

## MAN AND NECESSITY IN HISTORY

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As we see Herr Bernstein himself, in the days of his 'orthodox' mood, was among the people "here and there" who interpret the historical doctrine of Marx and Engels in the sense that in history "the economic situation produces an automatic effect." These also include very many "critics" of Marx who have switched into reverse "from Marxism to idealism." These profound thinkers reveal great self-satisfaction when they confront and reproach the "one-sided" Marx and Engels with the formula that history is made by men and not by the automatic movement of the economy. In quoting Marx they are actually misquoting him, and in their boundless simplicity of mind do not even suspect that the "Marx" they are criticizing has nothing in common with the real Marx, with the exception of the name, since he is the creation of their own really many-sided non-understanding of the subject. It is natural that "critics" of such caliber are utterly incapable of "supplementing" or "amending" anything in historical materialism. Consequently, I shall not deal with them any longer, and shall go to the "founders" of the theory.

It is of the utmost importance to note that when Engels, shortly before his death, denied the "automatic" understanding of the historical operation of the economy, he was only repeating (almost in the same words) and explaining what Marx had written as far back as 1845, in the third Thesis on Feuerbach. There Marx reproached the earlier materialists with having forgotten that if "men are products of circumstances...it is men that change circumstances." Consequently the task of materialism in the sphere of history lay, as Marx understood it, precisely in explaining in what manner "circumstances" can be changed by those who are themselves created by them. This problem was solved by the reference to the relations of production that develop under the influence of conditions independent of the human will. Production relations are the relations among

human beings in the social process of production. Saying that production relations have changed means the mutual relations have changed among people engaged in that process. A change in these relations cannot take place "automatically", i.e., independently of human activity, because they are relations established among men in the process of their activities.

But these relations may undergo changes -- and indeed often do undergo changes -- in a direction far from that in which people would like them to change. The character of the "economic structure" and the direction in which that character changes depend, not upon human will, but on the state of the productive forces and on the specific changes in production relations which take place and become necessary to society as a result of the further development of those forces. Engels explains this in the following words: "Men make their history themselves, but not as yet with a collective will or according to a collective plan or even in a definitely defined, given society. Their efforts clash, and for that very reason all such societies are governed by necessity, which is supplemented by and appears under the forms accident". Here human activity is itself defined as being not free, but necessary, i.e., as being in conformity with a law, and therefore capable of becoming an object of scientific study. Thus, while always pointing out that circumstances are changed by men, historical materialism at the same time enables us to examine the process of this change from the standpoint of science. That is why we have every right to say that the materialist explanation of history provides the necessary prolegomena\* to any doctrine of human society claiming to be a science.

\* The concluding words are opposed to the title of E. Kant's Prolegomena to Any Further Metaphysics That May Arise in the Capacity of a Science. The word prolegomena as defined by Webster's Dictionary the plural of, meaning a preliminary observation or discussion, especially a formal essay introducing a work of considerable length or complexity; prefatory remarks or observations.