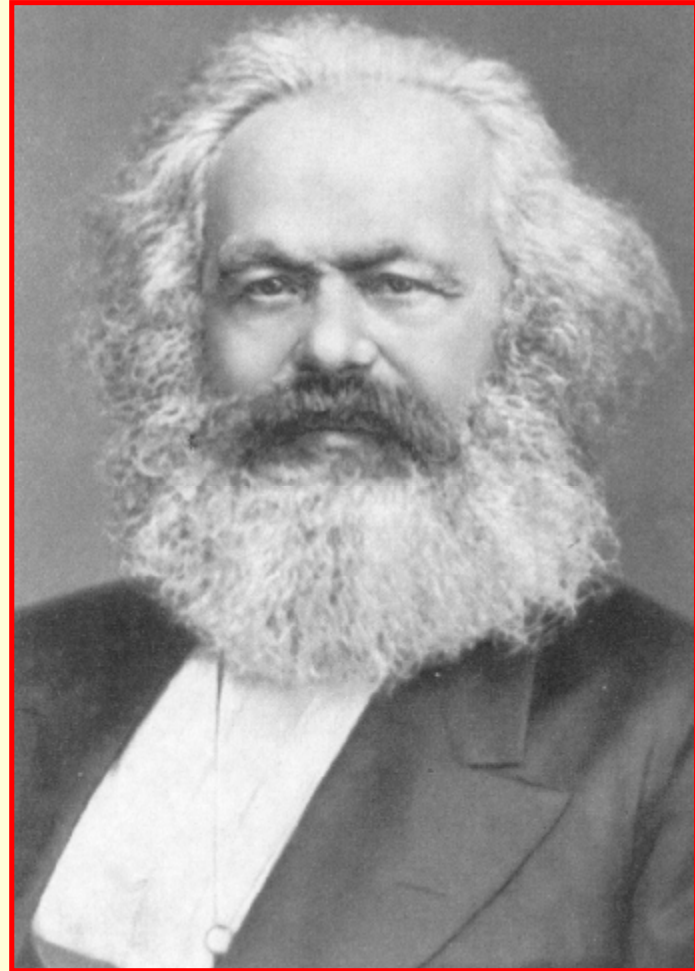


Introduction
to Marxism

Class 2.
The Marxist
theory of
the state



The Australian state today

The contemporary state carries out many functions.



Earliest societies had no state

- Hunter-gatherer society ('primitive communism') knew no state.
- The clan or tribal group administered its own affairs.



States organise in a new way

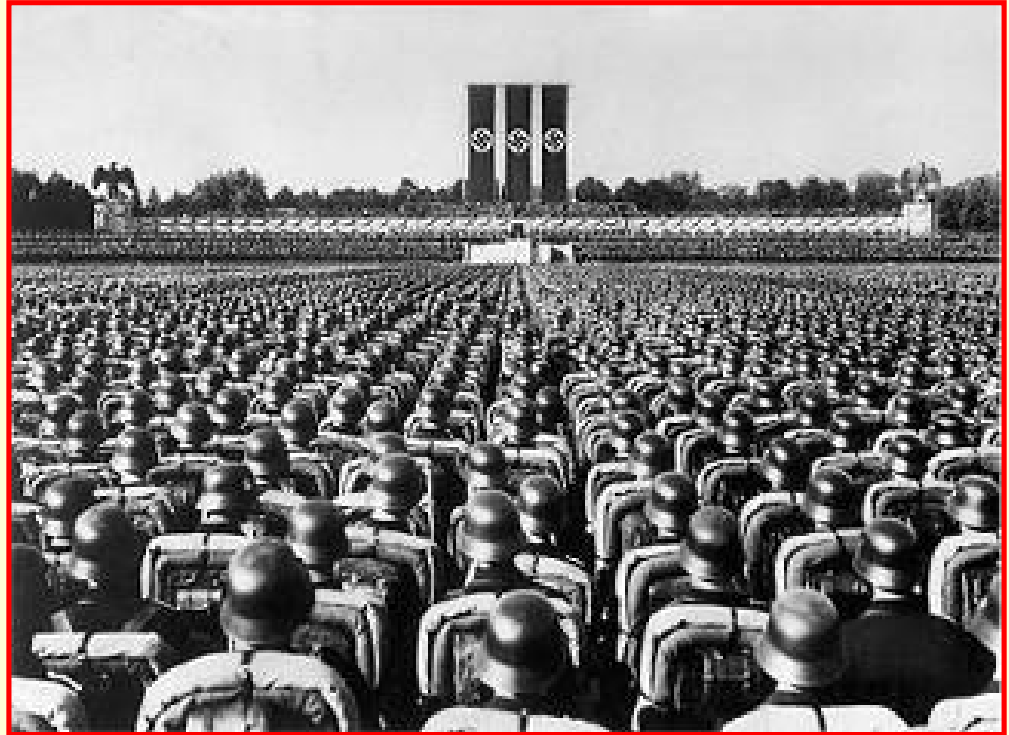


Roman emperor Augustus (63BC-14AD); Roman empire at its peak.

- **Earliest societies were organised by blood ties and administered their own affairs collectively.**
- **How do states organise their subjects?**

Is the state an arbiter between hostile classes?

- Is the state neutral between hostile social classes?
- Which social class does the state really represent?



Manufacturing consent

- Rule by force alone is not a realistic option.
- ‘Ideological integration’ is also crucial.
- How is consent manufactured?



State plays vital economic role

- Sets framework for capitalist competition.
- Dispenses huge funds (contracts, subsidies, etc).
- Regulates workforce (anti-union laws, wage levels, etc.)



Giant monopolies compete with each other but there are ground rules.

‘Liberty, equality, fraternity’

- ‘Freedom’ — for capitalists to buy, sell and exploit wage labour (and of workers to sell their labor power to the bosses)
- ‘Equality’ — for capitalists before the law (cf: feudalism with its privileges for the crown and nobility).



Feeling Sad and Depressed?

Are you anxious?
Worried about the future?
Feeling isolated and alone?

You might be suffering from **CAPITALISM**

Symptoms may include: homelessness, unemployment, poverty, hunger, feelings of powerlessness, fear, apathy, boredom, cultural decay, loss of identity, extreme self-consciousness, loss of free speech, incarceration, suicidal or revolutionary thoughts, death.

Ask your local doctor, union or occupation about MayDay_{Rx}

#MAY1

Where does real power lie?



Australia's richest (2011; Rinehart is now worth over \$20 billion)

- **Real power lies with the corporate rich.**
- **Parliament is entirely secondary.**

The limitations on our democracy

- The state?
- The economy?
- Voting mechanisms (voting age, right of recall, careerism, etc.)



Power to the people

‘The most indubitable feature of a revolution is the direct interference of the masses in historical events. In ordinary times the state, be it monarchical or democratic, elevates itself above the nation, and history is made by specialists in that line of business — kings, ministers, bureaucrats, parliamentarians, journalists. But at those crucial moments when the old order becomes no longer endurable to the masses, they break over the barriers excluding them from the political arena, sweep aside their traditional representatives, and create by their own interference the initial groundwork for a new régime . . . The history of a revolution is for us first of all a history of the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny.’ — *Leon Trotsky*

Revolutions: social & political

- **Social revolution:** mass upsurge, a class loses power, state power changes, property relations change (over time).
- **Political revolution:** mass upsurge, political overthrow, new governing group, property relations unchanged.



Cuba January 1959: rebel forces enter Havana — the start of a deepgoing social revolution.

People's power

- No blueprint but need to build a system where mass of people actually decide and control things (what we do, state apparatus, economy).
- Historical & current experiences (Soviet bloc countries, Cuba, Venezuela).



Some basic reading

- **Basic ideas:** Ernest Mandel, *Introduction to Marxism*, Chs. 3 & 10.
- **Further reading:** Lenin, 'The State' (a lecture given to youth in 1919),
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1919/jul/11.htm>