INTRO TO MARXISM
(COMMUNISM)
COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY

• Communism is a modern ideology, but its ideas existed for 1000’s of years
• Modern communism got its start in the latter half of the 19th Century with the writings of KARL MARX
• His ideology (belief system) was response to conditions created by Industrial Revolution of the 1800s
• Marx viewed the economic system of his day as a failure & wanted more extreme measures to improve the lives of workers
• While Marxism is typically viewed as a failure, it had a profound international impact over last 150 years
The Left vs. Right Political Spectrum

Left Wing
- Anarchism
- Communism
- Socialism
- Liberalism

Right Wing
- Conservatism
- Monarchism
- Nazism
- Fascism

Slavery - Freedom - Slavery
Karl Marx

- 1818-1883
- Born in Germany
- His father was a Jewish lawyer who converted to Protestantism prior to Karl’s birth in order to be allowed to hold public office
- His mother was Dutch & came from a prosperous family
- Attended the University of Bonn (where he ran up debts and fought duels with swords), later transferred to the University of Berlin where he graduated
Marx’s Beliefs

- Marx believed human fulfillment can occur by the erasure of class consciousness.
- Marx sees love/human relations as meaningless as long as a class struggle exists.
- Marx saw life as essentially practical: the cure for alienation is the engagement in the process of social transformation → self-fulfillment and truth means a better life & world.
MARXISM

- Refers to Marx’s ideas; adaptations & variations came later
- Marxism was dominant form of the 19th Century socialism
- Marx collaborated with FRIEDRICH ENGELS – Both were German but lived & wrote in England, especially in the industrial city of Birmingham
- 1848 – Communist Manifesto is published
- Marx chose term “communist” : it implied the end of private property & reorganization of society based on a workers’ revolution
Karl Marx and Frederick Engels write the Communist Manifesto (1848) and popularize the idea of a form of extreme socialism. They believe that society is made up of...
1. The proletariat – poor, unskilled workers

2. The bourgeoisie – rich, influential people who do not share
The bourgeoisie controlled the land and the means of production and therefore society.
The Working Class or Proletariat
bourgeois

means of production

proletariat
• Marx thought history was cyclical & that time for communism had arrived

• Marx advocated achieving communism in a violent revolution, where the workers (PROLETARIAT) would overthrow the capitalist/owners (BOURGEOISIE)

• This revolutions by the Proletariat would occur in industrialized countries as this is where the larges number of proletariat were

• Thus, proletariat revolutions would occur first in Britain & Germany as these were the most industrialized states in the 19th Century
ECONOMIC DETERMINISM

• Changes in the economy & economic relations determine all historical changes

• Therefore changes in material conditions will change the whole nature of society (e.g. if the proletariat had better living conditions, all society would be better)
• Further, this change follows a regular scientific pattern:

FEUDALISM ➔ CAPITALISM ➔ COMMUNISM...

• According to this pattern, communism is inevitable
### HISTORICAL INEVITABILITY OF COMMUNISM

Marx’s View of the Stages of History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Oppressing Class</th>
<th>Oppressed Class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primitive Communism</td>
<td>No classes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Slavery</td>
<td>Slave Owners</td>
<td>Slaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feudalism</td>
<td>Landowners</td>
<td>Serfs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capitalism</td>
<td>Bourgeoisie</td>
<td>Proletariat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socialism</td>
<td>State Managers</td>
<td>Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communism</td>
<td>No Classes</td>
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</tbody>
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LABOUR THEORY OF VALUE

• True value of any commodity or product is the result of the labour put into it
• Since owners don’t produce labour, they don’t produce value
• Capitalists add SURPLUS VALUE (amount charged over cost to produce) which they then withhold from workers
• Leads to concentration of wealth
• Capitalists continue to accumulate wealth & eventually cause their own downfall → workers have no money to keep economy functioning and revolt
Marx predicted a communist revolution where the proletariat rise up against the bourgeoisie and found a society where everything is shared.
The capitalist system, as illustrated by International Worker

CAPITALISM
WE RULE YOU
WE FOOL YOU
WE SHOOT YOU

WE EAT FOR YOU
WE WORK FOR ALL
WE FEED ALL

PYRAMID OF CAPITALIST SYSTEM
All of these preceding principles find their expression in the CLASS STRUGGLE........BOURGEOISE vs. PROLETARIAT

• Increasingly, bourgeoisie will use coercive power of state (police/army) against them

• Ultimately, Marx believed that VIOLENT REVOLUTION by the proletariat would be inevitable

• All theoretical: Marx never lived to see it
A revolution will establish a **DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT**

- To defend gains of the revolution
- Temporary, a transitional period on the way to communism
- A practical measure until *classless* society can be established
- “*To each according to need, from each according to ability*...”
- Not fully explained by Marx – controversy of term “dictatorship”
- Has become an excuse to be abused e.g. Lenin in Russia & Castro in Cuba
COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY

- Marxism itself was never practically applied on a national scale, but various examples of communes can be found in history.
- Nationally, so called Marxist ideology takes on a whole new character.
- First applied in 1917 in Russia after the successful Bolshevik Revolution (then in the USSR).
- Most prominent leader = VLADIMIR LENIN – first to apply Marxist ideology to a national government.
MARXIST-LENINISM

• Significant differences from Marxism

(1). Lenin argued for the existence of a VANGUARD - an elite group of strong leaders (“professional revolutionaries”):
  • Decidedly non-Marxist idea; Lenin does not agree with “Revolution from Below”
  • Lenin thought a Marxist Revolution in Russia required special organization, that Marx’s idea of a mass proletarian party was doomed because not enough people had developed appropriate class consciousness among the Russian working classes
  • Lenin is therefore impatient & wants to lead the disorganized masses;
  • Marx waited for history, Lenin made it
  • Lenin is therefore the 1st MARXIST REVISIONIST
(2). Lenin’s belief was that tight organization could effect socialism even in a pre-industrial society, therefore REVOLUTION CAN OCCUR IN NON-INDUSTRIALIZED SOCIETIES

→ this skips steps in Marx’s stages of history
(Feudalism → Communism)

• But the vanguard is required to direct the peasant masses who replace Marx’s industrial proletariat (therefore hammer & sickle)

• Lenin is pragmatic (practical) where Marx was dogmatic (idealistic)
(4). DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM – deals with post-revolution party & government

- Organization (Lenin’s Bolsheviks becomes Communist Party of the Soviet Union, so Soviet communism has a government unlike Marx)
- Dem. Cent. combines two contradictory tendencies:
  (A) democracy, free debate are key to formulation of party policy
  (B) but once a policy decision is made, debate stops = centralism
- This is adapted by future Soviet dictators & used to reinforce central government control
- PARTINOST – the Party proclaims ideological truth/“follow the Party line” (Pravda)
- Lenin dies 1924 – creates an ideological/power vacuum
TROTSKYISM

- Named after Leon Trotsky
- Lenin’s ideological colleague, his likely successor & co-leader of the revolution, founder of Red Army
- His main ideological contribution: WORLD/PERMANENT REVOLUTION
  - belief that socialism couldn’t survive if surrounded by class enemies on all borders, he therefore wants to export revolution to other countries
- Disappointment of WW1: *Socialism v. Nationalism*
  - for him, WW1 was a capitalist war & proletarian brothers lost their chance to unite against capitalism
- Trotsky’s fate: Lenin’s death in 1924 led to a power struggle with Stalin
- Trotsky is exiled & killed in Mexico City (1940) by Stalin’s agent (an icepick to the head!)
STALINISM

- Named after Josef Stalin (Man of Steel), an opponent of Trotsky, ideologically opposite to Marx
- Believed in “Socialism in One Country”
- Modernized & industrialized the USSR & to lead by example, not to export revolution
- To achieve this, firm state control is required (REVOLUTION FROM ABOVE)
- 5 Year Plans, Kulaks, Collectivization, Socialist Realism, Great Purges, the Vozhd (leader in Russian)
Questions

1. What 19th century historical event motivated Marx’s writings?
2. Why did Marx believe that communism was inevitable?
3. Which group would lead the revolution and why?
4. How did Lenin’s brand of communism differ from that proposed by Marx?
5. How did Trotsky and Stalin differ in their views regarding communism?