

From Adam Stevens:

I am digesting your message; you put a lot out there. It's exciting to see people grappling with Marxism searching for relevance in that model. Though you don't use the word that is what I see going on in your treatise. The question, in the end, becomes what one makes of Marx's analysis of capitalism as being a system where the immiseration of the masses and periodic economic collapse are inevitable due to the laws of falling profit rates and crises of overproduction. Add to that Lenin's thesis that capitalism's development tends toward imperialist war inexorably and any future under capitalism looks bleak. Is incremental adjustment within these confines the best we can do? Are these confines real or imagined? These are the questions we must begin with because they inform our strategy--will it boil down to reform or revolution? I think you know where I stand on that very starkly put question. Implementation of my "answer" is the rub.

From Norman Markowitz, Rutgers University:

Alan, you are a great guy but Marx and Engels were right and you I think are wrong to say that class exists under capitalism. Classes exist in themselves and become conscious and become classes for themselves in all societies based on the exploitation of labor to produce wealth, slave tribute societies, landlord serf/peasant societies and capitalist worker societies. Class relations become less complicated under capitalism and the number of middle strata in terms of having an independent existence actually declines, but, class divisions exist until society is organized around production for use and universal rights become economic and social rights. I agree with you entirely on point 2 I agree with you on point three and would say that there were and are elements of slave and feudal societies in societies that were or are predominantly capitalist, of which the U.S. Brazil, etc, are among the best examples. The exploitation of the Western hemisphere, including the extermination of indigenous peoples and the turning of millions of Africans into chattel slaves made Europe and eventually North America the centers for first commercial and later industrial capitalism

I agree with point 4 with the exception that these superstructures interact dialectically with the base and the many of the examples you cite have to be looked at in terms of both class struggle and counter-revolution(fascism) and the role of modern imperialism(Saudi Arabia as a feudal state formation maintaining feudal forms in an extreme way in alliance with transnational oil companies and the major imperialist states)

On point 5, I don't know if I would say that there is a capitalist package. commercial capitalism preceded industrial capitalism and the struggle for representative institutions was a struggle for the capitalist class to defeat the aristocratic landlord class, the struggle for the rule of law meant the struggle for capitalist property relations to be freed from feudal tribute and feudal particularism. The "capitalist package" can be returned as it was by Hitler, Mussolini, etc, or restricted, as it was to Blacks and other excluded groups in the U.S. It may even be returned by Bush in the form of a de facto dictatorship that uses police power without restraint, fixes elections as it sees fit, and implements its policies with the blessings of transnational corporations

point 6 is generally true, although the Soviet revolution and the complex multi-faceted role of the Soviets in history makes this more complicated At this point Alan, I will get back to the points at another time.

Although some of this may be dated, I suggest that you look at John Eaton's Political Economy(which is the general theory of Marx, Engels and Lenin in a very readable and clear form) and John Sommerville's Philosophy of Marxism.

P.S. Steinbrenner and the late Walter O'Malley were both capitalists but national ideology about the Yankees in your case and the Dodgers in mine have clouded our minds