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(To P. 4)

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION BULLETIN

The Discussion Bulletin is affiliated with the Industrial Union Caucus in Education (IUCE). It serves as
the intellectually and politically independent forum of a relatively unknown sector of political thought that
places the great divide in the "left," not between Anarchists and Marxists but between capitalism's
statist iteration of vanguards and social democrats and the real revolutionaries of our era: the
non-market, anti-statist, libertarian socialists. They are organized in small groups of syndicalists,
communist anarchists, libertarian municipalists, world socialists, socialist industrial unionists, council
communists, and left communists. The perspective of these groups with their rejection of capitalism's
wage, market, and money system as well as capitalist politics and unionism constitutes the only real
alternative to capitalism in both economic and social phases.

In the DB the often 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 limitation 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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your sub expires, we highlight it to remind you.

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people on our extended mailing list.
Review of Reflections on Marx's Critique of Political Economy

This 48-page A4 pamphlet, produced by a "council communist" group in India, focuses on five elements of Marxist economics although the authors prefer to use the term "Marx's critique of political economy". This is specifically what Marx wrote as the subtitle of Capital and is in large part what he set out to provide. However, in elaborating this critique he went beyond a mere criticism of bourgeois economics and developed his own analysis of how the capitalist system actually works - or, as he put it of "the laws of motion of the capitalist system of production". The five elements discussed here are each with its own chapter - are Marx's basic characterisation of capital, the extent of the domination of the capitalist mode of production, the significance of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, the problem of extended reproduction, and monopoly capitalism and imperialism.

The coherence of the analysis offered in each chapter varies. The best is the last one where the position of revolutionaries is taken up unequivocally against the Leninists who have attached themselves to the Marxian framework this century while in reality abandoning the working class viewpoint and supporting "anti-imperialist" states against imperialist powers and proclaiming the so-called "right of nations to self-determination".

Unfortunately some of the specifically economic analysis in the other four chapters less good. There is an odd chapter denying that there any tendency at all for the average rate of profit to fall in capitalism argued principally on the strength of a misreading of a passage in Volume Three of Capital about the effect of the growth of joint-stock companies on the rate of profit. This is a point answered comprehensively enough by another council communist type group called Internationalist Perspectives in the latest edition of their journal.

The main problem though with this pamphlet is its seeming insistence that the cause of capitalist crises is the inability of the working class and capitalist class combined to buy back the entire product of industry. This is a dangerous theory to hold, on two grounds. One is that it explicitly leads to the view that capitalism is somehow going to collapse as a mode of production, thus encouraging crude determinism and a fatalism within the working class movement. The other is that it is simply, and demonstrably, incorrect.

In essence the view Collectivities put forward appears to be the one elaborated by Rosa Luxemburg in her work The Accumulation of Capital, published in 1914. In this theory, the growth (and survival) of "pure" capitalism is impossible as it is unable to realise on its markets all the value that has been added in the sphere of production; hence capitalist growth is only possible when a non capitalist periphery exists for the system to use as a source of additional markets. This is an argument based on a complete misreading of Marx's reproduction schemas for both "simple" and "extended" reproduction. Indeed, Marx himself furnished the theoretical disproof of this view that growth in "pure" capitalism would be impossible, in Chapter 49 of Volume Three of Capital.

However, fundamentally the disproof of this theory is practical rather than just theoretical, based on the actuality of capitalist development this century. If growth in "pure" capitalism or at least something near to pure capitalism is impossible, the system just wouldn't have been able
to expand the forces of production in the way that it has been doing. If capitalism has been in a 
state of market saturation for decades (and according to Luxemburg as far back as 1914) its 
long-term growth in the years since would have been impossible. And although its rate of 
expansion has slowed in recent years it has still continued to enjoy considerable long-term 
growth ever since Luxemburg wrote and without selling sizeable quantities of commodities to 
undeveloped non-capitalist areas of the planet (if anything the opposite has been the case—it 
has attempted to plunder the small remaining non-capitalist periphery, rather than attempt to 
sell products to people with no money to buy them anyway).

Frankly, the idea that a serious revolutionary organisation locating itself in the Marxian tradition 
can still hold this view is more than faintly ridiculous. But it does illustrate another key problem 
with this pamphlet. Though there is much to commend it, from its definition of capitalism as a 
world system based on the exploitation of wage labour through to its largely excellent analysis 
of imperialism, it tends to lack a grounding in some of the realities of contemporary capitalist 
production. There are, for instance, in several thousand words of text, very few statistics or 
references to back-up what are sometimes rather grandiose and sometimes over-confidently 
stated claims. Interestingly, Collectivities claim that "obsession with the significance of the rate 
of profit and its tendency to fall in the present results in very sad and shabby attempts in 
force-fitting data to outdated concepts." Unfortunately 
this equally applies to Collectivities own "market saturation" view of capitalist crises, for 
which—conveniently—they do not bother to provide any data at all.

DAP
(from Socialist Standard, April 1998).

(From P. 2)

Notes, Announcements, and Short Reviews .................................................. 30

* * *

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

DB89 begins with the Socialist Standard's review of Collectivities' Reflections on Marx's Critique of 
Political Economy, also reviewed in DB87. So far as I am concerned the outstanding feature of the 
review, aside from its generally rather critical tone, was its rejection of what I have always assumed was 
a Marxist given: that because workers do not receive in wages the full value of their labor power the 
capitalist in the long run is unable to exchange all his commodities for money. The result is stagnation 
which causes the depressions and recessions that create the circumstances that could bring capitalism 
down. Next I raise questions about various aspects of Reflections...’s analysis. Most of this involves 
minor points except—as in the Socialist Standard review—the matter of the tendency for the rate of profit 
to drop. Incidentally one might ask the author of that review whether belief in this tendecy could 
"encourage crude determinism and fatalism within the working class."

In her letter Barbara Shawl-Jolly’s asks for help in finding a copy of the 1918 Soviet 
Constitution. Perhaps reader has a copy she could use. She also expands on her criticism of socialists 
for quoting Marx and the minor prophets to support their contentions. This is a quality of socialist 
writing I haven’t noticed. Our strongest arguments are the facts, and appeals to authority, except for the 
People's De Leon quotations, are rare in any publication in our political sector that I am aware of.

(TO P. 13)
I found Collectivities’ Reflections on Marx’s Critique of Political Economy most interesting, partly because, unlike many technical books on Marxism, I think I understood what I was reading. As the review in DB86 pointed out, the writers went out of their way to present the material clearly, with glosses on nearly every page as well as several pages of “Concept Notes” on the major ideas in Marx’s work. In this connection—and to emphasize my humility—I should point out that I don’t have an advanced degree in Marxology, nor have I studied Marx’s work in any systematic way. I can recall, when I joined the Socialist Labor Party as a young factory worker with a high school education, asking a prominent member in Detroit (an older factory worker with less than a high school education) how we could expect our class to grasp Marxism. He argued that the necessary knowledge was simple. All the Marxism we need to understand is 1) the process by which we are robbed at the point of production through the wages system and 2) the fact that capitalism is not some permanent kind of prison for our class but that we can destroy it and build a new social system.

I still think he is right about the basics. Yet there is clearly more to Marxism than that, and as the opportunity arises I try to increase my knowledge. It is in this spirit that I have read “Reflections...” and am now commenting—mostly by raising questions.

The authors state their central idea in the first two sentences: “Marx’s critique of political economy provided a foundation for analyzing the intricacies of the reproduction process of commodity producing society.... But some of the premises of Marx’s critique of political economy are problematic, insufficient, and could, indeed should, be said to be erroneous.”

The major point in the first chapter “The Fundamental Characterization of Capital” is that in pre-industrial societies before the advent of wage-labor based production for the market, merchants realized a profit on their capital without the use of wage workers. The authors argue that Marx’s formulation M-C-M’ is misleading because the process could take place without the use of wage labor. Production of the commodities being sold by merchants could have been done serfs, medieval artisans, or slaves, as in the case of cotton in the U.S. prior to the Civil War. Better, say the authors, to speak of “wage-labor based production” or “production for exchange using wage labor.”

In this connection I was under the impression that in defining a commodity Marx had specifically listed production by wage labor as one of the criteria. But on checking, I discovered that I was wrong. But still, doesn’t the profit yielded by mercantile activity involve the use of wage labor? Most especially in transport but also in accounting and the thousand and one tasks required in running a merchandizing operation. The value of a commodity is increased by the value added by the labor of the truck driver, loader, and others involved in shipping, all of whom are wage workers. Isn’t it from them that the merchant capitalist extracts surplus value?

Isn’t the “merchant” capitalist analogous to the industrial capitalist in that he hires wage labor to acquire, ship, and distribute a good. Consider grain and timber merchants. It doesn’t matter whether the source of the commodity is a small farmer’s grain harvest or the vast harvest of a corporate farm run by wage workers or whether the source of the logs is the standing timber on U.S. government land or the logs cut by a small farmer off his woodlot. The merchant capitalist hires labor to prepare it for the next buyer.

The authors also see the profits from usurers’ capital as being extracted outside the wage labor system. But isn’t the profit realized by a lender similar to that of a renter who charges for the use of a building? The usurer simply rents out his money to the merchant capitalist or industrial capitalist. The interest is a part of the capitalist’s expenses. Of course it comes from the surplus value extracted by the capitalist—as does the cost of electricity and anything else consumed in the process of production.

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The authors' argue that the profits realized by the early (15th-18th century) merchants who
developed the beginnings of a world market arose from “...their mediation between societies with different value for the same products or transforming use values and exotica into values (exchange values).” But isn’t it possible to say that the merchant bought the goods at their value in the orient and then shipped them to Europe hiring wage labor to man his ships and then sold them for a profit realized from the difference between the selling price and the cost of the commodity plus the wages of his hired workers and other expenses including insurance and loss from piracy and the like. Of course the demand is a factor in the selling price, which however revolves around the real value.

II. Extent of the Domination of the Capitalist Mode of Production.

The authors assert that Marx’s silence about the effect of competition between capitalist states and the influence of foreign markets on M-C-M’ suggests that he was theorizing on the basis of either 1) a self-contained nation state or 2) the entire globe considered as a single capitalist nation. In either case, Marx “…assumes away: 1. interstate competition [and] 2. other modes of commodity production.” In the first case they are asserting that the role played by the state in subsidizing production, protecting it from foreign competition, repressing worker rebellion, carrying on wars and engaging in other actions to the benefit of capital varies from nation to nation and that Marx failed to take this into account as an aspect of the cost of production. But I was under the impression that the state has historically been the agent of the ruling class, who willingly share out the cost of its maintenance, usually through taxation. Of course there are always disputes among the capitalist class as to how these should be shared, but this does not affect the process of production.

By “other modes of production” the authors mean simple commodity production by family enterprises, mainly peasant farmers but also small scale artisans. The major point they make is that while the wage worker must bear the cost of rearing a new generation of wage slaves in advanced capitalist societies, this cost in less advanced economies is often born by the family engaged in simple-non-waged—production. Presumably the capitalist gets a break here. Also, very often in such societies the burden of supplying some of the wage worker’s food and housing comes from the family engaged in simple production. Again the capitalist gets a break. But it strikes me that Marx had no reason to take such circumstances into account, nor could he, since this sort of thing is not measurable.

III. Significance of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall

The authors believe that Marx’s contention that this tendency is ongoing results from his inability to foresee the rise of corporations and the decline of the individual capitalist as an important factor in production. While the individual capitalists with relatively small scale enterprises will be affected by an increase in the ratio of constant capital to variable capital and thus the relative decline in the proportion of exploitable workers involved in production, the gigantic accumulations of capital in mega-corporations are immune because of the sheer mass of workers involved. I’m not sure why size should make a difference here. But in any event, the authors are not disputing the existence of this tendency in the capitalism of Marx’s day nor suggesting that Marx is wrong; rather that he was unable to foresee the level of concentration of wealth into corporations which would, in fact, negate the tendency. The authors also note that Marx specifically excluded corporations from the operation of the law (the tendency of the rate of profit to fall) because of the mass of capital they owned. Thus they argue that twentieth century capitalism, which is largely corporate, is immune to the law.

It is at this point that the authors’ comments on the falling rate of profit intersect with the ideas of Fred Mosely, author of The Falling Rate of Profit in the Postwar United States Economy, which is concerned only with the operation of the tendency since WWII. Mosely sees an additional factor contributing to the tendency in the need of large accumulations of capital like corporations to hire vast
numbers of non-productive workers—managers, accountants, high priced CEO’s and other corporate bureaucrats—in order to keep the business running, as well as the need for large marketing and financial sectors of the economy, both replete with unproductive workers. Unfortunately for those of us who might have seen this as a factor in the impending demise of the system, neither Mosely nor the authors of Reflections... see the tendency as causing the collapse of the system in the near future; in fact, unlike Mosely the authors of Reflections... deny the validity of the tendency.

IV. The Problem of Extended Reproduction

As nearly as I can figure it out, this chapter concerns the inability of the capitalist to sell the products of labor in order to get the money needed to either a) continue the process of production or b) accumulate money for further investment. The problem is the classic dilemma of capitalism: how to sell enough. The workers are not paid the full value of their labor power in wages and consequently can’t buy back the products of their labor. Since the capitalist cannot just eat up the profits and continue producing at the same level, he must look elsewhere for a way to cash in on the mass of commodities. According to the authors the solution has been to find a market in those economies outside capitalism where simple (non-wage labor) production exists.

Strangely the authors downplay the importance of what to my mind has become the consumer of last resort, the capitalists’ own political state. A gloss asserts that Rosa Luxemburg “absurdly posits military expenditure as a solution to extended reproduction.” Just why this is absurd isn’t explained. The essence of the Keynesian solution to the lack of demand was to empower the state to create demand by financing public works. Military spending would seem to be just a variant. In both cases the state either taxes the capitalist class to pay or else—and more frequently—borrows the money from the capitalists. This is obviously not a final solution, but it seems to have enabled U.S. capitalism to weather the storms to date.

V. Monopoly Capitalism and Imperialism

The authors argue—and properly, I think—that imperialism and monopoly are false concepts because capital is international — global. As to monopoly, while it is true that “factions” of capital (nations and corporations) may attempt to fix prices and may succeed temporarily on a local basis, such monopolies are fragile and shortlived. Imperialism too lacks any basis in historic reality. Far from being a market for British industrialists, until the industrial revolution Western merchants were importing finished goods from India and the Far East. India was a source of textiles, and China of tea, silk, and fine china. In fact, the drain on British currency led to the Opium Wars as British merchants turned to opium as a commodity for trade with China. Even today much of the U.S. balance of payments comes from agricultural and forest materials.

The authors claim that the theoretical mischief flowing from the concepts of imperialism and monopoly capitalism has been the leftist perversion of Marxism -- namely the idea of the “privileged” Western industrial worker who benefits from third world exploitation and also leftist political support of various factions of capital, usually third world nations, among them, I assume, Cuba, Nicaragua, China, Vietnam.

Besides being an excellent and informative read, this book by our Faridabad friends suggests that Marx’s ideas are accessible to working people and worthy of debate. One question that arises is the extent to which the authors’ reflections on Marxism are influenced by their economic environment. India is still in the stage of capitalist development that the U.S. was in before WWII. Agriculture and merchandising are precorporate and much manufacturing is still small scale and labor intensive. The industrial working class still has close ties with their families on the land, rather like Michigan in my
childhood. When industrial employment declined during the Thirties, thousands of unemployed
workers left Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Flint and returned to the marginal family farms in Northern
Michigan and Appalachia.

---Frank Girard

Dear Frank:

Thank you for mentioning the Mahanaim Institute in the Discussion Bulletin. So far we have received two requests for information about our publications, one of them from Canada. I also want to thank you for the pamphlets you sent in response to Joe Tupper's request. I was especially interested in the Society for Economic Equality. Is this a local organization, or are there similar groups around the country. If you have other pamphlets along this line we would be interested in receiving a copy.

The Mahanaim Institute is mainly concerned with Christianity and its influence on secular society. Jesus delivered a humanitarian message which addresses, not only personal, but also social and economic relationships. Christendom preaches "what's in it for me" doctrines instead of a "what can I do for others" program. One needs no vision from heaven to see the socialist message in Jesus' teachings.

The main reason for this letter is to ask whether you have a copy of the July, 1918, Socialist Constitution. I have drawn up a socialist constitution for today's socialists based on the USSR's October 1977 revision. I need to read the 1918 edition in order to check a few things and possibly make some additions in our document. I believe that the earlier version contains information I would like to incorporate in our constitution. If you have a copy, would you send one to me at the above address.

I have also drawn up a socialist "Declaration of Independence". At first I planned to include copies of both these documents in this letter. But I do so much revising that I wanted to make sure they are as comprehensive as I can make them before sending out copies for review.

In addition to these works, I am working on the final revision of the "Commentary On The Book of Matthew", which I translated from the original Greek. This is my "major" work, as it supports my claim that Christendom is operating on false doctrines, and is little more than a capitalist business. I don't know when I will have the work finished. It appears it will end up being a two-volume work, because the revision I am working on has about 900 pages. This also includes the actual Greek text, in case the reader wants to check my Greek sources.

I am also gathering notes for several other books, one on the socio-economic conditions in this country caused by capitalism. Also in the works is a book on Jesus, the man, and his humanitarian message. Hopefully, these will not be as long as the Matthew Commentary!

I subscribe to several socialist publications. It is my feeling that these groups depend so heavily on the philosophies of Marx, Lenin, DeLeon, etc., that their "socialism" appears to be more a religion than an economic plan for the future. These groups seem to believe that if they preach Marxist philosophers long enough and often enough, the people will suddenly convert and become "believers". As a former teacher, I believe that the average worker needs hard economic facts, not philosophy.

I often wonder why today's socialist writers feel it essential to justify every
statement they make by quoting Marx or other philosophers. Marx et al defined a socialism for the 20th Century, which is now gone. Yet, the socialists continue to quote these century-old theorists as if everything they wrote was cast in stone, and cannot tolerate any deviation.

We cannot use these philosophies to establish a socialist economy because they give us no practical guidelines for changing the capitalist system as it has evolved during this century. We need a socialism that addresses the needs and conditions of the 21st Century. It is a waste of time using century-old philosophies to justify today’s socialist ideas. We should be using our resources to develop a workable plan to eradicate capitalism and establish a practical socialist system that addresses today’s and tomorrow’s socio-economic needs and conditions.

I am working on several projects; gathering ideas and information, and examining the many areas of society that need changing, particularly with regard to the mechanisms needed to transfer corporate wealth and the workplaces to the workers. I am also collecting notes on how to socialize areas of society other than the workplace, such as education, health care, transportation, pensions, the arts, etc. Any input from other socialists will be greatly appreciated. I like to think of my efforts as reflecting the ideas of all socialists, not just my own.

I like to think of the socialist ideal as a picture of the “house” we want to build. Marx, Lenin et al gave us a picture but no blueprints. Today’s socialists have to draw up detailed blueprints with specific information regarding how to erect a “socialist house” that will meet the needs and conditions of today’s and tomorrow’s society. Marx never told us how to socialize capitalist globalization or the space program!

Again, thank you for sending your publications.

Here’s To The Revolution,

Barbara Shawl-Jolly and C.W. Jolly
Co-Directors, The Mahanaim Institute
Ph. 1-281-356-6828
Dawn Pisturino, in D.B. 60, made some interesting observations about the U.S. working Class. She said that they are: fairly comfortable in a material sense; afraid that any major change would cause them to be less prosperous; not inclined to engage in political struggle in order to change the world or for any other reason, unless they have no other choice; and, not willing to take on the responsibility of creating a new society.

I found little in her description that I would argue with. I would, however, like to examine the subject of workers' fear of responsibility.

The great majority of workers would have to assume a lot of responsibility for the establishment of socialism, and perhaps even more responsibility on a day to day basis for it to work. U.S. workers are not willing, at this point, to do this.

I wonder why. Are they naturally irresponsible? They may be. Do they feel that nothing they could do would make a difference, anyway? Perhaps. Complaints and passive resistance are not effective, and violent upheaval is morally repugnant to them. Furthermore, it is impossible, under the present circumstances, to bring about any substantial change through the electoral process alone.

The U.S. ruling class controls our elections and uses them to protect the interests of that class. Most people in this country know that, although I suspect that residents of other countries do not understand the extent of that control.

So, perhaps U.S. workers are not suffering from lack of character, but rather from apathy born of helplessness.

But that explanation does not completely satisfy me. I remain in search of some other reason.

There is a third possibility. It may be that U.S. workers, as a class, are in the capitalist stage of development. Capitalism is not forced upon them. This is what they want. They don't want feudalism, because they have outgrown that system. They don't want socialism, because it is beyond their development.

If that is the case, is it useless to try to "reform" them? You cannot persuade a society of slaves, or one of serfs, to embrace socialism. You have to wait for such societies to develop. Is it equally futile to try to sell our program to wage laborers?

These statements are not a declaration of my beliefs. They are questions. I would like to know what D.B. readers think.

Linda Featheringill
Dear Frank,

While I agree with much of your "reply to the De Leonist Society of Canada," namely that DeLeonists/unions/the IWW must be in the business of defending/improving daily conditions. If they claim to be economic organizations, then they must live in the here and now.

However, to characterise their position (one of not fighting to defend conditions on the economic front) as being "close to the thinking of the World Socialists (SPGB)" is, I believe, to misunderstand the latter's position.

The Socialist Party (WSM) has never advocated industrial unionism and never said that workers must become a class-conscious majority before forming Socialist Industrial Unions.

The position is to allow members of the organisation total freedom to decide whether they join a craft, trade union, or indeed any union at all.

So, in Britain you have members of the Socialist Party who work in Trade Unions; members who don't join any unions, and members like me who are in the IWW. This is altogether a different position from all forms of De Leonism.

All the best,
Derek Devine

Dear Editor,

I am tired of the senseless fighting in Washington, D.C. between the Republicans and the Democrats. I am tired of the charges and countercharges being made against members of both parties. The situation has deteriorated to the point where nobody can believe anybody. I would like to see both parties step down and a new transformation of government take place.

In reality, we no longer need politicians and their political slogans and lies. We can replace politicians at all levels of government (federal, state, and local) with computers. The internet makes it possible for the American people to vote directly on issues affecting them. We can eliminate the middle-men altogether and exercise true democracy with the push of a button.

As the population in this country continues to grow and our social problems become worse, traditional solutions will continue to fail.

Dawn Pisturino, PO Box 3536, Kingman, AZ 86402
Dear Frank,

While I agree with much of your "reply to the De Leonist Society of Canada," namely that DeLeonists/unions/the IWW must be in the business of defending/improving daily conditions. If they claim to be economic organizations, then they must live in the here and now.

However, to characterise their position (one of not fighting to defend conditions on the economic front) as being "close to the thinking of the World Socialists (SPGB)" is, I believe, to misunderstand the latter's position.

The Socialist Party (WSM) has never advocated industrial unionism and never said that workers must become a class-conscious majority before forming Socialist Industrial Unions.

The position is to allow members of the organisation total freedom to decide whether they join a craft, trade union, or indeed any union at all.

So, in Britain you have members of the Socialist Party who work in Trade Unions; members who don't join any unions, and members like me who are in the IWW. This is altogether a different position from all forms of De Leonism.

All the best,
Derek Devine

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Dear Editor,

I am tired of the senseless fighting in Washington, D.C. between the Republicans and the Democrats. I am tired of the charges and countercharges being made against members of both parties. The situation has deteriorated to the point where nobody can believe anybody. I would like to see both parties step down and a new transformation of government take place.

In reality, we no longer need politicians and their political slogans and lies. We can replace politicians at all levels of government (federal, state, and local) with computers. The internet makes it possible for the American people to vote directly on issues affecting them. We can eliminate the middle-men altogether and exercise true democracy with the push of a button.

As the population in this country continues to grow and our social problems become worse, traditional solutions will continue to fail.

Dawn Pisturino, PO Box 3536, Kingman, AZ 86402
Direct Democracy

Every condition which exists in the civilized (i.e., capitalist) society today was predicted by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels 150 years ago in *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848.

The expansion of free trade on a global scale; the continual upgrading and revolutionizing of the means of production; the loss of human values and personal self-worth; the degradation of the family; the wage slavery and dehumanization of modern day workers; the increasing disparity in wealth between "the haves" and "have nots"; the concentration of power and wealth in fewer and fewer hands; market fluctuations with their resultant periods of economic boom and bust; the emergence of women into the labor force; the reactionary conservatism of the middle-class; the necessity of the minimum wage: all of these conditions of modern society were already foreseen in the distant past.

It is, therefore, fair to say that the problems afflicting modern civilization are not the result of liberal or conservative political policies; Democrat or Republican policies; religious or secular policies; racial or gender policies. Rather, the problems plaguing American society today — and which seem so insurmountable — derive exclusively from the nature of the capitalist economic system itself!

This is a fact which the national media strives ever harder to explain away and cover up. This is a basic truth which our liberal and conservative leaders choose to ignore.

But the truth cannot be suppressed forever. The truth will set us free.

Most Americans are already conscious of the fact that they are virtually powerless to change conditions in this country without resorting to radical means. Since most Americans abhor violence, however, they convince themselves that change is not practical or not possible. They console themselves with trips to the shopping malls; dull their senses with mindless t.v. and videos; control their negative anxieties with mood-altering substances.

We already see that this kind of self-delusion and self-indulgence serves no useful end. As the American people become more dull-witted and inhibited, society crumbles all around us.

In the midst of economic abundance, social degradation and political chaos run rampant.

It is therefore fruitless to try and organize people into a militant force. Unions, alternative political parties, political action committees, etc. — few, if any, of these organizations ever effect permanent change.

It is simply not enough to verbally attack the prevailing political/economic/social system. In order to win the war, the working class must become the rulers of the system.

But how can this be accomplished?

*By empowering the people!*

We are taught from birth that America is a democratic country. In reality, Americans support a representative form of government. We may elect our leaders in free elections, but the decisions made by those leaders are not determined by the people who elect them. The decisions made by political leaders at the federal, state, and local levels are, more often than not, determined by economic factors and the people who wield the power of money. This, then, is not democracy. It is merely power concentrated in the hands of a
minority who pretend to do the will of the majority. Democracy in America is, therefore, a sham. The right to vote is equally false and misleading.

Representative government may have been a shining viable solution 200 years ago, but it is no longer effective in our vast, complicated society.

Then, what is the solution?

The only viable alternative to representative government is Direct Democracy.

Computer technology (specifically, the global networks) makes it possible for the American people to vote directly on issues affecting them as individuals and society as a whole.

We no longer need intermediaries who patronize us and throw us just enough crumbs to keep us from really rebelling against the system.

*Empowering the people* is the only alternative to outright violent revolution and social upheaval. Once the concentration of power is in the hands of the majority, we can re-shape the nature of politics, the economic system, and the entire social fabric. In fact, this will be an inevitable result of taking control of the political process.

Once the American people realize that they can control their own lives politically, they may eventually realize that they can direct their own lives economically, thereby instituting changes in the economic system and promoting a more harmonious social environment.

I urge every American citizen who cherishes the right to control his/her own life to work NOW towards the fulfillment of Direct Democracy in this country. With the power in our hands, we can bring about social evolution and create a better, brighter future for ourselves and our descendants.

Dawn Pisturino
Committee for Direct Democracy
P.O. Box 3536
Kingman, Arizona 86402

(from p. 4)

Linda Featheringill's letter raises once more the basic question in Anton Pannekoek's article in DB88.

Next Derek Devine sets me straight on the matter of the Socialist Party of Great Britain's views on socialist industrial unionism. But actually I mispoke; I should have said, "Your [the De Leonist Society of Canada] requirement that the working class be educated [about socialism] and class conscious before organizing the SIU strikes me as being rather close to the thinking of the World Socialists (SPGB) about the need for socialist education before a revolution can take place."

Dawn Pisturino's letter prepares the reader for her article "Direct Democracy," which follows. This article seems to be based on the thinking of Akiva Orr, whose pamphlet *Beyond Capitalism*..., reviewed in DB87. Next Orr points out a couple of mistakes in that review, one of which strikes me as arguable. Certainly nothing in the pamphlet suggests that private ownership of the means of production will be abolished under 'autonomy' and replaced with collective or social ownership. In fact, as the letter asserts, "...then workers become 'owners' of their work." The same idea is explicit in the following article, "Some History," reprinted directly from the pamphlet. Although I really question Orr's minimizing the importance of economic demands as prime mover of our class, the 1968 events in France are a strong argument for his point of view.

Monroe Prussack's letter applauding the De Leonist Society of Canada for opening his eyes to
Dear D.B. comrades,

Thank you very much for advertising my pamphlet: Beyond Capitalism, Socialism, Anarchism -- Autonarchy, the Ultimate Democracy on page 31 of the March/April issue of the Discussion Bulletin.

However, there are two embarrassing printing errors in your advert.

First. You printed ‘nationalism’ instead of ‘nationalization’ (of the economy).

Second. You ascribe to me the idea: ‘no need to abolish private ownership, capital and the state,’ which I never said or meant. What I meant and said explicitly in my pamphlet, is that to ‘own’ means to have the right to make all the decisions concerning work (including those concerning distribution of profits, investment policy, and everything concerning conditions of work) are made by the workers - directly (via phones using autobank technology), then the workers become ‘owners’ of their work. The same applies to the State. When every citizen has a every moment the right to vote on every political decision, then the citizens ARE ‘The State.’

I’d be most grateful if you’d correct these errors.

Fraternally, 25 Oranim St., Kfar-Shmaryahu, Israel 46910
A. Orr Internet E-mail: aki Orr@netvision.net.il
PeaceNet E-mail: orrr@igc.apc.org
Internet sites: http://www.autonarchy.org.il
http://www.geocities.com/~autonarchy
2. Some History.

Rule by direct voting in meetings of soldiers, workers, and peasants, emerged spontaneously in the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917 and was crushed by Lenin who came to power in 1917 by advocating this form of governance. The reappearance of the demand for equal authority to decide matters of State, Work, Education, occurred during the general strike in France in May 1968. This strike - the greatest in history, in scope and significance - paralyzed France in 1968. It began by Paris students protesting against outdated University regulations. The police attacked the students with truncheons. The students fought back. Battles between students and police lasted a few days. Young workers, outraged by police violence, came to help the students. Absence of young workers from the factories paralyzed production. Gradually other workers joined in. Transport workers, teachers, government employees, the entire education and health sectors and finally even the prostitutes...

An entire modern society stopped working during a period of peace and economic prosperity. Everybody was on strike. No political Party or Trade Union called for, or planned, this strike. All political Parties and Unions opposed it. Stranger still - the demands of the strike were not economic.

Why did the entire population of France stop working during a time of economic prosperity, peace, and free elections, without raising economic demands?

The strike was utterly unexpected and more widespread than anyone had ever seen. The strikers did not raise economic demands. Instead, meetings took place in universities, in neighbourhoods, factories, schools, hospitals, even in mental asylums. These meetings began to manage their areas of concern. People discussed issues neglected or ignored by the authorities, and voted on proposals for improvements. In schools, pupils, teachers, and parents, jointly discussed education and voted on proposals for improvements. Pupils had the same vote as parents or teachers. This repeated itself everywhere. 'Action Committees' sprang up in neighbourhoods all over the country. 'Self-management' was the popular demand.

France’s President, General De-Gaul, panicked and fled to Germany trying to bring the French Army stationed there to surround Paris and crush the strike. Meetings of soldiers decided against this and it came to nothing. Soldiers' decisions overruled the General's decisions. Generals can decide what they like, if soldiers make their own decisions they overrule the Generals'. Trade Unions' officials saw the strike as a threat to their authority. Why?

When meetings of employees make all decisions concerning work Trade Unions become redundant. Owners too. This solves the ownership problem. By making all decisions concerning their work employees become owners. 'Ownership' of something means authority to make all decisions about it. Whoever has authority to make all decisions concerning X, owns X. Ownership by employees is far more efficient than ownership by private or corporate owners. Tedium and profit can be divided by common consent without strikes or unemployment. No one knows work better than those who do it.
Employee autonarcy can consult experts to find out the options available, but choosing between options must be done by the employees, not by the experts, just as is done today by owners or their representatives who consult experts.

As for the Unions, they have long ago become fiefs of officials whose corruption stems from knowing that employees can represent themselves directly yet hiding this from the employees while hinting to employers that it is in their interest to negotiate with Union officials rather than directly with employees. In modern industrial societies Union officials are concerned more with ruling employees than with serving employee interests.

Meetings of employees can represent themselves directly far better than Union officials. Trade Unions today are an essential component of Capitalism. They are safety valves regulating tensions between employees and employers to keep Capitalism functioning. They stand - and fall - with the representative system. Some Capitalists strive to replace Unions by private contracts with employees. The regime of private contracts is worse than rule by Unions. Both must be replaced by Employee Autonarcy at work. Employee Autonarcy on national, trade, and firm, level, can solve all economic problems.

Trade Union officials will viciously resist any attempt to change Capitalism and rule by representatives, into Autonarcy. So will all employers.

The 'Action Committees' in France in May 1968 dealt also with general problems of society and took political decisions. This made Political Parties obsolete. All Political Parties, including Communist Parties all over the world, fought viciously against the French strike. They called it "Student Hooliganism", hid information about it, distorted facts, peddled lies. Why?

When mass-meetings assume political authority they overrule all representatives including Political Parties. When people vote directly on all political issues, representatives, be they individuals or Parties, lose their authority. That is why in 1917 Lenin hurriedly changed the slogan that brought him to power: "All power to the workers and soldiers councils" into: "All power to the Bolshevik Party". Lenin's Party crushed the workers councils, first legally (1918), later militarily (Kronstadt, 1921). Trotsky led the military attack on the strikers in Kronstadt, and executed those taken prisoners...

In 1968, when the French Unions and Communist Party (CP) realized they lose credibility by opposing the strike, they joined it so as to take it over and use it for their own purposes. The CP ordered its Union, the C.G.T., to demand a wage increase to buy off the workers and stop the strike. Pompidou's government realized that the CP wants to save itself, and the system of representatives, and agreed to a 15% increase of basic wages, plus a reduction in working hours. To everybody's surprise the workers rejected this offer declaring:

"We don't want a larger slice of the economic cake, we want to run the bakery".

This demand was, of course, rejected by the French government, by the Communist Party, and by the Unions. Accepting it would have made them all redundant. Gradually, after weeks of strike people began to drift back to work and the strike gradually subsided. Why?

The main reason for the failure of this unique strike was the inability of the strikers to unify the decisions of all meetings all over the country into a single decision. Society must have the means to unify many decisions into a single decision. This is necessary for running an electricity grid, transport and communication systems, health and education services, etc.

The main justification for Central Government today is its role as unifier of decisions. The inability of the 1968 strikers to produce an alternative system for unifying many decisions taken
all over the country into a single decision binding the entire society enabled the Central
Government to reassert its authority. Gradually the old system of representatives in France
reasserted itself. Is this the end of the story? NO WAY!
The motives for this strike have not disappeared. Quite the opposite. The motives for the 1968
strike are stronger today than ever before, not only in France but everywhere. The 1968 strike
in France was directed against antiquated authority relations, against hypocrisy and corruption
of politicians, against all Political Parties and Unions, and against the inability of citizens to
have a say in decisions affecting their lives.
These motives are stronger than ever today, not only in France, but everywhere. Since 1960 at
least 40% of the electorate in the USA never bothered to vote in any election to Congress and at
least 30% didn’t vote for Presidents. People abstain because they find elections ineffective in
bringing about real change.
Today, as in 1968, Political Parties and leaders inspire boredom and disgust. Most voters in the
West today vote “against”, not “for”. The 1968 strike was unexpected and faced problems never
faced before, it lacked means to unify decisions taken all over the country into a single decision
This enabled the French government in 1968 to reassert its authority. Today, electronic
communications provide means to solve this problem in a different, utterly new, manner.

(From p. 13)
the possibility of reforming our way to socialism may not go over very well with that group.

Next Larry Gambone takes on David Stratman’s “idealism” and suggests that in expecting a
revolution, most of the rest of us suffer from the same malady. I was surprised and disappointed that a
realist like Gambone could describe the claim that workers do not pay taxes as “the ultimate stupidity.”
For a defense of the idea, I suggest that he read my review of Mosely’s book or at least the part dealing
with taxes on page 26. Mosely also questions the idea that workers do not pay taxes. “Russian Strikes”
examines the condition of workers in the CIS (Confederation of Independent States), what is left of the
old USSR.

In Aufheben Number 6 (briefly reviewed in DB88) the major article was “What Was the USSR?”
Here we reprint the introduction to the series which promises to examine Trotskyist as well as less well
known answers to the question. As the next article makes clear, I found Fred Mosely’s book, The
Falling Rate of Profit in the Postwar United States Economy comforting because it confirmed one of
my fondest beliefs with a host of statistics. Unfortunately he found flaws in a couple of others.
The article on the reorganization of the revolutionary left by Cajo Brendel, editor of Daad en
Gedachte, the Dutch councilist journal, considers the changed thinking needed by revolutionaries since
the demise of “actually existing socialism” in the USSR. The core of Brendel’s thinking can be found
in the assertion that “… the abolition of wage labor can’t be realized by a party or vanguard. This
demands autonomous struggle, so that workers have to create their own organizations completely
different from traditional one.” As usual we end with some notes, announcements and short reviews.

Finances

Thanks to generous contributors, a couple of large back-issue sales, and readers who pay for advanced
subscriptions—in one case well beyond my actuarially determined life time—we are almost
embarrassingly in the black. Perhaps it’s time to declare a dividend or split our stock or do a takeover
of some less prosperous journal.

(To p. 22)
Dear Readers,

In reaction to previous letters I wrote to D.B., Irving Silvey attacked me as a traitor to Marxism in D.B. 88. He was displeased that I, as well as the DeLeonist Society of Canada, advocate Socialism with a political government in conjunction with democratic industrial unions. The ownership of industry or the means of production should be the people, represented by the state, and the workers should work for the state. It would be a classless society, because we would all own the tools of production and the land in common. Decisions on how we should live as a society and what we should use our resources and labor for should be made by the state, including the enforcement of law and order and foreign relations. Decisions on how to produce the needs of society, as well as the administration of democracy in the workplace should be done by the workers through their industrial unions. In D.B.88, the DeLeonist Society of Canada expressed it well when it ended a paragraph, “to conduct production and distribution in concert with policy guidelines of Parliament or Congress”.

Those Canadian DeLeonists, however, are not clear on whether the political arm of socialism should be instituted before or after the workers take control of the means of production. To be consistent with De Leon’s program, the state would have to be established after we have a classless society, and the workers are running industry through socialist industrial unions. My position is that the people as a whole should unite to reform our state to make private and state ownership of the means of production social property. In the United States, the Constitution allows us to achieve this through the amendment clause, or Article 5. By no means should we abandon our Constitution, as DeLeon advocated, when we can amend it. Our Constitution served the embattled farmers who once fought the British at Bunker Hill. It instituted the end of the chattel slavery through amendments. It has served and still serves the capitalist class, and it is available to administer the end of wage slavery as well as in the corruption of public servants by money influence. Our great President, Abraham Lincoln, said over 100 years ago that a government of the people by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth. I, likewise, believe we should retain our Constitution with necessary reforms under Socialism.

In 1948, I became an active sympathizer of the Socialist Labor Party in New York City. At that time, the SLP had regular outdoor meetings every week, it held public lectures every month, we distributed hundreds of thousands of leaflets every year, and we got on the ballot in local, state and national elections. In addition, I helped the SLP get on the ballot in Philadelphia and New Jersey. We presented the Socialist message to the public, and their response was not encouraging to me.
From time to time, I spoke out when I was critical of the SLP’s message, hoping to improve it. That was why I was not accepted as a member until the old guard called the New York Tendency broke away, to later form The DeLeonist Society.

Even when I was a member of the SLP, I continued to take issue with official party positions. If the party were able to win friends and influence people, I would have been satisfied, because I always believed we can reach the people. It took the DeLeonist Society of Canada to open my eyes to the realization that we can teach socialism, not as social revolution, but as a reform of our present society. The Socialist Party or the Social Democrats reform capitalism and should not be called Marxists, because they do not try to end class rule. Unlike those political fakers I advocate that we should work to amend our Constitution to end the private ownership of the means of production and make it social property, so we may end wage slavery and class rule. Polls show that the people prefer moderate to liberal capitalist government, because in spite of his bad behavior and lack of character, Clinton leads in the polls. This is still a war of ideas as part of the class struggle and when people hear my ideas, I am sure the polls will reverse themselves in our favor.

Fraternally yours,

Monroe Prussack

PERSPECTIVES ON ANARCHIST THEORY (Spring 1998, Vol. 2 No. 1) is a publication of the Institute for Anarchist Studies, which grants money for anarchist projects approved by its board of directors. This 12 page issue contains a long interview with Janet Biehl on “Radical Cities and Social Revolution” as well as information on the grants it has made and its efforts to raise money for its projects. One year, 2 issues, $5 from IAS, PO Box 7050, Albany, NY 12225.

LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW (Number 22, Winter 1997-1998) Subtitled “Anarchosyndicalist Ideas and Discussion” and edited by people close to the IWW, articles in this issue include an editorial “The Business Unions Can Not Be Reformed,” and two articles on Swedish syndicalism. “Notes on Anarchism in America, Part 2,” a contentious rendition of history by Mike Hargis, one guaranteed to raise the hackles of some anarchists, carries his history from the mid-1970s to the present time. An earlier installment covered the period from WWII, and “future articles will discuss the anarchist press and anarchist activism.” Also included is a review of two new books about Chomsky. LLR has always impressed me as an important journal in our political sector. In effect it is the theoretical journal of the IWW. 45 pages, $3.50 (4-issue, 2-year sub $12.00) from LLR, PO Box 2824, Champaign, IL 61825.

STILLED TONGUES: FROM SOAPBOX TO SOUNDBITE by Stephen Coleman chronicles the efforts in Britain to maintain the right to advance social ideas unpopular with the ruling class from the
I really must thank Dawn Pisturino for bringing the discussion down to earth. It's about time we had a reality check within the pages of DB. All the fancy schemes and desires amount to little when faced with the daily life of the average person. We are simply not at the point where, as Dawn says, we have been "pushed to the point where [we] have no other choice", and indeed, that might not ever occur. However, while revolution may be pie in the sky and people may not be driven to the wall, this does not mean we are completely content and totally unwilling to work for change. Dawn, while essentially correct is, I feel, a little too sceptical.

My experience with my fellow workers is that they do express certain desires and have strong complaints. They resent the taxes we pay, the lousy schools and all the other state bureaucratic institutions, the never ending regulations imposed by all levels of government. They have contempt for politicians and despise bureaucrats. They think we should have some sort of input into management decisions at work and think the managers are dopes. When I bring up the idea of mutual aid societies as an alternative to state run social services everyone thinks it a good idea. They also like the idea of decentralization. (I literally have never had anyone reject these ideas.) Now none of this adds up to socialism, let alone revolution. Bob Rossi gives us a name for it, "libertarian populism", but feels that it is far too limited. However, if that is all there is, perhaps we should admit it and try to work within that framework as best we can. One final point - if "libertarian populism" is severely limited, what have leftists and socialists ever done in response to the desires and complaints I have listed? They are not taken seriously, written off as "bourgeois", or the result of media hype, or the ultimate stupidity - the claim that workers don't pay taxes. If this is all the alleged friends of the workers can do, it is no wonder the workers response is limited.

Anyone who wants to discuss libertarian populism, mutualism or "practical anarchism", please feel free to write.

Larry Gambone
Box 174, Montreal QC
H3K 3B9 Canada

(From p. 19)

1600s when one James Naylor, at the behest of the British House of Commons, had a hole bored through his tongue to silence him. Coleman, himself a champion platform man for the SPGB, describes the give and take with audiences, the personalities of platform speakers, the importance of the soapbox to minor political and religious groups. And he mourns its loss to the power of wealth and technology. As Coleman describes it, free speech has never been a right in Britain—nor in the U.S. in my experience. Working people have always had to fight for it, and now the odds are much greater against the forces of righteousness. 173 pages, no price given from Porcupine Press, 10 Woburn Walk, London WC1H 0JL and from Humanities Press in the U.S.
Russian Strikes

The best analysis that the press in this country can come up with is that Russia is simply having trouble with the transition to capitalism. A closer look reveals that there are much deeper problems than converting to a free market economy. In fact the Russian ruling class has always been aware of how western market economies work. It is a problem that goes straight to the marrow of the world economy. There are three points that must be made. First, the Soviet Union was never a "socialist" state, it had a system of wage labor where all industry was owned by the state, hence we use the overly convenient term to describe it, as STATE-CAPITALIST. Second, What went on with the decline and fall of the Soviet Union was part of a tendency that can be seen at work all over the world as the welfare states of western Europe cut social services and as the United States eliminates the vestiges of its' social programs. Third, that the nations of the world can no longer afford to live up to their obligation to paid. The social welfare system that is today in a globalized economy that wage workers, who now comprise a majority of the human race, are isolated from each other and can hardly struggle vigorously enough to keep what they have. The ex-Soviet economy was the weakest link in the chain and therefore was the first to fall. Today in Russia workers are fighting back, it is not an offensive struggle that is being waged, rather it is a defensive struggle that marks all workers' struggles today. It is in this situation workers are trying to fight back.

Last February the government promised yet again to pay the workers all their back wages owed to them, in what was a long series of meaningless promises that Russian workers simply wont believe anymore. The strikes came to a head last September on the 18th, when a miners' strike that started in Kemerovo spread all the way to Vladivostock, caused both power shortages and sparked a power struggle between the mayor of Vladivostock and the regional governor. The quick response of miners in far eastern Russia to the miners in Kemerovo is an example of a tradition of solidarity that miners in Russia have had since the late eighties and early nineties. The traditional litany of the mine owners is that no one is paying the bills and thus they cannot pay the workers. Tominskaya hydroelectric owes 10.3 billion roubles, Kuznetskaya electric owes 9 billion roubles. The joint stock company of Leninskcoal is owed 24 billion roubles. All this is belied by the fact that a small number of ex-stalinists and the group of bosses centered around Yeltsin have managed to take for themselves the majority of the Gross Domestic Product. According to the Financial Times these "new Russians" took 75% of the total Gross Domestic Product for the year of 1992, mostly from selling off state enterprises (FT 5/21/96). Even air traffic controllers aren't being paid. On September 29th Russian air traffic controllers went on strike in 57 cities to force the payment of back wages. A Reuters bulletin on October 1, 1997 stated that workers at Luchegorskogol ended a strike after receiving 17 billion roubles (about $29 million dollars) nowhere near what they are actually owed. This represents the reality of the world bourgeoisie that asks for sacrifice and calls for greater efficiency solely because they are bankrupt.

Not only are the miners paid but the Russian rulers who couldn't afford to maintain safety standards yesterday, today cannot even maintain the equipment. On December 2nd of last year, 60 miners died in the Zvyaynovskaya mine in Novokuznetsk due to badly deteriorating safety measures such as ventilation. It was the worst such tragedy ever in the Kuznecks basin. The tactics of hopelessness show themselves again and again. on the 20th of November four miners at the "First of May mine" went on a hunger strike over the payment of back wages. Again on November 22nd families of workers at a lumber mill near Archangelsk resorted to stopping trains along the north railway.

The Russian version of a union is known as a professional committee. The professional committees of miners have agreed to start delaying the shipments of coal until back wages are paid. The situation is in a terrible mess that the economy is in is not merely the product of "trouble with the transition to a free market economy", but rather a startling example of how the entire world economy is in a crisis, the crisis starts in the world's weakest economies and spreads to the
world's stronger economies.

Obviously the decrepit old state-capitalist states could not survive crises that wealthy "free market" economies can overcome. This tendency to end all state subsidized industries and social welfare programs can be seen in even the most social-democratic states such as Sweden and Denmark. One of the main stumbling blocks to a unified Europe is the very question of subsidies especially to agriculture.

That the "socialist" economies always had a system of wage labor that was based on ownership of a ruling class embodied in control of a one-party state. Many non-communist countries serve as excellent examples of state-capitalism, like Israel, the ruling class and the state are the same entity. Whether through subsidies and direct control or through a board of shareholders the dynamic remains the same, to accumulate as much wealth off the backs of workers as possible. Hence, the ruling class must be fought in whatever form it takes and under whatever name they happen to call themselves.

Even in Russia workers still feel an obligation to their country, and so they are willing to keep up basic services even when they aren't being paid at all. This situation is very unstable and even bigger struggles are bound to occur as things get worse. This is a crisis of a global system of exploitation where the ruling classes of the world incrementally try to get more for less, in an endless race to the bottom, so that workers today are given a choice between accepting permanently worsening living conditions or taking up class struggle. A.S.

From Internationalist Notes, P.O. Box 2044, Madison, WI 53703

(From p. 17)

Contributions: Kevin Glover $3; David Frazer $12; Monte Throneburg $15; Grace and Mike Hogan $10; Dick Weideman $1; Perry Sanders $2; Joe Tupper $40; Monroe Prussack $7; Doug Fuda $7; Charles Bateman $2; Louis Prisco $7; Connie Furseck $ 16; James Hammond $9. Total $131.00
Thank you, comrades.

BALANCE February 25, 1997 $384.29

RECEIPTS
Contributions $131.00
Subs and sales 218.22
total $349.22

DISBURSEMENTS
Postage $ 125.00
Printing 36.29
Bank charges 14.00
Postage due 1.00
total $ 176.29

BALANCE April 26, 1998 $526.61

Fraternally submitted,

Frank Girard – for the DB
Introduction

The question of Russia once more

In August 1991 the last desperate attempt was made to salvage the old Soviet Union. Gorbachev, the great reformer and architect of both Glasnost and Perestroika, was deposed as President of the USSR and replaced by an eight man junta in an almost bloodless coup. Yet, within sixty hours this coup had crumbled in the face of the opposition led by Boris Yeltsin, backed by all the major Western powers. Yeltsin's triumph not only hastened the disintegration of the USSR but also confirmed the USA as the final victor in the Cold War that had for forty years served as the matrix of world politics.

Six years later all this now seems long past. Under the New World (dis)Order in which the USA remains as the sole superpower, the USSR and the Cold War seem little more than history. But the collapse of the USSR did not simply reshape the 'politics of the world' - it has had fundamental repercussions in the 'world of politics', repercussions that are far from being resolved.

Ever since the Russian Revolution in 1917, all points along the political spectrum have had to define themselves in terms of the USSR, and in doing so they have necessarily had to define what the USSR was. This has been particularly true for those on the 'left' who have sought in some way to challenge capitalism. In so far as the USSR was able to present itself as 'an actually existing socialist system', as a viable alternative to the 'market capitalism of the West', it came to define what socialism was.

Even 'democratic socialists' in the West, such as those on the left of the Labour Party in Britain, who rejected the 'totalitarian' methods of the Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and who sought a parliamentary road to socialism, still took from the Russian model nationalization and centralised planning of the commanding heights of the economy as their touchstone of socialism. The question as to what extent the USSR was socialist, and as such was moving towards a communist society, was an issue that has dominated and defined socialist and communist thinking for more than three generations.

It is hardly surprising then that the fall of the USSR has thrown the left and beyond into a serious crisis. While the USSR existed in opposition - however false - to free market capitalism, and while social democracy in the West continued to advance, it was possible to assume that history was on the side of socialism. The ideals of socialism and communism were those of progress. With the collapse of the USSR such assumptions have been turned on their head. With the victory of 'free market capitalism' socialism is now presented as anachronistic. The notion of centralized planning of huge nationalized industries is confined to an age of dinosaurs, along with organized working class struggle. Now it is the mark and liberal democracy that claim to be the future of socialism and communism are deemed dead and gone.

With this ideological onslaught of neo-liberalism the old social democratic and Communist Parties have dropped all vestiges of old socialism as they lurch to the right. With the Blairite New Labour in Britain, Clintonite new Democrats in the USA and the rename Communist Parties in Europe, all they have left is to openly proclaim themselves as the 'new and improved caring managers of capitalism, fully embracing the idea of the market and modern management methods.'

Of course, for the would-be revolutionaries who have grown up since the 1960s, with the exception of course of the various Trotskyist sects, the notion that the USSR was in anyway progressive, let alone socialist, communist, had for a long time seemed ludicrous. The purges and show trials of the 1930s, the crushing of workers' uprisings in East Germany in 1953 and Hungary in 1956, the refusal to accept even the limited liberal reforms in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the continued repression of workers' struggles in Russia itself, had long led many on the 'revolutionary left' to the conclusion that whatever the USSR was it was not socialist. Even the contention that, for all its monstrous distortions, the USSR was progressive insofar as it still developed the productive forces became patentely absurd as the economic stagnation and waste of the Brezhnev era became increasingly apparent during the 1970s.

For those ultra-leftists and anarchists who had lor
since rejected the USSR as in anyway a model for socialism or communism, and who as a result had come to reassess the original communist demands for the complete abolition of wage labour and commodity exchange, it has long since become self-evident that the USSR was simply another form of capitalism. As such, for both anarchists and ultra-leftists the notion that the USSR was state capitalist has come as an easy one - too easy perhaps.

If it was simply a question of ideas it could have been expected that the final collapse of the USSR would have provided an excellent opportunity to clear away all the old illusions in Leninism and social democracy that had weighed like a nightmare on generations of socialists and working class militants. Of course this has not been the case, and if anything the reverse may be true. The collapse of the USSR has come at a time when the working class has been on the offensive and when the hopes of radically overthrowing capitalism have seemed more remote than ever. If anything, as insecurity grows with the increasing deregulation of world forces, and as the old social democratic parties move to the right, it would seem if anything that the conditions are being made for a revival of 'old style socialism'.

Indeed, freed from having to defend the indefensible, old Stalinists are taking new heart and can now make common cause with the more critical supporters of the old Soviet Union. This revivalism of the old left, with the Socialist Labour Party in Britain as the most recent example, can claim to be making just as much headway as any real communist or anarchist movement.

The crisis of the left that followed the collapse of the USSR has not escaped communists or anarchists. In the past it was sufficient for these tendencies to define their radical separation with much of the 'left' by denouncing the Soviet Union as state capitalist and denying the existence of any actually existing socialist country. This is no longer sufficient, if ever it was. As we shall show, many Trotskyists, for example, now feel vindicated by the 'restoration of capitalism' in Russia. Others, like Ticktin, have developed a more sophisticated analysis of the nature of the old USSR, and what caused its eventual collapse, which has seriously challenged the standard theories of the USSR as being state capitalist.

While some anarchists and ultra-leftists are content to repeat the old dogmas concerning the USSR, most find the question boring; a question they believe has long since been settled. Instead they seek to reassert their radicality in the practical activism of prisoner support groups (the left never supports it prisoners does it), or in the theoretical pseudo-radicality of primitivism. For us, however, the question of what the USSR was is perhaps more important than ever. For so long the USSR was presented, both by socialists and those opposed to socialism, as the only feasible alternative to capitalism. For the vast majority of people the failure and collapse of the USSR has mean the failure of any realistic socialist alternative to capitalism. The only alternatives appear to be different shades of 'free market' capitalism. Yet it is no good simply denouncing the USSR as having been a form of state capitalism on the basis that capitalism is any form of society we don't like! To transform society we not only have to understand what it is, we also have to understand how past attempts to transform it failed.

Outline
In this issue and the next one we shall explore the inadequacies of various versions of the theory that the USSR was a form of state capitalism; firstly when compared with the standard 'Trotskyist theory of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state, and secondly, and perhaps more tellingly, in the light of the analysis of the USSR put forward byTicktin which purports to go beyond both state capitalist and degenerated workers' state conceptions of the nature of the Soviet Union.

To begin with we shall examine Trotsky's theory of the USSR as a degenerated workers' state, which, at least in Britain, has served as the standard critical analysis of the nature of the Soviet Union since the 1930s. Then we shall see how Tony Cliff, having borrowed the conception of the USSR as state capitalist from the left communists in the 1940s, developed his own version of the theory of the USSR as a form of state capitalism which, while radically revising the Trotskyist orthodoxy with regard to Russia, sought to remain faithful to Trotsky's broader theoretical conceptions. As we shall see, and as is well recognized, although through the propaganda work of the SWP and its sister organizations world wide Cliff's version of the state capitalist theory is perhaps the most well known, it is also one of the weakest. Indeed, as we shall observe, Cliff's theory has often been used by orthodox Trotskyists as a straw man with which to refute all state capitalist theories and sustain their own conception of the USSR as a degenerated workers' state.
In contrast to Cliff's theory we shall, in the next issue, consider other perhaps less well known versions of the theory of the USSR as state capitalist that have been put forward by left communists and other more recent writers. This will then allow us to consider Ticktin's analysis of USSR and its claim to go beyond both the theory of the USSR as state capitalist and the theory of the USSR as a degenerated workers' state.

Having explored the inadequacies of the theory that the USSR was a form of state capitalism, in the light of both the Trotskyist theory of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state and, more importantly, Ticktin's analysis of the USSR, we shall in Aufheben seek to present a tentative restatement of the state capitalist theory in terms of a theory of the deformation of value.

From Aufheben No. 6, Autumn 1997. I2.00 (about $3.00 U.S. plus postage) from Aufheben, c/o Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton, BN2 2GY U.K.

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REVIEW


This book has been resting here at PO Box 1564 for over a year. Reading Collectivities' Reflections... and especially the section dealing with the falling rate of profit prompted this review, even though Mosely and the authors of Reflections... are examining the theory of a falling rate of profit from different perspectives and in search of different answers.

There is something very alluring about the theory--actually a law, as Marx termed it--that besides its gravediggers the proletariat, capitalism creates another problem that promises to wreak havoc on it. As capital develops the means to replace workers by increasingly complex and productive machines, a natural law decreases the rate of profit the capitalists realize on their capital. Briefly the law states that as technological improvements in machinery take place over time, the rate of profit has a tendency to drop. How is that for being hoisted on their own petard!!?

Unfortunately for the casual Marxist, Fred Mosely decided to begin his book by explaining Marxist concepts as he intended to use them. I call the decision unfortunate because the language is much too technical for at least one casual Marxist. Mosely is writing in the language of post-doctoral Marxology, and I'm trying to understand from the perspective of a post-Socialist Labor Party study class graduate. Increasing the difficulty is the fact that Chapter 1 deals with disputes among expert Marxologists on the tendency. The use of mathematical notation also created a barrier to understanding except that it became clear that there were differences among the experts on how to calculate the rate of profit. Mosely himself concludes that

"...Marx's theory does not provide a definite prediction concerning the trend in the rate of profit. However, Marx's theory does provide a number of plausible reasons why the rate of profit might decline under certain historical circumstances. Whether or not Marx's theory is valid for a particular historical period (such as the post-World War II period) thus becomes an empirical question."

In Chapter 2 he discusses the "conceptual" issues involved in estimating "the three fundamental [Marxian] magnitudes: constant capital, variable capital, and surplus value" needed in figuring the rate of profit. These five issues are:

1. Do the concepts of constant capital, variable capital, and surplus-value refer to observable quantities of money (or prices) or to observable quantities of labor?
2. Do the concepts of constant capital and variable capital refer only to capitalist production, or also to various forms of non-capitalist production (mainly government production, but also household production and institutional production)?

3. Do the concepts of constant capital and variable capital refer only to the capital invested in production activities in capitalist enterprises or also to the capital invested in non-production activities?

4. Does the concept of constant capital include the value of residential housing?

5. Are the taxes paid by workers out of their wages a part of variable capital or surplus-value?

Their importance in figuring the rate of profit is obvious, but 2 and 3 are important for other areas of Marxist theory. If the concepts of constant and variable capital do not apply to government production, which the author sees as a form of “non-capitalist production, then the view of the Soviet system as state capitalism is false. If taxes on wages (income taxes) are deducted from workers’ wages rather than from the capitalists’ surplus value, then workers should respond positively to ruling class efforts to convince them that their best interests are served by supporting tax reduction measures.

In both cases Mosely comes down on what seems to me to be the wrong side. On the basis of a very strict reading of Marx, he argues that governments do not engage in commodity production (i.e. production for the market), M - C - M' in Marx’s notation. The net result of this is to remove the theoretical basis for the argument that the ‘socialism’ of the Soviet Union, China, and their satellites was actually state capitalism.

Mosely argues that taxes on wages (income taxes paid by workers on their wages) must be figured as a part of variable capital (i.e. the money the capitalist class pays in wages) on the rather narrow grounds that they do not enter into the cycle M - C - M’, characteristic of capitalist circulation but instead are consumed by the government. And since government involvement in the cycle is ignored by Marx, it should be ignored in figuring the rate of profit.

But not all of Mosely’s Marxist colleagues agree with him, so we can at least consider the other side of the question, which I believe has important consequences in the way we approach workers in trying to raise class consciousness. While Mosely may figure the wage tax as a part of variable capital because it does not fit into the category of constant capital as Marx formulated it, the fact is that we are dealing here with an aspect of capitalism that has evolved since Marx’s time: the increased role of government involvement in the economy and the ruling class question of how to pay the cost of this involvement.

Taxes on workers’ wage income is a post-WWII phenomenon in the U.S. that resulted from the need to pay for at least a part of the vastly increased military and social spending needed to shore up capitalism in its old age. But how to allocate most equitably the cost each capitalist should bear. Our rulers decided to tax capital on the basis of the cost of the labor power it purchases. A real genius in the capitalist camp suggested that the money so raised be included with wages in calculating workers’ paychecks and then deducted from gross pay the workers receive. The check stub for the much lower net pay shows the deductions and convinces the worker that it is he who is supporting the state and makes him an active ally of capital in its drive to cut social spending.

But getting back to the falling rate of profit, we find that Mosely calculations produced mixed results. The rate of profit increased by 8 percent between 1947 and 1965 and then decreased by 28 percent between 1967 and 1977. And Mosely sees the results as not measuring up to what one might
expect from Marx's law. He also finds that his results differ widely from those of two other economists working on the same problem who find an even smaller drop than he. The prime factor in the discrepancy, he says, lies in their differing definitions of variable capital (labor power). He does not include unproductive labor--the labor time used in circulation and supervision--as variable capital. Consequently it becomes a cost that must be recovered from surplus value. Mosely finds that supervisory labor and that required for marketing increased much more rapidly than productive labor. Over the period 1947-77 the number of productive workers grew from 30 million to 40 million while unproductive workers increased from 10 to 25 million. Thus the ratio of unproductive to productive workers nearly doubled. It seems to me that in the matter of unproductive labor we have an aspect of the evolution of capitalism that Marx couldn't have anticipated and which the authors of Reflections... didn't articulate.

Mosely includes a wide variety of non-producers whose wages when calculated as a part of constant capital increase the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. He classifies them under three headings: commercial, financial, and supervisory. We are all witness to the enormously greater effort involved in marketing the commodities and services our class produces and the growing role of finance: banks, credit, the stock market. Any of us working on the shop floor have seen the ongoing effort to maximize production through increased pressure on us wage slaves.

In recent years capitalists have noticed the dampening effect of non-productive workers on profits. In the factory they have responded by introducing the team concept and similar head games designed to get us to pressure each other to greater production. Also ongoing is the effort to break up corporate bureaucracies by the downsizing mania of the past decade or so, which has inflicted its greatest damage on middle management.

To sum up Mosely's conclusions, he attributes the 28 percent decline in the rate of profit between 1947 and 1977 to two factors. First in importance is the vast increase in unproductive labor. Second is the increase in the ratio of constant to variable capital, the factor Marx emphasized.

Worth noting is another aspect of the capitalist system which Mosely fails to mention because it isn't directly involved in his subject as he has limited it: the role of the state as a factor in the profitability and stability of capitalism. Whether the services are beneficial like education, social welfare, recreation or oppressive like the military, police, courts, the capitalist class must pay the cost of its "executive committee," as Marx called the state. And certainly this reduces profits by the amount they pay in taxes.

This review should not end without mentioning the valuable appendices and statistical tables (30 of the latter) that the author used in the calculations from which he drew his conclusions. Anyone who wants figures on the number of productive and unproductive workers in the U.S. and estimates of consumer installment credit, average real wage of productive labor, the value composition of capital and many others--up to as recently as 1987 is some cases--can find a use for this book.

--Frank Girard
SOME REMARKS ON THE REORGANIZATION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

The following article by Cajo Breidel deals with the left after the collapse of so-called actually existing socialism. We believe it poses important questions for those who consider themselves revolutionaries.

About 58 years ago the French writer Georges Sorel stated that "the historiographers and the actors in the historical drama are unable to see what is much later understood as the essence of what happened." (1) If this is true in general it is particularly true of the (revolutionary) left. Like those who in the middle ages marched with the "Bundeslehre" (2) to bring the Kingdom of God on earth, although indeed they were the political opposition against feudal society, many revolutionary leftists of the 19th and 20th centuries have had false ideas about the real meaning of their own purpose and acts. Absolutely convinced that they were the champions of a proletarian revolution, the revolution for which they strived has achieved nothing more than the transformation of private capitalism into state capitalism.

Recently it has been stated that "with the collapse of the real socialism... the left has been fundamentally shocked." (3) Nobody will deny the reality of this shock. However, one has to add immediately that what has collapsed cannot be defined as real socialism. As far as the shock is concerned, it has at last forced the traditional left to give up its illusions.

However, the end of illusions has not yet brought a reorganization, at the most it can only be seen as one of its preconditions. This is so because the traditional left can also be characterized not only by its socio-political illusions but also by its forms of organization and its pretensions. Perhaps, for special historical reasons, this left enters the public scene as a party or a political group which presents itself as the "vanguard of the working class" and in one way or another considers its task to be stimulating as what it defines as "class consciousness" of the workers. This task is considered urgent because the left regards the working class as "the agent of the revolution that it envisions."

In fact it is, of course, the other way around: the proletarian revolution is the definitive result of the daily struggle of the workers. To the traditional left the starting point is not the class struggle but the revolution. Its principle is the Leninist thesis that "without a revolutionary theory, there doesn't exist a revolutionary practice" - that is to say, revolutionary practice as it is understood by the left.

Whether the traditional left will believe it or not, it is characterized by its mistaken belief that if one replaces false ideas by correct ones, the existing reality will collapse. Admittedly it is a wrong idea that can be explained by the fact that, although the left knows precisely that not an interpretation is important but a transformation, it regards this transformation not as an act of the working class but as the act of a vanguard. That is to say resulting from its own action.

However, as Marx knew. "It is not a matter of what this or that proletarian or even the proletariat as a whole present as its goal. It is a matter of what the proletariat is in actuality and what in accordance with this being, it will historically be compelled to do." (4) Completely contrary Marx the traditional left thinks that the working class has to learn that workers have to struggle to overcome capitalist society, and that the vanguard is teaching them! In this way, it separates itself as an intellectual stratum superior to this class. And this has been so right from the beginning.

At first sight the pretension of the traditional left seems to have a certain basis in reality, it is only at first sight! As soon as this left is explaining its point of view and its position in relation with the so-called "idleness of the workers left to themselves" it becomes clear that the practice of the working class is far from being the practice that this left believes it should be, that is to say this practice is not as it should be according to it. Reality then doesn't accord with what the traditional left has in
mind. In other words, this left has it upside down.

It is not true that without revolutionary theory there is no revolutionary practice. It is not true that certain opinions and ideas, that a certain quantity of consciousness are the absolute precondition to struggle. It is the other way round! Many times, it has been stated that the “theory becomes a material force as soon as it takes possession of the masses.” However, a theory is never more than a recapitulation of the experiences of the past and of its consequences. Not because of a certain theory does one have new experiences of the struggle, but new experiences that arise from the struggle give birth to new theory. This is a continuous process. It is not a process in the heads of the workers. They don’t draw theoretical but practical consequences. They don’t struggle to realize any form of a theory, they struggle for their interests. Their practice isn’t the result of a certain theory, instead their practice has consequences for theory. When the circumstances which lead to struggle don’t exist, the voice of the left, which thinks theory is the precondition of the struggle, remains the voice of a preacher in the desert. The fact remains this reality now - and not since the latest few years - is clearer than ever before is the essence of the crisis.

What are the possibilities for the so-called “revolutionary left” to overcome this crisis? The discussion of its reorganization involves saying clearly to the workers that the transformation of private capitalism into state capitalism doesn’t change their class position. However, this also is no contribution to overcoming the crisis. It is all the same when “leftists” say that the liberation of the working class is by no means a political act, but a social one. And when they say that a change in productive relations - that is to say the abolition of wage labour - can’t be realized by a party or vanguard. This demands autonomous struggle, so that workers have to create their own organizations completely different from the traditional ones. All this has nothing to do with overcoming the struggle.

The downfall of what is falsely called “real socialism” seems to be the cause of a deepening crisis, but certainly it is not so. Instead it has to do with the fact that the old traditional labour movement with those leaders saying that they are acting on behalf of the workers and taking decisions in their name, has become an anachronism. Our time is one in which one can see an ever widening gap between those who call themselves the leaders on one side and the workers on the other side, who are prevented by the leaders from acting for themselves and making their own destiny.

If the so-called “revolutionary left” believes that its reorganization means that it has to present other slogans and that with other slogans and principles and other perspectives - even with a different form of organization - yet still acting as a vanguard, still believing that it has to teach the workers something - they will be trying to sell new wine in old bottles. However in doing so, they are just acting according to the law that is dominating their own form of organization.

Reality dictates that revolutionaries learn from workers rather than teach them, not trying to realize their own ideas but concluding the meaning of what the workers are doing from what is going on before their eyes. If the left are doing this, it wouldn’t be a vanguard any longer and this would interfere with the intentions of the reorganization.

Cajo Breidel

1) The author defines himself as Marxist. Still? What is meant by this “still”? If, somewhere other theories or ideologies have collapsed, Marxism has not. The author wants to stress that what he is understanding here by “the revolutionary left” is the traditional left, existing from the beginning of the labour movement and what has experienced a crisis today by the fact that new forms of class struggle arise not corresponding with the old traditions.

1 Georges Sorel, “Reflexions sur la violence.”

2 The “bundschuh” was painted on the banners of the revolting farmers. It was a shoe very different from the beautiful shoes of the knights. So, there couldn’t be any mistake about what sort of people were
behind those banners.

The German magazine “Spezial” July-August 93, p. 24

Marx/Engels “The Holy Family.”

From Red & Black Notes, Winter 1998. $1 for sample copy from P.O. Box 21013, 665 8th Street, SW, Calgary, Alberta T2P 4H5 Canada

NOTES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHORT REVIEWS

The CNT and the Russian Revolution by Ignacio de Flores, 13 pages plus notes L1 or $2.50 postpaid from KSL, BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX. In this pamphlet the author describes the Spanish response to the Bolshevik effort to woo the revolutionary wing of the international socialist movement. In Spain that wing was the anarcho-syndicalist CNT (National Confederation of Labor). De Flores details the divisive results of the Bolshevik’s efforts to advance Leninist internationalism in Spain and the CNT’s reaction to its authoritarian nature. In the second part he relates the reaction of the two CNT delegates sent in 1919 to the founding congress of the Third International. Their report described the authoritarian nature of the Bolshevik leadership as well as their efforts to obtain the release of anarchists who were already falling victim to Leninist political oppression.

Libertarian Communism by Isaac Puentes. First published in Spanish by the CNT, Puentes’ pamphlet, according to the introduction, was enormously influential in Spain before and during the Spanish Civil War. Puentes uses the term “libertarian communism” interchangeably with anarcho-syndicalism. As a supporter of the CNT he devotes much of the pamphlet to a concise description of the goal of anarcho-syndicalism and the case against the CNT’s rival for the support of Spanish workers: the statist and reformist social democratic and Leninist parties and unions. Much of the pamphlet consists of a discussion of the “popular prejudices” against the revolution—now position of the CNT. These include such views as the idea that workers need a “social architect,” that they are not equipped to build a new life, that they need politicians, etc. Four pages are devoted to a twelve-point list contrasting political organization of the future society with union organization. Although Puentes’ libertarian communism seems to be based on a small town, small industry economy, he does make an effort to explain how anarcho-syndicalism could function in a large city. 32 pages, no price given. Rebel Workers Pamphlet #5 from Monty Miller Press, P.O. Box 92, Broadway, Sidney 2007, Australia.

Marxism in the 21st Century, by the Socialist Party of Great Britain, is an attempt to refute the belief in economic circles that Marx and his “ism” are outdated. To this end it depends on a restatement of basic principles and ideas of Marxism in short chapters titled “Commodities,” “Value,” “Money and Prices,” “Do Machines Produce Surplus Value?” and the like. Especially interesting to me is the pamphlet’s attempt to support the Marxist explanation of gold as the universal measure of value in exchange in this era of the worldwide issue of national currencies unbacked by gold. The essence of the authors’ argument is that in the final analysis, when prices must find a standard for measurement, that standard will be the value of the labor required to produce an ounce of gold. I should think the chapters on “Banks and Credit” and “Do Banks Create Wealth” will interest most DB readers in this era of capitalism’s precarious dance on the
edge of economic collapse. 46 pages. IL - $2 postpaid airmail from the SPGB, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Rd, London NW12 8SB England.

Left Green Perspectives: A Social Ecology Publication, formerly Green Perspectives, has changed its name to dissociate itself from the increasingly market-oriented mainstream Greens USA and Green Party. Seven of the ten pages in this issue, number 38 April 1998, are devoted to "The Unity of Ideals and Practice," an essay by Murray Bookchin in which he attempts to combat what he sees as the growing diversion from the basic task of social anarchists—as it is of all elements of revolutionary libertarian socialism— to destroy capitalism and the state. Bookchin examines the decline in this respect of social democracy, Marxists in general, and the Green movement. He then goes on to describe the superiority of libertarian municipalism to other programs for the emancipation of the human race from capitalism. Unfortunately he tars all Marxists with the brush of statist on the grounds that 150 years ago when capitalism was in its infancy Marx assumed that a post-revolutionary society would have to retain the state until the means of production had been developed. $1 ($12 for ten issues, $16 overseas) from the Social Ecology Project, PO Box 111, Burlington, VT 05402.

World Socialist Review, No. 14, Winter 1998. The focus of this issue of the "Journal of the World Socialist Movement in the United States" are Ron Elbert's two essays critiquing of New Democracy and Dave Stratman's We CAN Change the World. As one might expect from a writer on the Marxist end of the libertarian socialist spectrum, Elbert concerns himself largely with Stratman's rejection of Marxism. This Elbert attributes to the Leninist distortions of Marx Stratman imbibed in his earlier political associations. Elbert finds that without Marxism, Stratman comes up with a fuzzy view of history, specifically in his interpretation of the events immediately following the Russian Revolution, the Cromwellian Revolution, and the May 1968 actions in France. While Elbert is not likely to welcome New Democracy into the World Socialist Movement as a "companion Party" any time soon and finds Stratman's rejection of Marxism a flaw that must adversely affect the revolutionary possibilities of New Democracy, his frequent references to the similarities of the goals of New Democracy and World Socialism indicate a welcome level of toleration. There may be more than one road to the New Jerusalem. 24 pages, $1 (four-issue sub $4) from WSP(US), PO Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144.

Here and Now No. 18 Begins with an editorial, "Emote Control," that sets the focus for this issue: "A new kind of society is being born, but nobody yet knows what sort of monster it will be.... Control of the national economy has formally been handed over to the Bank of England.... With government now removed from economic management, what remains to it is administration of the moral life of the population." Articles include "Truly Madly Appropriately," the transcript of a meeting of "care workers," "The Three Monkeys of the Apocalypse," "The Assurance of the Sleepwalkers" in which the authors look into the accounts of the therapy business, and a seven-page article on such psychological disorders as Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD), RMS - Recovered Memory Syndrome, MSP - Munchhausen Syndrome by Proxy, CFS - Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, and other excuses for intervention by a growing profession of psychological therapists. L2 ($3.00) from Here and Now, c/o Transmission Gallery, 28 King Street, Glasgow, G1 5QP Scotland.

Common Ownership Vol. 6, No. 24, March/April 1997. Worthy of note in this issue is a
three-page article on Lewis Henry Morgan, the pioneering American anthropologist and author of *Ancient Society*. “Lewis Henry Morgan and the Last 120 Years” is largely a summary of Morgan’s theories, their social and economic significance, and the rather successful efforts to downgrade Morgan by academics eager to place the new discipline of anthropology on a paying basis in the service of capital. $2 (one-year sub $12) from Common Ownership, 72 Thatcher Street, Wanganui, New Zealand.

*Reflections on Marx’s Critique of Political Economy*, 48 A4 pages, is still available free and postpaid from the DB. Just drop a card to P.O. Box 1564 or E-mail fgirard@iserv.net for your copy.

*Market Socialism: The Debate Among Socialists* is the title of a book edited by Bertell Olman in which two academic advocates of this oxymoron debate two opponents, one of whom is Olman, who sent the DB some xerox’s. It looks promising. We hope to obtain a copy to use in writing a proper review for a future issue. Available from Routledge, 29 W. 35th Street, New York, NY 10001.

*International Review* (Number 92, 1st quarter 1998) is the English language theoretical journal of the International Communist Current. Of major interest in this issue are two articles about Russia. “A Proletarian Debate Begins in Russia” (3 pages) describes a 1996 conference on Trotsky’s *The Revolution Betrayed* called by a committee of Russians studying “the legacy of Leon Trotsky.” Left Communists of the ICC and of the Communist Workers Organization were invited. Much of this report describes the machinations of the Trots to foil the efforts of left communists to place their ideas before the conference. “The Unidentified Class: Soviet Bureaucracy as Seen by Leon Trotsky” (4 1/2 pages) by a Russian author analyzes Trotsky’s thinking on events in the USSR after the rise of Stalin. Both articles are intensely interesting. 25 A4 pages 12, $2.75 from BM Box 869, London WC1n 3XX or PO Box 288, New York, NY 10018.

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