

Marx's theory of history and the question of colonies and non-capitalist world

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There is a widespread interpretation that Marx and Engels maintained a positivist view of progress (like a mechanical succession of phases in history) that led them to Eurocentric, and even racist, positions towards the 'least developed' regions of the world. Those interpretations are mainly based on their writings on the British rule over India and Ireland, and on the political and economical situation of East European and Latin-American, although it might also appear on some of their early major works, such as the Manifesto of the Communist Party. The diagnosis is always the same: Latin-Americans, Slavics, Chinese and Indians etc. are supposedly taken as 'barbarians' (or 'non-historical' peoples), and the fall of their native cultures could be seen then as 'the way of progress'. A corollary that might be drawn from this thesis is that Marx and Engels did not understand, nor can their theory be used to understand, the relationship between more and least developed nations in global capitalism. Even though there may be some truth in these accusations, that from times to times some Marxists and its critics reproduces, this paper aims to defend Marx's theory of history. We think that, rather than simply exaggerate these problematic views on the colonial question, one should note that already in *The German Ideology* it is possible to see a clearly non-linear theory of history that would be further developed in Marx's later works. To understand the evolution of Marx's ideas about the consequences of 'capitalist colonization' of the world we have to deal with methodological issues and the critical analysis of the author's writings. We try to analyze those writings in their historical context and in relation to others Marx's writings and the general orientation of the Marx's work. And we suggest that the effort to understand this development in Marx's thought corresponds to the first step to understand the category world market in a dialectical manner and the spread of capitalism around the world. We also suggest that the apparent congruency between Marx's theory of history and his early writings on the matter could be a reproduction of the contradictory character of the historical development and should be analyzed in face of Marx political opposition to the romantic reactions to capitalism. Finally, we believe that to rethink Marx's view on this issue is refreshing long lasting debates that take place specially in the so-called peripheral countries, in a way to show that the Marxist perspective still corresponds to the most powerful theory to understand our times.