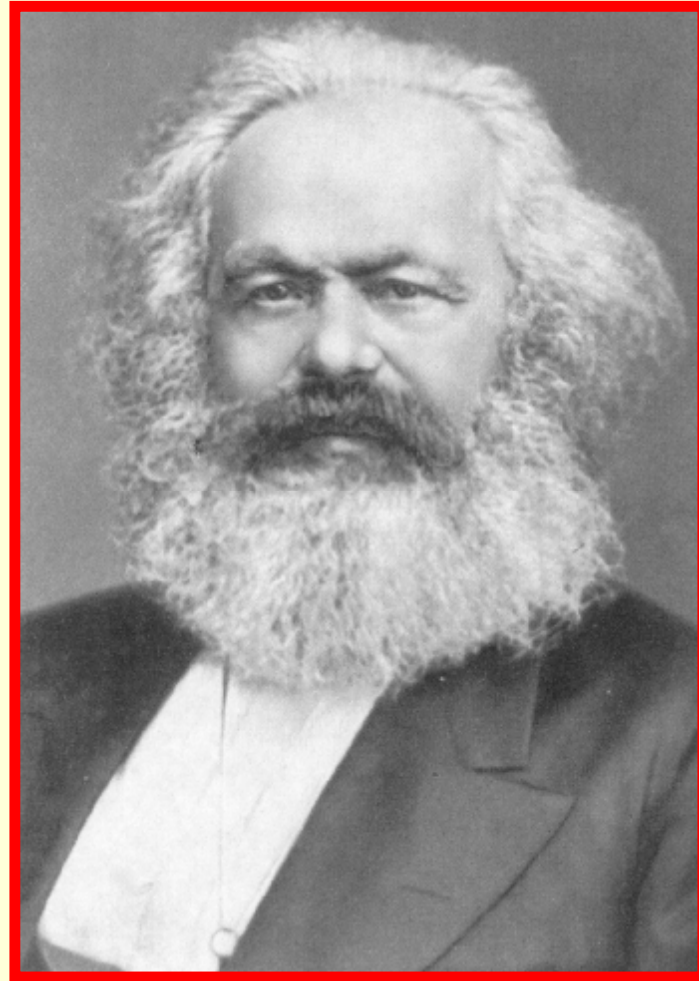


Introduction to Marxism

Class 1. Social inequality & social classes



Capitalism marked by extreme social inequality

- In the US, the top 1% own more than 36% of the national wealth and more than the combined wealth of the bottom 95%.
- In the world's wealthiest country, the richest 400 people have more wealth than the bottom 150 *million*.
- A recent study estimated that the world's super-rich have hidden between \$21 and \$32 trillion offshore to avoid taxation (cf US GDP approx. \$15.5 trillion).

Source: <http://www.alternet.org/economy/global-power-elite-exposed>

Massive global inequality

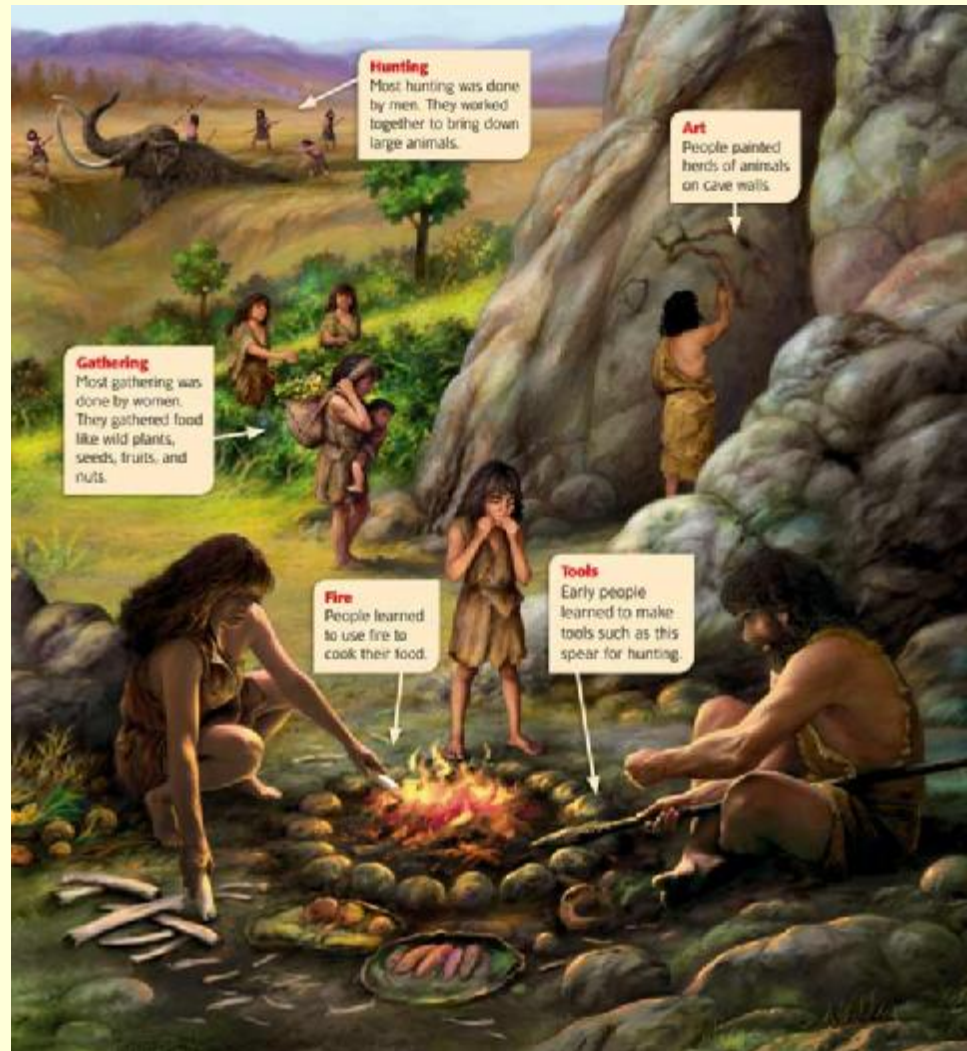
- Inequality runs not only *within* countries but *between* the developed 'First World' and the imperialist-dominated 'Third World'.
- Third World countries fundamentally different to imperialist ones.



Mexico City slum

Earliest societies were egalitarian

- **Social inequality hasn't always existed.**
- **Hunter-gatherer societies ('primitive communism') were egalitarian.**
- **Men and women had different but equal roles.**



Hunter-gatherer society

Neolithic revolution

- Began approx. 12,000 years ago.
- Development of agriculture (growing food, domesticating animals).
- Development of reliable food surplus had far-reaching social effects.

WHY HUNT? WHY GATHER? JOIN THE NEOLITHIC REVOLUTION!

How goes the hunt?
Not so great. How's gathering?
So-so.

Look! A village!
I wonder what they do over there...?

Excuse me.
I couldn't help but overhear. Let me tell you about living the Neolithic Way!

First off -- we don't just look around for our food... we actually grow some of it ourselves, where we live!

Plant and animal domestication is the key. We grow edible plants ourselves, right out of the ground, time after time!

Build permanent structures.

Enjoy regular meals!

Be civil!

Settle down.

Animals, too! We control their reproduction to select desirable characteristics and eliminate bad ones.

Wow! How can we live the Neolithic way?

Reshape your environment.

Special offer! Free booklets!
The Pleasures of Porridge
Earn Your Animals' Respect
How to Tell a Weed

You can start by joining us in the village! Leave your troubles behind!*

Form complex societies.

Be sociable!

***Some hunting and gathering may be necessary to maintain dietary variety and avoid famine.**

Your KEYS to a BETTER LIFE!

Harness Plant Power!

- Learn how the seeds you drop can become next fall's crop!
- Use seed selection to make future plants more productive and easier to harvest!
- Preserve and store surpluses for hard times!
- Invent new ways of preparing and cooking plant foods!

Put Animals To Work For You!

- Learn which species are slow and submissive!
- Use food and fences to keep them around!
- Influence their choice of mates!
- Breed the best and eat the rest!

Disclaimer: Plant and animal domestication can lead to overpopulation, deforestation, erosion, flooding, desertification, materialism, diminished nutrition, cavities, and television. Caution advised. YOUR RESULTS MAY VARY

Development of class society

- **Neolithic revolution had contradictory effects: big step forward for humanity but also led over time to division of society into a ruling class and the toiling classes (slaves, peasants, workers).**
- **Women also pushed into inferior position.**
- **Slavery developed (now profitable to keep captives and put them to work). Ancient Greece and Rome were based on slavery.**

Class society marked by fierce class struggle

All class societies have been marked by often intense struggles between the ruling class and the oppressed social classes.



Haiti 1803: Army of rebellious black slaves defeats French colonial forces in Battle of Vertières. The victory of the revolution ended slavery in the former colony.

Towards an egalitarian society

- ‘An egalitarian society . . . can only be developed on the basis of an advanced economy . . .’ — *Ernest Mandel*
- Unless basic needs are met for all, social classes will continue and will struggle against each other.



What are social classes?

Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and, consequently by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy. — *Lenin*

Modern social classes



Workers at Foxconn plant in Chennai, India.

- **The capitalist class**
- **The working class**
- **The middle class**

They get a wage . . . but are they part of the working class?

- **Cops**
- **Soldiers**
- **Supervisors**



Cops evict Sydney Occupy protesters, Nov 2011

The transition to socialism

- **A revolution will place the main sectors of the economy under social ownership and control.**
- **As society develops and more and more basic needs are met, objective social tensions will decrease ('wither away').**
- **The market, commodities and money will also wither away as more and more goods and services are made available on the basis of need (not purchasing power).**
- **Eventually we will have a society without social classes, made up of highly cultured people for the first time in control of their own destiny.**

Some basic reading

- **Basic ideas:** Ernest Mandel, *Introduction to Marxism*, Chapters 1 & 2.
- **Inequality in the US:** G. William Domhoff, *Who Rules America?*:
<http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/wealth.html>
- **Slave revolts in history:**
<http://www.history.com/news/history-lists/7-famous-slave-revolts>.