

Social Revolution

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In the Trotskyist movement, the term "social revolution" refers to an upheaval in which existing property relations are smashed. Examples include the October Revolution in Russia in 1917 and the Cuban Revolution, as both caused capitalist (and in some cases pre-capitalist) property relations to turn into post-capitalist property relations as they operated by plan rather than by market. Social revolutions is contrasted with purely political revolutions in which the government is replaced, or the form of government altered, but in which property relations are predominantly left intact. Social revolutions do not imply necessarily that the working class as a whole has control over the production and distribution of capital and goods - in many countries this control passed to a new elite in the form of a communist party - they just mean that the market is no longer used, and that the capitalist class has been expropriated.

In libertarian socialist and anarchist parlance, a "social revolution" is a bottom-up, as opposed to a vanguard party-led or purely political, revolution aiming to reorganize all of society (see Spanish Revolution). In the words of Alexander Berkman, "social revolution means the reorganization of the industrial, economic life of the country and consequently also of the entire structure of society." More generally, the term "social revolution" may be used to refer to a massive change in society, for instance the French Revolution, the American Civil Rights Movement and the 1960 hippie or counterculture reformation on religious belief, personal identity, freedom of speech, music and arts, fashion, alternative technology or environmentalism and decentralised media.

In Islamic thinking, especially in the Shi'a school of thought, a social revolution is needed when any form of government is tyrannic and despotic to its people. The underlying concept of Islamic Revolution maintains that moral freedom is the most important aspect of a human's fundamental needs. This philosophy is challenged by dictators throughout the world.

Theda Skocpol in her article "France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions" states that social revolution is a "combination of thoroughgoing structural transformation and massive class upheavals" (175). She comes to this definition by combining Samuel P. Huntington's definition that it "is a rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and government activities and policies" and Lenin's that revolutions are "the festivals of the oppressed... as creators of a new social order" (Skocpol 175). She also states that this definition excludes many revolutions, because they fail to meet either or both of the two parts of this definition.