

Marxism

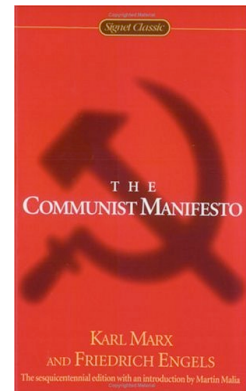
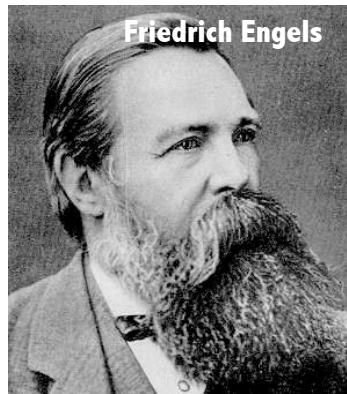
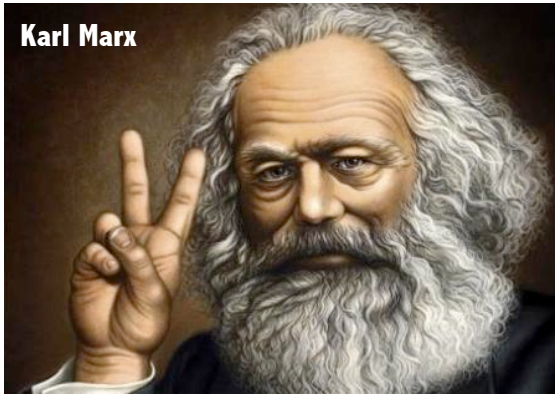


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Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels:

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were German revolutionary philosophers who co-wrote 'The Communist Manifesto' as well as several other pieces regarding the evils of capitalism, its inevitable destruction and the evolution of the world's economic system first to socialism then to communism. They blamed poverty and starvation on the evils of capitalist society.



What is Marxism?

In order to understand Marxism one must first understand what Capitalism is. Capitalism is an economic system in which the means of production are privately owned and goods and services are produced for profit in a free market. In a free market people are free to use and sell their private property without government interference.

Marxism refers to the political and economic theories of Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). Marx's theories revolved around human history. He believed that history was largely determined by the struggle between the ruling classes and the oppressed classes, which had conflicting interests. Marx believed that if workers could overthrow capitalism, they would be able to build a socialist society. This society will still contain social classes but for the first time in human history - the ruling class would be the majority of the population.

How does Capitalism work?:

Capitalism relies on the voluntary exchange of labour in return for wages or capital. This is a mutual beneficial agreement. Individuals pursue their own self-interest. In a sense, capitalism is based on greed and self-interest. People who support the idea of capitalism are known as capitalists. The capitalists believe that governments should not interfere with the economy and should regulate economic practices instead. The free market will distribute goods to people in the more efficient and cheap way. Language, scientific knowledge and law all grew out of free exchange and voluntary production.

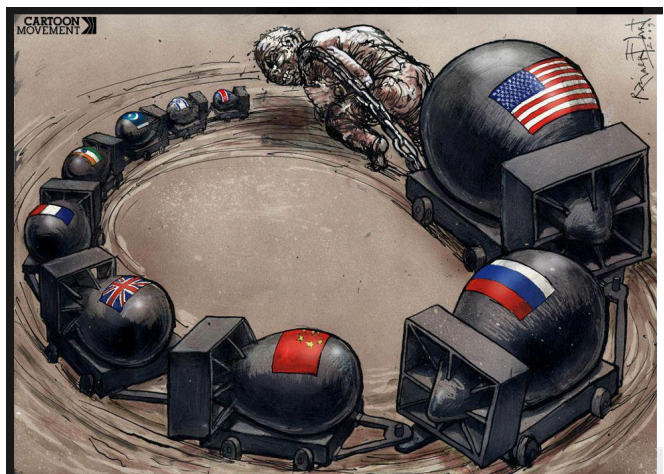
CAPITALISM
and
EQUALITY
are like
OIL and WATER

most of us have water

The beginning of Capitalism began during the Feudal System. In the Feudal System, as Lords owned the land, they relied on force to guarantee that they were provided with food. As they were not producing food to sell on the market, there was no competitive pressure to innovate production. Lords spent all their wealth on military equipment or lavish consumption, they therefore had no incentive to invest in developing new productive technologies. The result of the Feudal System actually

prevented capitalism from growing! The Feudal Manor (village area) was self-sufficient which limited the growth of a free-market.

There were also 3 other stages of Capitalism, and these were: Mercantilism (14th to 18th century), Industrial Capitalism (18th to 20th century) and Modern Capitalism (19th to 20th century).





Marx's Solution - Socialism:

Socialism is a class of ideologies favoring an economic system in which all or most productive resources are the property of the government, in which the production and distribution of goods and services are administered primarily by the government rather than

by private enterprises, and in which any remaining private production and distribution is heavily regulated by the government rather than by market processes.



There are many forms of socialism as many different leaders didn't really know what socialism really meant, so they created their own form of it. A few forms of socialism are: Maoism, Stalinism, Leninism, Trotskyism, etc.

Marxist Theory of Stages:

Marx believed in the idea of 'permanent revolution' or 'uninterrupted revolution' - a series of revolutionary stages in which, after one stage had been achieved, the next class struggle would begin immediately. He did not believe that 'progression' through the stages of society was inevitable and could actually be turned back. He even believed that a backward society could 'jump' a stage if aided by other countries.

Materialist Conception of History:

Marx set out his theory of history in the book: Critique of Political Economy (1859). He argued that the economic structure, based on the relations of production in any society (which class owns the economy) is the real foundation of any society.

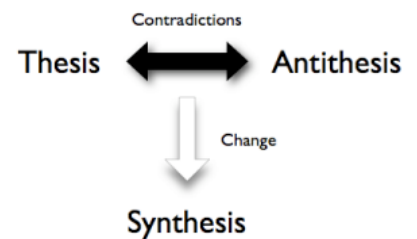
on this are built the legal, political and intellectual superstructures of society. It was social existence that largely determines people's consciousness or beliefs, not the other way around. So by changing the ownership of production, you could change history.

Hegelian and Materialist Dialectic:

Marx's philosophy of history was influenced by German idealist philosophy (Hegel, Herder, Kant), the ideas of French socialists (Saint-Simon) as well as the writing of British economists like Adam Smith and David Ricardo.

Dialectical (contradiction) Materialism emerged from Marx's criticisms of Hegel's ideas. Social relations were made up of opposite forces (thesis and antithesis). Class struggle between these poles would eventually lead to a new mode of production and a new stage in history (synthesis).

The Truth About Socialism



The Contribution of Lenin:



Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, later known as (Vladimir) Lenin, was born in Simbirsk in 1870. He was a gifted student, doing exceptionally well in exams. Lenin went to a Kazan university where he studied law. He took interest in revolutionary ideas and was fascinated by the idea of Marxism.

In 1895, he moved to St Petersburg and joined Marxist discussion groups. In 1895, Lenin was arrested for being involved in a propaganda strike movement and was exiled for 5 years.

After returning to the country he decided to press for the revolutionary movements he wanted to execute. He published his pamphlet *What is To Be Done?* in 1902. The pamphlet contained his ideas about the nature of a revolutionary party. He wanted to put forward his ideas at the Second Congress of the Social Democratic Party which met in 1903. His actions had caused the split in the party into the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. When the revolution failed he was exiled again. Lenin died on January 21, 1924 at the age of 53 from a stroke. Prior to his death he had suffered a few strokes.

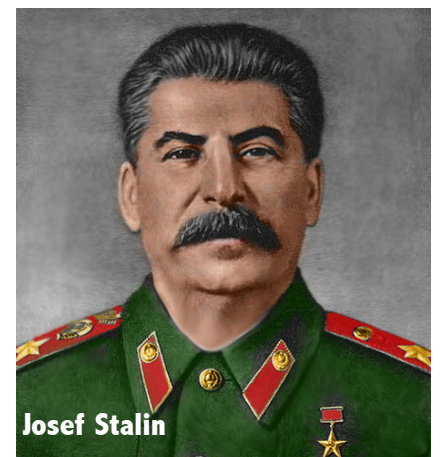
Other forms of Socialism:

Socialism is Marx's solution for the perfect economy. This idea was appealing to many past ruling leaders and some of them had created their own versions of socialism.



Maoism composed of the ideology and methodology for revolution developed by Mao Zedong and his associates in the Chinese Communist Party from the 1920s until Mao's death in 1976. Maoism has clearly represented a revolutionary method based on a distinct revolutionary outlook not necessarily dependent on a Chinese or Marxist-Leninist context.

Stalinism refers to the method of rule, or policies, created by Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Communist Party and state from 1929 until his death in 1953. Stalinism is associated with a regime of terror and totalitarian rule. Based on Marxist-Leninist principles, Stalinism came to represent whatever ideology Stalin wished it to represent.





Trotskyism is another Marxist ideology based on the theory of permanent revolution first expounded by Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), one of the leading theoreticians of the Russian Bolshevik Party and a leader in the Russian Revolution. Trotskyism was to become the primary theoretical target of Stalinism in Russian Communist circles in the 1920s and 1930s. Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution" held that, historically, an economic system had to be seen as a world system rather than a national one.

Social Democracy is the idea that the government should provide people security and equality. The government should also actively reorder society in order to develop this idea.

Criticisms of Socialism / In defence of Capitalism:

There have been some criticisms of socialism. The Marxist Doctrine has been claimed to be a democratic one. However socialism involves using violence in order to gain control which is not the principle of a democratic doctrine. Marxism has also been criticised for making too many simplistic assumptions about human nature, behaviour and society and sees everything in terms of class struggle. Marxism focuses mainly on economic factors and ignores cultural, traditional and other factors. Another criticism of Marxism is that it does not encourage development of new products which in turn stunts development of new technology. This is an argument in favour of capitalism.