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Industrialisation and the Rise of Karl Marx as an Ideological Tide

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A B S T R A C T

Industrial revolution in Europe and subsequently which spread across the world was not just a scientific advancement but also a milestone in socio-political history of the world. As factories grew to be the centres of production and the with the production processes mechanised, the nature of relations and the economic diversity of classes changed substantially. With the growth of the “working class” a new phase in the political history of class, revolution, struggle began. Karl Marx propounded his theory which has continued to be a source of hypothesis to many theorists in the world, and which has created a “theorizing puzzle” in the realm of social reality. The reasons include-firstly, the ideological foundation of the theory and secondly and universal acceptance it received. With the growing class struggle as visualised in Marxian Theory, radical ideas sprung up in the social sphere. The capitalist West was uncomfortable with Marx theorizing as it hinges on the oppressiveness and emancipation of the masses (proletariats), of the emerging modern capitalist system been brought about by the industrial revolution of the 19th century in Europe and the overthrow of the system. The capitalist (bourgeoisie), sought therefore, to develop counter theories that would demystify Marx paradigms. In view of the above, Marx prepositions were too dangerous and stood in contrast to Western bourgeois ideology and the interest it represents that professes conservative reforms and orderly social change in the system hence the urgency to tame the theory.

Keywords: Marx, Class Struggle, Industrial Revolution, Ideological Foundation, Paradigms, Emancipation, Working Class

Introduction

The Marxian Theory

Karl Marx (1818-1883) propounded a theory that provided a model and a path to economic growth and societal development. He highlighted the context of socio-political dimensions and within his premise brought historical and dialectical materialism under his review. The Approach

was universal in an analytical study of social relationships and their contradictory nature in the material world. Marx argued that the problem of modern society is traceable to real material sources of life, for example, the structures of capitalism, and that the solution to this therefore, would be in the overturning and dismantling of these structures by mass action of the people through class-consciousness that came about by long time exploitation by the dominant

¹Bibi Farouk Ibrahim, The Thoughts Of Karl Marx And It's Contemporary Value, 20th April, 2011

class in the society due to their ownership of the means of production, where also they derived their economic and socio-political relations from.

The entire theory resulted from the changed social relations because of industrial revolution. In this theory, the following can be noted:

- The unique relationship between labour and owners of the means of production
- Capitalism as the economic system where bourgeoisies own the production and are essentially in a privileged position
- Proletariat on the other hand is the labour class who must sell their labour time to the capitalists in order to meet their survival needs
- This inter-relationship forms the crux of Marxian theory
- On the Marxian line of reasoning, there are certain objective conditions which the distinct classes undergo in achieving their collective aims
- The most radical idea in this theory was the conceptualising of the antagonism between the classes and the clash of interests
- Marxism is a social process which integrates the study of past and present

Karl Marx posits “men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered from the past”.

From the viewpoint of Karl Marx, the free expression of a man would lead to the realisation of his potential and that could be guaranteed only in a “classless” society. Marx analysed society through the relationship of social classes. In the ambit of social science, his theory assumes the importance of being a Conflict Theory. The historical roots of this conflict can be analysed with the help of the contemporary situation in which it was propounded. Under his theorised case of capitalism there was exploitation of the workers who would supply the basic fuel to the production process and would still be deprived of a dignified existence. The working conditions in factories were appalling with workers having no basic rights and being forced to work to keep up the skills of production. In this process, they were exploited by the privileged class of factory-owners and various mechanisms of State were used to sustain this exploitation. Marx argued that this gap between the two classes would be polarised even more, and the working class would develop a class consciousness that would culminate in a conflict and cease the rights which they have been long denied.

²Socialism- Industrial Revolution And The Rise of Socialism, available at <https://science.jrank.org/pages/11288/Socialism-Industrial-Revolution-Rise-Socialism.html>

³Socialism -Industrial Revolution And The Rise of Socialism, Utopian Socialists: Owen, Saint-simon, Fourier, available <https://science.jrank.org/pages/8088/Socialism.html>

The Age of Industries

As discussed already, Industrial Revolution was a milestone in not simply scientific advancement, but also in the socio-political transformation in the 19th Century. The dawn of the new era in the 19th century had amalgamated forces of ideological strength together with the new social order that was starkly different from the erstwhile feudal society. Industries provided a new avenue for work – which defined the relations between the workers and the owners of the factory in a different way. While the owners of the factory had complete control of the work and dictated the production process, on the other hand the labour was supplied by the workers who actually worked, toiling day and night, only to lead a life of deprivation. It is however interesting to note that such a class difference was not uncommon and had always been a part of the segmented society, but what drove the class conflict was rather an ideology and less of a pragmatic reality. It was this ideology that manifested itself in the form of Socialism and was carefully nurtured by Karl Marx in his works.

As a political ideology, socialism arose largely in response to the economic and social consequences of the Industrial Revolution. There is an abundance of literature that attests to the dramatic way in which the industrialization of Europe affected the daily lives of individuals, particularly the working classes. The reformist trend in British politics during the 1830s brought some of these harsh realities to the public’s attention. In 1832, for example, a parliamentary investigation into the conditions in the textile factories later known as the Sadler Committee’s Report revealed the appalling toll on human life that had resulted from unregulated industrial growth.²

Searching for an appropriate definition of Socialism is difficult, but Socialism is above all concerned with the relationship between the individual, state, and society. For the socialist, the individual is never alone and thus must always define himself or herself in relation to others. Socialists believe that a well-ordered society cannot exist without a state apparatus, not least because the state is seen as the most effective vehicle for coordinating and administering to the needs of all.³ Socialism gathered its true meaning and definition over time, but the official beginnings of this term, in early 19th Century indicates how growing industrialisation was slowly transforming the society indeed.

In this age of factories and power driven work, the artisan lost his skill and came to be paralleled with any other unskilled labourer, simply mechanically aiding in a

continuous production process. Workers used to own the means and the necessary skill capital that had a unique value attached to them, but with industries taking over, the scenario had soon changed. The resulting system, in which work was organized to utilize power-driven machinery and produce goods on a large scale, had important social consequences: formerly, workers had been independent craftsmen who owned their own tools and designated their own working hours, but in the factory system, the employer owned the tools and raw materials and set the hours and other conditions under which the workers laboured.⁴ With all the workers forming the uniform class of labour alike, their condition started to worsen. There was no longer special demand for skills and practices, but a poor subsistence wage to carry out work which extends beyond designated time and in the lust for more produce, ultimately led to the degradation of the workers as a class- socially, physically, emotionally. One thing which was unique in the period was the desire for collective action - the awareness that the entire community of workers shared their drudgery and were equally suffering in depravity. This was essentially the main reason why Marxian theory disseminated ver well with the classes.

The ushering age of factory revolution has to be analysed from an economic perspective too. The intensive Capitalist form of economic governance, ideas of free trade and colonial control of territories to draw out surplus in production laid its base. Capitalism caused the Industrial Revolution because industrialization required significant work and investment from individuals and not necessarily the government. For example, in Britain, where the Industrial Revolution began, wealthy entrepreneurs were important because they used their wealth to create factories and mines. This investment from individuals, whose actions were guided by the profit motive, would not have been possible without the emergence of capitalism. Furthermore, as the Industrial Revolution began the individualistic principles of capitalism helped create a climate wherein industrialization exploded, and eventually spread worldwide.⁵

However, it was not long after that the era witnessed yet another metamorphosis.

Tide of Socialism

History has often been a spectator to some dramatic changes, and one of them would undoubtedly be the growth of socialism as a social transformative idea and that would soon lay down the order of the New World in 19th Century. By the mid 1800s, the policies and thoughts around the intensive capitalist form of governance and the condition of workers in the new factories started to get a

new dimension the other side and the dark state of affairs of these contemporary times came to be at the forefront. There was the birth of the new working class that toiled labour all day and still lived with meagre means and on the other hand was the privileged class of factory owners who had been benefitted by the production surplus amount and the associate profits a lot. The resultant income gap was huge and it almost demarcated an income gap in the society that was too poignant to be ignored.

The sudden change in this period can be attributable to a variety of factors that on a close inspection show the interplay of different social causes of that time. The exodus to industrial towns and cities as remarkably one of the first demographic transformations of the era, where farm owners and agriculturists came to the new world of industries and set the beginning of the growth and development of Urban Culture. When farm based agrarian families moved to the new industrial cities, they became workers in mines or factories. Many felt lost and bewildered. They faced tough working conditions in uncomfortable environments. In time, though, factory and mine workers developed their own sense of community despite the terrible working conditions. The new industrial middle class was also a part of the Bourgeoisie and lived comfortably housed in lavish environments with the rich upper class. The sad state of affairs of the poor factory worker class continued to get worsened with poor housing, bad sanitation system of the localities where they had to live, poor hygiene, and a rick of working in factories, almost without any social protection. The change in their lives was one of the most important factors that led to the socialist tide, as they had lost ownership of the work which they used to carry out, at their own will, and in industries they had to be subjugated to the whims of the employer and work hard for inhuman lengths of time, just to keep the rates of production high enough.

Although labour unions, or workers' organizations, were illegal at this time, secret unions did exist among frustrated British workers. They wished to initiate worker reforms, such as increases in pay, but had no political power to effect change. Sometimes their frustration led to violence. The first instances of industrial riots occurred in England from 1811 to 1813. This shows the pent up anger among the working classes who, in the absence of a decent life and work were also ready to stage armed conflicts. The prolonged degradation which they were subjected to and the bleak prospects of development which they felt had made them realise the need to protest. Protest has always been an introduction to any mammoth change it shows the will of the people and a collective conscience. It is

⁴Factory System, available at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/factory-system>

⁵Economics in the Industrial Revolution , <https://www.historycrunch.com/economics-in-the-industrial-revolution.html#/>

exactly on this base that the Marxian theory came to be widely accepted by the masses and helped them render a strong voice.

Working hours were long, with shifts lasting from 12 to 16 hours, six or seven days a week. Workers could only take breaks when the factory owners gave permission. Exhausted workers suffered accidents from machines that had no safety devices. They might lose a finger, a limb or even their lives. In textile mills, workers constantly breathed air filled with lint, which damaged their lungs. Those workers who became sick or injured lost their jobs. The need for power had increased leading to greater mining operations being carried out - Although miners were paid more, working conditions in the mines were even worse than in the factories. They worked in darkness, and the coal dust destroyed their lungs. There were always the dangers of explosions, flooding, and collapsing tunnels.

In the cities, poor living conditions had slowly posed a threat to the city life in general, with mismanaged sanitation; cities smelled bad and became eventual death traps where deaths outnumbered births for a while. Adding to the deterioration of urban life was the adulteration of food. Consumers were defrauded in a variety of ways: alum was added to make bread look white and hence more expensive; beer and milk were watered down; and red lead despite its poisonous qualities was substituted for pepper. The government refused to intervene.⁶ However, many social investigation reports were initiated which simply gave important insights into the life and misery of poor class-In Britain the Poor Law Commissioners produced detailed reports. The investigators were often struck by the physically and morally debilitating effects of urban industrial life on the poor.

The social order was almost on the brink of collapse, with a large scale threat to the rich and middle class as well. Work hours ranged from twelve to sixteen hours a day, six days a week, with a half hour for lunch and dinner. There was no security of employment and no minimum wage. The worst conditions were in the Industrial Revolution and Its Impact on European Society 601 cotton mills where temperatures were especially debilitating. One report noted that "in the cotton-spinning work, these creatures are kept, fourteen hours in each day, locked up, summer and winter, in a heat of from eighty to eighty-four degrees." Mills were also dirty, dusty, and unhealthy.⁷

Efforts to improve this state of affairs stemmed from some reform minded individuals who tried to help out the workers, mobilisation outside the posts of government,

different trade unionist movements by the workers that mostly remained banned and futile, and lastly the Chartist movement and drawing up of the People's Charter.

This ultimately fuelled the rise of Socialism - left-wing economic system that favours government intervention in the economy in order to try to decrease the imbalances created by laissez-faire capitalism. In general, socialism was favoured by working class people, as it sought to create a more equitable distribution of income.

A central figure of the development of these socialist ideologies, which transformed the economies of the Industrial Revolution, was Karl Marx. His theory almost revolutionised the prevailing socialist development and helped give it the shape of a movement, with the most sparking universal appeal that history had witnessed. Written at the end of 1847, The Communist Manifesto was a political pamphlet first published in 1848 under the title 'Manifesto of the Communist Party'. It was commissioned by the Communist League, an international communist organization that operated in Europe. Marx and Engels were associated with the Communist League and wrote The Communist Manifesto in order to clarify and articulate the ideas of the organization. In the pamphlet, Marx and Engels set forth the basic principles of Marxism that have gone on to influence many different thinkers and ideologies around the world.⁸

Conclusion

Das Kapital was translated into Russian in 1872. Marx kept up more or less steady relations with the Russian socialists and took an interest in the economic and social conditions of the tsarist empire. The person who originally introduced Marxism into Russia was Georgy Plekhanov, but the person who adapted Marxism to Russian conditions was Lenin.⁹ The theory propounded by Marx, was a landmark in political development, in so far as it mobilised new protests but also in the way shaped up the growing socialist movement, charted a course for the new born industrial working class to fight and gain the freedom from oppression and established the thrust that a class needs to confront, demand, defend its interests.

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⁷The Industrial Revolution and its Impact on European Society, chapter20, page 582

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