Marxism

Assume you are a worker in the nineteenth century. Today you have gone to the local town square to hear Karl Marx propose his solutions to problems faced by laborers. The crowd quiets; Marx begins to speak:

 “A spirit is haunting Europe—the spirit of communism.

 The history of… society is the history of the class struggles. Throughout history, there has always been conflict between the haves and have-nots, between those who hold economic power and those whose labor is exploited. In ancient times, this conflict was between freeman and slave, between aristocrat and commoner. In the Middle Ages, it was between the lord and serf, between the guild master and the journeyman. Here in the industrial age, there is constant class warfare between the proletariat (workers) and the bourgeoisie (employers)…

 At one time, capitalism was beneficial to society. It enabled people to produce goods on a large scale. The machines and technical skills introduced by capitalism created unlimited opportunities for people to improve themselves. But now capitalism has outlived its usefulness… The workers… are forced to work long hours under miserable conditions. They receive little in return for their labor. Although the workers produced the goods, the profits go to the capitalists. Capitalism has brought great wealth to the bourgeoisie and grinding poverty to the worker.

 What is the solution? Communist theory is summed up in a single sentence: Abolish private property (property owned by individuals, not the state). Bring all means of production into the hands of the state; that is, the workers organized as a ruling class. When this happens, the class struggle will be over. In place of the capitalist society with its opposing classes, we will have a classless society in which everyone will be equal.

 The immediate aim of the communists is… to organize the proletariat. Aroused and united by the communists… the workers will rise up and overthrow their capitalist oppressors… They will take over the means of production and seize political power.

 Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

 Workingmen of all countries, unite!

Why did Karl Marx advocate doing away with the capitalist system?

According to Marx, what steps would societies follow in moving toward communism?

What did Marx predict was the future of the proletariat?