



TOPIC 10.1. MARXISM

Supplement to Chambers, *The Western Experience*, Chapter 25: European Power, pp. 895-896, and Chapter 26: The Age of Progress, pp.938-939.

MARXISM	KARL MARX (1818-1883) and FRIEDRICH ENGELS (1820-1895) published <i>THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO</i> in 1847. This pamphlet, fewer than fifty pages, would become the most influential political document of modern European history.
Dialectical Materialism	The major ideas of the <i>Manifesto</i> and <i>DAS CAPITAL</i> (1867) were derived from German Hegelianism, French socialism, and British classical economics. Marx applied to social and economic development Hegel's concept that thought develops from the clash of THESIS and ANTITHESIS into a new intellectual SYNTHESIS. For Marx, the conflict between dominant and subordinate social groups generated conditions that led to the emergence of a new dominant social group. These new social relationships, in turn, generated new discontent, conflict, and development.
Class Conflict	<p>The French socialists provided Marx with a portrayal of the problems of capitalist society and had raised the issue of property redistribution. The classical economists had produced the analytical tools for an empirical, scientific examination of industrial capitalist society. Marx later explained to a friend:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>What I did that was new was to prove (1) that the existence of classes is bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production; (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society.</i></p> <p>In <i>The Communist Manifesto</i>, Marx and Engels contended that human history must be understood rationally and as a whole. History is the record of humankind's coming to grips with physical nature to produce the goods necessary for survival. That basic production process determines the structures, values, and ideas of a society.</p>
Revolution	Historically, the organization of the means of production has always involved CONFLICT BETWEEN THE CLASSES that owned and controlled the means of production and those classes that worked for them. That necessary conflict has provided the engine for historical development. It is not an accidental by-product of mismanagement or bad intentions. Thus, piecemeal reforms cannot eliminate the social and economic evils that are inherent in the very structures of production. A radical social transformation is required. The development of capitalism will make such a REVOLUTION inevitable.
Dictatorship of the Proletariat	During the nineteenth century the struggle was between the BOURGEOISIE and the PROLETARIAT (the middle class and the workers). Capitalist production and competition would steadily increase the size of the unpropertied proletariat. As the business structures grew larger and larger, the competitive pressures would squeeze out smaller middle-class units. Competition among the few remaining giant concerns would lead to more intense suffering for the proletariat. As the workers suffered increasingly from the competition among the ever-enlarging firms, Marx contended, they would eventually begin to foment REVOLUTION. Finally, they would overthrow the few remaining owners of the means of production.

ONLINE RESOURCES	<p>For more information on this topic, explore one or more of the following online resources:</p> <p>The Communist Manifesto: The complete text of this important document.</p> <p>What is Marxism? In these extracts, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky explain some of the basic ideas, methods, and philosophy of Marxism.</p> <p>Marxism Made Simple: The basics, including such topics as religion, class, gender, etc.</p> <p>Marxism Page: Contains an introduction to politics, words and music to the Internationale (the Communist anthem), and classic and contemporary Marxist material.</p>
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	<p>Drawing on the resources you have had an opportunity to explore (textbook, course documents, online resources, library resources), answer one or more of the following questions:</p> <p>Marx claims that the modern democratic state is merely a facade for the power of the bourgeoisie. Can you think of any aspects of modern American society that support this position? How about aspects that refute it?</p> <p>Do you think communism as Marx describes it is a desirable ideal, a foolish dream, a frightening nightmare, or something else? Why?</p> <p>Some people argue that true Marxism has never been attempted, and that if his original ideas were followed it might be more successful. Marxism, they say, has been discredited by people who betrayed Marx. What do you think of this argument?</p>