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** BULLETIN MATTERS **

First I should explain the mystery of the blank sheet of paper in most U.S. subscriptions and all exchange copies of DB93. After nearly nine years of mailing the DB via bulk mail, a new employee of the bulk
maling unit here in Grand Rapids discovered that Post Office regulations require that all copies weigh exactly the same. We have been violating the rules by inserting a sheet of paper in some copies giving notice of expired subs or providing information to recipients of sample copies. To make the mailing acceptable, we had put a sheet of paper in those copies that were underweight.

As a result beginning with this issue we are publishing a set piece on page two giving information about the DB including the purpose and the subscription prices instead of the sheet of yellow paper with its "GENTLE REMINDER!" addressed to those of you whose subs have expired.

Now to this issue: Canadian DB subscriber Paresh Chattopadhyay's article, first published in the Economic Review, Colombo, Sri Lanka, will interest "left Leninists," who maintain that the Bolshevik

(Cont'd on p. 113)

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION BULLETIN

The Discussion Bulletin is affiliated with the Industrial Union Caucus in Education (IUCE). It was designed to serve as the financially and politically independent forum of a little known sector of political thought. It places the great divide in the "left," not between anarchists and Marxists but between capitalism's statist left-wing of vanguardists and social democrats and the real revolutionaries of our era: the non-market, anti-statist, libertarian socialists. It is organized in small groups of syndicalists, communist anarchists, libertarian municipalists, world socialists, socialist industrial unionists, council communists, and left communists.

The perspective of those groups with their rejection of capitalism's wage, market, and money system along with capitalist politics and unionism constitutes the only real alternative to capitalism in both its market and statist phases.

In the DB the often fiercely antagonistic groups that make up this sector can debate and discuss the issues that divide them, gain some understanding of their history and future possibilities, and begin a process, we hope, of at least limited cooperation.

The pages of the DB are open to anyone in this political sector, the only limitations being that submissions be typewritten, single-spaced, and copier ready. We do no editing here. As to content, we assume that submissions will be relevant to the purpose of the DB and will avoid personal attacks.

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DID THE BOLSHEVIK SEIZURE OF POWER INAUGURATE A SOCIALIST REVOLUTION? — A MARXIAN INQUIRY

by Paresh Chattopadhyay

In the eyes of the overwhelming majority on the left — certainly in South Asia — the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia in 1917 signalled the victory of socialist revolution or at least started the socialist revolution in that country. Those who accept this position hold it more or less axiomatically. The present essay is an attempt at examining this position by going back to the significance of socialist revolution in the original sense of Marx. All the principal (theoretical) categories used in the following lines are Marxian. We say 'Marxian' and not 'Marxist' in order to stress that we are taking the categories as they appear in Marx's own texts and not as they are interpreted by people claiming to be his followers.

We are no historians, and the paper naturally in no way claims to be a contribution in history. Ours is rather an essay in (critical) analysis, from a Marxian point of view, based on the events that are already well-known.

As is well known, Russia, around the time of the Bolshevik seizure of power, was a backward (capitalist) country. On the eve of the first World War, according to one authority, "after three decades of swift industrialisation the urban population still accounted for less than one fifth of the total, and workers in mining and manufacturing (excluding the artisan sector) less than 2 percent. Some 80 percent of the population still derived its livelihood from agriculture." Given this situation in Russia there seems to be a quasi-consensus shared by the Marxists and the non-Marxists — that what is generally known as "October Revolution" — supposed to be proletarian — was contrary to the Marxian contention that a proletarian revolution could take place only in an advanced capitalist country. This idea could be seen summed up in the laconic statement of the young Antonio Gramsci: "The revolution of the Bolsheviks is the revolution against Karl Marx's Capital."1

Abstracting for the moment from the question of the character of the October event in Russia, the general theoretical stand underlying the view given above, is, we submit, an over-simplification — bordering on a superficial reading of the Marxian position.2 To start with, in Marx's perspective of future revolution, it is not the proletarian revolution or what is equivalent in this case — socialist (Communist) revolution breaking out in an advanced capitalist country that alone finds a place. In this perspective there could also be outside of this so-called 'classic' case, a situation occurring in a relatively backward society where, unlike what had happened in earlier revolutions, the proletariat would play an active (including the leading) role. Such a situation could arise in two types of circumstances. First, this could be a non-proletarian revolution that would directly interest the proletariat. Secondly, this could be a proletarian revolution without yet being a communist (socialist) revolution.

As regards the first case the Communist Manifesto (Section IV) specifically discusses the role of the communists in the coming "bourgeois revolution" in (backward) Germany. "Again, in Marx's "address" on "revolution in permanence" delivered two years later the immediate perspective for the German proletariat is still held as the completion of the bourgeois revolution to be only followed by the proletarian revolution. Similarly in the preface to the Russian edition of the Communist Manifesto — jointly signed by Marx and Engels one year before the former's death — we read about the possibility of a (non-proletarian) "Russian revolution giving a signal to the proletarian revolution in the West" and leading to a "communist form of collective ownership" in Russia mediated by the existing communal form of property in land.

As to the second case Marx envisages, with regard to backward Germany, a "proletarian revolution backed by some second edition of the Peasant war."3 In the same way, Marx is in his polemic with Balzac in about two decades later, speaks of the possibility of the proletarian coming to power in the "States of Western European Continent" (that is, outside of England) "where the mass of peasants form a more or less important majority of the population" and where (naturally) the proletariat has to "win the peasantry for the revolution."4

Thus a proletarian revolution breaking out in a backward capitalist country is certainly not, in principle, outside of the Marxian framework.

In a famous passage which has been subject to numerous misinterpretations and misuses Marx writes: "No social formation ever disappears before all the productive forces, for which it is large enough, have developed."5 It goes without saying that in a backward capitalist country the forces of production have far from developed to the full. But Marx speaks of revolution in such a country taking place under the leadership of the proletariat, as we saw above. Can these two positions be reconciled? Now, in a situation of backwardness the immediate task of the proletariat leading the revolution is not to effect a transition to socialism by eliminating (the partially -
CAPITALISM & SOCIALISM

existing capitalism. Its immediate task is to destroy the pre-capitalist relations, that is, complete the "historic" tasks of the bourgeois revolution. In the "classical" case, this would be the work of the bourgeoisie itself. But in situations where the bourgeoisie is weak and no longer revolutionary via any pre-bourgeois dominant classes it is the proletariat in alliance with the rest of the immediate producers that must accomplish the work. In the process of completion of the tasks of the bourgeois revolution the proletariat, at the same time, creates (consciously) "the material conditions of existence of the higher relations of production", to use the words of the same Marx. Then, a proletariat revolution is not directly a socialist revolution (yet) in the sense that its task is not merely to create things, to transform the society of free and associated labour. To try the latter without creating its "material conditions of existence" would simply be "Don Quixoteism". After all, a society cannot go over the natural (naturgemasse) phases of its development either by leaps or by decrees.

Given, however, that Marx's principal preoccupation is with the "economic" law of motion of the capitalist society (its growth, decay and death), the revolution that occupies most of his attention is the revolution against capitalism as the "grave diggers", that is, communist or socialist revolution (they are equivalent in Marx). Here the proletarian revolution—pre-supposing the completion of the historic task of the bourgeois revolution—is the same as socialist revolution.

Let us be clear about the Marxian conception of "revolution". By (social) revolution Marx means, as he already emphasized in his polemic with Robbe (1844), the "dissolution of the old relations" of society9 and equivalently, as he says fifteen years later, a "change" in society's "economic basis", instituted by the (social) "relations of production."10 An immediate consequence of this conception is that social revolution is not a mere change of the political power (though the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus), it being only the "first step in the working class revolution" as the Communist Manifesto declared. The old relations of production do not disappear and the new relations do not arise on the morrow of the proletarian seizure of power and the establishment of the juridically ordained "public ownership" of the means of production in as much as the working class has to go "through long struggles, through series of historical processes transforming circumstances and men", as Marx emphasizes referring to the first proletarian dictatorship in history11—-in short, through a whole "period of revolution" as a preparation to which corresponds the proletarian rule.12 Thus the "epoch of social revolution" for the working class comprises a whole period—the period of "prolonged birth pains" in Marx's celebrated metaphor of 1875—-from the installation of the proletarian political rule to the advent of the new society, the "first phase of communism." The entire process is, of course, based—on the central postulate enshrined in Marx's whole life work, namely, that the emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves. The proletarian revolution is indeed summed up in what Marx called (in 1859) the battle cry of the working class: "The Revolution in permanence."

As a consistent materialist Marx, it is well-known, did not leave any "blue print" for the future society. In the same way, it should go without saying, there is no unique "model" of socialist revolution in Marx's writings—the "German model" as Lenin would say in his polemic with the Mensheviks. There could indeed be innumerable kinds of historical situations with corresponding permutations of social forces in which a socialist revolution could break out and proceed. (Marx himself learnt a lot about the proletarian revolution from the Parisian workers in 1871.) But what remains invariant amidst all these permutations and combinations is that his revolution must involve a radical transformation in the social relations of production and must be self-emancipatory act of the immediate producers themselves beginning with the establishment of their absolute rule as a class (That is, not by an individual or a group in its name and standing in the middle of their direct control). Otherwise we are not speaking of socialist revolution within a Marxian framework.

A radical transformation in the social relations of production would mean, in this connection, (re)union—at a higher level—of the producers with their conditions of production—in real and not formal judicial terms of course—away from separation (opposition) between the two characterizing capitalism. This would signify a complete inversion of the principle under capitalism: "The means of production employ the workers, the workers do not employ the means of production," in Marx's striking phrase of Ricardo.13

II - I

It is for the first time in April 1917, upon his arrival in Petrograd, that Lenin called for a socialist revolution in Russia.14 He knew perfectly well that in the Marxian scheme socialist revolution is supposed to follow the bourgeois—democratic revolution. Indeed he had, in 1905, clearly distinguished between these two phases of the Russian revolution. Following Lenin the Bolsheviks had hitherto argued that the socialist revolution in Russia starting with the proletarian dictatorship would usher in after the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution were, at least in the main, completed under the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, given the incapacity of the Russian bourgeoisie to accomplish its "historical mission". When, however, Lenin called for a socialist revolution in Russia bourgeois-democratic revolution was very very far from completed in the country. In support of his call Lenin advanced the surprising argument that "the state power in Russia has passed into the hands of a new class, namely the bourgeoisie and the landlord turned bourgeoisie. To this extent the bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia is completed."15

We would, on the other hand, suggest that to the extent that Lenin predicated the completion (even partial) of the bourgeois democratic revolution simply on the passage to political power of the Russian bourgeoisie, Lenin was revising the concept of social revolution in Marx, in as much as a social revolution in Marx,
as we saw above, means nothing less
then a transmutation of the political
relations of production and not simply a
change in the political "superstructure";
its Marx's language of 1859.

Lenin's defence of his position against
his opponents is, to say the least,
ambiguously. Thus one year before his
death he wrote against N. Sukhanov
that, contrary to a pre-established
"model" of revolutionary sequence, a
people "faced with a revolutionary
situation" might have to "throw itself"
into it before creating the conditions for
"socialism".16 Now as a general proposi-
tion this is exceptional. But why and
in what sense the revolution referred
to has to be precisely a socialist revolution
in a semi-feudal society with the prole-
tariat constituting a tiny minority of
the total population? Why cannot this be a
bourgeois -- democratic revolution
under the leadership of the proletariat
-- in alliance with the rest of the exploit-
towards completing the so-called "his-
toric task" of the bourgeoisie in order to
advance, unviolently to a socialist
revolution. In fact this latter position was
defended against Lenin by the much
maligned Bolshevism Kamenev in April
1917. Kamenev and his partners went
further. In as much as Lenin call for
"socialist revolution", being or theory,
meant in practice merciless struggle
against all the non-Bolshevik socialist
currents in Russia (not accepting Lenin's
point of view) leading to the exclusive
political power of the Bolshevism
Kamenev and his partners, who wanted a
"party of revolutionary proletarian
masses," warned against the danger of the
seizure of power by a "small group of
bolsheviks" incapable of holding the power
exercising through terror.17

The spontaneous rise of the soviets
-- at first of workers and soldiers' dele-
ties in Russia in February 1917, surprised all
the existing political parties in the country
as it had done twelve years earlier.
The workers had gone far beyond their so-
called "trade-union consciousness" and
on their own gained full political class
consciousness -- independently of the
political parties. In a way the soviet
phenomenon largely invalidated Lenin's
1902 thesis that on their own the workers
could only acquire "trade union cons-
sciousness" and that the revolutionary
consciousness had to be imported to
them from outside by the revolutionary
intellectuals. On the other hand the
soviet phenomenon fully corroborated
what the young Marx and Engels had
written: "The consciousness of the
necessity of an "apparent" revolution"
would arise from the (working) class
itself,21 or what Lenin's great contem-
porary said in 1906: "revolutions do not
allow any "school masters".22 The great
Paris Commune had shown the same
tendency in 1871 just as the splendid
Spanish workers were to show in their
fight against the government in the thirties only to
be shamelessly crushed by Stalin's
"Internationalists."

Unprepared for and surprised by the
rise of the soviets the different socialist
parties increasingly tried to control them
by gaining majority in them. At the first
Pan-Russian Congress of Soviets of
Workers and soldiers' deputies in June
the Bolshevism constituted less than one-
seventh of the delegates. However, ins-
terruption of from setbacks in July-August,
the Bolshevism increasingly won influence in
the Soviets and the beginning of autumn
they made great progress, gaining clear
majority in Petrograd, Moscow and
other big industrial centres. However, in
the Western regions (among the peas-
antry), that is, among the immense majority
of the country's working population, it is
the Socialist Revolutionaries who held a
majority in the Soviets (in October the Social-
Revolutionaries split and the majority of
the party came out and formed an inde-
pendent party, the so-called Left Social-
ist Revolutionaries, which often helped the
Bolshevism obtain majority in different
soviets). The Menshevik had majority
only in a handful of regions. The anar-
chists and the so-called "Mensheviks" also
were faced with the Bolshevism very often and contributed
caracter" of the Soviets) Lenin in fact wanted 'power' to be exclu-
sively in the hands of his Party. This is
clearly seen, for example, when in the
first Congress of Soviets of Workers and
Soldiers' Deputies where the Bolshevists

as and contributed
considerably to the increasing radicalis-
tion of the masses. This was the situation
in October.

Though "all power to the soviet" was
the great mobilising slogan propagated
by Lenin and his Party (dropped for a
while during summer in view of the
"reactionary character" of the soviets),
Lenin in fact wanted 'power' to be exclu-
sively in the hands of his Party. This is
clearly seen, for example, when in the
first Congress of Soviets of Workers and
Soldiers' Deputies where the Bolshevists

Thus the Congress of the Soviets when it met was faced with the seizure of power (through insurrection) as a fait accompli. Not only that. The Provisional Government was disavowed not only by the Congress of Soviets, not even by the Petrograd Soviet but by the so-called 'Military Revolutionary Committee' of the Petrograd Soviet - completely dominated by the Bolsheviks - by a decree drawn up by Lenin himself. This singular operation wrote a notable French historian, "deprived simultaneously the Congress of Soviets and the Petrograd Soviet of all right to legality regarding the founding act of the new order and in fact deprived them of any claim to legitimacy. The day after the Congress closed Maxim Gorky's journal Novaja zhizn (New Life) wrote, 'The Congress of the Soviets was deprived of the possibility of freely deciding the question of the hour, that of military conspiracy at the moment when it assembled, the seizure of power being placed before it as a fait accompli. The creation of a new power (the Soviet Republic) and its political programme were similarly fixed in advance. The Congressists saw themselves being precipitated, for want of form, the adoption without debate of these same theses proclaimed in a solemn declaration to the people. This is how the parliament of revolution, democracy was transformed into a machine to stamp mechanically the mark of approval on all the directives of the Bolshevik Central Committee." While addressing the Congress of Soviets Leon Trotsky declared: 'They tell us: you did not arrest the Congress with your uprising... we as a party considered this our task to make it genuinely possible for the Congress of Soviets to seize the power... In order to achieve this task a party was needed which would wrench the power from the hands of the counter-revolution and say to the people, "Here is the power and you've got to take it."'

The ultimate act of consolidation of the Bolshevik road to power was the "final solution" of the problem of the Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly was the supreme objective of all the liberal (bourgeois) and socialist tendencies in Russia from the start of the revolutionary movement. Simultaneously the symbol and crowning point of decades of struggle against the autocracy the Assembly in fact became a revolutionary demand of the country's working people - including the vast peasant masses. The Bolsheviks were throughout the most vociferous advocate for convening the Assembly and insisted that only they would ensure its summoning and prevent the Provisional Government from frustratying this great event in Russian history. While announcing the victory (of the seizure of power) in October the quasi Bolshevik 'Military Revolutionary Committee' promised to convene the Assembly without delay. The next day Lenin, introducing before the Congress of Soviets the decree on peace, spoke of "submitting all peace proposals to the Constituent Assembly for decision," and introduced the decree on Land (taking over textually what was earlier drawn up by the Socialist Revolutionaries) as "expressing the absolute will of the vast majority of the conscious peasants of all Russia" which in its preamble declared that "the land problems in its full extent can be solved only by the Constituent Assembly." Lenin went even so far as to say that "even if the peasants give the Socialist Revolutionary Party a majority we will still say so be it... We must leave full creative freedom to the masses of the people." In the elections that took place about three weeks after the seizure of power - the first elections in the history of Russia". The Bolsheviks received less than a quarter of the total votes cast. Already apprehensive that the outcome of a country-wide free election would not be in favour of the Bolsheviks - "it is senseless (for the Party) to wait for the Constituent Assembly that evidently will not be with us" he had argued at a meeting of the Central Committee two weeks before the seizure of power - Lenin now came out openly against the Constituent Assembly contradicting his own position expressed only a few days earlier. When the overwhelming majority of the people could not yet know the full extent and significance of the October proletarian peasant revolution, he wrote, "every attempt to consider the question of the Constituent Assembly from a formal or legal point of view... would be a betrayal of the proletarian cause, and a going over to the bourgeois point of view." When the Assembly did open on January 18, 1918, the Bolsheviks presented it with a 'Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited Peoples' - drafted by Lenin - that incorporated the legislation of the Second Congress of Soviets on land, power and workers' control of industry - unexceptionable in itself the 'Declaration', however, wanted the Assembly to consider that it would be basically wrong, even formally, to oppose the Soviet power and therefore to consider that supporting the Soviet power and the decrees of the Council of Peoples' Commissars its task is limited to establishing the fundamentals of a socialist reorganisation of society. This clearly amounted to an act of addiction of power by the Constituent Assembly dictated by the Bolsheviks in the name of the Soviets. By a vote of 231 to 140 the Assembly rejected it. Needless to add, this act of the Assembly sealed its fate and it was dispersed by the Red Guards the next morning.

It was natural that the opponents of the Bolsheviks would seize upon the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly as an example, among others, of the 'anti democratic' character of the new regime. As is well known K. Kautsky was one of the most vociferous among these opponents. In his celebrated reply to Kautsky Lenin justified the dissolution of the Assembly on the plea (mainly) that the dictatorship of the proletariat was superior to bourgeois democracy and Soviet Republic was superior to bourgeois Republic. This he did by axiomatically holding a series of equivalences: Bolshevik power = Soviet Power = Paris Commune type rule = Proletarian Dictatorship (Correspondingly the power that the Bolsheviks suspended was supposed to be bourgeois democratic). This chain of reasoning, however, completely obscures and mystifies the real process of the Bolshevik seizure of power and the way that power was sought to be maintained.

However, the opposition to the Bolshevik action did not emanate from the 'enemies' alone. The great contemporary of Lenin Rosa Luxemburg, with her impeccable revolutionary credentials and a lot of sympathy for the revolutionary position of the Bolsheviks via a lot the reformists of the Second International
also sharply criticized the Bolshevik action. Very interestingly he found a curious consequence of the Bolshevik and the Kautskyan approaches to the question of democracy and dictatorship which she thought was opposed to the Marxist approach. "The fundamental error of the Leninists, in the organization, she writes is that they like Kautsky, oppose dictatorship to democracy. The formulation of the question for the Bolsheviks as well as for Kautsky is "dictatorship" or "democracy? The latter (Kautsky) naturally opts for democracy, indeed for bourgeoisie democracy, because it constitutes the alternative to the socialist revolution. Lenin-Trotzky opts on the contrary, for the dictatorship in opposition to democracy and thereby for the dictatorship of a handful of persons, that is, for the dictatorship after the bourgeois model."

II - 2

On the morrow of the seizure of power Lenin claimed that the "Soviets are following the same road as that of the Paris Commune." That the "Soviet Republic is a continuation of Paris Commune." But to what extent did these words correspond to the reality?

Now when Lenin spoke of "Soviet Power" he meant nothing at all. By"Soviet Power" he meant nothing more than a variant of the "proletarian dictatorship" or "proletarian power" with the "Bolshevik Power." Thus six months after the seizure of power Lenin wrote: "We, the Party of the Bolsheviks conquered (voted for) Russia, from the rich for the poor from the exploiters for the labouring people. We must now govern Russia... We must now consolidate what ourselves have decreed, legislated, discussed, charted... and this is the "Soviet Power" — conquered, held and exercised not by the labouring people themselves but by the Bolsheviks in their name who, it Lenin automatically equates with the proletarian dictatorship. Inasmuch as "sell now we have not reached the stage where the labouring masses could participate in government... the Soviets, as a matter of fact are organs of government for the labouring mass."

Lenin told the eighth Congress of the Party. Naturally no political or organizational question is settled by any state institution in our republic without the guidelines of the Party's Central Committee." Writing against "a purely liberal idea of the march of the revolution" Trotsky in his turn observed that "the revolutionary domination of the proletariat supposes the domination of a Party in the proletariat itself... The substitution of the power of the party for the power of the working class is, fundamentally, no substitution at all." No doubt the "general direction of affairs" is concentrated in the hands of the Party... The last word belongs to the Central Committee of the Party."

How very different is Marx's account of the practice of the Parisian workers constituting the Commune of 1871, the first dictatorship of the proletariat! "Workers govern the Paris Commune." Marx wrote: "they have not only "taken the initiative of the present Revolution" but "they have" also "taken the management of their Revolution into their own hands.""

Before proceeding further let us note another organ of workers self-role that arose in 1917 by the side of the Soviets, namely the factory committees. Contrary to the Soviets which represented the workers, soldiers and ultimately the peasants, the factory committees represented the industrial workers only. Secondly, while the Soviets in course of their growing institutionalization were little by little, losing direct contact with the masses at the base, the factory committees were in daily contact with the workers at the shop floor and to that extent these committees directly reflected the changing temper and growing revolutionary aspirations of the labouring masses. Already by the middle of April 1917, the "Provisional Government" was obliged to accept these committees as workers' representatives facing the enterprise management on the question of wages, hours and general conditions of labour as well as for claiming from the government various state and social services for the workers. The Bolsheviks found them an ideal instrument of propaganda and, as a matter of fact, they became a Bolshevik stronghold fairly rapidly. As champions of "workers' control" the Bolsheviks quickly gained majorities in these committees. By October, these committees had successfully pushed the trade unions to the background and independently of any law, they were directly intervening not only in the question of day to day production but also in those of enterprise management, frequently bringing the factories under the collective possession of the workers after expelling their legal owners. However, after the Bolshevik seizure of power "the factory committees continued to function as organs of self-administration for workers increasingly clash with the inherent centralizing tendency of the Bolshevik power. Within a very short period the trade unions, by now dominated by the ruling Party, succeeded in annexing them and transforming them as their own organs at the lowest level thus ending the direct sovereignty of these committees."

On his side Lenin now discovered that the "Russian is a bad worker in comparison with the advanced nations." Therefore, instead of collectively administering the affairs of work places, through their own elected organs - a practice earlier championed by the Bolsheviks but now denounced as "petty bourgeois spontaneity," the masses must unquestionably obey the single will of the leaders of labour process."

And must accept "unquestioning subordination during work to the one-man decisions of Soviet Directors, of the Donskomov (dictators) elected or appointed by the Soviet institutions, vested with dictatorial powers (dictatorship)."

At the same time Lenin understood that "particular significance is now attached to measures for raising labour discipline and labour productivity through such typical bourgeois measures as the introduction of Taylor system and piece work."

At another level a logical consequence of equating the proletarian dictatorship with the Bolshevik rule was not only the elimination of the monarchical and the bourgeois political parties but also the effacement of the two (other) socialist parties the Socialist Revolutionaries (first the "Right" and ultimately the Left) and the Mensheviks. Opposition to the Bolshevik seizure of power instantly made the Mensheviks and the "Right" Socialists Revolutionaries "counter-revolutionary." However, if by counter-revolution is
meant the restoration of the old regime in Russia. They were certainly not counter-revolutionaries. As a noted authority has remarked, "the reverse was the case: each of these parties threw away the opportunities which it had to really effectively bring about the Communist rule for the fear that this would play into the hands of the reactionary side in the Civil War." And the historian adds that this was probably why so long as the Civil War raged the Communists while constantly pressing the two socialist parties by arrests and administrative repression, nevertheless suffered their continued existence." The end of the Civil War and the beginning of the New Economic Policy (NEP) practically split the end of overt political activities of these two parties. Their free activities were massively suppressed of course much earlier, immediately after the seizure of power through the very first decree of the newly established Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom), the decree on the press which - contrary to the Bolshevik Party's old programme guaranteeing press freedom - instituted censorship and prohibited the publication of news papers and journals that would question the new regime. It should also be mentioned that the Anarchists, close allies of the Bolsheviks in their rise to power, were, in their turn, also severely persecuted in the post-seizure period. Finally, the Bolshevik leadership, not satisfied with the suppression of the other parties, wanted to "arrest the syndicalism and anarchist deviation in the party." which was a "complete rupture with Marxism and Communism" as interpreted, it goes without saying, by Lenin and prohibited. Starting with 1921, the existence of groups with separate platforms within the Party.

In his different writings in 1917 before the seizure of power, Lenin closely followed the analysis of the Paris Commune by Marx and Engels, who particularly stressed, as the characteristics of proletarian dictatorship, the destruction of the old state machine with its police, standing army and bureaucracy and their replacement, under the new dispensation, not by another type of autonomous state apparatus but by freely elected and revocable officials at all levels, earning workpersons' wages, and the universally armed workers, and had accused "the Plekhanovs and the Rotshilds" of having "forgotten and perverted" this "essence of the Paris Commune", and we saw above that the new regime was of the Paris Commune type). However, here again, Lenin apparently contradicted his words. He himself had to admit, shortly before his death, that "we effectively took over old state apparatus from the Tsar and his bourgeoisie... wholly...". Indeed, the bureaucratic machine organically linked with the new central establishments, increased with gigantic strides, particularly in the absence of any verifiable political opposition. Alexandre Kollontai, much to her glory, observed perspicaciously in 1931 that "we are afraid of the autonomous activity of the masses. That we have to leave a free domain to their creative spirit. We fear criticism. We have ceased to have confidence in the masses. That is the cause of our bureaucratism (People's) initiative is weakening, (their) will is-it is not appearing.... In this way off extremely harmful division is appearing: 'we' - that is the workers and 'they' - that is the Soviet functionaries on whom depends everything. The evil has no other origin..." The same year, after the prohibition of the existence of different platforms within the Bolshevik Party another Bolshevik, G. Miasnikov, a worker-founder of the Workers' Group (wholly proletarian in its composition) wrote to the Central Committee of the Party: "Now that we have crushed the resistance of the exploiters and that we have constituted ourselves into a unique power in the country we must proclaim liberty of expression and press (for everybody) from the monarchists to the anarchists - a liberty such as no one has ever experienced in the world."

According to Lenin's often repeated pre-seizure declaration one of the vital conditions of transforming bourgeois democracy into proletarian democracy is the abolition of the standing army and its substitution by the armed workers, and he had precisely accused the "Socialist Revolutions and the Mensheviks" for not "carrying out this demand after the February revolution." However, after the seizure of power, not only a standing army - but also "Red" - was created but even the earlier promise - made a few hours after the power was seized - of "full democracy within the army" was completely violated. On the other hand, the initially self-armed workers - the "red guards" - were completely disarmed, in many cases simply integrated into the standing army.

A similar development could be seen in the rise and consolidation of a special police apparatus, separated from the labouring masses, of which the core, the dreaded security police - Vecheta or Cheka - established five weeks after the seizure of power rapidly grew to over a quarter of a million by mid 1921. For the state, established through the October seizure of power, with its own bureaucracy, standing army and police kind of an ever increasing series with no tendency to converge to a limit completely belied Lenin's repeated affirmation that this state was of the Paris Commune type, a "Commune - State." As an American historian has observed, "deprived of power in the Soviets and in the factories the Russian Proletariat... found that the triumph of the dictatorship in its name was a very hollow victory."

Lenin (and the other Bolsheviks) always claimed that the October seizure of power had inaugurated socialist revolution in Russia and that the state issued from the act was the embodiment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This assertion became a byword of a self-evident truth with the immense majority of the revolutionaries. Left. However, from a materialist point of view and paraphrasing Marx's words from his 1889 "Preface" referred to earlier - we cannot judge the Bolshevik power by what it thought of itself, "by its own consciousness" (for itself), we have to look at it objectively, on the basis of the "contradictions of the material life", from this standpoint Lenin's affirmation could be called simply ideological. That is, a case of "false consciousness" in the original Marxian sense of the term.

Indeed, it is easy to see that judging by the way "power we seized" or by the way it was held and allowed to develop one would be hard put to claim that October signalled the beginning of the process of the "emancipation of the working class by the workers themselves." Carried away by the Leninist position that socialist revolution would break out
in the "weakest link" in the chain of the uneven development of world capitalism. People on the Left, by and large, have not only unconsciously accepted the character of the October seizure of power as "socialist" but have also explained or rather justified the measures undertaken by the new regime on the score of Russia's backwardness and its hostile environment - "unforeseen" by the founders of scientific socialism. Now undoubtedly the reconstruction of a socialist society in a state of backwardness and in an hostile international environment - particularly in the absence of much expected revolutions in Western Europe - required desperate measures. But the basic question remains: who decided on these measures and who enforced them? If they were not the workers as a class but, in their name, an autonomised, self-designated "vanguard" (of the working class) then one would be hard put to claim that those were the revolutionary measures undertaken by the "proletarian organisation, as the ruling class", in the words of the Communist Manifesto. Undoubtedly, again, the proletarian dictatorship is not a free society. Even apart from the need for suppressing the old exploiting classes, just evicted from political power, the newly established proletarian regime cannot be marked by absence of all constraints. That is why the "revolutionary transformation period" is a period of "prolonged birth pangs", in Marx's 1875 metaphor. But, again, whatever constraint and coercion remained would be self-inflicted, would be the work of the "coerced" themselves.

If what Lenin was saying about the "backward" Russian workers, incapable of exercising power on their own (as we saw earlier) were true, then one has to admit that they were also not prepared for socialism, at least not in its Marxian sense of a "society of free and associated producers"; and, consequently, the revolution undertaken in their name cannot be accepted as a "socialist revolution."

On the other hand, it one takes Lenin's 1902 position as the point of departure, namely, that the proletariat on its own is incapable of achieving the proletarian revolution unless it is led by a group of "professional revolutionaries" whose constitution, programme and political practice are completely outside the control of the proletariat then one has to admit that the basic Marxist, that "the emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves" is completely wrong.

However, fortunately, history - "the greatest of all Marxists," as Hilferding used to say - has not proved the Leninist position. We would submit that by the time of the seizure of power the vast majority of the immediate producers - including the peasantry - in Russia was prepared to do away with the pre-capitalist relations of production and certainly with the "Provisional Government" which was unfit for the task - as well as for achieving peace - but not ready for a socialist revolution - understood in the original Marxian (and not "Marxist-Leninist") sense of the expression - a revolution that would be own creation and not sought to be forcibly imposed on them by a self-appointed "vanguard" hermetically sealed from any outside contamination and claiming to know the interest of the workers better than the workers themselves. However, there are reasons to believe that the great movement for self-emanicipation of the immediate producers that started with the Soviets and the factory committees, if allowed to continue unimpeded, would have, after completing the bourgeois-democratic tasks, uninterrupted, posed on to the new stage and inaugurated the revolution for building a "society of free and associated labour." Unfortunately the movement was not allowed to continue on its own, was hampered and ultimately destroyed mostly by the "proletarian vanguard."

Notes and References
1. In the following five citations between English sources and in our own translation, whenever possible, refer to their English version only. In the case of the first five references, the original is the working version, the second for the English translation version. This is particularly the case with Lenin's texts.

C. Ganzanev - "The Involvement of Russia and the Secretariat in C. M. C. Cepinul - The Far Eastern Economic History of Europe Vol. 4, part 3 (Cheka), 1973, p. 470 and of L. P. Shtyaev - The Level of Economic Development from 1850 to 1979 in Ukraine 1902 November - December (preprint) where the state funds for the treatise. By far the most backward among the world's important countries at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Political Writings of Italian Rome, 1972, p. 220.
4. For an earlier example see F. H. Cian - The Double

References
10. Towards a Critique of Political Economy, Moscow 1931, p. 34; Marx Engels - Selected Works in One Volume (in German), Moscow 1974, p. 67.
13. Towards a Critique of Political Economy, Berlin 1931, p. 34.
18. "The Civil War in France" in Marx Engels - Works X/1, (in German), Berlin 1931, p. 129.
21. Selected Works II, p. 395-416, in 1924-1925, the first effort to do this. The second was in 1925.
31. Selected Works II, p. 400, p. 411. These remarks were published the following year.
32. Ibid, p. 435, p. 435. In our English version is mentioned "social liberation of the proletariat... from the Russian "revolutionary peasantry" - the "proletarian... revolution" - the "communist society... the society which is already socialised... the economic force and the political power... and the country... the assets... the economic force... the political power..."
34. Ibid, p. 476-77.
42. Ibid, pp. 632, p. 632.
43. "Ruztov et Incroyables" in Selected Political Writings of Vladimir Lenin, Moscow 1940, p. 407-411.
THE MYTH OF STATE OWNERSHIP

One of the greatest myths of the Twentieth Century has been the view that socialism should be equated with state ownership or control of industry. What exactly was Marx and Engels' conception of socialism? What did they feel about state ownership and those who proposed this measure as being somehow progressive or socialistic?

The Congress should proclaim no special system of co-operation, but limit itself to the enunciation of general principles ... THE ASSOCIATION OF FREE AND EQUAL PRODUCERS. Marx, Instructions For Provisional Council

to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production into mere instruments of the free and associated labour ... If united co-operative societies are to regulate national production ... what else, gentlemen, would it be but communism. Marx, Civil War In France

his attitude (Lasalle's ed.) is quite that of a future worker's dictator. The workers are to ... send people armed, like himself, with the "shining sword of science" to the Chamber of Representatives. Then they will establish worker's factories which the STATE will advance the capital. Marx, Letters, p.146

... or the state capital, so far as government employs wage labour in mines, railways etc., performs the function of the industrial capitalist. Capital Vol 2, p.318

There is no question of workers association with state capital, as was the case with the late Lasalle. here it is clearly a question of the SUPPRESSION of capital. Engels, MEW Vol 16 p.216

( it is wrong) ... to accept what the capitalists themselves only pretend to believe, that state ownership is socialism. Engels, MEW, Vol 20, p.259

... state ownership does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces ... (it is) the ideal personification of the state national capital ... the workers remain wage workers ... state ownership is not the solution...

Engels, Socialism, Utopian and Scientific

It should be quite obvious that Marx and Engels were completely opposed to equating socialism with state ownership, and if anything, such a view is the complete antithesis of the free association of the producers. Let's leave the lounders of scientific socialism and see how later socialists felt about the matter.
Delivering men to the state, conferring upon the government the effective direction of the nation's work ... would be to give a few men a power compared to which that of the Asiatic despot is nothing, since their power ... does not regulate economic life. Jean Jaurès, Congress of the Socialist International. 1904

Nationalization is not socialism. Socialism is the force of the proletariat.
Anton Pannekoek, leader of Dutch Left. ND

But government ownership will not in itself secure labour's product to those who produce it ... That public ownership after the fashion of the capitalist should be corrupt is inherent in the nature of it ... The public may expect no mercy and deserves none. Government industries ... are often disgracefully inefficient and usually unprogressive ... W. Atkinson. INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW 1939

... the despotism of the state employer is no better than ... private industry ... In spite of the protests, repeated a hundred times, by all the socialist theorists, most of their adversaries obstinately claim that the formula of collectivism is "all for the state" ... if this were so socialism would have no greater adversaries than the socialists themselves ... For such a system (state ownership etc) should be substituted ... the federalist organization ... the system of decentralization of autonomy and responsibility ... Such is the conception common to all the greatest socialist theorists from the anarchist Proudhon to the ... Marxist school ... the best way of conceiving of socialist production is ... its actual realization (co-operatives etc) ... Socialism as a giant co-operative society, in which all members would elect ... their administrators. Emile Vandervelde, Collectivism. 1906, pp 108, 123, 132, 139.

... state administered establishments are NOT socialist ... as some mistakenly assume. August Bebel. Society of the Future. p.18

Apparently government ownership is no better for the slave than private ownership ... National ownership or control is only a more complete development of capitalism ... Socialists realize that nationalization of industry will not remove the slave system ... untitled, WESTERN CLARION, Journal of the Socialist Party of Canada. 1912

State organization of production, a bureaucracy by the dictatorship of a small section of the people does not mean democratic control of industry. Socialism presupposes democratic control of industry. John Tyler. WESTERN CLARION, Oct 1 1919

under nationalization, which is state capitalism, they must sell their labour power and be subject to the laws of capitalism ... Alex Young. The Fallacy of Nationalization, ONE BIG UNION BULLETIN. Feb. 27, 1930

The task of socialists has been made more difficult by the association in many people's minds of nationalization with socialism. Nationalized or state capitalist industry is, in fact, just another way of operating capitalism. Nationalization has
nothing to do with socialism ... Questions Of The Day, Socialist Party of Great Britain, 1932

The Russian experiments in planned economy are not to be rated as socialist ... to be sure, the means of production has passed from the hands of private entrepreneurs ... as regards the producers, however, nothing has changed ... The only difference is that they are no longer required to deal with the individual capitalist, but with the total capitalist, the State ...

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL CORRESPONDANCE, Oct. 1934

because of) ... the "socialist" pretensions of Soviet Russia, they have a totally false picture of what socialism is. They imagine that socialism means government ownership ... This is a false picture. Why War? Socialist Labor Party, ND

the following, which claim to be socialists are ultimately not so. (1) Russian state capitalism with its authoritarian, monolithic structure and regimentation. (2) China falls also into this category (3) Cuba, Yugoslavia and Albania, although differing superficially also belong to the foregoing ...

Bill Pritchard (a leader of the Winnipeg General Strike) Socialism, 1972

Socialism is not the state capitalism that is oppressing the workers in the USSR, China or any other country that claims to be socialist. Socialism is not the nationalization of industries... What Socialism Is, WORLD SOCIALISM #5, 1986

One could go on throwing out quotes to show how socialism has nothing whatsoever to do with state ownership, but hopefully this selection has made the point clear. But a question now remains - how did this misconception come about? A hint at a solution is found in the quotes from Marx and Engels contra Lasalle. Here is what historians have to say about his relationship to socialism:

The German Social Democratic Party is claimed as having risen on a marxist basis. This is a myth ... the politics came mainly from two other sources ... One was Lasalle ... the prototype of the STATE SOCIALIST. Hal Draper, Two Souls Of Socialism.

Degeneracy (of socialism eds) as a whole is Lasalian and not Marxist ... political life has been marked by the theoretical and political vicissitudes of Lasalism ... The Marxism of Marx has been the great victim of political thought. Henri Lefebvre, The Survival Of Capitalism, p. 95

The vast majority of German Social Democrats were introduced to socialism through the teachings of Lasalle ... M. Sapin, Unpublished PhD Thesis, p. 13

Long after his death, Lasalle remained a pervasive force. Raya Dunayevskaya, Rosa Luxemburg, p.154

The evidence clearly points to Lasalle as the initiator of the myth of statist socialism. The Social Democratic Party of Germany, which influenced all the other parties, although claiming to be Marxist, was actually Lasalian. After the death of Marx and Engels, the main interpreter of socialist doctrine and the most important popularizer of Marxism was Karl Kautsky, who remained faithful to
his Lasallean roots, Kautsky helped spread socialism far and wide - but read what others have to say about the man:

(Kautsky's) *Workers Program* ... became the authoritative exposition of Marxism ... in 1891 the (party) leaders congratulated themselves on having expunged the Lasallean phrases from their program, they had indeed gotten rid of the phrases, but not the underlying ideas. And Kautsky ... produced what was essentially a textbook of State Socialist doctrine. J.D.H. Cole, *History Of Socialist Thought*, p.430

For Kautsky, the state ... is not to be destroyed ... Lucio Colletti, *From Rousseau to Lenin*, p.222

Socialism to Kautsky did not mean abolition of the state. L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents Of Marxism* Vol 1, p.49

Stateist influences came as well from Great Britain. Most of the Fabians equated state ownership and control with socialism and regarded socialization of the economy and society as something worth encouraging. The roots of Fabian socialism lie with Jeremy Bentham, the first social engineer, whose ideas were influential among English progressive liberals. H. G. Wells, who broke with the Fabian Society, gave this picture of the group: ... the cardinal idea in their lives ... the inevitable development of an official administration class in a modern state ... the vision they displayed ... seemed like a harder, narrower, more specialized version of the disciplined state. Another ex-Fabian was J. D. H. Cole who formed the libertarian Guild Socialist movement in opposition to their statism. He declared ... to every problem the State Socialists (in reference to the Fabians eds) applied their flywheel formula ... nationalization ... as if putting industry into the hands of politicians were synonymous with putting it into the hands of the people. (Both quotes from Ann Freemantle, *This Little Band of Prophets*)

There is no doubt that Lasalle, Kautsky and the Fabians were statist, but their pseudo-socialism was merely government ownership within a DEMOCRATIC state - we are still light years away from the gulags and the People's Commissars. It was left to the Bolsheviks and their successors to strip away the democratic aspect of Social Democracy and attempt to impose TOTALITARIAN state capitalism upon the world. That Lenin and his followers equated state capitalism with socialism was inevitable since they had learned their "Marxism" from reading Karl Kautsky.

Larry Gambone, April 1992

(Cont'd from p. 2)

"seizure of power," as the title of the article calls it, was a proletarian revolution at least in the early years. And of course the failure of the Soviet system fascinates all of us.

Another Canadian, Larry Gambone, discusses the closely related subject of state ownership. He finds the theoretical roots of the misconception that equate socialism with state ownership in the thinking of Ferdinand Lassalle. According to this article, it was Karl Kautsky, Marx's and Engels' literary executor and foremost theoretician of the social democracy of the Second International, who grafted Lassalleanism on the Marxist root stock.

Next come four short letters commenting on articles and letters in *DB53*. Adam Buick, in discussing articles by Gerry Haber and Larry

(Cont'd on p. 23)
Dear Comrades,

Following up Gerry Maher's article in DB 53 on the concentration of wealth ownership in the UK, I'd like to confirm that the situation is the same in Britain.

Socialists say that capitalism is based on the concentration of the ownership of the means of production into the hands of a tiny minority of the population. This also gives rise to inequality in incomes and in the ownership of means of consumption like houses, household goods and cars. But these are not capital for those who own them since they don't provide them with an unearned income. What I'm saying is the obvious point that not all wealth is capital. The figures that really confirm the socialist contention are not those for the ownership of wealth in general but those for the ownership of capital as assets that yield their owners an unearned income ultimately derived from the unpaid labour of those who operate the means of production.

Estimates derived from official government figures show that in Britain in 1989 1.5 percent of adults owned 36 percent of capital and 5.7 percent owned 61 percent, while the bottom 65 percent of the population owned virtually none.

As to the controversy over the nature of pension funds initiated by Larry Gambone, it is clear that these are not controlled by workers but by professional managers who are required by law to run them according to the capitalist economic principle of seeking to maximise profits (while at the same time being allowed to pay themselves enormous salaries that will eventually allow them to become capitalists in their own right). But I don't think it valid to concede that they are owned by the workers who have pension rights under them.

Whoever they belong to they don't belong to workers. Quite apart from the fact that control is a key aspect of ownership, ownership also involves the right to sell; which workers with pension rights don't have. All they have is the legal right to be paid a certain income on retirement which is better seen as deferred wages than as a property income. In my view, pension funds ultimately belong to the body that set them up, whether employers or the state.

Capitalism is still based on the concentration of the ownership of the means of production into the hands of a tiny minority, the capitalist class. And the socialist solution remains, not some more equal distribution of wealth ownership, but the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production by all the people.

Yours for Socialism,

Adam Buick, 40 Granville Gardens, London W1 3PA, GE.
Dear DB readers:

I'd like to comment on the letters in DB53 between Robin Cox of "Spanner" and Mark of "Subversion". I think you have to trust individuals and localities to keep the interests of the whole human community in mind, and allow them a large amount of autonomy. If they do not cooperate voluntarily, complex rules and regulations covering every possible eventuality will have to be formulated until you end up with special days for hanging out your laundry and grain quotas the farmers must supply to the cities. And if people don't obey, what are we going to do with them? Is it worth the trouble to force people to cooperate? This is the real reason "communism" failed in the USSR - communism cannot be forced on people. People must be highly motivated for it to succeed because it doesn't have the sticks and carrots used in capitalist economies (the Leninist model relies mostly on sticks). I believe people are basically good and reasonable, and that most disagreements can be worked out through mediation as long as one party doesn't have power over the other. If people are basically selfish and unreasonable, then there are not enough police to keep all of us under control 24 hours a day. Lack of personal autonomy and security is what makes people self-centered. For example, some cities are requiring mandatory recycling. What better way to instill a hatred of environmental stewardship than to force people to separate their trash or fine them. Why not give a discount to people who do recycle?

Anyway, I feel a macro approach to libertarian socialism is the wrong way to go about it. We should organize ourselves into an economic and residential community and put our ideas into action among ourselves. If it works, they'll have to build a Berlin Wall to keep people out.

Ed Stamm, PO Box 1402, Lawrence KS 66044 USA

Dear Comrades,

I wish to comment on Ed Jahn's first letter in DB #53. I was a member of the S.L.P. from about 1966 to 1972. After I first joined, I wanted to find out if the S.L.P. was truly a democratic organization, so I sometimes would deliberately vote against the majority in order to find out what would happen. I never got any flack, but I would always go along with the majority viewpoint. If somebody asked, I was prepared to say that I was just trying to express my democratic right to vote the other way. Nobody ever asked or gave me flack about it, so I soon came to the conclusion that the S.L.P. was really a democratic organization. Nothing that anybody can say now can convince me otherwise.

Regarding the so-called undemocratic provisions in the S.L.P. constitution, one must remember that the S.L.P. has been under attack for its entire history. People behave differently when under attack than they usually do, and the S.L.P. is no exception. These provisions are conditioned responses to the attacks, and are not normally envoked. Need I say more?

In answer to the question, "what will it do to the rest of us if it ever gets power?", the S.L.P. has always stated that
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if and when it gets elected, it will have only two functions:
1. Turn the reins of government over to the Socialist Industrial
Union; and 2. Abolish the political state. The political state
must be completely dismantled so that the capitalist class cannot
use it to crush the working class. That is why the state must
be captured at the ballot box - so the working class can dismantle
it. Once the state is abolished and the S.I.U. is running the
nation smoothly and democratically, the S.I.P. will disband; its
mission accomplished.

By the way, a bill of attainder has to do with "extinction
of the civil rights and capacities of a person, consequent upon
death or outlawry", and has nothing to do with guilt by associa-
tion. Look it up in your nearest dictionary.

Ken Kelly
HCR 32-1011
Pahrump, NV 89041

Dear D.B.,

I have been glad to see the series of articles on the Green Movement and think it a good thing
that members of our current are involving themselves in this area. This is so much better than
sitting around and talking to ourselves as we often do and will help encourage libertarian
socialist tendencies (such as the Social Ecologists) within the Greens. As well, this should
counter the anti-working class prejudices found among many Greens. This said, I'd like to add a
few reservations. The ecological crisis should not be seen as another one of those "ultimate"
crises of capitalism that will bring the system down - on the contrary, it may well be the means
by which capital, via greater socialization, goes into a new "stage" of development. Hence, we
should not pin all our hopes on the environmental crisis or the Greens. (This, by the way, is not
my idea, but was suggested back in the early 1950's by Bordiga)

Another reservation is the possibility that being "Green" means being trapped in a
"single-issue" organization. Now we all know that this is not the case, that left greens in
particular have articulated positions on a host of issues, but, nonetheless, Green organizations
are seen by the population at large as concerned "only" with the environment. As other parties
take up these issues, the Greens will tend to get sidelined - This seems to have happened to a
certain extent with the West German Green Party. I think what we ultimately need is a broad
movement which includes the important green aspects, but cannot be seen as reduced to these.
Concern for the environment is shared by a majority of the population, but this concern also
eats and flows with the economic situation. Today nobody likes politicians and bureaucrats and
the biggest expense for working people is taxes. Therefore, we have never had a better
opportunity for putting anti-statism on the agenda - unite this emphasis with green concerns
and I think you could really shake things up.

Solidarity,

Larry Gambone
TO STOP POLICE BRUTALITY
WE MUST DESTROY CAPITALISM

At the time of this writing the rage that erupted into rioting, looting, arson and death in Los Angeles continues and has spread to at least a dozen cities, including San Francisco, Seattle, Las Vegas, Atlanta. In Los Angeles, 37 people have been killed, 1,300 wounded and thousands arrested. Six thousand National Guard troops have been mobilized by California Governor Pete Wilson and President Bush has ordered 1,000 federal law officers and 4,000 soldiers and marines to Los Angeles. These troops are trained in urban combat, having sharpened these deadly skills in the invasion of Panama.

The acquittal of four policemen who stood trial for the savage beating of Rodney King, a black motorist, in Los Angeles a year ago was the flashpoint for the riots. The ruling class has unleashed a barrage of ideological campaigns in the past two days designed to obscure reality and to stir up divisions within the working class in the U.S., e.g. racism. It is crucial that revolutionaries and militant workers are clear on the real meaning of what has transpired.

POLICE BRUTALITY IS AN UNDERPINNING OF CAPITALIST RULE

The beating of Rodney King was no aberration. This kind of thing goes on all the time. In capitalist society, the police are the shock troops of the ruling class. Sometimes cops may reunite a lost child with its parents or solve a crime, but in the final analysis their reason for existence is to maintain capitalist social order through the exercise of force and violence. Brutality, fear, beatings, intimidation -- these are the stock in trade of the police, whether its Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, apartheid South Africa or democratic U.S.A. Even if specific police officers may have had their sociological origins within the working class, they have gone over to the enemy class and become the legitimized thugs of capitalism. They are the enemies of the working class.

Police brutality originated as a weapon against workers in the early days of the class struggle against capitalism. The terror tactics of roughing people up, cracking heads, harassment, beating people, shooting people, treating people as subhumans, provoking violence to serve as pretext for further repression, all these were honed in the fight to stop workers from improving their working conditions and standard of living.

It is true that today police act like an occupying colonial army in black and Hispanic neighborhoods, and that young black people are subjected to police harassment more often than others, but it is incorrect to see the problem simply as a racial issue. This is precisely what the ruling class wants us to do in order to divide white and black workers against each other. It is not "white people" whose interests the cops defend, but capitalism's interests. The cops beat poor black people today. Tomorrow they will crack the heads of strikers -- black, white and brown -- and provide protection for scabs who try to steal our jobs. Police brutality must be denounced as an expression of capitalist state terror.

WORKERS MUST REJECT CAPITALIST IDEOLOGICAL CAMPAIGNS

We must also denounce the entire "debate" orchestrated today in the capitalist media, whether its on the themes of the "quest" for justice, or racism/anti-racism, or reforms of the police department. All of these ideological campaigns serve the purpose of obscuring the fact that capitalism itself is responsible for the situation we face today.

Those, like Jesse Jackson, who call for federal civil rights charges to be brought against the cops serve capitalism by perpetuating the myth that justice
under capitalism is possible. The fact is that the phrase "capitalist justice" is a contradiction in terms. The problem is much greater than four individual cops. If the four accused cops had been convicted, nothing would have changed. Cops would still be cops, and brutality would continue. It's not the individuals who are the real problem, but the capitalist system that is responsible. The working class must oppose and denounce police brutality, but the only way to solve the problem is the destruction of the capitalist system.

We must also reject the efforts of the ruling class to portray the events that are occurring in purely racial terms. Anyone looking at the television pictures of the people in the streets, knows that it is not just black people, but also Hispanic, Asian and white poor, young people whose rage has exploded. We must also reject the argument that it is just the criminal and hoodlum elements who are in the streets. While it is true that these lumpenized elements are taking advantage of the situation opportunistically, there are many ordinary poor people of all races, driven by poverty and desperation, to participate in the disorders.

The use of racism to divide workers against themselves is a classic tactic of American capitalism, and that is precisely what they are trying to do today. They are trying to stir up racist mistrust between blacks and whites. That is why they are fomenting vicious rumors about imaginary racial incidents in cities all across the country. That is why liberal and leftist groups are being used by capitalism to organize an "anti-racism" campaign in response. The ruling class will snicker at the real problems facing black and white workers in America today — the economic, political and social bankruptcy of capitalism — are ignored, and instead society is polarized around the question of race. Just as he used the hysteria campaign around Willie Horton in 1988, Bush will use the riots and racist mistrust, as a springboard for his reelection this year.

THE DECOMPOSITION OF CAPITALIST SOCIETY

The crisis we see in the streets today is an expression of the decomposition of the capitalist social fabric. There are no jobs, no future for millions of young people, black or white. Rage and discontent bubble beneath the surface, pent up, ready to burst. The slightest spark touches off the explosion. The only way that capitalism can maintain its social order is with the gun and the nightstick.

While the rage is understandable, the rioting and looting we see today is not a working class response to the capitalist crisis. Rather it is an act of blind rage, born of desperation, without perspective and counterproductive. In order to change society, to destroy the system of capitalist exploitation and oppression, the working class must develop a revolutionary consciousness of its historic tasks and responsibilities, and organize itself to confront its class enemies. It is the class struggle, not rioting in the streets, that provides the basis for the development of this consciousness.

The working class is going through a difficult period. The deepening economic crisis is pushing workers to once again take up the class struggle and to confront capitalism. At the same time, capitalism is trying to divert us into seeing the essential problem as a problem of race. Workers must reject this trap.

--INTERNATIONALISM, MAY 1, 1992
U.S. Section of the International Communist Current.
Write to: Post Office Box 288, New York, NY 10018-0288
CITY OF LIGHT

Pigs will be pigs. You've got to wonder about anyone who'd choose to be one. Just as you have to wonder how many people chose/choose not to know that Rodney King happens every day.

But the insurrection in LA was not fundamentally about the latest high-profile police atrocity, nor was it mainly a matter of race relations. Of course, the media worked overtime to argue otherwise, endlessly showing a white trucker being beaten by blacks, in order to equate him with Rodney King and trivialize the whole matter. Pushing most of the story out of the way, this tactic says, one "brutal and senseless" act cancels the other and things are not really that bad, except for such behavior. As if excesses committed by a population enraged beyond measure are the same as a calculated, vicious act by those who are not. More importantly, what is truly "brutal and senseless" is remaining passive about systematic degradation and not rising up wrathfully.

The media "coverage" was simply outrageous. Almost none of it hesitated to openly take sides against this slave revolt and array every kind of oppositional thinking against it. An outbreak that cost some 60 lives, burned and looted 5,000 businesses to the tune of $1 billion, and required 8,500 troops and countless cops from all over Southern California to contain, was attributed to a few "hoodlums and opportunists"—an incredible lie in itself. All media attention seemed to turn to politicians and church leaders—for their help in denouncing the events unfolding, those cops who speak for the very few. The media behavior only reminds one that its job is always to advertise the culture defined by the commodity and its rules (viz. work).

On May 1 a group of German anarchists in Berlin unfurled a banner declaring their solidarity with the people of Los Angeles and attacked a nearby group of neo-Nazis. In a radio interview May 6, permitted safely after the fact, sociologist Harry Edwards pointed out that what happened "was not a black vs. white thing. Everyone was out in the streets, old and young and every color." He also made it clear that people with jobs took part, including employees who destroyed their employers' businesses. So much for the vain hope of capitalists that investment in new businesses will create social peace.

The rioting was not confined to the ghetto. In LA it spread to downtown, Westwood, mid-Wilshire and Hollywood, as desert-camouflaged armor guarded shopping malls for nearly 50 miles in every direction. The violence could not be isolated in South Central Los Angeles any more than the depth of alienation can that exists all across this rotting culture. The decline of voting to depths that challenge the very legitimacy of a phoney representation is one excellent example.

Those who wish to remain slaves as every authentic aspect of society, and nature along with it, are lofted every day still summon up their defenses of slavery. Others, everywhere, who will not suppress their anger, their passion to live, find an inspiration in the exploits of those whose pride and dignity could not be suppressed. As Marc Fumaroli put it earlier this year, "the new generation is now discovering that the state of being a consumer, and above all a 'cultural' consumer, is the most humiliating and deceptive of all."

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IN AGREEMENT, BUT ALSO IN COMPLETE DISAGREEMENT WITH PSZIKSO JACOBS

translated from Deadr en Gedachte Vol 27, #11

Twenty short years ago, German anarchist writer Peter Heintz postulated the death of organized anarchism; the death, that is to say, not of the principles, but of the mass movement that spread from them in the last quarter of the 19th Century, in which Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin, among others, were important representatives. (Peter Heintz, Anarchismus und Gegenswart, Berlin 1971, p 10) Virtually the same thing is being shown today—but with a clear and therefore convincing substructure of argumentation—in Recht voor Allen by Pszisko Jacobs. "A New Anarchist Movement?" was the title of the article in which he didn't hesitate to tell the harsh truth, and on the basis of this to deal thoroughly with inaccurate notions and illusions concerning anarchism in Holland in particular.

"How are things going," he asks himself, "for the Dutch Anarchist movement?" Over the last 90 years, i.e., since the beginning of this century, it's changing "continually along a descending line", as his answer goes. He corrects this later insofar as there have still been brief periods (e.g., in the '20s and the '60s), when anarchism received all the attention again, but except for that, the descending line kept curving down ever more.

With this view of Pszisko Jacobs, we are in agreement, but we're in complete disagreement with the "explanation" that he gives for this decline, for this "death" of anarchism. Even at that, we can accompany him to the extent that—as he writes—there is mention of a deterioration which has cropped up within social-democracy and the movements derived from it, like communism, trotskismy, etc. But the big difference between Pszisko Jacobs and us consists in the fact that, where he understands the movements he's mentioned as simply part of the workers' movement, we on the other hand emphatically give notice that while this "workers' movement", as described and as considered objectively, has even workers as adherents, it's still a movement which gained leadership due not to working class, socially-motivated people punished on behalf of societal betterments. (Betterments which were in fact in the interests of Capital, the same kind which were advocated in England by the factory owner Owen, and in Holland by the factory owner J C van Marken of the Delft Soul and Spirit Factory.)

According to Pszisko Jacobs, there was a time when the working class played a role in social change, that is, the time when capitalism was still on the rise. "The working class," he says, can then make money in and by means of the rising workers' movement" (italics by Pszisko Jacobs). In his view, this change came about because capitalism was gathering strength. The development led to the stage where "any present day "Socialists" bring nothing to the fore of progressive struggles any more which has anything to do with the original workers' movement. In fact"—we're still quoting Pszisko Jacobs—"the people concerned have moved on to the acceptance of the capitalist mode of production."

In our view, it's out of the question that, in the period Pszisko Jacobs is dealing with, the working class played a role in social change. In that period, not only was capitalism still weak, but so too was the working class, which moreover was still anything but what could be called a working class in the modern sense of the term. It is not the case that the stronger, more universal, and more modern
capitalism becomes, the weaker the working class becomes. On the contrary, as capitalism increased in significance, so too did the working class.

That Pazisko Jacobs has another concept stems, as we see it, from the fact that he looks on the precisely-described political movement, which can be described as the "left" wing of the progressive bourgeoisie, as something it in fact wasn’t. Not the working class, but this movement is what’s weakened (or, better, strained: yet one more function to be taken up) as step by step the betterments sought through this movement are realized.

Pazisko Jacobs sees it as a question of this movement no longer having "anything to do with the original workers' movement" and having "moved on to the acceptance of the capitalist mode of production." Our conception is that this movement was always situated on the ground of the capitalist mode of production. According to Pazisko Jacobs, there doesn’t exist any more working class; it’s been, as he himself puts it, "gobbled up by the capitalist system", and he finds that "an intolerable idea." We can put him at ease: Capitalism, even as it evolves, can not “gobble up” the working class or let it disappear, because capitalism deploys the working class along its front. Without wage workers, the production of surplus value is not Capital, and not capitalism. What has disappeared is the primitive working class from yesteryear, a class which still consisted of manual laborers to a large extent, or from but a short time ago of manual workers, artisans, or an impoverished rural populace getting recruited.

From the above, it obviously follows that we are in complete disagreement with Pazisko Jacobs as he then writes that "there was a time when the working class represented a certain power" that "was to a large extent made evident in the workers' movement." It is truly noteworthy that Pazisko Jacobs lets it follow in the same breath that the working class and the workers’ movement were "not definitely synonymous," and that the distance between the working class and the anarchist movement was even greater than that between the working class and other movements. "The anarchists", as he states, "have never been as influential as they think." And of the anarchist movement, he reckons that it "in fact doesn’t move anything anymore, and itself moves still less. It can", he says, "be placed in the realm of utopian memories."

With similar pronouncements, we have little or no trouble. We shouldn’t want to merely mention these memories as being utopian without observing that the social-conception of the anarchist movement displayed a utopian appetite as the result of conditions during the period of its rise. The working class was weak, and its concepts therefore necessarily had to stay relatively vague. To the extent that Pazisko Jacobs tries to analyze the roots of this kind of thing, our paths diverge.

At the close of his funeral oration of the anarchist movement, Pazisko Jacobs writes, "The wait is on for a new, another movement, that will put an end to capitalism." In the remaining part of the article, he philosophizes about the appetite that this movement, according to him, will have to display. We can at least follow him on this path—he himself admits at one point more or less that he’s fantasizing.

We don’t need to wait for a new movement; that’s taking all the time it needs in hstily evolving itself. But it’s impossible in such a case, as far as a movement goes, to reach back to the forms and thoughts of the past. The period of full-grown, modern capitalism
produces something quite different from that which people always designate as the workers' movement. The new movement has in common with all social phenomena that it changes itself slowly, in fits and starts, and its evolution withdrawn from view often enough. Still, one can see what really quite clearly makes it distinct from all "old" movements. The new movement distinguishes itself from the "workers' movement" in that it is a movement of the workers. And to the extent that it develops an entirely unique power, there lies the true power of the working class—as opposed to what Pazisk Jacobs writes—always has lain completely there, that is, in its activity.

Having offered all these differences, there are large parts of Pazisk Jacobs' article we read with a certain approval. That doesn't only count the passages in which he minces no words, smoothes his feelings, and confronts his kindred with the hard-as-stone truth. And an argument there, that amounts to saying that anarchism has become a lifestyle, that anarchists themselves are busy sticking to moral questions and education, that they're trying to acquire a culture of their own, this argument one can only endorse.

And Jacobs is also right on the money when he notes at the close of his dissertation that "the anarchist movement, like any social movement, is the result of socio-economic development." (Was, we'd say.) But whoever views it this way has to follow us as far as the conclusion—that there's no reason to consider a "revival" of that movement. This conclusion Pazisk Jacobs fails to draw. He doubtless pictures socio-economic development differently than we do.

Dear readers,

It goes against my grain to refer to the late Soviet Union as state capitalism. As a matter of record the capitalistic system was instituted there with the overthrow of the Czar in March 1917 and ended when the Bolsheviks led the storming of the winter palace in Nov 1917. The new social system was ruled jointly by workers and peasants councils (soviets) and the communist party. With the bloody destruction of the Kronstadt soviet in March 1921 by the Red army the communist party had complete control of the Russian empire. The great american marxist Daniel DeLeon warned that if the workers seized control of industry during a revolutionary crisis and do not hold control and continue production there will be a reactionary revolution. Capitalism in either case will be out and the new despot- istic called "industrial feudalism". Characteristic of the new order will be the absence of political freedom and the continuation of the economic despotism of capitalism along with a labor draft. This centralized feudalism is more stable than capitalism because it has planned production to avoid a glutted market. It will evolve into socialism by changing into capitalism first as is happening in the late Russian empire.

In response to the lie that the late Soviet Union had socialism many marxists called it state capitalism. To name that social monstrosity state capitalism served a dual purpose. It precluded our sympathy for the soviet union and is expressed a low esteem for large sections of the capitalist economy that are government controlled or owned. The heat of the class struggle makes many marxists react emotionally to
the lies of enemies of socialism who equate communist party
functionism with the real thing.

Important teachings of Marx were the high regard he had
for the capitalist system which he referred to as the highest
evolve of society prior to socialism. He did not mention
state capitalism as a social system apart from capitalism.
The restoration of lost freedom and dignity to humanity
that was lost to primitive man through chattel slavery and
later feudalism was a long uphill struggle. Our great heroes
of religion, music, art, science, philosophy and literature
contributed to our common advancement. Under capitalism
marxism reveals that the achievement of the liberty, equal-
ity, and fraternity of primitive man is possible with materi-
AL plenty through socialism. Neither socialism or state
capitalism describes the soviet union system.

Before closing I want to include that modern day liberals
have similar mentalities to leninists. Politicians who swing
to the left want to do things for people because they believe
that they are incapable of doing things for themselves.
When they strive for big government it indicates that they do
not trust the free economy of capitalism and are for capital-
ism with reservations. Leninists likewise support big govern-
ment because like other leftists they want to do for peoples
what they believe people can't do for themselves under cap-
itlsm. They feel they are true to their convictions to
advocate more government in capitalist countries. Another way
leninists reveal themselves is to oppose capitalism's wars
but to support wars to benefit the soviet union or
Red China. Before we can reconstruct society into socialism
we must eliminate the Tower of Babel confusion that pits us
at odds with others and prevents a clear picture of what we
marxists intend to achieve to be understood by all.

Fraternally yours,

Morris Prussack

(Cont'd from p. 13)

Gambone, distinguishes "ownership of capital" from "ownership of
wealth" and makes a point about the nature of pension funds. Ed Stann
comes down on the side of a kommunitarian and locally autonomous
social system in his comments on the debate between Robin Cox and Mark
of Subversion. Ken Kelly defends the SLP from Ed Jahn's allegations
in DBS3. Another point that Comrade Kelly might have made is that
DeLeonists believe that the party must disband at the moment our class
seizes the means of production. Larry Gambone comments on recent
articles on the Green movement, pointing out how our class perspective
can reconcile workers to environmentalism and cautioning against
"being trapped in a single-issue organization."

Events in Los Angeles have resulted in two leaflets from groups in our
sector. Internationalism has about as forthright a title as one
could ask for. My principal difficulty with the leaflet is the
conspiracy theory of politics one infers from the following sentence
on the second page: "That is why liberal and leftist groups are being
used by capitalism to organize an 'anti-racism' campaign in response."
(my italics) In "City of Light" AAA sees the violence and looting as
a defensible response to a social system that uses violence and loots
us every day.

(Cont'd on p. 31)
QUESTIONING ECOLOGY

Anyone who attempts to criticize progress, or to denounce the middeeds of modernism quickly finds him or herself accused of wanting to return to the Stone Age. For progressives of every variety it is a question of inducing the belief that nature is the capital of a collective capitalists — human beings — and that it should be used and moulded in the image and likeness of the human "collectivity". Today's productive development is only possible to the extent that people adopt this conviction and that it inspires their desires. The "ever higher, ever further" carrot of consumption, survival on credit, and lightening-the-chains-of-work-through automation can then be dangled by the capitalists before their astonished eyes.

The entire discourse which presents technological and industrial development as a constantly renewed combat to domesticate hostile nature is one that conceals that above all this activity is all that is necessary to develop a system of domination. What is produced by human beings and the means they use to achieve it are determined by the relationships between them and with nature as a whole. Today's "riches", therefore, are not human riches; they are riches for capitalism which correspond to a need to sell and stupefy. The products we manufacture, distribute, and administer are the material expressions of our alienation.

A social system in which market relations have become generalized implies that attempts to assign meaning to money will use anything which can assist them, be it animate or inanimate, material or nonmaterial. The means are irrelevant — what is necessary is to reduce everything to the level of an object, thing or product. Money must be generated at any price, whatever its negative effect on people, their health, or the environment; natural products (food among others) must be transformed into manufactured products (which are above all modern and well marketed) that can help us through the contingencies of a time-is-money workaday life. Every means of allowing people to save time, to reduce the margin of the unforeseen in manufacturing a product to assure its interchangeability is sought in order to guarantee an ongoing process of commodity production. Everything must submit to the needs of the "product". This mad quest implies constant attempts to invent new "needs", to make people endure new "scarities" and new "emptinesses" which humans need to fill by accepting to sell themselves to get the money which allows them to buy. The only thing that is real about this process is that it has always tended to reduce people's capacity to take the initiative, mutilating their intellectual and physical faculties, while at the same time proclaiming the contrary.

From the extreme industrial mechanicalness, from automation to word processing and robots, a cycle which has rendered humans inessential has come into being. People have been reduced to a set of predetermined gestures over which they have no control by a process that has managed to render even simple relations between them superfluous because all their time is spent monitoring and controlling processes which totally escape them.

The development of the productive forces is simply an expression of the domination of commodities through a process of reducing human activity to a pure expenditure of energy and human beings to contemplating its results. Neither happiness, community, nor an end to domination is produced, only commodities and our increased submission to values which are abstract ... but quantifiable.

ON ECOLOGY

If the protests of groups and individuals calling themselves "ecological" are no less partial than those calling themselves "proletarian", this does not imply that the damage done by pollution should be accepted as a fatality. Capital is a system of production and reproduction which has been caused by human beings, not an abstract notion which might give the impression that we have no choice in the matter. But will adding a filter to the factory smokestack be sufficient to put an end to the oppression which work exacts on wage slaves who are obliged to waste their lives in order to earn a living? Obliging petrochemical industries to stop dumping wastes in the river will not stop the numerous people who take tranquillizers (which even today are known as "urbanizers") on a daily basis from being poisoned, or from being poisoned by the antibiotics produced by the same industries, which people need
today to handle modern life and its accompanying psychological and physical damage. Will getting rid of leaded gasoline be enough to give us back the pleasures of walking, of taking our time, of being ... 

The minor improvements which the ecologists have obtained here and there can bring about immediate positive effects. We are not indifferent to anything which is capable of slowing down the accumulation of industrial wastes, the disappearance of animal and plant species or of diminishing the nuclear menace ... But these improvements are only permitted because they are ultimately useful to capitalism in that they allow the state a breathing space; the accompanying social peace guarantees that consumer goods are produced, that the machine keeps running without jamming and that money — the only valuable of any importance in a world defined by capital — is generated in a logical manner. Ecology’s narrow outlook, with its goal of lowering the level of pollution through laws and minor reforms without questioning the world in which we are mired in an all-encompassing way, consists of according the state the benefit of a state of innocence concerning industrial development’s relationship to the process of environmental degradation. That the state has a moral role to play is accepted, paving the way for a reassuring belief that a separation within capitalism management exists, that it is the state’s duty to modify the course of events and that this is within its power. Those who accept this approach refuse to acknowledge that the state, whatever its political shade, represents an expression of the development of capitalism, with the social relations and the practical and moral consequences which this implies. It also conceals that every law which is implemented by the state assures its future ... and our impotence.

Therefore, those who dream of an ecological state, consciously or not, are elaborating a project whose goal (again) is to prevent the major catastrophes while prolonging the lesser ones eternally. This is why discussing ecology is often limited to evoking nuclearism, concealing other dangers which are less media-oriented but just as ominous. Nuclearism has the power to create shock value and to incarnate a real threat of irremediable destruction on a vast scale. It is also a reflection of a choice which has been made by society, that of a world in which anything at all must be sold and people must be made to buy. Nuclear energy, we are told, will free us from the hazards of the petroleum market and spare us the humiliation of candles. Long live the electric fairy, who keeps the wheels of industry rolling, mass-producing the gadgets which are supposed to mitigate the emptiness of our lives. Caught in this trap of progress, we have been robbed of our very lives; the role of the products of every sort which surround us is to distract us from this dispossession. And to give a new shine to Progress and dispossession, why not an ecological state!

Life would continue to be a rat race. But if relations were a bit chillier, as compensation we could rest our work-exhausted eyes by contemplating a nature park on a video screen. But why all this work? Because, like today’s concrete/steel/atomic state, an ecological state would be a life-killing machine. It would remain a nation-state, a kind of national ecstacy.

Readers might feel that we are going too far by bringing together the words ecology and state in this manner. But let there be no confusion: certain greens are already quivering with joy at the thought of such a state and are ‘psyching themselves up by filling in those presently in power about how they intend to manage the national burden. Thus, concerning the Iran-Iraq conflict, Michal Delore, the European spokesman for the greens, proposes measures which would allow France to extriccate itself from “The Napoleonic dream of spheres of influence ... which is contrary to its true interests” in order to “offer a positive contribution to a lasting solution to fundamental Mediterranean problems and thus avoid a variety of inconveniences” (quoted in Vert-Contact no. 46, July 18 – August 14, 1987).

Green Politics

Ultimately ecology’s political fringe is in bed with everyone who aims to run a state and contemplates the economy and politics with the same adoration.

The “greens” support an ecological economy which would function according to “economic laws”, and wish to “liberate the country from the agony of unemployment” ... but what is the economy? It seems to be a question of a neutral idea. Since it is everywhere, the economy has become indivisible and uncontrollable. It has penetrated the remotest corners of our daily lives. It is the monster holding us in its claws. Killing the economy would be like an act of parricide, like attacking the last god that everyone still respects.

The economy is synonymous with isolation.
Life is divided into different sectors (home, work, education, consumption) and these fragments of existence are administered by specialized (business, administrative, industrial, and recreational) apparatus. Economic laws imply that the ways in which human relationships are expressed are based on inequality, competition, and the domination of certain people — inequality, competition, and domination which themselves justify the laws in question by presenting them as inevitable and as having always existed. From an economic viewpoint, other people appear matter-of-fact or are usually only of interest because of their productivity, power, or money. The economy reduces us to possessors of labour power or capital or to representatives of pressure groups. If we can't stand it, we are labelled weak or unfit. As communication between people becomes more and more difficult, every exchange must be controlled by money or the media. When it is not simply a question of confrontations between gangs,

Without a doubt, there is no question of getting involved in the political game that has been accepted by the greens if one wishes to question society's anti-ecological logic. Having proclaimed a desire to reconcile life, they have simply ended up congratulating themselves for passing laws and have accepted parliamentary logic in its entirety. This is reassuring and gives one a clear conscience, without changing anything at all. Parliament may very well accept the recycling of glass and aluminum while at the same time people continue to waste eight hours a day in the factories. The state's mega-computers may quite conceivably be used to plan a more rational use of natural resources, while at the same time erasing any trace of suspicion about the computers themselves. And when will the armed forces bring back the so-close-to-nature and minimally polluting cavalry? Translated into political terms, our dreams become bills and our hopes become economic measures. The political involvement of different ecologists and environmentalists is a reflection of their superficial critique of the relations upon which industrial civilization is based. If ecology criticizes the excesses of civilization and its "abusive" commercialization of nature, it questions neither the validity of market relations nor the states which implement them. As long as they continue to ask states and international institutions to propose "solutions" to the present predicament, the ecologists' "anticentralism" will only favour the despotic state. And as long as they continue to prop up a civil defence (of what and against whom?), they will constitute an impulsion to the questioning of militarism and nationalism as such.

Ecology, Environmentalism ... and Reformism

What is seductive about ecology is that it was supposed to finally unmask civilization ...! Faced with a monster that is devouring us a little more each day, the desire to survive appears elementary ... and therefore indispensable. No need to wonder whether all of this garbage of progress can be legitimately questioned! It is of greater interest to wonder whether what alienates us does not remain entirely intact behind our rejection, carefully concealed behind a "realistic" sense of resignation.

The destruction of our environment will be halted! Natural reserves will be created! The specialists will find solutions ... besides, the Green parties are already working toward them! We can finally have a big sigh of relief!!

Everything needed to avoid the real problems, to flee any kind of all-encompassing questioning is already in place, particularly the question of how the battle against the forces which have destroyed and domesticated numerous animal species and an increasing number of human beings — and which are even in the process of challenging the foundations of human life — could be fought from a perspective which is different from the one animating these forces.

For those who wish to reconcile the natural world and democratic society, the human species (and its "environment") is simply a juxtaposition of atomized groups and individuals whose relationships have been reduced to legal and economic formalisms — as if anything within nature including, as far as we are able to ascertain, traditional primitive societies] has ever been based on abstract, legal rights of this type as opposed to harmony and complementarity — a complementarity which includes predatory relationships towards other species in order to fulfill needs! No tears for a world in which people in a state of perpetual competition would be able ... as a spiritual supplement, to earn the right to ecstasy and contemplate nature! Bastard! And for those who are too squeamish to take their reasoning to its logical conclusion, here's a definition of an ecological preserve which ought to please them. This will give them lines to say in the society they desire ...!
Satisfaction of any kind can be drawn only on the condition that nature has previously been marketed, transformed into a national park, into an ecological preserve, a biological window, or a museum of the future. Actually, if nature was left to its own devices, it would not be of particular interest; nor, in any case, could it constitute a determining factor in a process of individual enrichment. On the contrary, meaning must first be given back to nature, which can then be offered as something to be enjoyed. It is only under these conditions that it inevitably becomes satisfying. This will entail an immense reconversion of nature similar to the reconversion of any industrial complex. What will the social cost be of such an operation? Not much, really. And what costs there are will only result from preventive measures and ecological propaganda. It will only be necessary to create a buffer zone, or better yet, a screen between people and nature which would prevent it from being damaged." — Enrico Berlinguer (Pier Franco Ghisleni), Lettres aux hérétiques — Editions du Rhododendron.

Provided that the principle of the pursuit of growth industrial, demographic, or of the media ... is in no way questioned, a passing remark about widespread environmental destruction can be permitted! Everything remains very polite and the byword is "not getting bogged down in utopian thinking."

What is the difference between those who are implementing growth which is fatal to the health of humanity and those who have nothing to offer (and generally to sell!) beyond expert advice or therapy? The same shopkeeper's mentality reigns, the same greed concerning possibilities of opening up new markets, including the proposed therapeutic solutions to the conditions which oblige people to live in an artificial manner. And with people's resignation lending a hand, nature itself is comfortably presented as the universal therapist! Therefore it is not simply a question of opening up a new market, but of the possibility of convincing people that what is causing the damage is external to themselves; that their illness is not produced by human activity — including their own — but by minor managerial mistakes, or for the "radical environmentalists", by certain deteriorating productive apparatus, excrescences that it would be sufficient to cut out in order to allow a healthy organism to survive! All this thanks to the belief that the sickness is not to be found in this society as a whole (including the projects which intend to breathe new life into it), but only because nature is being polluted, the wrong political choices are being made, etc.... Now that civilization's democratic domination has led people to cut themselves off from everything that surrounds them, including other human beings, the only remaining choices are either totally refusing this domination or identifying with it. And tomorrow what remains of what we still call nature will be its representation as commodities and recreation industries!

Green politics is ultimately a guarantee of a moratorium on social change. We desire neither a green army nor a green state nor green money. An ecological perspective which could contribute to changing this world by allowing the interaction of all forms of life will have to go beyond green politics of this type.

The underlying thesis of "Workers Against Work" is a provocative one, despite their phrasing: both the Spanish and French Left during the Popular Fronts essentially functioned as agents of modernization in their respective countries for a bourgeoisie that was either too lazy (as in the case of Spain) or too wrapped up in authoritarian parochialism (as in the case of France). As for the workers, they were expected to work and increase production, but it didn't come off quite that way. In both countries during the Popular Front period, a massive resistance to work and work discipline in the form of sabotage, absenteeism, slowdowns, theft and other factory-related actions erupted in the wake of rising expectations. According to Seidman, this resistance, 'apolitical' and hidden, and ignored by traditional historians, emphasis on what political parties were saying or doing, can be measured in reports from both management and revolutionary militants who seem curiously united in denouncing the 'laziness' and irresponsibility of workers in meeting production goals. This spontaneous resistance against work, which had no ideological platform or conscious expression, left no memoirs or reports, nevertheless lay bare a tremendous gap between the expectations of ordinary workers and the expectations of the minority of militants and activists in all groups of the Left claiming to represent the workers' interests. In just one of many examples, while in power, leftist parties 'anti-fascism' led to political and electoral alliances, workers on the shop floor interpreted anti-fascism quite differently. "Fascist" became a popular everyday epithet applied to particularly hated foreman and managers. Thus, from an ordinary workers' viewpoint, the struggle against work discipline also became a struggle against 'fascism'.

In a book that is nearly 400 pages, Seidman backs up his arguments with a fascinating wealth of documentation from the period. If there is one complaint I could make beside the outrageous price of the book—yes, I think he treats the categories of ideological, militant and apolitical workers in too static a manner. In periods of ferment and change, where everything becomes open to questioning, probably there was a much more fluid interchange between the two layers, especially on the shop floor, than is credited here.

Certainly, the questions raised here are still far from being dated. In fact, they are relevant in today's issues and struggles and it is to the author's credit that he challenges many of the orthodox 'liberal', 'Marxist' and 'anarchist' interpretations of the time period.
The Left Green's fourth Continental Conference met in a church in Iowa City, Iowa, the heart of America's heartland. Among the topics on the agenda waiting for discussion and action by the twenty-five delegates were the following:

1. The future of the LGN -- should it dissolve or disband?
2. The Program of the LGN
3. LGN proposals for the Minneapolis Green Gathering.
4. The LGN and independent politics
5. Periodicals -- *Left Green Notes* and *Regeneration*

A few members saw the LGN as unneeded now, in part because the politically oriented opportunists are now in the Green Party Organizing Committee (GPOC), and the rightwing conservative part of the Greens has departed for the breakaway Green Politics Network. Those who favored disbanding argued that since the remaining Green movement is already "left," our existence just complicates things and duplicates effort. Besides, by remaining separate and explicitly "left," the LGN alienates other Greens who view our agenda as only secondarily environmental. By dissolving into the Greens we can have more influence and assuage these concerns.

Opponents of this move, who were clearly in the majority, felt that the dissolution of the LGN or its integration into the Green Movement would mute the message of anti-capitalism the LGN is trying to put forth in the Greens. Also, most LGN members are members of the Green Movement and aren't regarded as bearers of an alien ideology. Disbanding would also mean that the annual conferences would cease as would LGN publications. With them would go the intellectual give and take that shapes the perspective they carry to the Greens and other environmentalists.

The Program of the LGN, a topic of heated debate at the 1991 conference, received little attention this year. The effort to rewrite it during the intervening year fizzled, and the task was shelved in favor of producing some shorter, more useful documents to use at literature tables and especially at the 1992 Green Gathering in Minneapolis.

Many of the topics suggested for introduction by the LGN at the Green Gathering (the Greens' annual national conference) related to the movement's rapid evolution. Recent political successes--elections to office in Alaska and elsewhere and achieving ballot status in California--have encouraged members who would like to see the Greens become a third party competing with the Republicans and Democrats. This is what happened in several West European countries, notably Germany. These Greens see the road to a clean, healthy environment through government action sparked by the Green Party. The activists of the Green movement, on the other hand, see politics as a deadend. It will discourage grassroots involvement by creating a political leadership that will assume responsibility for environmental action.

The division of the Greens into politicians and activists has raised the question of who will control the organization. The actual paid up membership of the Greens is around 2000 with 100 paid up and
affiliated locals. The extended membership and locals: those that regard themselves as Greens and have some connection with the Green's organization amounts to around 15,000 with 400 locals. To revolutionaries these figures may seem astronomical until one begins to think in terms of the 60,000 plus in California alone who signed up as members to put the Green Party on the ballot.

The question of control hinges on whether the organization should consider as members those Greens whose Green activity consists only of signing a petition or casting a vote. By the standards employed by capitalist parties, a party's state vote determines its representation in conventions and control of the organization. Several of the LGN proposals dealt with this matter.

Despite opposition, the LGN reiterated its stand against independent national politics. The conference voted to continue *Regeneration* and *Left Green Notes* as LGN publications. The latter will be published in California. The Conference ended on a note that revolutionaries will find encouraging. It rejected unanimously a proposal to endorse a 1930s-style, New Dealish Federal jobs program.

*  *  *

Again I'd like to point out the potential of the LGN for advancing the cause of revolutionary socialism and the importance of participation in it by socialists. Twenty-some socialists and many of us stood by and watched the influence of vanguardists and social democrats destroy the anti-capitalist potential of the student movement and dissolve it into radical reformism.

The same thing could happen to the environmental movement. Carried to its logical and necessary extreme, it is--in the language of the bookohnists--"inherently anti-capitalist." Like any significant improvement in the standard of living of wage slaves, any significant effort to preserve the environment decreases the ability of the system to accumulate the capital needed for growth.

Although the Left Green Network is far from having the coherent revolutionary program and united membership many of us would ask for in an organization, it could become a strong force for presenting anti-capitalist ideas to the Greens. And we libertarian socialists could become an important part of the LGN, with a special mission to wage workers, many of whom have accepted the capitalist message that environmentalism, saving the planet from the plunderers, is against their best interests.

If we choose to abstain from involvement, the LGN could go the same way SDS did twenty years ago. And with it could go any chance of influencing the environmental movement with revolutionary anti-capitalism. Also, as a part of the LGN we could help counter the strong element in the organization that has difficulty distinguishing reformism from revolutionary activity. Give it some thought.

--Frank Girard
A Seattle machinist with the gift of tongues has translated an article from the Dutch councilist journal Vand en Gedachte. It discusses the past and future of the anarchist movement and, much more interesting, the future of the "movement of workers," which the article distinguishes from the "workers' movement" of the past, a movement operated by non-working class people. Next, Monroe Trussell expresses his thoughts on the term "state capitalism," which he regards as a misnomer.

The DB has had "Questioning Ecology" for over a year, and I can't remember who sent it nor from what periodical we lifted it. Michael William translated it from the French journal Interrogations, so perhaps it came from his publication Demolition Derby. It places the ideas of environmentalism and the Green movement that has arisen from it—especially in its political manifestations—in the context of the anti-industrialism we have in the US associate with Fifth Estate.

Curtis Price's review confirms the view of our political sector that our class is capable of seeing the real purpose behind the social democratic and vanguardist union and political movements. We end with still another Left Green article from me.

FINANCES: The past two months have been a financially thin time for the DB. Usually we receive between $150 and $200 during such a period. The former figure leaves us with a deficit; the latter helps us catch up. With only $73 this time, we are really in serious straits. We'll see how things work out. We've been deeper in the hole than this. Ordinarily, individual donations carry us. Certainly our subscription price doesn't do the job. We haven't the raised the $3 for a US sub since we began publication in 1983. And during the intervening years we have increased the size from 20 to 32 pages; perhaps it's time for a price increase. I'd appreciate some advice on this problem from subscribers.

CONTRIBUTIONS: Barry Carpenter $2; Harry Wade $25; Eugene Rodriguez $4; Ed Stamm $4; David Fraser $5. Total $40. Thank you, comrades.

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BALANCE June 20, 1992 [deficit] $100.64

Fraternally submitted,
Frank Girard
for the IUCE
The Gateway Green Alliance nominates for PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES:

St. Louis Airport Site (SLAPS).

SLAPS holds radioactive waste from the "Manhattan Project," which developed the atomic bombs used on Japan in 1945. Since no one else has any idea of what to do with nuclear waste, we are nominating SLAPS for President and plan to ship it to the White House when it wins. After 4 (or 8) years in office, SLAPS will be retired and relocated to the Pentagon where it can rest for eternity.

The Department of Energy currently has a plan to "treat" radioactive water at the nearly Weldon Spring site and then dump it into the Missouri River at Hog Hollow Road. From there, the waste would make its way to metro St. Louis drinking water intake points. The radioactive dump symbolizes what can happen to any city when the State uses war to ensure high profits for industry.

SLAPS also reflects the racial attitudes which allowed the US to so easily bomb both Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As a symbol of the slaughter of Japanese, SLAPS manifests the concern which the military/industrial complex has for communities of color within our borders. If you believe that it is the best-qualified candidate to assume the office of President of the United States of America in 1992, vote for "SLAPS" on your ballot next November.

Call for Nominations for VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

SLAPS needs a running mate. Do you have a local nominee? A municipal waste dump? A hazardous waste incinerator? A poisoned lake or stream? A clear-cut? Send a 100 to 600 word description of your candidate and why he/she/it is qualified to be Vice-President. We are especially interested in receiving suggestions for running mates from children. We need to receive nominations before July 20. Send nomination descriptions to Gateway Green Alliance, Vice-Presidential Nominations, P.O. Box 8094, St. Louis MO 63156. If at all possible, please send $5 or $10 to help publicize the campaign.