



Principles of Communist-Socialism in the 21st Century

By Adam Denker

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What is Communism?

Communism, in short, is stateless socialism. It is a society where total liberation of all people has been achieved, where class no longer exists, and the “means of production” is controlled by the community.

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What is Socialism?

Socialism is a blanket term that is used to refer to all systems where the workplaces, tools, and resources needed to make things, what is commonly called the “means of production,” is owned and controlled by all those who work it. Socialism is the expansion of democracy into the places we all rely on to live, so everyone has a voice in the systems that they already contribute to, like their jobs, and no one has sole control over the places and things that we all need. Often “Socialism” is used by communists to refer to what is more accurately called “State-Socialism,” which is a socialist system that is managed and protected by a state-government, but that is not the only system which qualifies as socialist. The term “socialist” and “communist” are often mistakenly used interchangeably because, as stated above, communism is a type of socialism. All Communists are Socialists, but not all Socialists are Communists. Some socialist tendencies do not seek to eliminate the state, such as “Democratic-Socialism.”

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Isn't Socialism tax funded programs, like a welfare state?

No, that system is called “Social-Democracy,” which is actually the system we already have in the United States. Often, people mistakenly point to Sweden, Norway, and Denmark as examples of “Democratic-Socialism,” but this is not accurate. Those are all Social-Democracies as well, they simply have more robust tax funded programs than the U.S. does. Socialists actually oppose Social-Democracy, because it is still a capitalist system, it still allows wage labor, the means of production to be privately owned, and prohibits the workers from having democratic control of their workplaces. Democratic-Socialists are still socialists, they simply attempt to implement socialism through democratic reforms rather than a revolution, and typically do not seek to eliminate the state. A fully established socialist system would not need any significant welfare system because profit driven production and labor exploitation would be eliminated. Meaning all workers would keep 100% of what they produce with their labor, eliminating poverty, class, and

significant wealth inequality. The small portion of the population who cannot work could easily be taken care of with the excess products of the community's labor, as it would not be destroyed to protect market value. And if not, any welfare system that would be needed to take care of the infirm, would be very small, as there would be no "working poor" like there are now; the only people who would need such welfare would be those who are physically unable to work. And of course under communism there would be no welfare at all, because there would be no currency. Communism makes all available to all; communism is the community taking care of each other's needs without any restrictions.

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What is the State?

The state is not easy to define, and is often used by different communists to refer to different things. Karl Marx used the term to refer to a system by which one class subjugates another. Anarchists use the term to refer to centralized, hierarchical, governmental systems which claim authority over multiple communities. No matter which thing "the state" is used to refer to, all communists seek to eliminate it, although different communist groups use different means and timeframes to eliminate it.

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What is Anarchism?

Anarchism is another broad term for anti-capitalist ideologies which also oppose hierarchical and illegitimate authority as they define those terms. Which means that Anarchists seek to eliminate the state, as well as capitalism and organize society around horizontal community based systems and direct democracy. For this reason, Anarchists are one type of Communists.

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What other types of Communists are there?

There are many types, but communists are primarily defined by two different tendencies: those who seek to eliminate the state along with capitalism, like Anarchists, and those who seek to build some form of State-Socialist system to transition to communism over time. Anarcho-Communists and Mutualists are examples of the anti-state communists. Leninists and Council-Communists are examples of pro-state communists. All communists have the same ultimate goal, they only differ in how they seek to achieve it.

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Why do you want to establish communism?

Communism represents a necessary change from the oppressive nature of capitalism, and all other forms of oppression and exploitation, as well as all the systems which support them. Communism must be established for the same reason that democracy had to be: because all people deserve agency over their lives. Surely you can agree that they cannot have such agency so long as they have no voice in the governmental systems which rule over them. Then how can they have full agency in their lives when they have no voice in the workplaces and resources they need to survive? We cannot tolerate totalitarian dictatorship over the means of production, for the same reason we cannot tolerate totalitarian dictatorship over the government. At the very heart of it, that is what Socialism and communism are: democracy, total democracy. Not the hybrid system of totalitarian dictatorship in one realm of life and democracy in the other, which we have now.

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Isn't capitalism simply the free exchange of goods and services?

No. That is called “trade,” and it has always existed, and it will likely always exist in some form, even under communism. Capitalism developed out of the “mercantilism” of the 18th century, which in turn developed out of feudalism. Capitalism did not fully emerge until the early 19th century. Capitalism is the commodification of labor and private ownership of the means of production. Before capitalism, most free workers had far more control over the means of production than they do under capitalism. Through the use of guilds and community ownership of land and other resources, free workers and communities were able to exert collective effort to survive and keep most of what they produced with their labor. Such guilds and free communities existed all across Europe, and indeed the world, until the era of European colonialism and empire.

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How is Capitalism oppressive?

Capitalism is oppressive for the same reason that a dictatorship or a monarchy is. It places total control in the hands of an individual, or a small elite group of people, over what everyone relies on to survive. In fact, capitalism bears a great deal of similarities to feudalism. Ownership of most major businesses is heredity, or at least passed from one person to another of their choosing, but one person doesn't own all businesses. Much like there is never one king or one lord which controls all kingdoms or fiefdoms. Often critics of socialism say that “if you don't like your job, you can find a better one!” But this is no different than saying “if you don't like your kingdom, or your lord, or your fiefdom, then you can just move to a better one!” No matter what, you're still being subjugated by an anti-democratic and exploitive system, even if one is slightly less oppressive than another.

Also: under feudalism, a landowner claimed ownership of all that was produced on their land by their serfs. They allowed them to keep just enough to barely survive, and took the bulk of what the serfs produced. Capitalists do the same thing through the use of the wages system. When a worker under capitalism produces a product, the owner then sells the product (or rather usually another worker sells it on behalf of the owner), the owner then takes all of the profit from that sale, and gives the worker back a tiny portion of that profit, far less than the value the worker produced with their work. This is what is called “labor exploitation,” and it is similar to how a slave is treated. Except that in most cases a slave was not paid in currency, but rather raw needs like food and shelter, never gaining enough to free themselves from bondage. So too is a modern worker prohibited from gaining such freedom. The majority of jobs pay so little back to the worker from what they produce that it is seldom enough to survive. Meaning that most workers can never earn enough from their labor to pull themselves out of poverty and wagedom. This is what is called “wage slavery.”

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Why can't I keep my own property under socialism and communism?

You can, or at least you can keep the property that you are likely thinking of. The misconception that communists want to seize your house and everything you own is an intentional one created by capitalists to scare you. Communists make a distinction between “private property” and “personal property.” “Private Property” is not your house, or car, or any of your personal effects, nor even anything you produce solely with your own labor. Those are all “personal property,” they are all yours and no one else has a right to them. This is because communism seeks to end exploitation, meaning that whatever you produce yourself is yours. Communism also recognizes housing, food, shelter, and privacy as basic human rights. Meaning you have a right to your own

home. "Private Property" only exists under capitalism, because it is the private ownership of the means of production, and under both socialism and communism the means of production is owned and controlled equally by all those who work it. The only time you must give up sole control of something is when it is needed and used by more than just yourself, such as a workplace. But even then, you don't lose control over it, but rather you control it democratically along with all those who need it and use it.

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This all sounds very idealistic, how could it ever be possible?

All new ideas are idealistic, for eons people believed democracy itself was an impossible dream, until they did it. If we never imagine a better way to live, and try to implement it, then nothing will ever change, our lives will never improve. The abolition of slavery was deemed such a daunting and impossible task that the people of the United States put it off for so long that it boiled over into a war that cost millions of lives, but in the end it was achieved, it proved a reality. No matter how difficult the abolition of oppression and exploitation in any form may seem, we have a duty as people to oppose it wholly and fight to end it. It is only through collective effort and constant work to make a change that every change has occurred. This is why we no longer are subjected to the whims of a monarch, why we have the rule of law, why we are no longer serfs toiling in the soil beneath a feudal lord. All of these improvements were implemented because people dared to envision something better, and never stopped working to make their visions a reality, until it was finally done. As the great Anarchist writer Murray Bookchin once wrote: "The assumption that was currently exists must necessarily exist, is the acid which corrodes all visionary thinking."

A better world is possible, but we must fight for it.