

Socialism

Introduction

System of social organization in which property and the distribution of income are subject to social control rather than individual determination or market forces.

Socialism refers to both a set of doctrines and the political movements that aspire to put these doctrines into practice. Although doctrinal aspects loomed largest in the early history of socialism, in its later history the movements have predominated over doctrine, so much so that there is no precise canon on which the various adherents of contemporary socialist movements agree. The most that can be said is that socialism is, in the words of Anthony Crosland, a British socialist, “a set of values, or aspirations, which socialists wish to see embodied in the organization of society.”

Although it is possible to trace adumbrations of modern socialist ideas as far back as Plato's [*Republic*](#), Thomas More's [*Utopia*](#), and the profuse Utopian literature of the 18th-century [Enlightenment](#), realistically, modern socialism had its roots in the reflections of various writers who opposed the social and economic relations and dislocations brought by the [Industrial Revolution](#). They criticized what they conceived to be the injustice, the inequalities, the suffering brought about by the [capitalist](#) mode of production and the free and uncontrolled market on which it rested. To the acquisitive individualism of their age they opposed a vision of a new community of producers bound to each other through fraternal solidarity. They conceived of a future in which the masses would wrest control of the means of production and the levers of government from the capitalists.

Although the great majority of people calling themselves socialists in the 19th and 20th centuries have shared this vision, they have disagreed about its more specific ideas. Some of them have argued that only the complete nationalization of the means of production would suffice to implement their aims. Others have proposed selective nationalization of key industries, with controlled private ownership of the remainder. Some socialists insist that only strong centralized state direction and a command economy will suffice. Others advocate a “market socialism” in which the market economy would be directed and guided by socialist planners.

Socialists have also disagreed as to the best way of running the good society. Some envisage direction by the government. Others advocate as much dispersion and decentralization as possible through the delegation of decision-making authority to public boards, quasi-public trusts, municipalities, or self-governing communities of producers. Some advocate workers' control; others would rely on governmental planning boards. Although all socialists want to bring about a more equal distribution of national income, some hope for an absolute equality of income, whereas others aim only at ensuring an adequate income for all, while allowing different occupations to be paid at different rates.

“To each according to his need” has been a frequent battle cry of socialists, but many of them would in fact settle for a society in which each would be paid in accordance with his contribution to the commonwealth, provided that society would first assure all citizens minimum levels of housing, clothing, and nourishment as well as free access to essential services such as education, health, transportation, and recreation.

Socialists also proclaim the need for more equal political rights for all citizens, and for a levelling of status differences. They disagree, however, on whether difference of status ought to be eradicated entirely, or whether, in practice, some inequality in decision-making powers might not be permitted to persist in a socialist commonwealth.

The uses and abuses of the word socialism are legion. As early as 1845, Friedrich Engels complained that the socialism of many Germans was “vague, undefined, and undefinable.” Since Engels' day the term socialism has been the property of anyone who wished to use it. The same Bismarck who as German chancellor in the late 1870s outlawed any organization that advocated socialism in Germany declared a few years later that “the state must introduce even more socialism in our Reich.” Modern sophisticated conservatives, as well as Fascists and various totalitarian dictators, have often claimed that they were engaged in building socialism.

Origins of the socialist idea

The term socialism, in its modern sense, made its first appearance around 1830. In France it was applied to the writings of Fourier and the Saint-Simonians and in Britain to those of Robert Owen.

Saint-Simon and Fourier

Comte Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825) was an erratic genius with a fertile and yet disorganized mind. His socialist writings revolved around the idea that his age suffered from an unhealthy and unbridled individualism resulting from a breakdown of order and hierarchy. But he held that the age also contained the seeds of its own salvation, which were to be found in the rising level of science and technology and in the industrialists and technicians who had already begun to build a new industrial order. The joining of scientific and technological knowledge to industrialism would inaugurate the rule of experts. The new society could not be equalitarian, Saint-Simon argued, because men were not equally endowed by nature. Yet it would make the maximum use of potential abilities by assuring that everyone would have equal opportunity to rise to a social position commensurate with his talents. By eradicating the sources of public disorder, it would make possible the virtual elimination of the state as a coercive institution. The future society would be run like a gigantic workshop, in which rule over men would be replaced by the administration of things.

Saint-Simon's followers bent the founder's doctrine in a more definitely socialist direction. They came to see private property as incompatible with the new industrial system. The hereditary transmission of power and property, they argued, was inimical to the rational ordering of society. The rather bizarre attempt of Saint-Simon's followers to create a Saint-Simonian church should not obscure the fact that they were among the first to proclaim that bourgeois-capitalist property was no longer sacrosanct.

[François-Marie-Charles Fourier](#) (1772–1837), a lonely and neglected thinker who was more than a little mad, was led to his anticapitalist vision by a loathing for a world of competition and wasteful commerce in which he spent most of his life as a salesman. Possessed by an inordinately wide-ranging imagination, he argued that the regenerated world to come would be characterized not only by social but also by natural and even cosmological transformations. The ocean would be changed into lemonade, and wild animals would turn into anti-lions and anti-tigers serving mankind.

With meticulous and obsessive care, Fourier set forth plans for his model communities, the *phalanstères*, the germ cells of the good society of the future. In these communities men would no longer be forced to perform uncongenial tasks but would work in tune with their temperaments and inclinations. They would cultivate cabbages in the morning and sing in the opera in the evening. Fourier's was an antinomian vision in which human spontaneity made outside regulation unnecessary. Whereas Saint-Simon called for the rule of experts, Fourier was convinced that love and passion would bind men together in a harmonious and noncoercive order.

Owenism

The Welshman [Robert Owen](#) (1771–1858) held more sober views. Early in his career he became known as a model employer in his textile works in Scotland, and as an educational and factory reformer. Despairing of his fellow capitalists he later turned to the emergent trade union movement. Acutely conscious of the evils of industrialism by which he had acquired his wealth, he thought that the new productive forces could be turned to the benefit of mankind if competition were eliminated and the effects of bad education were counteracted by rational enlightenment. He advocated cooperative control of industry and the creation of Villages of Unity and Cooperation in which the settlers, in addition to raising crops, would improve their physiques as well as their minds. Owenite communities established in [New Harmony](#), Indiana, and elsewhere in America all failed. His attempts to join the cooperative and the trade union movements in a “great trades union” also proved a failure. Yet he left a lasting imprint on the British socialist tradition; his indictment of the competitive order, his stress on cooperation and education, his optimistic message that men could increase their stature if only the stultifying effects of an unhealthy environment were removed have continued to inform the socialist movement.

Other early socialists

The 1840s saw the rise of a number of other socialist doctrines, particularly in [France](#). [Louis-Auguste Blanqui](#) evolved a radical socialist—or, as he called it, communist—doctrine based on a democratic populism and on the belief that capitalism as an inherently unstable order would soon be replaced by cooperative associations. Impatient with theorizing, given to a strong belief in voluntarism and the virtues of revolutionary action, he is remembered for his many attempts at organizing insurrections rather than for his theoretical contributions.

[Étienne Cabet](#), in his influential utopian work *Voyage en Icarie* (1840), carried on the tradition of Thomas More as well as of Fourier. [Louis Blanc](#) is best known for *L'Organisation du travail* (1839), in which he advocated the establishment of national workshops with capital advanced by the government. These workshops would remain free from government control, with workers electing their management. The national workshops he organized in Paris after the revolution of 1848 were soon dissolved by a resurgent middle class. His plans for the “organization of labour” and his pleas for the recognition of the “right to work” were nevertheless a foreshadowing of the modern welfare state.

[Pierre-Joseph Proudhon](#) (1809–65) is best viewed as one of the founders of the anarchist tradition. But his attacks against private property and the institutions on which it rests, as well as his championing of a system of human relationships in which reciprocity, equity, and justice would replace what he saw to be rapacity, exploitation, and greed, powerfully stimulated the socialist imagination. His anti-statist and federalist vision of producers' communities provided a counterweight to the centralizing and statist impulses in the socialist tradition.

In [England](#), the first half of the 19th century saw the emergence of a number of writers attacking the inequities of capitalism and basing their indictment of wage labour on radical interpretations of the thinking of an eminent economist, David Ricardo. Somewhat later, a Christian socialist movement led by [Frederick Denison Maurice](#) and [Charles Kingsley](#) attempted to combine radical economic views with political conservatism. The radical [Chartist](#) Movement of the 1830s and 1840s is better viewed as a political movement of the working class than as a specifically socialist formation, though anticapitalist ideas played a strong part in it.

Marx and the rise of social democracy

In the perspective of intellectual history, all of these pre-Marxist socialist thinkers produced ideas of considerable intrinsic worth. But from the viewpoint of the subsequent development of socialism their ideas seem to be tributaries feeding the mighty stream of the [Marxist](#) movement that came to dominate the socialist tradition in the last third of the 19th century.

[The Communist Manifesto](#)

[Karl Marx](#) (1818–83) had a synthesizing mind. He fused German idealistic philosophy with British political economy and French socialism. Marx's earlier writings are discussed elsewhere (see [Marxism](#)). In this section the focus is on his mature thought as first developed in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), which he wrote in conjunction with [Friedrich Engels](#), his lifelong intellectual companion.

To Marx, society is a moving balance of antithetical forces; strife is the father of all things, and social conflict is the core of the historical process. Men struggle against nature to wrest a livelihood from her. In the process they enter into relations with one another, and these relations differ according to the stage they have reached in their productive activities. As a [division of labour](#) emerges in human society, it leads to the formation of antagonistic classes that are the prime actors in the historical drama. In contrast to his predecessors, Marx did not see history as simply a struggle between the rich and the poor, or the powerful and the powerless; he taught that such struggles differ qualitatively depending on what particular historical classes emerge at a given stage in history. A class is defined by Marx as a grouping of men who share a common position in the productive process and develop a common outlook and a realization of their mutual interest.

Marx, like Hegel and Montesquieu, considered societies as structured wholes; all aspects of a society—its legal code, its system of education, its religion, its art—are related with one another and with the mode of economic production. But he differed from other thinkers in emphasizing that the mode of production was, in the last analysis, the decisive factor in the movement of history. The relations of production, he held, constitute the foundation upon which is erected the whole cultural superstructure of society.

Marx distinguished this doctrine, which he called scientific socialism, from that of his predecessors whom he labelled utopian socialists. He asserted that his teachings were based on a scientific examination of the movement of [history](#) and the workings of contemporary capitalism rather than simply on idealistic striving for human betterment. He claimed to have provided a guide to past history as well as a scientific prediction of the future. History was shaped by class struggles; the struggle of contemporary proletarians against their capitalist taskmasters would eventuate in a socialist society in which associated producers would mold their collective destinies cooperatively, free from economic and social constraints. The class struggle would thus come to an end.

[The First International](#)

The Communist Manifesto, which had been written as a program for the Communist League, a group of continental workmen, failed to have an impact on the European revolutions of 1848. For a number of years thereafter Marx and Engels lived in complete isolation from the labour movements developing in England and on the Continent. Socialism in those years was only the creed of isolated sects, often of exiles. In 1864, however, after a gathering in London of

continental and English workers' representatives and associated intellectuals, there emerged the International Working Men's Association, commonly known as the First International. Although it encompassed various tendencies ranging from simple trade unionism to anarchism, Marx dominated it from its inception and made it an instrument for the diffusion of his message. Its headquarters were in London, but it never exerted much influence in England, where the labour movement remained impervious to Marxist revolutionary ideology. On the Continent, particularly in [Germany](#), Marxism spread rapidly and soon became the major doctrine of the emerging labour movement.

German Social Democracy

In Germany, [Ferdinand Lassalle](#) (1825–64), the architect of the German labour movement, agreed with Marx on the need for autonomous organization of the working class but differed from him in wanting the government to provide the necessary capital for the establishment of producers' cooperatives that would emancipate labour from capitalist domination. To Marx, any appeal to the bourgeois state was out of the question, and he proceeded to organize followers in Germany against Lassalle. In 1869 they created the [Social Democratic Party](#). The division between the followers of Lassalle and those of Marx persisted until 1875, when the two parties united on the basis of a compromise program (which Marx sharply criticized for its Lassallean vestiges).

The German Social Democratic movement grew rapidly, despite Chancellor [Otto von Bismarck's](#) attempts to suppress it through anti-socialist legislation and to undercut its appeal by social reforms. In 1877 the Socialists obtained half a million votes and a dozen members in the Reichstag. In 1881 the party claimed 312,000 members, and, by 1890, 1,427,000. After the repeal of the anti-socialist laws the party adopted the so-called [Erfurt Program](#) of 1891, eliminating all demands for Lassallean state-aided enterprises and pledging itself to the orthodox Marxian goal of “the abolition of class rule and of classes themselves.”

It soon became apparent that Marx's own thought had gone through a process of evolution so that different disciples could quote chapter and verse in support of fairly divergent political views. In particular, whereas Marx in the late 1840s and early 1850s had asserted that only a violent revolutionary overthrow of bourgeois rule and the emergence of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” would lead to the emancipation of the working class, by the late 1860s his views had considerably mellowed. Writing in England after the second Reform Bill (1867), which had given the vote to the upper strata of the workers, Marx suggested the possibility of a peaceful British evolution toward socialism. He also thought that such a peaceful road might be possible in the United States and in a number of other countries.

Although the leaders of German Social Democracy liked to speak in revolutionary Marxist rhetoric, they had in daily life become increasingly absorbed in parliamentary activities. Under the intellectual guidance of their theoretician [Karl Kautsky](#) (1854–1938) they developed a brand of economic determinism according to which the inevitable development of economic forces

would necessarily lead to the emergence of socialism. The official Social Democratic platform remained ideologically intransigent, while the party's activities became increasingly pragmatic.

[Eduard Bernstein](#) (1850–1932), once a close companion of Engels, challenging prevailing orthodoxy in his famous *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie* (1899; Eng. trans., *Evolutionary Socialism*, 1909), appealed to the party to drop its revolutionary baggage and recognize theoretically what it had already accepted in practice: namely, that Germany would not have to go through revolutionary convulsions in order to reach socialist goals. Ignoring the differences between political conditions in Germany and England, Bernstein urged the party to travel along the English road in hope of gradually transforming capitalism through socialist reforms brought about by parliamentary pressure.

The struggle between Kautsky's orthodoxy and Bernstein's [revisionism](#) shook the German party. Bernsteinian doctrine was officially defeated in 1903, but revisionism in fact permeated the party, especially its parliamentary and trade union leaders. At the outbreak of World War I practically all the leaders supported the government and the war, thus ending the party's revolutionary pretensions.

Other Social Democratic parties on the Continent

In France, the Marxists had to contend with rival socialist traditions that had profound roots in French working-class history. The followers of Blanqui and Proudhon played leading roles in the Paris Commune of 1871. In the years that followed, French socialism was torn by conflicting tendencies. The [Parti Ouvrier](#) founded by Jules Guesde in 1875–76 represented Marxist orthodoxy, but there were other socialist parties that reflected the influence of Blanqui, Blanc, and Proudhon, as well as the 18th-century revolutionary heritage. Even after the various parties amalgamated in 1905, the movement continued to be torn by dissension between its revolutionary and reformist wings. Nonetheless, it continued to grow. At its first congress the unified party claimed 35,000 members, and in the elections of 1906 it won 54 seats in Parliament. By 1914 it had more than 100 members in the Chamber of Deputies. As in Germany, however, revolutionary rhetoric usually went hand in hand with pragmatic action, and the party became in fact a skillful participant in the parliamentary games of the Third Republic. After [Jean Jaurès](#), the great Socialist orator and a principled leader of the peace elements, was assassinated on the eve of World War I, most of the Socialists supported the French war effort.

In the last part of the 19th century, Social Democratic parties generally beholden to Marxist doctrine sprang up in most of the countries of continental Europe. A Danish Social Democratic Party was founded in the 1870s, the Swedish Socialist movement in 1889. The [Norwegian Labour Party](#) (first called the Social Democratic Party) was formed in 1887 but became a major political force only in the early 20th century. In central Europe, Social Democratic parties fairly rapidly assumed a major place on the political horizon. An Austrian [Social Democratic Party](#) was founded in 1888. By 1908 it had gained about one-third of the vote cast in the parliamentary elections, to become the strongest Socialist party outside Germany. The Belgian Labour Party, formed in 1885 as an amalgamation of trade union, cooperative, and other groups, rapidly

organized thousands of mutual aid societies, built a very strong trade union movement, and led a number of general strikes on behalf of more liberal suffrage laws. The Dutch Socialist-Democratic Workers Party, founded in 1894, became a significant force only in the years immediately preceding World War I. It held 20 percent of the seats in the lower house of Parliament in 1912.

All of the continental parties were torn by internal tensions. Proposals to enter liberal coalition governments often were defeated by only narrow margins; Marxist orthodoxy prevailed only after sharp struggles. In The Netherlands, for example, a proposal to enter a coalition government was rejected by the close vote of 375 to 320 at the party congress of 1913.

In the less industrialized parts of Europe, particularly in Italy and Spain, Marxism had to contend with anarchist tendencies mainly rooted in the precapitalist and peasant strata. European anarchism as a political force was created by Mikhail [Bakunin](#), the highly influential Russian libertarian thinker. His Anarchist Federation had belonged to the First International, but quarrels with Marx led to the expulsion of Bakunin and his followers in 1872.

Bakuninist and other anarchist strains of thought remained powerful in [Spain](#), despite the founding of the Social Labour Party in 1879. The Spanish socialist movement suffered from the competition of the anarchists throughout its subsequent history, and only after World War I did it become a political force to be reckoned with.

In [Italy](#) anarchist tendencies also impeded the growth of a socialist movement. The Italian representatives to the First International followed Bakunin's lead. Not until 1892 was a distinctly Socialist party formed under the leadership of [Filippo Turati](#). In 1913, after the electoral franchise was broadened, the official Socialist Party secured 51 seats in Parliament, and two other Socialist parties that had split from its ranks gained 31 seats. Although it continued to suffer from internal dissension and from anarchist tendencies in the more backward areas of the country, by World War I the [Italian Socialist Party](#) had become one of the strongest Marxist organizations in Europe.

The [Second International](#)

The First International had brought into being a variety of Socialist movements throughout Europe. When these began to grow roots in their respective political systems, it became apparent that the international movement could no longer be controlled by a single directing centre. After the dissolution of the First International in 1876, Marx and Engels remained father figures whose counsel the movement eagerly sought; but they could no longer direct it. The history of socialism now became largely the history of separate national movements that, for all their ceremonial acknowledgment of Marxist orthodoxy, increasingly tended toward a revisionist and nonrevolutionary line. By the early years of the 20th century socialism had become a powerful parliamentary force in most European countries. Except in Russia, where autocracy still held sway, the Socialists were reformers seeking a transformation of the existing system rather than

its violent overthrow. Only left-wing minorities within the various parties still stood for revolutionary orthodoxy.

The Second International, founded in 1889, reflected the changed character of the movement. It was a kind of international parliament of socialist movements rather than the unified and doctrinally pure organization that the First International had attempted to be. It was dominated by the German party. With traditional Marxist rhetoric, the German delegates stood adamant against proposals to sanction socialist participation in bourgeois governments, and thus appeared to favour a “left” course. But socialist participation in government was not a realistic option in Kaiser William's Germany, and so the German delegates could be intransigent at no cost to themselves. When the issue was put to a vote at the Amsterdam congress in 1904, the Germans sided with those who opposed participation, against [Jaurès](#) and those who condoned it. But Jaurès had the better of it when he pointed out that “behind the inflexibility of theoretical formulas which your excellent comrade Kautsky will supply you with till the end of his days, you concealed . . . your inability to act.” As with the issue of government participation, so with the issue of war. The Second International, under its German leadership, issued many moving and stirring manifestoes against war, but when war broke out it disclosed its paralysis. Most of its national components sided with their own governments and abandoned the idea of international working-class solidarity. Almost all of them recognized what they may secretly have believed for a long time: the workers, after all, had a fatherland.

Other socialist tendencies before World War I

British Fabianism

Although Marxism triumphed in the continental Socialist movement, it did not do so in Great Britain. Henry Hyndman, a radical journalist, founded the Social Democratic Federation on strictly Marxist principles in the 1880s, but it ever remained marginal to the British socialist movement. The Socialist League, founded by the poet William Morris, propounded libertarian-syndicalist ideas and likewise failed to make headway. Fabian socialism, on the other hand, based on non-Marxist ideas, was to have an enduring influence in Britain.

The [Fabian Society](#) was organized in the 1880s by a number of young radical intellectuals among whom Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Graham Wallas, Sidney Olivier, and George Bernard Shaw were the most outstanding. It developed an evolutionary and moderate form of socialism. Convinced of “the inevitability of gradualness,” the Fabians never endeavoured to become a mass organization but preferred to be a ginger group of intellectuals working to transform society through practical and unobtrusive advice to the men of power. The extremely influential [Fabian Essays](#) (begun in 1889) contained detailed blueprints for social legislation and reform that influenced policymakers whether they were socialists or not. Through “permeation,” which Shaw defined as “wire-pulling the government in order to get socialist measures passed,” the Fabians attempted to convince key politicians, civil servants, trade union officials, and local decision makers of the need for planned and constructive reform legislation. Basing their doctrine at least as much on non-Marxist economics as on the continental socialist tradition, they

worked for a new order “without breach of continuity or abrupt change of the entire social tissue.”

Syndicalism

The syndicalist movement grew out of French trade unionism when it was reconstituted after the bloodletting of the Paris Commune (1871). Convinced of the futility of parliamentary and political activity, the syndicalists stressed that only direct action by workers organized in their unions would bring about the desired socialist transformation. Under the leadership of Fernand Pelloutier the [Fédération des Bourses du Travail](#) (founded in 1892), which was later amalgamated with the Confédération Générale du Travail (1902), was built on the idea that the emancipation of labour would come through a “general strike” that would paralyze the country and deliver power into the hands of organized workers. The unions would become the directing and administering nuclear cells of production.

The syndicalists attracted a number of intellectuals to their ranks, who attempted to provide a philosophical basis for syndicalism and its rejection of the political road to socialism. The most important of their writings, [Georges Sorel's *Réflexions sur la violence*](#) (1908; Eng. trans., [Reflections on Violence](#), 1916), has continued to exercise considerable influence on the thinking of revolutionary militants, even though Sorel himself soon shifted his allegiance to the extreme right.

Guild socialism

The guild socialist tradition developed in Britain in the years before World War I. Sharing the general socialist hostility to the wage system and production for profit, guild socialists took from the syndicalists their distrust of the state and their emphasis on producers' control. They looked back to the Middle Ages when independent producers, organized in guilds, controlled the conditions of their employment and took pride in creative work. Aiming at self-government in industry, guild socialists urged that industrial organizations, churches, trade unions, cooperative societies, and municipalities be granted autonomy. They argued that every group in society should carry out its particular functions without control from above, and that individuals should have a say in the direction of all those functional units in which they happened to be interested. Cooperation between functional units would replace direction by the state, which would be restricted to providing needed national services such as police protection. The state would be a functional unit among many others, rather than an all-encompassing sovereign.

Although guild socialism owes its origin to several thinkers, it grew into a mature doctrine only when in 1913 it recruited G.D.H. Cole, a brilliant Oxford don, two of whose early books, *The World of Labour* (1913) and *Self-Government in Industry* (1917), contain the best exposition of guild socialist doctrine. The movement never attained wide popular appeal but has continued to

be a source of ideas in the British labour movement, if only as a counterpoint to the bureaucratic and centralizing tendencies of Fabianism.

Socialism in the [United States](#)

Socialism never became as influential in the United States as it did in Europe. When the Socialist Party was formed in 1901 it claimed a membership of 10,000 that grew to 150,000 in 1912, in which year the party polled a presidential vote of 897,000, or 6 percent of the national total. Although its strongest roots were among recent immigrants from Europe, it also drew its inspiration from the utopian colonies of the 19th century, from the slavery abolitionists, trade unionists, and agrarian reformers, and from isolated socialist groups of the 1880s and 1890s.

The [Socialist Labor Party](#), a predecessor of the [Socialist Party](#), was formed in 1877 but acquired a distinct outlook only when the journalist and polemicist [Daniel De Leon](#) joined it in 1890. De Leon attempted to marry a doctrinaire brand of Marxism to a “labourism” nourished in part on French syndicalist doctrine. He and his followers wished to raise the membership of the unions above “paltry routine business” and prepare them for a successful contest with the power of capital, both at the ballot box and in industrial combat.

The Socialist Labor Party remained a sect. But the Socialist Party developed into a mass movement under the leadership of [Eugene Debs](#), a former union official who had been converted to socialism by reading the works of various socialist writers while in jail. The Socialist Party of Debs was neither centralized nor politically homogeneous. In its ranks it harboured reformists and revolutionaries, orthodox Marxists, Christian ministers, municipal reformers, populists who hated the railroads and the trusts, and Jewish garment workers dreaming of fraternity in the sweatshops. It produced no major theoretical works, but it managed in its undoctinaire way to be an effective voice for the idea of socialism in America. It declined after World War I, its last well-known leader being [Norman Thomas](#).

The rise of [Russian](#) socialism

The [populist](#) tradition

The dominant radical tendency in 19th-century Russia was populism, a doctrine first developed by the author and editor [Aleksandr Herzen](#), who saw in the peasant communes the embryo of a future socialist society and argued that Russian socialism might skip the stage of capitalism and build a cooperative commonwealth based on ancient peasant tradition. Herzen idealized the peasantry. His disciples inspired many students and intellectuals to “go to the people” in order to stir them into revolutionary action.

In the 1860s and 1870s, the more radical populists lost their faith in a peasant revolt and turned instead to terrorism. Small groups of student revolutionaries sought to bring down tsarism

through terroristic action; their efforts culminated in the assassination of Alexander II in 1881. [Sergey Nechayev](#)'s *Revolutionary Catechism*, in the writing of which Bakunin had a hand, stressed that the sole aim of the revolutionary is to destroy “every established object root and branch, [to] annihilate all state traditions, orders and classes in Russia.” It is one of the ironies of history that Bakunin helped create in Russia an elitist and terrorist movement composed almost exclusively of alienated intellectuals, while in western Europe he appealed to skilled craftsmen and peasants and appeared to be the heir of Proudhon.

Within the broad stream of populism, terrorism was opposed by an evolutionary socialism that put its faith in peaceful propaganda and the education of the masses. While the elitists pursued their campaign of terror, the gradualists stuck to propaganda among the people.

Marxism in prerevolutionary Russia

The father of Russian Marxism was [Georgy Plekhanov](#), who began his socialist career as a populist and was converted to Marxism when he settled in Geneva in 1880; in 1883 he founded the first Russian Marxist organization, the *Osvobozhdenie Truda* ([Liberation of Labour](#) Group). Plekhanov thought Russian socialism ought to be based primarily on the growing factory proletariat. Rejecting Herzen's idea that Russia was exceptional, he held that the revolution would be European in character and that Russia's place in it would be determined by its own labour movement. In a variety of books and pamphlets in the 1880s and 1890s, Plekhanov attacked the populists and argued that Marx had shown the objective historical necessity of socialism. The laws of social evolution could not be flouted. A bourgeois revolution in Russia was inevitable in the course of industrial development. The organized working class would know how to take advantage of the bourgeois revolution and push it forward.

Against this German brand of Marxism, [Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov](#) (1870–1924), later to be known by his party name of Lenin, argued for a more militant approach to revolution. In [What Is To Be Done?](#) (1902) he formulated his characteristic doctrine. Socialism would be achieved only when professional revolutionaries succeeded in mobilizing and energizing the masses of workers and peasants. Left to themselves, the workers would get no farther than a trade union consciousness. A militant, disciplined, uncompromising organization of revolutionaries was needed to propel the masses into action.

Lenin's followers parted company with the other Russian Marxists at the second congress of the (illegal) [Russian Social Democratic Workers Party](#) held in London in 1903. The anti-Leninist position was formulated by the leader of the more orthodox Marxists, [L. Martov](#), when he declared, “In our eyes, the labour party is not limited to an organization of professional revolutionaries. It consists of them, plus the entire combination of the active, leading elements of the proletariat”

The two factions within the Russian Social Democratic movement at first cooperated and even held joint meetings; the final split came only in 1912. Individual leaders switched from one faction to another (Plekhanov, who originally sided with Lenin, joined his opponents in 1904).

Others, such as [Leon Trotsky](#), attempted for a time to stay free from factional alignments. These disputes were fought out in the West, where most of the leaders of both sides lived as émigrés. Within [Russia](#) itself, however, Lenin's opponents (the [Mensheviks](#)) mainly attracted the better educated and skilled workers, as well as the Jewish intelligentsia, while his [Bolsheviks](#) tended to be most successful among the more backward strata of the working class.

After the February Revolution of 1917 toppled the tsarist regime and installed a liberal and vaguely socialistic leadership, the Bolsheviks managed to extend their organization among the urban masses. When Lenin returned from exile in April 1917, he startled his followers by calling for an entirely new strategy. Previously they had believed that their immediate task was to work within the limits of a democratic republic while preparing for future revolutionary opportunities. Lenin argued instead that they must seek power at once. The desire of the masses for an immediate end to the war, the land hunger of the peasantry, the feebleness of the new regime, he urged, made possible what had not been possible in the abortive revolution of 1905: a socialist revolution led by Bolshevik cadres. Moreover, Lenin argued, a [Russian](#) revolution would not be isolated for it would soon be followed by a German revolution.

The soviets (workers' and peasants' councils), which had sprung up spontaneously when the tsarist power collapsed, were the main organizational bases from which the Bolsheviks mounted their assault on the established order. Lenin's slogan "All power to the soviets" found a ready response in the major urban centres. In September 1917 the Bolsheviks won elections for the Moscow and St. Petersburg soviets. These now became centres of "dual power" challenging the official government. It was the St. Petersburg soviet that in October 1917 gave Trotsky the military instrument with which he was able to topple the provisional government and install a revolutionary regime headed by Lenin.

Lenin and the Third International

The Bolshevik seizure of power had been undertaken in the belief that the revolution would soon spread to the rest of Europe. Lenin's perspective had always been internationalist. When most of the socialist leaders of the Second International rallied to their national governments in 1914, Lenin denounced them as traitors to the cause and sought to lay the groundwork for a new organization of revolutionary Socialists. After their seizure of power, the Bolsheviks resolved to create a [Third International](#). By the time the delegates had assembled in Moscow in 1919, a revolutionary uprising in Berlin had been crushed and its leaders murdered. The great majority of the German working class was evidently willing to give the Social Democratic leadership of the new German republic a chance. But to the Russian leaders' world revolution still seemed near. Soon after the first congress of the Third International a short-lived soviet republic was proclaimed in Hungary and another in the German state of Bavaria. Communist parties began to be organized in all the major countries of Europe.

When the so-called [Communist International](#) (Comintern) met for its second world congress in July 1920, it was no longer a small gathering of individuals or representatives of small sects but a union of delegations from a dozen major Communist parties. The outcome of this meeting was to

give the Russian leaders control of the new International, now broken away sharply from the Socialist movement. It adopted 21 conditions for membership in the Comintern, demanding that its adherents reject not only those Socialist leaders who had been “social patriots” in the war but also those who had taken a middle position. It aimed at creating a disciplined and militantly revolutionary world organization patterned after the Russian model, which would accept willingly the direction and unquestioned authority of the Russian leadership.

By 1923 the hoped-for revolutionary tide in Europe had not developed. New uprisings in parts of Germany failed completely in 1923. The Red Army's attempted invasion of Poland had been thrown back. Many Socialists who had for a time joined the Comintern, including the leadership of the Norwegian Labour Party, left-wing Communists in Germany, and Syndicalists in France and Spain, now turned away, rejecting its policy of centralized dictation.

Europe achieved a measure of economic and social stabilization. By the time of Lenin's death in 1924, Moscow was beginning to use the parties over which it still held command as instrumentalities of Russian foreign policy. Although some Comintern leaders like Trotsky still believed that world revolution was on the agenda, their faith was no longer shared by the majority of the Russian leadership.

Socialism between the wars

The split with the Communists

Communists throughout the world denounced the leaders of the reconstructed Socialist parties as “social traitors” who “objectively” fostered the maintenance of capitalism. They accused them of having repudiated Marxism and betrayed international socialism by collaborating during the war with the bourgeoisie in the defense of their national states. The Socialist leaders retorted by pointing to the dictatorial features of the [Soviet](#) state and accusing the Communists of having betrayed the democratic socialist tradition.

The European Socialist movement was irremediably split. In Germany, the Social Democrats united again and succeeded in enrolling the bulk of the working class under their banner; the Communists were reduced to a minority position in the German labour movement. In France, where the Communists at first succeeded in attracting the majority of the Socialist Party, their opponents soon regained ascendancy and the Communists became a minority on the French left. Italian socialism split into Communists and left-wing and right-wing Socialists and thus greatly facilitated Mussolini's march to power. In Great Britain the Communists hardly made a dent in the Labour Party and never became more than a radical sect. European socialism as a whole, as well as socialist movements on other continents, was sharply split between adherents of the Second International and the Communists organized in the Third.

The Comintern followed an erratic course, sometimes veering toward a revolutionary line and sometimes making attempts to collaborate with the more militant strata of the socialists. After the onset of the economic depression in 1929 the Comintern took a sharp leftist turn, expecting

the “final crisis” of capitalism to bring proletarian revolution everywhere. It denounced Social Democratic leaders as “social Fascists” and enemies of the working class. In the Prussian Landtag the Communists actually voted with the Nazis to bring down a Social Democratic government, on the theory that the [Nazi movement](#) was a passing phenomenon.

At the same time the Socialists gave up in practice, though not always in theory, their commitment to revolutionary doctrine. They became in effect pressure groups trying to extract maximum advantages for the working classes from their respective national regimes. In Germany, in Britain, and in the Scandinavian countries they participated at times in the government. Elsewhere, as in France, they tended to support congenial left-bourgeois regimes. But they lacked, on the whole, a concrete plan of social and economic action, and consequently were ineffective when the world depression unsettled the economies and political regimes of western and central Europe.

Response to the world economic crisis

Nowhere, except in Sweden and Belgium, did the socialists press for comprehensive socialist planning during the depression. Where they were in power they followed orthodox policies of budgetary management and public finance. When they were out of power they contented themselves with a defense of the immediate interests of the workers by demanding more unemployment insurance and opposing reductions in wages.

As the crisis deepened, the Communists gained influence, particularly among the unemployed and those unskilled workers hit most severely by the depression. They did not make deep inroads among other workers.

The rise of [fascism](#)

Hitler's rise in Germany led to the destruction of both the Communists and the Socialists in that country. The Communists had hoped that a Nazi victory would be only temporary, and that afterward they would be called upon to lead the masses of Germany to victory. Their battle cry was, “After the Nazis—We.” The Socialists played politics as usual, expecting that the depression would run its “natural” course and that a gradual decline of the Nazi fever would follow. A disunited labour movement proved unable to stay the Nazi march to power. This disaster led both Communists and Socialists to reconsider their previous policies and to revise their strategy and tactics.

[Austrian](#) Socialists, threatened with destruction by the reactionary regime of Chancellor [Engelbert Dollfuss](#), resolved to offer armed resistance in February 1934. The [Austrian party](#) had long been regarded as a model for both its theoretical contributions and its concrete accomplishments. It enjoyed the nearly total support of the workers; 500,000 of Vienna's 2,000,000 inhabitants were dues-paying members. But the party was almost completely

metropolitan and urban. Consequently the bloody battles of February 1934 remained localized in Vienna. The uprising was suppressed after four days, and the party had to go underground.

Experience in government

Germany

The end of World War I had seen a somewhat reluctant Social Democratic Party installed in the seat of German government. [Friedrich Ebert](#), the head of the party, became the first president of the new republic. But the Socialists were split internally. The “majority Socialists,” the right wing of the party, wished to proceed in a cautious and pragmatic manner. The “independent Socialists,” led by [Kautsky](#) and his former antagonist [Bernstein](#), pressed for fundamental structural reforms. The extreme left, led by [Rosa Luxemburg](#) and [Karl Liebknecht](#), wished to organize a revolutionary party and founded the Communist Party of Germany. When younger extremists, overruling Luxemburg and Liebknecht, organized a left-wing *Putsch* early in 1919, they were isolated and easily defeated by the government of the majority Socialists and its allies among right-wing officers. Luxemburg and Liebknecht were assassinated, and the remaining leaders took the group into the Comintern. Another left-wing and Communist putsch in Bavaria a few months later was also unsuccessful. In the early 1920s, the independents reunited with the majority Socialists.

In the first election to the new National Assembly in 1919 the majority Socialists obtained a plurality of the votes cast (39.3 percent), and the independent Socialists won another 8 percent. The Socialist government proclaimed the need for socialization of monopolistic industries and other radical measures. But after the elections of June 1920, a non-Socialist cabinet took office. In subsequent years the cabinets were largely non-Socialist in character, though Socialists participated in some of them. The middle classes were again in the saddle, and when President Ebert died in 1925 the conservative nationalist Hindenburg succeeded him. Throughout the turmoil of the first years of the [Weimar Republic](#), the Social Democrats remained a bulwark of republican legality against both the extreme right and the extreme left. In the *Länder* (states), Prussia in particular, they held positions of governmental power and managed to institute a number of reformist welfare measures. But they failed to gain a controlling voice in national politics.

In the May 1928 elections the Social Democrats emerged as the strongest party in the Reichstag. Although they lacked a majority, their leader Hermann Mueller became chancellor, and their financial expert was named minister of finance. This largely Socialist government, however, proved unable to deal with the economic depression that soon afflicted Germany along with the rest of the world. The government followed an orthodox deflationary policy, pressed for the reduction of unemployment benefits in order to save taxes, and attempted to reduce budget deficits. Unable to stem the tide of [depression](#), it resigned in 1930. This was the last government of the Weimar Republic in which Social Democrats participated. Soon afterward, the Nazis started on their way to power.

Britain

In the general election of 1923 the [Labour Party](#), which had adopted a Socialist program only five years earlier, won a plurality; with the support of the Liberals it formed the first Labour government under [Ramsay MacDonald](#) in January 1924. Its tenure proved short. After implementing a few modest reform measures, it was ousted by an electorate which, partly because of manufactured fears of a “Bolshevist menace,” turned sharply to the right in the elections of October 1924.

In June 1929 the Labour Party had its second chance. It won 288 out of 615 seats in the House of Commons and, with the support of the Liberals, formed the second Labour government, again under Ramsay MacDonald. But Labour, like the German Social Democrats, proved unable to deal with the depression, particularly with mounting unemployment. It was pledged to far-reaching social reforms that it was not prepared to carry out. The flight of capital from London assumed catastrophic proportions; business circles demanded a balanced budget and lower unemployment benefits. When MacDonald proposed to accede to some of these demands, the trade unions sharply opposed him. He then split the Labour government and formed a national coalition with the Conservatives and the Liberals. For the remainder of the 1930s the Labour Party was out of power.

Italy

In the Italian elections of 1919, the Socialists won 2,000,000 votes out of a total of 5,500,000. Italy seemed on the verge of revolution; large-scale strikes, mass demonstrations, factory occupations, and spontaneous expropriations of landed estates spread throughout the country. In August 1920 a revolutionary situation developed in the industrial north after a breakdown in wage negotiations; 500,000 workers occupied the factories, kept production going, and prepared for armed resistance. The far left called for an extension of the strike, but a divided Socialist leadership hesitated. The discouraged workers retreated. [Mussolini](#)'s Blackshirts began breaking up working-class meetings. In 1921 the right-wing Socialists proposed that the party form a coalition government with the Liberals, but the left vetoed the idea. Mussolini's terror squads made further inroads in the large industrial centres. A general strike called by the trade unions proved a dismal failure. Soon afterward Mussolini made his March on Rome (October 1922) and was installed as premier. By 1926 parliamentary government had completely ended in Italy. The Socialists were driven underground.

France

None of the French governments from the end of World War I until the middle 1930s included Socialists. Although the Socialist Party was in fact deeply committed to gradualism, it still clung

to its prewar policy of not participating in “bourgeois” governments. Only in the mid-1930s, when militant right-wing groups threatened the Third Republic, did the Socialists change their policy. In June 1936 a government took office representing a [Popular Front](#), ranging from the Communists on the left to [Radical Socialists](#) in the centre and headed by the Socialist leader [Léon Blum](#). The Communists had at last abandoned their doctrine of “social Fascism” and were now willing to enter coalitions with other parties of the centre and left.

The victory of the Popular Front in June 1936 was accompanied by sit-down strikes in the factories; these helped push the government, headed by Léon Blum, in a radical direction. Collective bargaining rights, never recognized before by French employers, were now protected by law; social security and general working conditions were significantly improved; the 40-hour week was made mandatory. The Blum government attempted to institute a French version of the U.S. New Deal. But after the initial enthusiasm had waned, French employers took courage and pressed the government to return to traditional fiscal and budgetary policies. When in June 1937 his middle-of-the-road partners in the coalition refused his demands for emergency fiscal powers, Blum resigned. The Socialists participated in the next government headed by a Radical Socialist, and Léon Blum later formed another Popular Front government that held office for about a month in 1938. When France went to war against Germany in 1939 the Communist Party, which opposed the war, was banned. After France's collapse in 1940, the Socialist Party was dissolved by the Vichy government.

[Sweden](#)

Only in Sweden were Socialists successful in their governmental policies. A Swedish Labour government was formed for the first time in 1932. Unlike the other European Socialist parties, the Swedes broke with orthodox budgetary and financial policies and stressed large-scale intervention by the government in the planning of economic affairs. Extensive public works, financed by borrowing from idle capital resources, helped to reduce unemployment and stimulated the economy; public investment was used methodically to offset the effects of reduced private spending. Unemployment, which had reached 164,000 in 1933, was eliminated by 1938 through a policy of steady economic expansion. The Swedish innovations helped lead the way to the economic policies practiced by almost all Western countries after World War II.

Socialism after World War II

The worldwide spread of “socialist” parties

Orthodox Marxists had always assumed that socialism would emerge first in the industrial countries of the world. But a new kind of “socialism” spread rapidly in agrarian societies and backward countries after World War II. In many of these countries Marxism became, despite the intention of its founders, the ideology of industrialization. In the struggle against colonialism the liberation movements, especially the intellectuals and semi-intellectuals who led them, adopted

what they conceived to be socialist ideas. It seemed to them that meaningful national independence could be attained only through state direction of the economy. Rapid economic growth, they believed, could be fostered only by restricting consumption and channelling national resources into the building up of productive facilities. In one degree or another the new countries took the Soviet Union as their model for rapid industrialization. All manner of regimes, from totalitarian one-party states to military dictatorships, proclaimed that they were socialist. Only in India and a very few other countries did the ruling party retain the traditional Western socialist vision of social justice, equality, and democracy.

In the meantime, ironically, the Socialists of western Europe were giving up their Marxist views and turning toward the [welfare state](#). During World War II almost all of the Socialist parties had joined governments of national unity. Afterward they sought to become popular parties following the parliamentary road to power and ready to participate in coalition governments with Liberal or Christian Democratic partners. Surrendering the idea that only full state ownership would bring the good society, they aimed at a mixed economy in which public control and a certain amount of planning would bring social benefits for all. This was, in essence, the idea of “the inevitability of gradualism” that the English Fabians and the German revisionists had preached around the turn of the century.

The transformation of western European socialism

[Germany](#)

The new orientation of the postwar [Social Democratic Party](#) of Germany was expressed in its Frankfurt declaration of 1951, which made no mention of the class struggle and other traditional Marxist doctrine, stating instead that the party “aims to put economic power in the hands of the people as a whole and to create a community in which free men work together as equals.” It advocated public control of the economy but rejected comprehensive state ownership. It accepted planning, but stressed that democratic socialist planning had nothing in common with the Communist and totalitarian kind.

A few years later, in its program adopted in Bad Godesberg in 1959, the party shed the last remnants of Marxism. The name of Marx and the words “class” and “class struggle” did not appear in the program, which even advocated private property in the means of production. It rejected overall central planning and endorsed the idea of a competitive free market. The party now stood for “as much competition as possible—as much planning as necessary.” Moreover, the party no longer claimed to possess a universally valid doctrine and instead embraced a pluralistic society in which no party would seek to impose its particular philosophy on society as a whole. Thus, the Social Democratic Party of Germany had become a reformist party striving for an extension of the welfare state. With their election victory in 1969, the Social Democrats became the senior party in a coalition that governed West Germany for the next 20 years. Their efforts to extend the welfare state, however, were largely thwarted by anti-interventionist elements in their coalition partners, the Free Democrats. After a long interval of Christian Democratic rule beginning in 1982, the Social Democratic Party returned to power in 1998.

Under its new leader, Gerhard Schröder, the party further moderated the social-welfare policies it had advocated in earlier years and even proposed curtailing some existing programs.

Britain

The British Labour Party was never committed to Marxism and hence found it easier to adjust to the political realities of the postwar world. In 1945 it won a majority in Parliament for the first time. The government of Prime Minister [Clement Attlee](#), during its six years in power, laid the foundations of the British welfare state. A number of basic industries, such as coal, railways, road transport, and steel, were nationalized. A comprehensive system of nationalized medical care was established. Social services were extended. Full employment was maintained. Although Labour was voted out of office in 1951, its main achievements remained. The steel industry again reverted to private control, but for the next three decades no efforts were made to undo other features of the welfare state.

[Hugh Gaitskell](#), who succeeded Attlee as party leader, wanted to revamp the party's program by eliminating earlier pledges to seek large-scale nationalization of industry. Although he was not successful, in practice the party adopted a reformist course aimed at the extension of the welfare state and pragmatic planning. When the party returned to power in 1965, its leader, [Harold Wilson](#), prime minister until 1970, pursued a cautiously reformist policy. Harassed by economic difficulties and forced to pay more attention to the balance of payments than to internal reforms, the Labour government made few policy decisions of a distinctively socialist character.

The Labour Party returned to office in 1974, facing high inflation and considerable labour unrest. After its supporters in the trade unions paralyzed the country during the winter of 1978–79, the party fell from power and remained in opposition for the next 18 years, during which much of the British welfare state was dismantled by a resurgent Conservative Party under [Margaret Thatcher](#). When “New Labour” came to power in 1997, it was not as a socialist party but as a party committed to managing a mixed economy more efficiently than its Conservative predecessors, though not in a very different fashion from them.

France

Reconstituted after World War II, the French Socialist Party held leading positions in the first few postwar [French](#) governments. It supported nationalization of some parts of French industry, public control of the economy, and the reform of social security. But the party had lost much of its prewar support among the workers to the Communists, and increasingly it became a party of civil servants, middle-class professionals, and other white-collar employees. Although the Socialists made no attempt to recast their program as the German Social Democrats did, their policies were just as moderate. When party leader [François Mitterrand](#) became the first leftist president of France in 1981, the Socialists nationalized a number of industrial and financial concerns, but a worldwide recession and pressures on the franc eventually forced them to retreat

from many of these initiatives. In 1997, Socialist leader [Lionel Jospin](#) became prime minister on a program promising a shortened workweek, reduced unemployment, and a more moderate approach toward France's entry into the European Union.

Italy

After World War II the Italian Socialist movement split into a number of parties. The largest, the [Italian Socialist Party](#) under [Pietro Nenni](#), attempted to revive the left-wing Socialist tradition of the pre-Mussolini era. In 1947 the party split over the issue of whether to cooperate with the [Italian Communist Party](#), with a majority under Nenni favouring cooperation and a minority, under [Giuseppe Saragat](#), rejecting it. Saragat's faction, which became the Italian [Social Democratic Party](#) (originally the Socialist Party of Italian Workers), was committed to moderate social reforms and participated in most centre-left Italian governments through the 1980s.

After the failed [revolt](#) against Communist rule in Hungary in 1956, the Italian Socialist Party increasingly distanced itself from the Communists, and eventually it joined a coalition government with the Christian Democrats (1963). The party was a member of most Italian governments during the 1970s and '80s. In 1983–87 the Socialists formed their own governments under [Bettino Craxi](#), who became Italy's first Socialist prime minister. Following charges of corruption against Craxi and other party members in the early 1990s, the party's fortunes waned, as did those of the Italian Social Democratic Party. In 1994 the two parties merged for the second time (an earlier merger in the late 1960s was short-lived) and adopted the name Italian Democratic Socialists.

African socialism

Socialist ideas were carried to North Africa mainly by French-educated African intellectuals; in addition, many French settlers, especially schoolteachers and civil servants, were Socialists or Communists. The various national liberation movements, especially in Tunisia and Algeria, linked the struggle against [colonial](#) domination with socialist ideas. When [Algeria](#) became independent, its first leader, [Ahmed Ben Bella](#), surrounded himself with French advisers from various Marxist groups.

Collectivization of agriculture and self-management in industry stood high on the agenda of the Algerian [national](#) government. When these programs failed, Ben Bella was replaced by Colonel [Houari Boumedienne](#), who pledged to continue “Algerian socialism” but settled for an economy based on state-directed enterprises and private landholdings. In fact, the country was run by a military dictatorship. In 1988–89, under Colonel Chandli Benjadid, Algeria adopted constitutional amendments that reduced the formal powers of the governing [National Liberation Front](#) and introduced elements of a multiparty system. However, the Front was unable to establish broad-based electoral support, and during most of the 1990s it was relegated to the opposition in governments directly or indirectly controlled by the military.

In [Tunisia](#) a one-party regime was installed after independence in 1956, and, under its leader, [Habib Bourguiba](#), it proceeded to nationalize major enterprises. The ruling [Destourian Socialist Party](#) (after 1988 the Democratic Constitutional Assembly), which remained the only legal party until 1981, was committed to modernization through planned economic development. Despite gradual electoral reforms from the 1980s, the few legal opposition parties continued to face systematic obstacles, and they did poorly in elections through the end of the 20th century.

Elsewhere in Africa, the ruling elites proclaimed their adherence to one or another version of “African socialism” while in fact being committed above all to rapid industrialization and modernization. Many African socialists stressed the need to build their ideology upon African traditions such as communal land ownership, the egalitarian practices of some tribal societies, and the network of reciprocities and obligations that once existed in tribal societies. By the end of the 20th century, however, the attempt to construct African socialism had largely been abandoned, as many countries were forced to adopt privatization programs and other “structural reforms” to secure badly needed loans and to attract foreign investment.

Arab socialism

The “socialist” movements of the [Middle East](#) were led by European-educated intellectuals belonging to a new middle class of civil servants, army officers, and schoolteachers. Attempting to appeal to the Arab people as a whole, they stood for modernization and for the brotherhood of all Arabs.

The most important of these movements was the Arab Socialist Party, usually called the [Ba'ath Party](#). Founded in Syria in 1943 and subsequently established in many other Arab countries, it called for the formation of a single Arab socialist nation, though in practice it did little to promote specifically socialist policies. The party was most successful in Syria, where Ba'athist president [Hafiz al-Assad](#) ruled from 1970 until his death in 2000, and in Iraq, where President [Saddām Hussein](#) was the sole ruler from 1979 until his ouster in 2003 during the [Iraq War](#). Hussein's regime, like Assad's, was only nominally socialist. Indeed, for many observers it exemplified a new brand of Arab neo-fascism.

When [Gamal Abdel Nasser](#) came to power in Egypt in 1952, his group of young army officers had little if any interest in socialism. Nasser was subsequently led to socialist ideas through his struggle against the domination of Egypt by foreign businesses. In 1962 the Arab Socialist Union was established as the only legal political party in Egypt, and in accordance with its program the country nationalized all large industrial and financial enterprises, expropriated large landholdings, and placed all other important sectors of the economy under state control. In 1976–77 other parties were granted legal recognition, and the Arab Socialist Union was soon re-formed as the centrist National Democratic Party. As the party of the government, it maintained a virtual monopoly of power through the end of the 1990s.

Asian socialism

Southeast Asia

In the 1950s, the governments of several countries of South and Southeast Asia—India, Burma, Ceylon, Indonesia, and Singapore—called themselves Socialist. Yet the Socialist parties in these countries soon lost all power and influence. The several Socialist organizations in [India](#) were dwarfed by the ruling [Congress Party](#), which was striving to unite many divergent political and social tendencies within its ranks. The Burmese Socialist Party, though for many years a partner in coalition governments, was outlawed when General [Ne Win](#) seized power in 1962. Similarly, the Indonesian Socialist Party was abolished by President [Sukarno](#) in 1960. In the subsequent decade, practically none of the Socialist parties of the region played a significant role in the political life of their countries.

As the influence of the European-style Socialist parties waned, various authoritarian regimes arose speaking in Socialist accents. [Suharto](#), who succeeded Sukarno as president of Indonesia in 1967, retained his predecessor's vaguely socialist ideology of [Pancasila](#) (Bahasa Indonesia: “Five Principles”)—which included a commitment to “internationalism” and “guided democracy”—but in fact his regime, like Sukarno's, was little more than a corrupt personal dictatorship. The Burmese military dictatorship of Ne Win similarly proclaimed Burma a socialist state, and Socialism was also the official program of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), which came to power in another military coup in 1988.

[Japan](#)

Only in Japan, by far the most developed of Asian countries, did traditional socialist organizations become firmly established. The [Socialist Party of Japan](#), formed in 1901, endured varying periods of repression and harassment until 1946, when it won more than 90 seats in the Diet to become Japan's third-strongest party, and a year later its leader, Katayama Tetsu, became prime minister in a coalition government (1947–48). In the 1960s the party split to form the leftist Japan Socialist Party and the rightist [Democratic Socialist Party](#). The Japan Socialist Party, which called for nonalignment and a democratic transition to socialism, gradually moderated its commitment to socialism in the 1980s and '90s. In 1993, as the Social Democratic Party of Japan, the party participated in the first government in four decades not headed by the Liberal Democratic Party. In 1994 the party's leader, Murayama Tomiichi, became the first Socialist prime minister of Japan in nearly 50 years. Soon thereafter the party's electoral fortunes dramatically reversed, and by the end of the 1990s it had ceased to be a significant force in Japanese politics.

Other countries and regions

[Australia](#) and [New Zealand](#)

Socialism has deep roots in the British Commonwealth countries of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. The [Australian Labor Party](#) was formed in 1901, just as the Australian Commonwealth came into existence. Only three years later its leader, [John Christian Watson](#), became the world's first Labor prime minister, and by 1915 Labor had headed three national governments. It subsequently led the country during several crucial events in its history, including the two world wars and the onset of the Great Depression. The party formed the government again in 1973–75 and 1983–96. At the end of the 1990s its program called for racial and gender equality, a nonaligned foreign policy, and an end to the constitutional role of the British monarchy.

A loose Liberal-Labour alliance dominated New Zealand politics between 1893 and 1906, but the [New Zealand Labour Party](#) did not emerge until 1916. It grew steadily, coming to power in 1935 for the first of several periods of varying duration. Despite its principled pledge to bring about socialism, the New Zealand Labour Party, like its Australian counterpart, was committed to gradual reform, and it was mainly concerned with using governmental control as a means of dealing with immediate problems and expanding social services. In 1984, the Labour government of [David Lange](#) retreated from some of the party's earlier commitments by partially deregulating the economy and reducing some government subsidies. After seven years in opposition in the 1990s, the Labour Party returned to power in 1999 under its leftist leader Helen Clark.

[Canada](#)

Canadian socialism developed more slowly than its Australian and New Zealand counterparts. Prior to World War I the Canadian Socialist movement was split between two parties, neither of which managed to win seats in the federal Parliament. During the 1920s various Socialist and Labour parties flourished in different parts of Canada, but only rarely did they win federal office. In 1944 the socialist Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), campaigning on a promise of “social and economic planning on a bold and comprehensive scale,” won provincial elections in Saskatchewan, and it remained in power there for the next 20 years. In 1961 progressive union leaders joined with the CCF to form the [New Democratic Party](#), which expanded support for the Socialist movement from the agrarian midwest to the more industrialized parts of the country. Advocating a planned economy, the party stood for increased social security, government employment guarantees, and large-scale construction of low-rent housing, among other goals. The New Democrats formed governments in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia intermittently to the 1990s, in the Yukon Territory in the 1980s, and in Ontario, Canada's largest and richest province, in the 1990s.

Latin America

Socialism in Latin America has a long history. Several branches of the First International were established in Argentina in the early 1870s. In [Chile](#) and Argentina, and to a lesser extent in other countries of the region, socialists at times played leading roles, but they were hampered by factional conflicts and by the fact that their following consisted mainly of immigrant industrial workers. In Chile, however, they participated in coalition and popular-front governments in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. In 1958, Chilean socialists supported the Popular Action Front (FRAP) candidate, [Salvador Allende](#), who was narrowly defeated in that year and again in 1964. In 1970, Allende won by a narrow plurality in a three-way election and became head of a government supported by a broad popular front of leftist groups. Pledged to the nationalization of foreign-owned industry and to the planned reconstruction of the country, the government soon met with increasing economic and political turmoil, some of which was secretly abetted by the United States. In 1973, Chile's government was overthrown and Allende killed in a bloody military coup led by General [Augusto Pinochet](#), who established a dictatorship that ruled Chile for the next 16 years. The restoration of democracy in 1990 led eventually to the election of moderate Socialist presidents Ricardo Lagos in 2000 and Michelle Bachelet in 2006, the latter of whom was the first woman to hold the office. Meanwhile, socialist presidents were elected in Brazil in 2002 and in Bolivia in 2005.