of the theory:

That proposition is: that in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggle, contests between the exploiting and the exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; that the history of these class struggles forms a series of evolution in which, now-a-days, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed classes - the proletariat - cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class - the bourgeoisie - without, at the same time, and once

1. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, p. 53.

2. M. Beer, Life and Teachings of Karl Marx, p. 85.

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1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, p. 53.
2. W. Beer, Life and Teachings of Karl Marx, p. 55.

and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class-distinction and class struggles. ¹

All the hope, vibrancy of the movement toward a classless society is found in this passage. The urgency of the vision which which these men have seen will not let them rest. A more academic statement of the theory is this one, taken from the body of the Manifesto:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstitutions of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society in various orders, a manifold graduation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the middle ages, feudal lords, vassals, guildmaster, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate graduations.

The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of the feudal society, has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses however, this distinctive feature; its has simplified 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: Bourgeois and Proletariat. ²

Before examining the theory as a whole, the meaning of

1. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Manifesto of the Communist Party, pp. 7-8.

2. Ibid., pp. 12-13.

the more important terms employed by Marx should be made clear. First is the term "class", and since the theory is called the class struggle, the term is central. First of all, why have classes in the theory? A simple answer can be made: because there are classes. The Manifesto puts it clearly in the very first sentence of the first section:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. ¹

The concept of classes is not a notion hoisted on the shoulders of history; it is an empirical fact to be recognized as such. The classification of society into groups is a logical process dependent upon a man's perception and reasoning powers, and if these are operating normally he will see classes in society as surely as others have observed them in minerals, jewels, plants and animals. Wherever there is a specific group distinguishable as a group from others because of marked common characteristics or characteristic, there is a class made so by its very nature. Interests also are not sufficient to make a class; there must be characteristics of the people forming the group that are objective to the group and the individuals forming it. Since Marx held that economic facts were fundamental he contended that economic characteristics were valid for the purpose of classification and arrangement.

1. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Manifesto of the Communist Party, p. 12.

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This automatically eliminates political parties or groups caused by divergence of economic views. However, a distinction would be drawn between the social division of labor and classes; physicians, farmers, clerks, miners are divisions but not classes. Classes for Marx arise from the relations of production. He observes that in any given mode of production the men who are direct participators in the productive process sustain different relations. And these relations are the sources of economic or Marxian classes.

The classes arising from such relations are two, the bourgeoisie and proletariat. They are defined as follows:

By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern Capitalism, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labour. By the proletariat, the class of modern wage-labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live.¹

Men whose chief means of living are wages form the working class. Men whose most important source of livelihood is their ownership of the means of production form the capitalist class. It makes little difference whether a worker owns a bank-book or draws interest from some shares, or that a capitalist supervises him. The outstanding thing about his life is his interest in his wages and this makes him a member of the proletariat in contrast with the capitalist whose chief interest is not in wages but in capital and the legal right to profit from it. It is plain there will be

1. Ibid., p. 12.

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divisions even within classes; there will be skilled and unskilled workers, physical and mental workers, day and salary workers, manual and "white-collared" workers, all divisions but a common class because their interest in and dependence upon wages makes them a class. There will be differences just as varied in the owning class, also.

Thus, the relations which serve as criteria of a class are property ownership or absence of property ownership. What differences is there between ancient slaves and the modern laborer? The difference is the freedom of the laborer. While the slave was considered property the modern proletarian is not. Although he owns no means of production, he can still enter contractual relations with the capitalist.¹ While in the contractual relations the capitalist can control his behavior, but when work is done, the modern laborer can do as he pleases. Bober says in the way of final definition:

One may define, then, a class as a group of people finding themselves in the same position with reference to two things: the ownership or non-ownership of the property essential to the labor-processes, and second, the personal freedom enjoyed or deprived of.²

A characteristic of the proletariat is its revolutionary nature. But before this can be understood it is necessary

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1. Cf. Karl Marx, Capital, vol. I, pp. 169-178, 186-188.
 2. Mandell M Bober, Karl Marx's Interpretation of History, p. 96.

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1. Cf. Karl Marx, Capital, vol. I, pp. 109-118, 188-189.
2. Mandel & Bóber, Karl Marx's Interpretation of History, p. 98.

to know what Marx means by revolution. This passage is in the Manifesto:

In depicting the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced 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. ¹

There is a difference between civil war and revolution according to this passage, and the implication is the violent overthrow of the upper classes makes the difference. This is further supported by the section where the proletariat is pictured as the only revolutionary class; it is this:

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie to-day, the proletariat alone is the really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product.

The lower middle class....fight against the bourgeoisie to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are, therefore, not revolutionary, but conservative....If by chance they are revolutionary, they are so only in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat. ²

Here the proletariat are revolutionary because they are opposed to the middle-class, and the function of the revolutionary class seems to be to destroy the capitalists. The revolutionary function rests in the fact that of all the classes, the laboring class is the one which is not absorbed by modern industry, but is made antagonistic to it. Revolu-

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 2. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

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tion seems to occur at the point where one class that is underneath forces the control from the hands of the ruling group. This is borne out by the following quotation taken from the chapter on the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation:

The transformation of scattered private property, arising from individual labor, into capitalist private property, is naturally a process incomparably more protected, violent and difficult than the transformation of capitalistic private property, already practically resting on socialized production, into socialized property. In the former case, we had the expropriation of the mass of the people by a few usurpers; in the latter, we have the expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of the people. ¹

Place alongside this sentence:

The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary role. ²

This sentence occurs in the Manifesto after a description of the rise of the middle-class, called the few "usurpers" in the longer quotation above, and shows clearly that Marx's conception of revolution is basically an economic one which means, after the revolution occurs in the modes of production there occurs a complete change of control, a shifting of power from one class to another, involving all the drastic transformations in institutions of the epoch that such a move would require. That is why he calls the middle-class a revolutionary class, and in that same sense the proletariat is a revolutionary class. There exists between the capitalists and the wage-earner an unbridgeable gulf. The ownership of

1. Algernon Lee, Essentials of Marx, p. 182.

2. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, op. cit., p. 15.

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1. Wage-Labor and Capital, p. 183.
2. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Col. Ed., p. 18.

capital is such a power that it can even disregard the ownership of labor-power. It is left then for the laborer to find his salvation and freedom through wresting from the bourgeoisie the modes of production. Nothing less than that is revolutionary and the proletariat is the only class who can "expropriate the expropriators".

The full exposition of the theory, now that the terms have been defined, is in the first section of the Manifesto. Capitalism, says these men, appeared with the discovery of America, the opening of Asia and the beginning of world commerce. Now under feudalism, industry was controlled by closed guilds. These guilds were able to supply limited, local markets but by their set-up they were not able to supply a world market which had come into existence. The economic necessity of large scale production forced the guilds out of business and substituted manufacturing. In the meantime, the burghers of different towns observing their opportunity, had started to control the new businesses. The revolutionary effect of the appearance of steam and machinery was soon felt and aided greatly in substituting manufacturing for hand-work, and thereby helping bring into existence the middle-class. Modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long series of revolutions in the modes of production and exchange.

Each succeeding change in the economic status of the bourgeois class was accompanied by a change in political

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bourgeois class was accompanied by a change in political

status, gradually bringing them to the place that they are the controlling class of the modern state. Marx says:

The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie. ¹

The capitalists, in their advance, have played a revolutionary role. Wherever they have obtained control, they have torn apart with ruthlessness the old relations of production and the institutions grounded on them. The peaceful, idyllic world of feudalism was destroyed just this way. This class has:

Pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors', and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment'. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine enthusiasm, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal growth into exchange value, and in the place of numberless infeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single unconscionable freedom - Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by political and religious illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation. ²

Clearly Marx believes that all men have been forced to live and work in and for a system which makes normative self-interest.

At the same time, this class has accomplished many

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Far surpassing the Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts and Gothic Cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former exoduses of nations and crusades. ¹

With this the bourgeoisie has brought the revolutionizing of the means of production and the relations of production, and with them the whole superstructure of society. No longer are there any fast, rigid lines of social distinction or unchangeable ways of producing. The essence of the new class is a constant revolutionizing of all old forms.

The need for new markets forces the bourgeoisie over all the globe, so that production and consumption take on a cosmopolitan character. This produces an economic interdependence of nations. Culture likewise spreads and world literature appears.

National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness becomes more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature.

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls....It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production. ²

With this invasion, it is also necessary for the capitalist class to bring about centralization. Laborers must be placed

1. Ibid., p. 16.

2. Ibid., pp. 17-18.

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where they can be used, the country must be under the domination of the city, and the means of production plus property must be concentrated in the hands of a few men. Because speed is essential, competition intense, the tendency of centralization is quite plain. The concentration occurs not only in social and economic realms but in the political realms. Here is a passage which describes this:

The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than all preceding generations together. Subjection of nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground - what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor? 1

All this is a description of the rise and work of the modern capitalist class, one of the classes in the modern struggle. The bourgeoisie arose because at certain times in the development of the means of production in feudal society, a clash occurred between them and their relations. So into their places stepped free competition, accompanied by a superstructure adapted to it and the control of the structure in the hands of the bourgeois class. But just as the disintegrating process took place in the womb of feudalism, so there is taking place a process of destruction

1. Ibid., pp. 18-19.

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in the womb of capitalism:

Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production of exchange and property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the socerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. 1

The evidence further cited for this is the presence of industrial crises which periodically place on trial the bourgeois society. Over-production breaks out, commerce is reduced to a minimum, industry limits its activities, all because the rigid relations of production will not take care of the immense wealth produced by it. Each crisis is then overcome by methods that will turn the new peaks of prosperity into more severe crises. So the forces of production which capitalism has brought into existence are the very weapons of its own death.

If the theory of class struggles stopped here, there would be little interest for us, but it does not stop. This is the description of how one of the classes arises. Now we find that the capitalist society with its bourgeois class not only forges the weapons of death but also calls into existence the men who will wield them - the laboring class or the proletariat.

In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i. e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed, a

1. Ibid., p. 19.

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The process goes on; the workman is made the mere appendage of the machine; his work loses its charm; monotony and repetition are present. The whole burden of toil increases with the use of machinery and the division of labor. Soon classes arise. They are the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

This working class, which is brought into existence by the bourgeoisie, goes through various stages of development. From the outset it has a struggle with the capitalist class. At first it is a matter of each laborer and each employer, then it becomes the workers of some one factory or a trade, and finally the people in some one locality. At times the proletariat is enlisted by the bourgeoisie in their fight against absolute monarchy, but for the most part, with machinery obliterating distinctions, wages steadily going downward, the laborer becomes more class-conscious. As this takes place, the collision between the two classes assumes more and more a distinct class character. Unions grow up, then national organizations and finally labor parties are formed. The Manifesto says:

This organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the

1. Ibid., p. 21.

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This organization 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 ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier. 1

This party becomes stronger and stronger as the bourgeois at times are compelled to bring the laboring class into political arena to support them. With the edges of the ruling class constantly being thrown into the laboring classes because of concentration, the labor party develops the conditions of enlightenment and progress. Finally when the decisive hour approaches, whole sections of the capitalistic class will move into the labor party, lending their trained minds to the work of the struggle.

Marx sees no hope from any other class. He writes:

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie to-day, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product. 2

Other classes, such as small manufacturers, shop owners, farmers, artisans will battle but not for the overthrow of the economic order; they fight only for their place in the bourgeois class, so they are conservative. Nor is there any hope in what is called the "social scum", for they are better fitted to be the bribed tool of the reactionaries rather than positive support in the revolution. But the proletariat, stripped of all property, its family life slowly disappearing, dependent utterly upon its em-

1. Ibid., p. 25.

2. Ibid., p. 26.

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ployers, is more and more skeptical of its rulers, more and more willing to act against them.

One thing which is unique about the victory of the proletariat; there will be no class left to exploit.

All the preceding classes that got the upper hand, sought to fortify their already acquired status by subjecting society at large to their conditions of appropriation. The proletarians cannot become masters of the productive forces of society except by abolishing their own previous mode of appropriation, and thereby also every other previous mode of appropriation. They have nothing of their own to secure and to fortify; their mission is to destroy all previous securities for, and insurances of, individual differences. 1

This is true because the movement of the proletariat will be a movement of the vast majority rather than an independent self-conscious minority. The whole of the upper strata of society will be thrown into the air by this upheaval and no exploited class will be left.

The inevitability of some such conflict as thorough and general as this one, is based in the increasing misery of the laborer. While under feudalism the serf could at least live, and while the petty bourgeois could develop into a bourgeois, the laborer under capitalism sinks lower and lower.

He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth. And here it becomes evident, that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an

1. Ibid., pp. 27-28.

over-riding law. It is unfit to rule, because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within its slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink 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. 1

Can the capitalist help himself? No; because capitalism depends on capital and its accumulation; that depends upon wage-labour. Wage-labour is dependent upon competition. To have competition the capitalist must bring together masses of workers, but this very act starts the tendency of increasing misery and the disciplining of the workers into class-consciousness. A reference in Capital gives this clearly:

While there is thus progressive diminution in the number of capitalist magnates (who usurp and monopolize all the advantages of this transformative process), there occurs a corresponding increase in the mass of poverty, oppression, enslavement, degeneration, and exploitation; but at the same time there is a steady intensification of the wrath of the working class - a class which grows ever more numerous and is disciplined, unified and organized by the very mechanism of the capitalist mode of production. Capitalist monopoly becomes a fetter upon the method of production which has flourished with it and under it. The centralization of the means of production and the socialization of labour reach a point where they prove incompatible with their capitalistic husk. This is burst asunder. The knell of the capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated. 2

This review of the first section of the Manifesto puts concretely the theory of class struggles and gives us

1. Ibid., p. 29.

2. Karl Marx, Capital, vol. II, p. 846.

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depends on capital and its accumulation; that depends upon
wage-labour. Wage-labour is dependent upon competition.
To have competition the capitalist must bring together
masses of workers, but this very act starts the tendency
of increasing misery and the disciplining of the workers
into class-consciousness. A reference in Capital gives
this clearly:

While there is that progressive diminution in the
number of capitalist managers (who turn up and money-
olize all the advantages of this transformative
process), there occurs a corresponding increase in
the mass of poverty, oppression, enslavement, de-
generation, and exploitation; but at the same time
there is a steady intensification of the war of
the working class - a class which grows ever more
numerous and is disciplined, unified and organized
by the very mechanism of the capitalist mode of
production. Capitalist monopoly becomes a factor
upon the method of production which has flourished
with it and under it. The centralization of the
means of production and the socialization of labour
reach a point where they prove incompatible with
their capitalist form. This is what is meant by
the capitalist private property system.
The expropriators are expropriated.]

This review of the first section of the Manifesto
puts completely the theory of class struggles and gives us

a panorama of history viewed through the glasses of classes, showing the rise of the bourgeoisie, the genius of the proletariat, the logical clash, and what Marx believes will be the outcome of it - the victory of the proletariat. This theory now appears to us, not as a theory that applies to one limited portion of history, one selected epoch, but as a theory which attempts to explain the progress of mankind under all systems of society. It offers explanations of the transformations of ancient cultures, the rise of feudalism, as well as of capitalism and socialism. The whole sweep of human affairs is examined and the main phenomena there is viewed as series of class struggles which are at once economic and political in character. These conflicts are not static; the opposing classes change again and again in the course of time, but the struggle is always present so long as there are basic differentiation of classes. The present stage of the struggle - the struggle between laborers and capitalists - is regarded as the last phase, and the resolution of this conflict will mean the resolution of all conflicts, the destruction of all classes. Because of this the proletariat has its historic mission of freeing the world, building a classless society. So the class struggle is not only a description but an authoritative basis for revolutionary action throughout the world.

We have defined classes, the nature of the two classes Marx selects, the revolutionary character of the proletariat,

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now in closing a simple statement of the class struggle would be well. The class struggle could be simply stated as the clash between classes. But this covers more than it reveals. To clarify further: groups of proletarians may revolt but until they revolt as a class there is no class struggle. Yet a second distinguishing mark would be the purpose of the struggle: many strikes are for the improvement of factory conditions or raising wages but they may not be signs of the class struggle. The purpose of the class struggle by its nature is the overthrow of one class by another. As long as it is individual it can hardly be said to be a class struggle.

We have before us the theory, and it is a theory which shows us, not individuals struggling against one another, but classes exploited by classes, and classes struggling against classes. In capitalism there are two such classes the capitalist and the laboring, the former of which is doomed to defeat and the latter to victory. The struggle is intense, prolonged and bitter. Each age sees it nearer the climax and when the climax does appear, the proletariat will be free from bondage.

Even here, Marx would remind us that the class struggle is the outgrowth of the deeper conflict between the new "forces of production" and the old "relations of production". Struggles in society aren't caused by mere ill-willed agitators; the silent contradictions of the economic system work a

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relentless transformation, and the class struggle is but the conflict appearing men, taking the form of battling for economic and political power. Once the "forces of production" have outgrown the "relations of production" in any particular epoch the class struggle will appear, to be resolved only by some form of revolution. This, I believe, makes the class struggle a logical corollary of the materialistic interpretation of history.

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SUMMARY

This thesis, after reviewing the life of the author, special emphasis was laid on his intellectual development, which has been mainly concerned with the historical method. In regard to history and the theory of class struggle, it is pointed out that the author has been influenced largely by Engels's line of progress and his dialectic. It is stated that Engels's line of history is based on a material process. In a few words, the law was that in all history, production and exchange relations which are independent of their content and form of production are always the result of a certain stage in the development of the forces of production. Therefore the process of production with its relations of production, the economic structure of society, is the real foundation on which the superstructure of law, politics, religion, art, science, etc. is built. The general character of the superstructure is determined by the mode of production. As the mode of production and relations of production are constantly changing, the superstructure is also constantly changing. It is pointed out that the author's theory of history is not a mere theory of being. In further explanation of the author's theory of production, it is said that the author's theory of production is not a mere theory of production, but a theory of production, which helps to understand the material world. The author's theory of production is not a mere theory of production, but a theory of production, which helps to understand the material world.

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Summary

This thesis, after reviewing the life of Marx with special emphasis upon his intellectual development, has been, mainly concerned with the materialistic conception of history and the theory of class struggle. In regard to the former, it has been said that Marx, influenced largely by Hegel's idea of process and his dialectic, stated the dynamic law of history in terms of a material process. In a few words, the law was that in all social production men enter into relations which are independent of their wills; these relations of production are always the result of a certain stage in the development of the powers of production. Therefore the powers of production with the relations of production, the economic structure of society, constitute the real foundation on which rises institutions and ideas. The general character of any epoch is determined by the mode of production. Because the modes of production are constantly changing, we have a law of history which is one of becoming rather than being. In further explanation of the conception "powers of production", it was defined as any force, personal or impersonal, which enables men to satisfy their material needs; "relations of production" were defined as any or all social relations which men have in

This paper, after reviewing the life of Marx with special emphasis upon his historical development, has been mainly concerned with the materialistic conception of history and the theory of class struggle. In regard to the former, it has been said that Marx, influenced by his study of Hegel's idea of process and his dialectic, viewed the historic law of history in terms of a material process. In a few words, the law was that in all social production men enter into relations which are independent of their will; these relations of production, or always the result of a certain stage in the development of the material production. Therefore the basis of production with the relations of production, the economic structure of society, constitutes the real foundation on which rise the institutions and ideas. The general character of the epoch is determined by the mode of production. Be- cause the mode of production are constantly changing, we have a law of history which is one of dialectic nature. In further explanation of the materialistic concept of historic law, it has been said that the process of production, which includes man as subject and his material nature; relations of production, are defined as any or all social relations which we have in

their social production. The charge that this theory made the economic factor the sole factor was denied as was the charge that Marx was a psychological hedonist. Marx was stating that in the broad changes of human history the economic factor is dominant.

When the conception of class struggle was discussed, its historical background as a theory was pointed out, then a direct statement of the proposition was given. In a review of the first section of the Communist Manifesto, there was traced the rise of the capitalist class, the attendant growth of the laboring class, and the resulting conflict and final dissolution of the capitalist class. The theory in brief is the belief that every change in the powers of production brings forth a new class which clashes with the old class as does the powers of production with the ancient relations of production. Today the conflict is simplified into two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This is the final class struggle, for with the victory of the proletariat, there will be left no class to exploit. Further explanation of the theory was the defining of the word "class" as any group that have objective economic characteristics which set them apart, and distinguishing between the two classes that characterized the modern epoch. Capitalists were capitalists because they were an owning class; laborers were laborers be-

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cause they were an earning class. When the nature of revolutions was examined and discovered to be sweeping economic change, it was clear why Marx called the working class a revolutionary class. This section closed with a definition of class struggle as one where there is a class rather than a group struggling, and the purpose of the struggle is the overthrow or coercion of the ruling class.

...of the struggle in the overthrow or coercion of the ruling class. The purpose of the class is not to struggle, and the purpose of the struggle is to overthrow or coercion of the ruling class. This section deals with a definition of class struggle as one where there is a change in the ruling class. It was shown why Marx called the working class a revolutionary class. When the nature of revolutions was examined and it appeared to be sweeping and complete they were in certain cases. When the nature of revolutions was examined and it appeared to be sweeping and complete they were in certain cases.

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