**Karl Marx (1818-1883)**

Born in Prussia, forced by his politics to Paris, Brussels, and London (1849).  Writings have had a profound impact on government, philosophy, literature, even sciences

**Most significant writings**: The Communist Manifesto (1848) and Das Kapital (1867)

**The theory**:  all history is seen as class struggle

**In a capitalist system**

• The oppressor class (the bourgeoisie) exploits the labors of the working class (the proletariat)

• Profits accumulate to the bourgeoisie as capital -> wealthy class become fewer and wealthier

• The rich get richer and the poor get poorer

• System depends on a large pool of under or unemployed workers

• Profitability drives all business decisions not humane considerations in such a system

• Workers are reduced to the level of machines and discarded if not profitable

• Justifications such as the right to property seen as rationalizations by the oppressor system

• Freedom cannot exist in a capitalist society since all workers are enslaved through their labor

**Consequently**

• All workers of the world should unite - national borders mean little

• The natural system is a world economy

• Nationalism and imperialism seen as tools of the oppressing class

• Religion seen as the opiate of the masses (ie. the church is used to keep the workers docile)

The prediction

Seen as a scientific theory -> predictions are natural and include

• In a sufficiently industrialized economy there will be an inevitable communist revolution

• This revolution will be see the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat

• No new oppressor class will appear but rather a dictatorship of the proletariat itself

• An intermediate phase of government by the proletariat

• Each individual will receive a share of production according to his needs

• Ultimately the need for the state will diminish and the state will then wither and die

**Note:** Marx had nothing at all to do with the Russian revolution, did not know Lenin or Trotsky, and would have been rather surprised that a communist revolution could occur in a backward mainly-rural economy.

1. What is a capitalist society? Why did Marx think it was doomed to failure?
2. What was Marx’s prediction for what would happen if capitalism was used?
3. If capitalism believes that each man can create his own destiny based on his abilities, what does Marx believe?

4. In your opinion, justify what system is better, communism or capitalism.