

Communism

SS 30-1

Unlike the Utopians, who wanted only to modify classical liberalism, other socialist ideologies contemplated fundamental changes to society's structure. According to these socialists, the great evils in society were perpetuated by the concept of private property, which allowed industrialists to control the economy. The socialist intent was to encourage governments and the institutions of capitalism—banks, industry, commerce, and services—to rethink their purposes and consider replacing the liberal ideology of individualism and limited government.

Socialist thought ranged from moderate and democratic social reform to radical revolutionary Marxism. Socialists agreed on the following beliefs and values: Private ownership of the means of production permits exploitation. The state should direct the economy to achieve economic equality for all citizens. Society should be classless.

While sharing common views, socialists differed greatly in the methods they advocated for achieving their goal of transforming liberal capitalist society.

Left Wing	Center	Right Wing
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Public Direction	Private Direction
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Planned Economy Centrally Planned Economy Command Economy	Mixed Economy	Free Enterprise Laissez-faire Invisible Hand
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Communism	Socialism	Welfare Capitalism	Capitalism
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Interventionist	Individualist
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Common Good Social Welfare Collectivism	Individual Initiative Individualism
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	Socialism <small>(difficult to make specific statements about socialist beliefs as they vary from country to country and over time; these are the most frequently held beliefs)</small>	Communism
Motto	<i>From each according to ability, to each according to work</i>	<i>From each according to ability, to each according to needs</i>
Method of Gaining Power	Democratic election; peaceful persuasion	Violent revolution
Type of Government	Multi-party democracy	One-party state
Degree of Public Ownership	Limited to essential industries	Extensive, if not complete
Means of Acquiring Public Ownership	Nationalization with compensation (paying the owners for the property)	Nationalization without compensation
Private Property	Most individually owned	None, state-owned
Dominant Influences on Human Actions	Conscience and rational reasoning	The relationship to the means of production
Source of Beliefs	No guiding body of writing	The writings of either Marx, Lenin or Mao

Communism is a system of society with property vested in the community and each member working for the common benefit according to his or her capacity and receiving according to his or her needs

- Individuals < Community
- No one gets more than they need

In communist ideology, the collective is more important than the individual. Communists also believe that the well-being of individuals is primarily the responsibility of the government rather than of the individuals themselves. Key factors include:

- Public ownership of resources, land, factories, etc.
- Economic equality
- Revolutionary change

Communism – The Advantages

- Encourages high rates of economic growth
- Helps reduce wastage of resources
- Distribution of income is more equal
- System does not suffer from the cycle of boom and bust
- Essential goods are produced before less essential goods

Communism – The Disadvantages

- The system can be bureaucratic and inflexible
- There is little incentive for efficient management
- It may stifle individual effort
- Freedom of choice is limited and restricted
- Quality, quantity, and variety of goods are limited

Political Ideas

- Workers will revolt and overthrow the wealthy business owners and landowners.
- The state will be governed by the Communist Party in the interests of the people.
- The political structure will have less hierarchy.
- There will be a more collective form of government with better representation for all people.

Economic Ideas

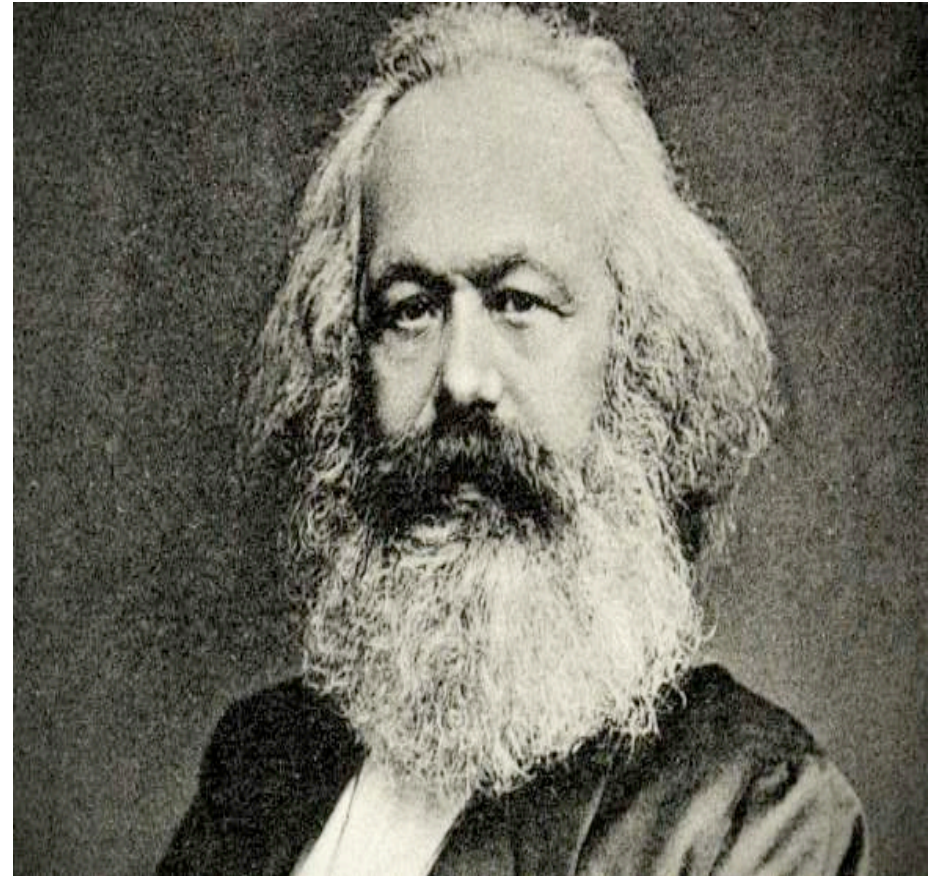
- There will be collective ownership of the means of production (resources, land, and capital).
- Private property will be abolished.
- Incomes will be equalized.

Social Ideas

- A classless society will be created.
- Women will have equal rights.
- There will be co-operation instead of competition.

Karl Marx

He was born in 1818 in Trier, German. He fled Germany for the persecution he was facing due to his political ideas in 1843. He then lived the rest of his life in exile in Paris and London, mostly in poverty. He was a revolutionary, a writer, a journalist, a philosopher, and an economist. His most important works include *Das Kapital* and *The Communist Manifesto*. He was considered to be egotistical, conceited, and sarcastic.



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

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

— Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

Marx's Critique of Capitalism

- Capitalism is exploitative
- Profit comes from the gap between how low you can pay your workers and how high you can charge for a product
- It alienated workers from their labor--labor is supposed to be a creative endeavor
- Workers become things no different than the machines they run

Which of these critiques do you agree or disagree with?

Marxism

The term Marxism was never used by Karl Marx (1818–1883). A group of French socialists, among them Jules Guesde and Benoît Malon, coined the term in the 1880s. Karl Marx himself, on hearing about some of the things these so-called followers were doing, proclaimed that he was not a Marxist. Marx spent three years in France and wrote about the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and other early socialists, but rejected these ideas for not being scientific enough.

Marxism is a radical form of socialism, often called scientific socialism or communism to distinguish it from other socialist ideologies. Marx developed a theory that history is the story of evolving class warfare. According to Marx, the only way to overthrow capitalism was by means of a class struggle between the proletariat (workers) and the bourgeoisie (owners). He argued that this workers' revolution was necessary before any significant changes could be made in society.

Philosophies of Marxism

Karl Marx did not invent socialism, but his ideas of socialism became known as Marxism. He, along with Friedrich Engels, wrote the ***Communist Manifesto*** and later *Das Kapital*.

- Events and institutions are determined by economic forces
- Class conflict is continuous and is the determining force of history (economic conflict)
- Industrial Revolution – the gap between **Proletariat** (workers) and **Bourgeoisie** (owners) grows
- Products become valued more than people (wages are lower than the cost of the item)
- Proletariat needs to use force to overthrow Bourgeoisie.
- After Bourgeoisie is overthrown, a temporary Proletariat dictatorship will rule until all opposition is wiped out.
- Class distinctions will be abolished creating a classless society
- Communism is eventually established
 - Public ownership of means of production, distribution and consumption
 - Each person works according to ability and receives according to needs
 - Incentive is for the good of all

Which principles of collectivism does this ideology embody?

The Communist Manifesto

Marx collaborated with Friedrich Engels to write The Communist Manifesto in 1848. Marx believed that economics was the foundation of society and the means of production, such as factories, needed to be in workers' hands. Marx and Engels elaborated many of the principles of scientific socialism, albeit briefly, in this document, outlining how the proletariat would gain the means of production.

1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all right of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the state by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly.
6. Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state.
7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state; the bringing into cultivation of wastelands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.
8. Equal obligation of all to work. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country by a more equable distribution of the population over the country.
10. Free education for all children in public schools, abolition of child factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production.

Capitalism emerges from feudalism



Violent conflict occurs between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; the proletariat wins



The victorious proletariat establishes a Dictatorship of the Proletariat, which is also evolutionary in nature:

- A centrally planned economy is established.
- Income is distributed according to the value of work performed



Economic equality is established



Social classes gradually disappear



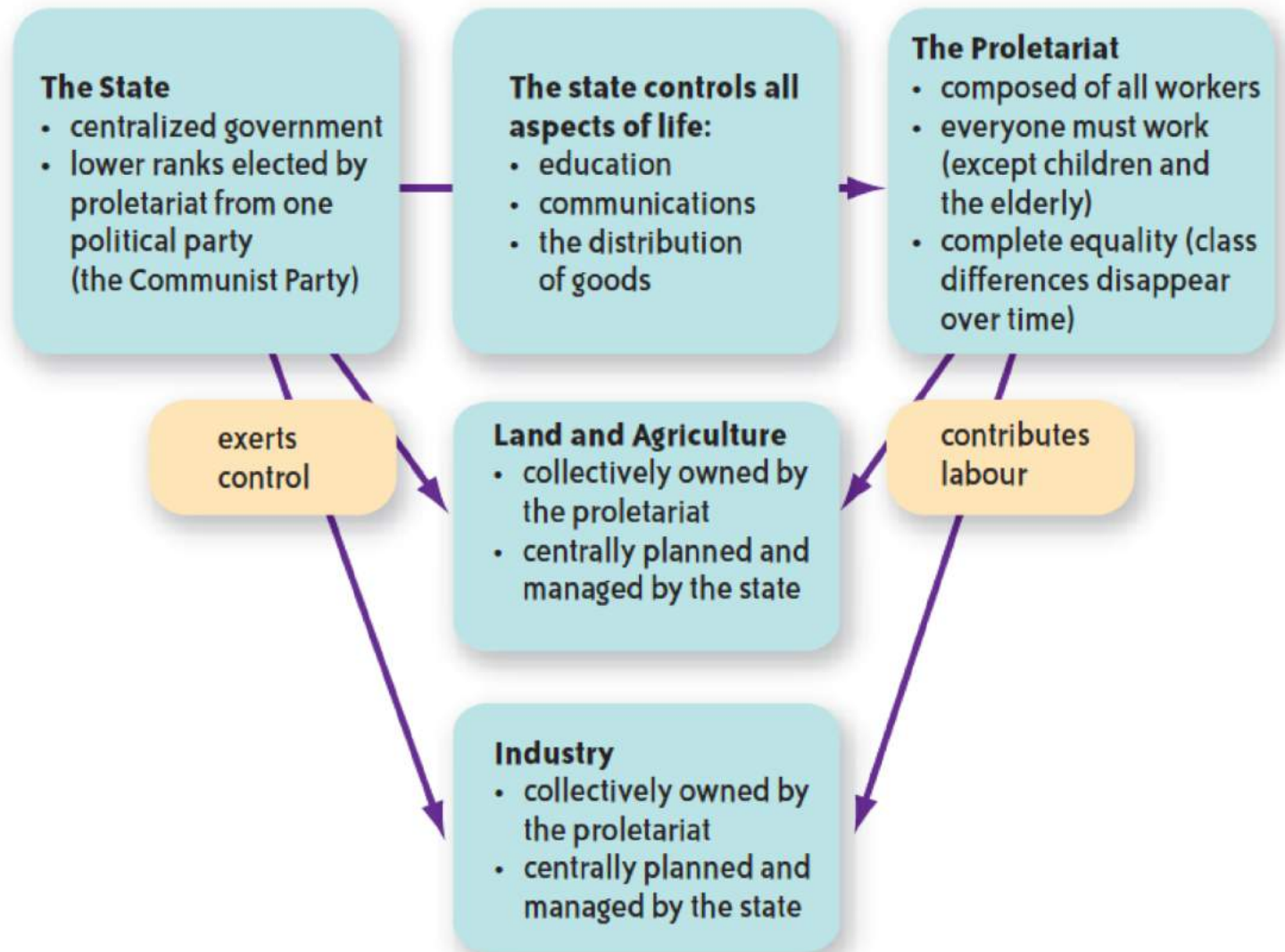
People work for societal good rather than personal gain



The state "withers away"

Figure 5-14

This chart shows the theoretical organization of a communist society in the first stage of communism, known as the **dictatorship of the proletariat**. As one can see, the economic system would be a centrally planned or command economy. According to Marx and his followers, once this system was fully established and social classes disappeared, there would be no more need for government control and the state apparatus would gradually “wither away.”



Consider This...

How are these Marxist ideas a response to classical liberal ideas in society?