



What is Socialism?

Unit 1: Introduction

Introduction

- Socialism is the mode of production which, in short, abolishes exploitation and allows working class rule of society.
- Socialism is divided into two distinct stages, a *lower* and *higher* stage.
- Socialism has the dictatorship of the proletariat and still contains class conflict and distinctions.
- The lower stage of socialism is a transitional phase between capitalism and communism.



“The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property. But modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few.” —Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

How is socialism attained?

- Socialism is made a necessity by the conditions of capitalism and its exploitative nature.
- The workers (proletariat) will become increasingly class conscience, resulting in revolutionary action and organization of a vanguard party.
- Socialism cannot be attained via reforms or elections.
- A workers' state (dictatorship of the proletariat) is needed for socialism to survive and develop.



“The transition from capitalism to socialism and the liberation of the working class from the yoke of capitalism cannot be effected by slow changes, by reforms, but only by a qualitative change of the capitalist system, by revolution.” —Joseph Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*

What is the lower stage of socialism?

- The lower stage of socialism is the form of socialism which emerges immediately after the proletarian revolution.
- The socialist state (proletarian dictatorship) is controlled by and serves the interests of the workers. It must be empowered to facilitate the construction of socialism and repulse bourgeois forces.
- The socialist revolution is distinct from all prior revolutions, and seeks the total abolition of private property.
- The process by which socialism advances into its higher stage will be long.



What is the higher stage of socialism?

- The higher stage of socialism emerges after the proletarian revolution has succeeded in most or all countries.
- Under communism, the state in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat withers away into a stateless society.
- Communism is the total negation of capitalism in all its forms. In that regard, communism is unique insofar as it is not a class society.



“The first act by virtue of which the State really constitutes itself the representative of the whole of society — the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society — this is, at the same time, its last independent act as a State. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous and then dies out of itself; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The State is not ‘abolished.’ It dies out.” —

Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*

What are examples of socialist societies?



- One of the first examples of a socialist state was the Soviet Union. Other examples include the people's democracies in Eastern Europe. They were created after successful proletarian revolutions.
- Under socialism, these countries experience unprecedented developments and their economic condition increased massively.
- Unfortunately, these socialist states experienced counter-revolution and capitalism was restored.
- These events, however, are merely temporally setbacks, and the struggle for socialism still remains as critical as ever before.

What is *not* socialism?

- There are no socialist states currently existing.
- Misconceptions pertaining to socialism are abundant.
- Social democratic countries are not at all socialist. Mere social programs are not socialism.
- Modern “communist” states — China, Vietnam, North Korea, Laos, and Cuba — are not socialist.
- State intervention is not socialism. Fascism and Nazism have nothing to do with socialism.

“Today, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists within the labor movement concur in this doctoring of Marxism. They omit, obscure, or distort the revolutionary side of this theory, its revolutionary soul. They push to the foreground and extol what is or seems acceptable to the bourgeoisie. All the social-chauvinists are now “Marxists” (don’t laugh!).” —Vladimir Lenin, *the*

State and Revolution





Concluding questions:

What makes you interested in socialism?

How will socialism improve your life?