

DISCUSSION BULLETIN
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Eastern Bloc Democratizes to Impose More Austerity--Poland: Solidarnosc Drops Its Mask" and "Strikes in the USSR: A Blow for Perestroika." Number 15 also contains a special four-page supplement, "The Upheaval in Central Europe."

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW*: P.O. Box 288, New York, NY 10018 or BM Box 869, London WC1N 3XX, UK; Quarterly, 8 by 12, 25 pp. Sub US \$15.50/ UK L8. IR is the English language theoretical journal of the ICC. As such it concentrates on ongoing Marxist analysis of current events and polemics with other groups in "the milieu." The contents of number 60, first quarter, 1990, reflect this: "Presentation to the Theses on the Economic and Political Crisis in the USSR and the Eastern Countries", and the theses themselves, which include "New Difficulties for the Proletariat" and "World Economic Crisis: After the East, the West." And "Understanding the Decadence of Capitalism...the Real Confusions of the Proletarian Milieu." Of special interest to readers is that although the language of some of these articles is a bit hard to follow and one may be a bit put off by the arrogant self importance of some of these, they include what seems to me to be one of the few real attempts in our political sector to interpret recent events.

KAMUNIST KRANTI: Two issues of this English language journal were published some time ago and were reviewed in earlier DBs. KK continues to produce documents in English, one of which, "Communique from India," was published in DB--. Most recently we learned that it has published a 200-page condensation of Rosa Luxemburg's The Accumulation of Capital. A review and information about ordering will be forthcoming in a future issue. Readers wishing to write to KK should address their correspondence to Sher Singh, c/o Bhupender Singh, 679 Jawahar Colony, Faridabad - 121001, India.

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DISCUSSION BULLETIN

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BULLETIN MATTERS

Reading this department in DB40 after it had been printed convinced me that the DB desperately needs a proofreader. But I'll do my best this time not to omit words and create confusion.

Whether or not we agree with Murray Bookchin's assessment of the stability of capitalism, his view of the role "radicals" can play in what is becoming the major social issue of our time, the environment, is well worth reading, as is the response of the Committee for Socialist Union, a DeLeonist group. Also in this connection we reprint a political statement by the Youth Green Clearinghouse, sent to us by

Comrade Adam Buick. It provides a further example of the political currents in the Green movement. We hope readers will comment on this and provide additional material. The Ohioan in a letter to Monroe Prussack takes a dimmer view than Bookchin of the present health of capitalism. E.R. takes issue with my labeling the publications of the International Communist Current (ICC) and kindred journals as Leninist advocates of the dictatorship of the party. Space considerations prevent my answering his letter in this issue. R.S. writes about Tianamen Square and his own experiences in discussion with Chinese students in the U.S. Jon Bekken straightens out Bob Black and the record, while John Zerzan straightens out me "and friends" on deindustrialization. This time I'll try to send him an advanced copy of my reply so that he can get in the last word for a change.

As usual we call for your articles and letters. They must be typewritten and camera ready. We don't edit here except for an occasional bleep. Please help us conserve space by using narrow margins and single spacing.

Frank Girard
for the D.B. Committee

REVIEWS OF PERIODICALS

Here we review what we regard as the periodicals of our political sector in rotation as space permits. Below is what we intend as an exhaustive list of such journals in the English language. If you have ideas for additions--or deletions, for that matter--please let us know. Those titles followed by an asterisk are regarded as being in our political sector but suffering from the Leninist virus of "dictatorship of the partyism":

AGAINST SLEEP AND NIGHTMARE, ANARCHIST LABOR BULLETIN, ANGRY WORKERS' BULLETIN, BULLETIN OF ANARCHIST RESEARCH, CLASS STRUGGLE BULLETIN, COLLIDE-O-SCOPE, COMMUNIST*, COMMUNIST BULLETIN*, DELEONIST BULLETIN, DEMOLITION DERBY, DISCUSSION BULLETIN, ECHANGES, FACTSHEET FIVE, FIFTH ESTATE, HERE AND NOW, IDEAS & ACTION, INDUSTRIAL WORKER, INTERNATIONALISM*, INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE*, INTERNATIONAL REVIEW*, KAMUNIST KRANTI, LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW, LITTLE FREE PRESS, NEW UNIONIST, OPEN ROAD, THE PEOPLE, PROCESSED WORLD, THE RED MENACE, SINEWS, SMILE, SOCIALISM FROM BELOW, THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC, SOCIALIST STANDARD, SOCIALIST VIEW, SOLIDARITY, THE SPANNER, SUBVERSION, SYNDICALIST BULLETIN, WILDCAT, WORKERS' DEMOCRACY, WORKERS' INFO-RAG, WORKERS' SOLIDARITY, WORLD SOCIALIST REVIEW, WORLD REVOLUTION*.

INTERNATIONALISM*: P.O. Box 288, New York, NY 10018; 8 1/2 by 11, 14pp. 5-issue sub \$6 US/Canada, elsewhere \$8/L5. Internationalism is the publication of the US branch of the International Communist Current (ICC). As such it upholds left-communist positions held by many of us who would not describe ourselves as left communists. These are reflected in the titles of articles, e.g. in No. 67 Jan-Feb 1990: "No to 'Democracy' / Yes to Class Struggle." An article, "The Bloodbath in El Salvador" refers to the FMLN as one of "the bourgeois gangs" that have made life hell for El Salvadorans. Like other ICC publications, Internationalism takes a keen interest in other groups in what it calls the "proletarian milieu" and occasionally has polemical articles on

Cont'd on p.23

[The article below by Murray Bookchin and the following "Open Letter" by the Committee for Socialist Union constitute a unique exchange on the "radicalism" of the Left Green Network, for whom Bookchin is a principal theorist. This article is reprinted here with the permission of Green Perspectives, P.O. Box 111, Burlington, VT 05402, -- fg]

Radical Politics in an Era of Advanced Capitalism

by Murray Bookchin

Defying all the theoretical predictions of the 1930s, capitalism has restabilized itself with a vengeance and acquired extraordinary flexibility in the decades since World War II. In fact, we have yet to clearly determine what constitutes capitalism in its most "mature" form, not to speak of its social trajectory in the years to come. But what is clear, I would argue, is that capitalism has transformed itself from an *economy* surrounded by many precapitalist social and political formations into a *society* that itself has become "economized." Terms like *consumerism* and *industrialism* are merely obscurantist euphemisms for an all-pervasive embourgeoisement that involves not simply an appetite for commodities and sophisticated technologies but the expansion of commodity relationships—of market relationships—into areas of life and social movements that once offered some degree of resistance to, if not a refuge from, utterly amoral, accumulative, and competitive forms of human interaction. Marketplace values have increasingly percolated into familial, educational, personal, and even spiritual relationships and have largely edged out the precapitalist traditions that made for mutual aid, idealism, and moral responsibility in contrast to businesslike norms of behavior.

There is a sense in which any new forms of resistance—be they by Greens, libertarians, or radicals generally—must open alternative areas of life that can countervail and undo the embourgeoisement of society at all its levels. The issue of the relationship of "society," "politics," and "the state" becomes one of programmatic urgency. Can there be any room for a radical public sphere beyond the communes, cooperatives, and neighborhood service organizations fostered by the 1960s counterculture—structures that easily degenerated into boutique-type businesses when they did not disappear completely? Is there, perhaps, a public realm that can become an arena for the interplay of conflicting forces for change, education, empowerment,

and ultimately, confrontation with the established way of life?

Marxism, Capitalism, and the Public Sphere

The very concept of a *public realm* stands at odds with traditional radical notions of a *class realm*. Marxism, in particular, denied the existence of a definable "public," or what in the Age of Democratic Revolutions of two centuries ago was called "the People," because the notion ostensibly obscured specific class interests—interests that were ultimately supposed to bring the bourgeoisie into unrelenting conflict with the proletariat. If "the People" meant anything, according to Marxist theorists, it seemed to mean a waning, unformed, nondescript petty bourgeoisie—a legacy of the past and of past revolutions—that could be expected to side mainly with the capitalist class it aspired to enter and ultimately with the working class it was forced to enter. The proletariat, to the degree that it became class conscious, would ultimately express the general interests of humanity once it absorbed this vague middle class, particularly during a general economic or "chronic" crisis within capitalism itself.

The 1930s, with its waves of strikes, its workers' insurrections, its street confrontations between revolutionary and fascist groups, and its prospect of war and bloody social upheaval, seemed to confirm this vision. But we cannot any longer ignore the fact that this traditional radical vision has since been replaced by the present-day reality of a managed capitalist system—managed culturally and ideologically as well as economically. However much living standards have been eroded for millions of people, the unprecedented fact remains that capitalism has been free of a "chronic crisis" for a half-century. Nor are there any signs that we are faced in the foreseeable future with a crisis comparable to that of the Great Depression. Far from having an internal source of long-term economic breakdown

that will presumably create a general interest for a new society, capitalism has been more successful in crisis management in the last fifty years than it was in the previous century and a half, the period of its so-called "historical ascendancy."

The classical industrial proletariat, too, has waned in numbers in the First World (the historical *locus classicus* of socialist confrontation with capitalism), in class consciousness, and even in political consciousness of itself as a historically unique class. Attempts to rewrite Marxian theory to include salaried people in the proletariat are not only nonsensical, they stand flatly at odds with how this vastly differentiated middle-class population conceives itself and its relationship to a market society. To live with the hope that capitalism will "immanently" collapse from within as a result of its own contradictory self-development is illusory as things stand today.

But there are dramatic signs that capitalism, as I have emphasized elsewhere, is producing external conditions for a crisis—an ecological crisis—that may well generate a general human interest for radical social change. Capitalism, organized around a "grow-or-die" market system based on rivalry and expansion, must tear down the natural world—turning soil into sand, polluting the atmosphere, changing the entire climatic pattern of the planet, and possibly making the earth unsuitable for complex forms of life. In effect, it is proving to be an ecological cancer and may well simplify complex ecosystems that have been in the making for countless aeons.

If mindless and unceasing growth as an end in itself—forced by competition to accumulate and devour the organic world—creates problems that cut across material, ethnic, and cultural differences, the concept of "the People" and of a "public sphere" may become a living reality in history. The Green movement, or at least some kind of radical ecology movement, could thereby acquire a unique, cohering, and political significance that compares in every way with the traditional workers' movement. If the *locus* of proletarian radicalism was the factory, the *locus* of the ecology movement would be the community: the neighborhood, the town, and the municipality. A new alternative, a political one, would have to be developed that is neither parliamentary on the one hand nor

confined exclusively to direct action and countercultural activities on the other. Indeed, direct action would mesh with this new politics in the form of community self-management based on a fully participatory democracy—in the highest form of direct action, the full empowerment of the people in determining the destiny of society.

The Green Movement and the Public Realm

The Green movement, in general, is remarkably well positioned to become the arena for working out such a perspective and putting it into action. Inadequacies, failures, and retreats like those of *die Grünen* do not absolve radical social theorists from the responsibility of trying to educate this movement and give it the theoretical sense of direction it needs. The Greens have not frozen into hopeless rigidity, even in West Germany and France, despite the enormous compromises that have already alienated the radicals in these countries from their respective Green parties. What is important is that *the ecological crisis itself* is not likely to permit a broad environmental movement to solidify to the point that it could exclude articulate radical tendencies.

To foster such radical tendencies, to strengthen them theoretically, and to articulate a coherent radical ecology outlook is a major responsibility of authentic radicals. In an era of sweeping embourgeoisement, what ultimately destroys every movement is not only the commodification of everyday life but its own lack of the necessary consciousness to resist commodification and its vast powers of cooptation.

Society, Politics, and the State

There is now a great need to give this consciousness palpable form and reality. If the 1960s gave rise to a counterculture to resist the prevailing culture, the closing years of this century have created the need for popular counter-institutions to countervail the centralized state. The specific form that such institutions could take may vary according to the traditions, values, concerns, and culture of a given area. But certain basic theoretical premises must be clarified if one is to advance the need for new institutions and, more broadly, for a new radical politics. The need once again to define *politics*—indeed, to give it a broader meaning than it has had in the past—becomes a practical imperative. The ability and willingness of radicals to meet this need

may well determine the future of movements like the Greens and the very possibility of radicalism to exist as a coherent force for basic social change.

The major institutional arenas—the social, the political, and the statist—were once clearly distinguishable from each other. The social arena could be clearly demarcated from the political, and the political, in turn, from the state. But in our present, historically clouded world, these have been blurred and mystified. Politics has been absorbed by the state, just as society has increasingly been absorbed by the economy today. If new, truly radical movements to deal with ecological breakdown are to emerge and if an ecologically oriented society is to end attempts to dominate nature as well as people, this process must be arrested and reversed.

It is easy to think of society, politics, and the state ahistorically, as if they had always existed as we find them today. But the fact is that each one of these has had a complex development, one that should be understood if we are to gain a clear sense of their importance in social theory and practice. Much of what we today call *politics*, for one, is really statecraft, structured around staffing the state apparatus with parliamentarians, judges, bureaucrats, police, the military, and the like, a phenomenon often replicated from the summits of the state to the smallest of communities. But the term *politics*, Greek etymologically, once referred to a public arena peopled by conscious citizens who felt competent to directly manage their own communities, or *poleis*.

Society, in turn, was the relatively private arena, the realm of familial obligation, friendship, personal self-maintenance, production, and reproduction. From its first emergence as merely human group existence to its highly institutionalized forms, which we properly call society, social life was structured around the family or *oikos*. (Economy, in fact, once meant little more than the management of the family.) Its core was the domestic world of woman, complemented by the civil world of man.

In early human communities, the most important functions for survival, care, and maintenance occurred in the domestic arena, to which the civil arena, such as it was, largely existed in service. A tribe (to use this term in a very broad sense to include bands and clans) was a truly social entity, knitted together by blood, marital, and functional ties based on age and

work. These strong centripetal forces, rooted in the biological facts of life, held these eminently social communities together. They gave them a sense of internal solidarity so strong that the tribes largely excluded the "stranger" or "outsider," whose acceptability usually depended upon canons of hospitality and the need for new members to replenish warriors when warfare became increasingly important.

A great part of recorded history is an account of the growth of the male civil arena at the expense of this domestic or social one. Males gained growing authority over the early community as a result of intertribal warfare and clashes over territory in which to hunt. Perhaps more important, agricultural peoples appropriated large areas of the land that hunting peoples required to sustain themselves and their lifeways.

It was from this undifferentiated civil arena (again, to use the word *civil* in a very broad sense) that politics and the state emerged. Which is not to say that politics and statecraft were the same from the beginning. Despite their common origins in the early civil arena, these two were sharply opposed to each other. History's garments are never neat and unwrinkled. The evolution of society from small domestic social groups into highly differentiated, hierarchical, and class systems whose authority encompassed vast territorial empires is nothing if not complex and irregular.

The domestic and familial arena itself—that is to say, the social arena—helped to shape the formation of these states. Early despotic kingdoms, such as those of Egypt and Persia, were seen not as clearly civil entities but as the personal "households" or domestic domains of monarchs. These vast palatial estates of "divine" kings and their families were later carved up by lesser families into manorial or feudal estates. The social values of present-day aristocracies are redolent of a time when kinship and lineage, not citizenship or wealth, determined one's status and power.

The Rise of the Public Sphere

It was the Bronze Age "urban revolution," to use V. Gordon Childe's expression, that slowly eliminated the trappings of the social or domestic arena from the state and created a new terrain for the political arena. The rise of cities—largely around temples, military fortresses, administrative centers, and interregional markets—created the basis for a new, more secular and

more universalistic form of political space. Given time and development, this space slowly evolved an unprecedented public sphere.

Cities that are perfect models of such a public space do not exist in either history or social theory. But some cities were neither predominantly social (in the domestic sense) nor statist, but gave rise to an entirely new societal dispensation. The most remarkable of these were the seaports of ancient Hellas and the craft and commercial cities of medieval Italy and central Europe. Even modern cities of newly forming nation-states like Spain, England, and France developed identities of their own and relatively popular forms of citizen participation. Their parochial, even patriarchal attributes should not be permitted to overshadow their universal humanistic attributes. From the Olympian standpoint of modernity, it would be as petty as it would be ahistorical to highlight failings that cities shared with nearly all "civilizations" over thousands of years.

What should stand out as a matter of vital importance is that these cities created the public sphere. There, in the agora of the Greek democracies, the forum of the Roman republic, the town center of the medieval commune, and the plaza of the Renaissance city, citizens could congregate. To one degree or another in this public sphere a radically new arena—a political one—emerged, based on limited but often participatory forms of democracy and a new concept of civic personhood, the citizen.

Defined in terms of its etymological roots, *politics* means the management of the community or *polis* by its members, the citizens. *Politics* also meant the recognition of civic rights for strangers or "outsiders" who were not linked to the population by blood ties. That is, it meant the idea of a universal *humanitas*, as distinguished from the genealogically related "folk." Together with these fundamental developments, politics was marked by the increasing secularization of societal affairs, a new respect for the individual, and a growing regard for rational canons of behavior over the unthinking imperatives of custom.

I do not wish to suggest that privilege, inequality of rights, supernatural vagaries, custom, or even mistrust of the "stranger" totally disappeared with the rise of cities and politics. During the most radical and democratic periods of the French Revolution, for ex-

ample, Paris was rife with fears of "foreign conspiracies" and a xenophobic mistrust of "outsiders." Nor did women ever fully share the freedoms enjoyed by men. My point, however, is that something very new was created by the city that cannot be buried in the folds of the social or of the state: namely, a public sphere and a political domain. This sphere and this domain narrowed and expanded with time, but they never completely disappeared from history. They stood very much at odds with the state, which tried in varying degrees to professionalize and centralize power, often becoming an end in itself, such as the state power that emerged in Ptolemaic Egypt, the absolute monarchies of seventeenth-century Europe, and the totalitarian systems of rule established in Russia and in China in our own century.

The Importance of the Municipality and the Confederation

The abiding physical arena of politics has almost always been the city or town—more generically, the municipality. The size of a politically viable city is not unimportant, to be sure. To the Greeks, notably Aristotle, a city or *polis* should not be so large that it cannot deal with its affairs on a face-to-face basis or eliminate a certain degree of familiarity among its citizens. These standards, by no means fixed or inviolable, were meant to foster urban development along lines that directly countervailed the emerging state. Given a modest but by no means small size, the *polis* could be arranged institutionally so that it could conduct its affairs by rounded, publicly engaged men with a minimal, carefully guarded degree of representation.

To be a political person, it was supposed, required certain material preconditions. A modicum of free time was needed to participate in political affairs, leisure that was probably supplied by slave labor, although it is by no means true that all active Greek citizens were slaveowners. Even more important than leisure time was the need for personal training or character formation—the Greek notion of *paidaia*—which inculcated the reasoned restraint by which citizens maintained the decorum needed to keep an assembly of the people viable. An ideal of public service was necessary to outweigh narrow, egoistic impulses and to develop the ideal of a general interest. This was

achieved by establishing a complex network of relationships, ranging from loyal friendships—the Greek notion of *philia*—to shared experiences in civic festivals and military service.

But politics in this sense was not a strictly Hellenic phenomenon. Similar problems and needs arose and were solved in a variety of ways in the free cities not only in the Mediterranean basin but in continental Europe, England, and North America. Nearly all these free cities created a public sphere and a politics that were democratic to varying degrees over long periods of time. Deeply hostile to centralized states, free cities and their federations formed some of history's crucial turning points in which humanity was faced with the possibility of establishing societies based on municipal confederations or on nation-states.

The state, too, had a historical development and cannot be reduced to a simplistic ahistorical image. Ancient states were historically followed by quasi-states, monarchical states, feudal states, and republican states. The totalitarian states of this century beggar the harshest tyrannies of the past. But essential to the rise of the nation-state was the ability of centralized states to weaken the vitality of urban, town, and village structures and replace their functions by bureaucracies, police, and military forces. A subtle interplay between the municipality and the state, often exploding in open conflict, has occurred throughout history and has shaped the societal landscape of the present day. Unfortunately, not enough attention has been given to the fact that the capacity of states to exercise the full measure of their power has often been limited by the municipal obstacles they encountered.

Nationalism, like statism, has so deeply imprinted itself on modern thinking that the very idea of a municipalist politics as an option for societal organization has virtually been written off. For one thing, as I have already emphasized, politics these days has been identified completely with statecraft, the professionalization of power. That the political realm and the state have often been in sharp conflict with each other—indeed, in conflicts that exploded in bloody civil wars—has been almost completely overlooked. The great revolutionary movements of the past, from the English Revolution of the 1640s to those in our own century, have always been marked by strong community upsurges and depended for their success on strong community ties. That fears of municipal autonomy still

haunt the nation-state can be seen in the endless arguments that are brought against it. Phenomena as "dead" as the free community and participatory democracy should presumably arouse far fewer counterarguments than we continue to encounter.

The rise of the great megalopolis has not ended the historic quest for community and civic politics, any more than the rise of multinational corporations has removed the issue of nationalism from the modern agenda. Cities like New York, London, Frankfurt, Milan, and Madrid can be politically decentralized institutionally, be they by neighborhood or district networks, despite their large structural size and their internal interdependence. Indeed, how well they can function if they do *not* decentralize structurally is an ecological issue of paramount importance, as problems of air pollution, adequate water supply, crime, the quality of life, and transportation suggest.

History has shown very dramatically that major cities of Europe with populations approaching a million and with primitive means of communication functioned by means of well-coordinated decentralized institutions of extraordinary political vitality. From the Castilian cities that exploded in the *Comuñero* revolt in the early 1500s through the Parisian sections or assemblies of the early 1790s to the Madrid Citizens' Movement of the 1960s (to cite only a few), municipal movements in large cities have posed crucial issues of where power should be centered and how societal life should be managed institutionally.

That a municipality can be as parochial as a tribe is fairly obvious—and is no less true today than it has been in the past. Hence, any municipal movement that is not confederal—that is to say, that does not enter into a network of mutual obligations to towns and cities in its own region—can no more be regarded as a truly political entity in any traditional sense than a neighborhood that does not work with other neighborhoods in the city in which it is located. Confederation, based on shared responsibilities, full accountability of confederal delegates to their communities, the right to recall, and firmly mandated representatives—forms an indispensable part of a new politics. To demand that existing towns and cities replicate the nation-state on a local level is to surrender any commitment to social change as such.

What is of immense practical importance is that

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prestatist institutions, traditions, and sentiments remain alive in varying degrees throughout most of the world. Resistance to the encroachment of oppressive states has been nourished by village, neighborhood, and town community networks, witness such struggles in South Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. The tremors that are now shaking Soviet Russia are due not solely to demands for greater freedom but to movements for regional and local autonomy that challenge its very existence as a centralized nation-state.

To ignore the communal basis of this movement would be as myopic as to ignore the latent instability of every nation-state; worse would be to take the nation-state as it is for granted and deal with it merely on its own terms. Indeed, whether a state remains "more" of a state or "less"—no trifling matter to radical theorists as disparate as Bakunin and Marx—depends heavily upon the power of local, confederal, and community movements to countervail it and hopefully establish a dual power that will replace it. The major role that the Madrid Citizens' Movement played nearly three decades ago in weakening the Franco regime would require a major study to do it justice.

Notwithstanding Marxist visions of a largely economic conflict between "wage labor and capital," the revolutionary working class movements of the past were not simply industrial movements. The volatile Parisian labor movement, largely artisanal in character, for example, was also a community movement that was centered on quarters and nourished by a rich neighborhood life. From the Levellers of seventeenth-century London to the anarcho-syndicalists of Barcelona in our own century, radical activity has been sustained by strong community bonds, a public sphere provided by streets, squares, and cafés.

The Need for a New Politics

This municipal life cannot be ignored in radical practice and must even be recreated where it has been undermined by the modern state. A new politics, rooted in towns, neighborhoods, cities, and regions, forms the only viable alternative to the anemic parliamentarism that is percolating through various Green parties and similar social movements—in short, their recourse to sheer and corruptive statecraft in which the larger bourgeois parties can always be expected to outmaneuver them and absorb them into coalitions. The duration

of strictly single-issue movements, too, is limited to the problems they are opposing. Militant action around such issues should not be confused with the long-range radicalism that is needed to change consciousness and ultimately society itself. Such movements flare up and pass away, even when they are successful. They lack the institutional underpinnings that are so necessary to create lasting movements for social change and the arena in which they can be a permanent presence in political conflict.

Hence the enormous need for genuinely political grassroots movements, united confederally, that are anchored in abiding and democratic institutions that can be evolved into truly libertarian ones.

Life would indeed be marvelous, if not miraculous, if we were born with all the training, literacy, skills, and mental equipment we need to practice a profession or vocation. Alas, we must go through the toil of acquiring these abilities, a toil that requires struggle, confrontation, education, and development. It is very unlikely that a radical municipalist approach, too, is meaningful at all merely as an easy means for institutional change. It must be fought for if it is to be cherished, just as the fight for a free society must itself be as liberating and self-transforming as the existence of a free society.

The municipality is a potential time-bomb. To create local networks and try to transform municipal institutions that replicate the state is to pick up a historic challenge—a truly political one—that has existed for centuries. New social movements are foundering today for want of a political perspective that will bring them into the public arena, hence the ease with which they slip into parliamentarism. Historically, libertarian theory has always focused on the free municipality that was to provide the cellular tissue for a new society. To ignore the potential of this free municipality because it is not yet free is to bypass a slumbering domain of politics that could give lived meaning to the great libertarian demand: a commune of communes. For in these municipal institutions and the changes that we can make in their structure—turning them more and more into a new public sphere—lies the *abiding* institutional basis for a grassroots dual power, a grassroots concept of citizenship, and municipalized economic systems that can be counterposed to the growing power of the centralized nation-state and centralized economic corporations.

OPEN LETTER TO MURRAY BOOKCHIN OF THE GREEN MOVEMENT

The question of class and the class struggle is vital if people, concerned with the myriad of problems in society, are to find a solution. Upon its correct analysis depends the strategy, tactics, and goal they will adopt.

Thus, it is not for frivolous reasons that we take issue with Murray Bookchin. Green Perspectives November 1989 No. 18. "Attempts to rewrite Marxian theory to include salaried people in the proletariat are not only nonsensical, they stand flatly at odds with how this vastly differentiated middle-class population conceives itself and its relationship to a market society."

Whether he realizes it or not, Bookchin is mirroring the favorite propaganda of the ruling class. For years, pseudo-scientific sociology classes have distorted the real position of salaried workers. What better way to keep working people divided, than to produce a mythical middle class. It is not a revision of Marx to include the salaried worker in the working class, but rather a careful reading of Marx, and a careful application of Marxian principles to the changed conditions of today.

Members of a social class have distinct characteristics in common, characteristics that express the economic divisions within an existing society and reflect the operation of that system. In our present capitalist society, all who are compelled to sell their ability to work to an employer, private or state, in order to make their living, belong to the working class. This includes also, all who are looking for, or are unable to find work.

The fundamental position salaried workers stand to the means of production is the determining Marxian principle. They do not live by virtue of ownership of the means of production as does the capitalist class, but, rather, by selling their labor power, as does the working class. Whether they are paid hourly, or by prearranged salary makes no essential difference.

There is no validity to the argument that salaried workers perception of themselves and perception of their relation to the market, determines their class; any more than to the argument that there is no class struggle because workers are not conscious of it. Salaried workers are bought at the going market price just as are hourly workers. When their labor cannot be used, they join the ranks of the unemployed just as does the rest of the working class.

This is not to imply that there are not vast differences in the income levels of the various groupings of salaried workers, both within their category, and contrasted to hourly workers, nor vast differences in the treatment of higher paid salaried workers. Nor, does it deny that the salaried workers scab on the hourly workers during strikes; and in all manner of ways, operate in the interest of the owners and against their fellow workers. However, they still remain part of the working class. In the coming crisis, many of them, even the highly compensated, well may side with the rest of the working class.

To complete the picture of the class divisions still existing at this latest and most decadent stage of capitalism, one should include the independent producer, although nowadays this class has shrunk, both numerically and economically to insignificance.

The independent producers once made up a large part of the population in early America, the independent blacksmith, cobbler, farmer, etc. As late as 1900, they were still a sizeable group. They are defined as all those who own their own tools, but do not hire or exploit wage labor. They were often large extended family units. Because of their ownership of land and tools, all the new values that they produced were theirs, and when they took their surpluses to market, they realized the full social value. This segment of the population has all but disappeared, having lost both the means of life and their independence, and now, being forced to seek employment from others.

The capitalist class, a numerically insignificant class of less than 5% of the population, comprises a class with great economic differences, from petty capitalists who employ and exploit only a few workers, to giant corporations exploiting thousands. The common relationship between these individuals making them into a class, is their ownership of the means of production, distribution and the social services, and their exploitation of wage labor.

There are about 10 million small businesses in the U.S., large numbers of which are in a constant process of opening, and closing. It is estimated that nine out of ten new businesses fail within a few short years. Those who survive, do so often to the convenience of big business, which jobs out orders too small to be cost effective for their own operations. Nevertheless, the petty capitalist lives on the raw edge of survival, ever threatened with falling into the ranks of the workers

The working class produces all social wealth. It stands in sharp contrast to the capitalist class which lives by means of its ownership of the means of production and consequent ability to exploit workers for profit. In our modern society, the working class is the only socially useful class, the capitalists, for the most part, absentee owners, having hired

highly paid members of the working class to do the necessary job of coordinating the productive operations, while at the same time driving the workers to produce more surplus value.

As we have already pointed out, it is vitally necessary for working people to understand the class divisions of capitalist society, the meaning of exploitation, the vital and necessary role they play in producing and distributing the necessities of life, and above all, the potential power they have to bring about change. The whole capitalist class could fly to the moon, they never would be missed; but, let the worker stop producing, stop transporting, stop communicating, stop teaching, stop cleaning, stop tending, and everything falls apart.

As Bookchin says the Green movement has the greatest potential to unite people from all walks of life. With this, we would agree. Workers who in the normal course of daily work see themselves as adversaries, find themselves equally shocked and angered when pollution bubbles up in their back yards, and their children sicken with cancers.

Let us hope that when these motivated workers approach the Green Movement, it will have a viable program to solve the problems. A program that will not, on the one hand, rely on politicians, green or whatever color, to do the job, nor on the other, imagine that there is any means other than revolution* by which to divest the capitalist of ownership and control of the industries. In the first case, regardless of the sincerity of the Green politicians, the capitalist class would still pull the economic strings in the background, in the second, there is no possible way that the people could acquire the means to buy out the capitalists! Furthermore, even if it were feasible, we would be left with all the contradictions and problems of capitalism, production for sale and profit, exploitation, pollution, destruction of the environment, along with a new batch of capitalists.

This makes it all more important that workers become fully conscious of the class struggle and see the futility to the approach of reforming society by way of Bookchin's public forum. Even if we should grant Bookchin's laudable attempt at reconstructing the historic power of the public realm as accurate, this public/political realm is largely irrelevant, as he himself has indicated.

Again, we must go back to the class analysis to make our point. What classes were included in the Greek public? Obviously, not the slaves, which were estimated at one time to comprise five out of every six persons living in old Athens. The citizens of Greece making up the public were mainly large and small landowners.

* SEE THE SOCIALIST INDUSTRIAL UNION PROGRAM OF DANIEL DE LEON

Early America had a much similar society. Property qualifications were the basis for the franchise in most of the territories. At the very height of the American Revolution state constitutions were adopted, depriving the propertyless of any voice in government. In fact, if it weren't for Ben Franklin, property would have been required of the voter in the early federal elections. The large body of farmers, independent producers, large and small business men including the southern slave owners made up the public, and as such, had as the Greeks, a commonality of interests.

The Civil War, itself, represented a breakdown of those interests. It was mainly an economic conflict between the abhorning big business and manufacturing class who wanted "free" wage slaves for exploitation in the developing territories versus the landowning slave owners who had found chattel slavery economically viable in the warm southern climate. Capitalism requires workers that it can hire and fire at its convenience, not slaves that must be kept and fed year round.

When one reads about that War, the implication in history books is of a war fought over moral principles. The underlying economic conflict is masked as a movement of public conscience.

Today, the mask of morality is the so called public opinion poll. Thus when Bush invaded Panama its legitimacy was proclaimed via the favorable "opinion" of 75% of the people, supposedly from the poorest welfare recipient to the wealthiest of the wealthy. It is obvious, there is no public value free press that the vast working class can go to for the truth! What we see in its place is an increasingly managed propaganda machine that has become scandalous.

It should be obvious that the public sphere is meaningless today, and will remain so as long as the class structure exists. The future need for local town or city forums will have to be determined by the people as a whole, after they have gotten rid of class divided society.

It is only when a united working class take, hold and operate the industries and social services in the interest of the whole of society, that we can begin to build the kind of world most of us long for in our hearts.

Committee for Socialist Union
P.O. Box 303
Camden, NJ 08101

Anti-Capitalism

Passed Spring 1989.

"How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land?"

- Chief Seattle¹

There has been much talk lately within the Green movement about the appropriateness of explicitly anti-capitalist politics. Some have questioned whether "capitalism" is the best term to describe the economic and social systems we oppose. Others warn against falling into the discredited strategies of the old left while others insist that we need to move beyond such so-called outmoded thinking. We members of the Youth Greens wish to reiterate our unequivocal opposition to the capitalist economic and social system in all its myriad forms and in any of its possible mutations. At a time when there is serious discussion of "eco-capitalism" and "profits for peace," we consider it a vital task to begin to articulate a radical Green critique of capitalism and to elaborate alternatives.

Capitalist relations dominate almost every human community on Earth today, whether in bureaucratic form in the state capitalist societies of the Soviet bloc or in openly capitalist, so-called democratic societies in the West. This world-wide system of profit, exploitation and endless growth is the driving force behind the terrible ecological dislocations which confront us more urgently than ever before.

Capitalism has brought us Bhopal and Love Canal, Three Mile Island and acid rain, gaps in the ozone layer and the greenhouse effect. Capitalism is the culprit in the destruction of rain forests around the world. It is to blame for the smog which suffocates our cities and the so-called development that eats up more and more of our countryside every year. Spectacular tragedies like the recent oil spill in Alaska overshadow its everyday contamination of the environment. Capitalism is poisoning the air, water, and soil from the Third World to the first. It is laying waste to this green planet at an increasingly rapid rate.

Capitalism also erodes the human condition. It enslaves millions of people to the discipline and alienation of meaningless work and offers only empty consumption in return. Decisions about what to produce and how are made by an elite few, and all others are forced to submit themselves to intensely hierarchical systems of command. The "progress" and growth of this leviathan are entirely based on the exploitation of working people. Profit comes at the expense of the great majority of us. Capitalism inculcates competition, greed, and ruthlessness into every person while corroding community and cooperation. It turns everything into a commodity--from social interactions to human emotions to the air and water themselves. Capitalism has driven much of the world's people into abject poverty and starvation in order to maintain the profits of the powerful few. It is a system of organized mass degradation and dehumanization.

The dynamic which fuels this wantonly destructive system is imperative growth. The "free market" demands growth. Under capitalism, every economic entity must continue to grow and accumulate in order to keep pace with its competitors, or it will be swallowed. This brutal logic of constant growth obliterates all other considerations, including any concern for human well-being or the health of the environment. Today this dynamic has brought us to the brink of complete ecological collapse.

We believe that Greens must oppose capitalism both because of what it does to people as well as what it is doing to the planet. We must be aware of how capitalism's fundamental processes of exploitation and permanent growth warp our every effort to create humane and ecological alternatives. Talk of "community based economics" is not enough in an age of gargantuan multinational corporations, overwhelming Third World debt, and IMF austerity programs. A Green strategy that does not face these realities head on is doomed to failure.

We recognize that suspicion about an anti-capitalist stance is not unfounded. We are aware of the many organizations and movements which spout anti-capitalist rhetoric only to continue and even intensified alienation, exploitation, misery and environmental destruction. But we reject the notion that a radical Green critique of capitalism will evoke nightmare visions of totalitarian state "socialism" in the minds of the public. This seems a capitulation to the dominant political discourse in American society. We must not allow elite obfuscation to define our language.

We realize that capitalism is not the sole domination over nature and society. Capitalism has evolved out of oppressive hierarchical, patriarchal, and discriminatory power structures. We resist all forms of domination and exploitation, and engage in many struggles against social and ecological threats and for creative Green alternatives. But we insist that any viable alternative must go beyond well-meaning adjustments to the status quo. The problems with capitalism are inherent in its structure and therefore all attempts at reform will ultimately fail to bring about the changes we are seeking.

We are not opposed to reform per se and believe that incremental changes which lead toward fundamental transformations are generally to be supported. But we have come to see that capitalism always manages to co-opt and absorb any internal challenge and neutralizes any attempt to transform it from within. We do not believe in the possibility of a "capitalism with a human face." Nor do we support social-democratic attempts to administer capitalism more wisely and ameliorate its more savage effects. Capitalism makes a mockery of everything human, social, and democratic. This does not mean that we categorically condemn entrepreneurial efforts or that we completely reject cooperative efforts within the capitalist framework. We simply wish to guard ourselves against illusions about what it will take to overcome the capitalist juggernaut.

As we approach the 1990s, movements and struggles from all over the globe--from the rubber tappers in the Amazon to the defenders of the Danube in Hungary--are searching for a new vision and a new strategy to face the forces which threaten our survival. We believe that the Youth Green movement can play a significant part in this process. Resisting, subverting and combating capitalism must be an integral part of our new vision and strategy.

Youth Green Clearinghouse
c/o Youth Survival Center
EMU Suite 1, Un. of Ore.
Eugene, OR 97403

A comment or two to Monroe Prussack

Dear Mr. Prussack,

I am not as capable of arguing with you in print as our late comrade Louis Lazarus was. But I'll try this one time.

My feeling is if we do not all wake up and take matters into our hands very soon there will be one hell of a disaster that we can not imagine. DeLeon not only spoke of why workers should want to create a socialist republic of labor but he spoke of what would happen in a capitalist crisis if they did not and he called it "industrial feudalism". We saw this happen in the 1920's and 30's in Italy, Germany, Spain, Romania, Hungaria, and the Baltic states before Stalin took them over. There were fascist movements in Austria and elsewhere before Hitler's German Army rode in. And there were fascists in "democratic" England and the U.S. too.

All around what I can see because I can read and think and because I have been to job interviews is that the capitalist system is now in the largest crisis since the 1930's. This is not boasting. It is the reality that one can see in every sphere of life today and it scares the hell out of me.

I have no answer to the question that you have posed of working class indifference. It sure bothers me to no end and I have concluded that our class will see first hand "industrial feudalism". We will see a mass based fascist movement gain control unless the proletariat awakens very soon. If Prussack is a Marxist then he must realize the system of capitalism is all tied up in knots of its own making and is looking everywhere for solutions but finding no solutions short of an all out attack on our living standards and will soon need to attack what few democratic rights we have. In fact they are doing so now. In Ohio there is a bill before our state legislature to outlaw anti-fur protests near stores. The SLP is not merely trying to scare people. It is stating the truth: a truth that can be discerned by an understanding of capitalist economics and how the rulers have reacted in a crisis.

The SLP is guilty of the worst kind of Leninist tactics but not in your cited case. They are guilty of eliminating all discussions in the party and of substituting the decisions of the National Secretary and a mere rubber-stamp NEC for those decisions made in convention and ratified by the entire membership.

To label as "Leninist tactics" the truth about capitalism is to do both an injustice to the SLP and to the proletariat. The proletariat needs to be aware just what "Leninist tactics" are so that if and when the majority should get off their asses they can create the movement of self-liberation without the unnecessary detours the existing socialist movement has taken.

The SLP has since 1890 'examined the more optimistic ideas about capitalism' and found all of them to be illusions fostered by the capitalists to hoodwink the workers and preserve their system. It is not the job of a bonafide socialist party to try and guess why workers still believe in capitalism as you suggest. It is our task to deliver a message of self-liberation.

The Ohioan

IN DEFENCE OF THE COMMUNIST LEFT

In Discussion Bulletin 39, in the section entitled "Publications Received", comrade FG, having listed the known publications which "...can be classified as presenting a revolutionary socialist political viewpoint that rejects both the Leninist and social democratic varieties of statism and reformism", then singles out five of these as "...considered close enough to be reviewed but infected with the Leninist virus of 'dictatorship of the partyism'." Now it just so happens that these five publications--Communist Bulletin, Internationalism, International Review, Internationalist Perspective, and World Revolution--are all publications of organizations in the left communist milieu. For those unfamiliar with this milieu, it is delimited by the fact that it traces its programmatic origins to the left communist (or 'ultra-leftist') fractions which split from the degenerating Third International in the early or mid 1920s. The most important left communist fractions were the German Communist Workers' Party (KAPD), the Dutch Communist Workers' Party (KAPN)--the leading theorists of both of these parties were Herman Gorter and Anton Pannekoek, both of whom were active in both Germany and Holland--and the left fraction (grouped around Amadeo Bordiga) of the Communist Party of Italy.

The left communists are probably best known as being the targets of Lenin's wrath in his 1920 pamphlet 'Left-Wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder.(1) The arguments Lenin puts forward in this pamphlet are fundamental to what is usually called "Leninism", so it is ironic that the arch "anti-Leninist" "ultra-leftists" are now being accused of "Leninism". However, the term "Leninism" is often thrown around so loosely, it is worth considering avoiding it altogether. For instance, there is no one "Leninism" that Lenin (or the Bolsheviks) adhered to in 1904, 1917, and 1921 (or any two of these three years, for that matter), let alone the 'theory-practice' of all shades of latter day Stalinists, Maoists, and Trotskyists (often considered to be paradigm "Leninists"). This avoidably loose usage, including that of the editor of DB to define negatively the political sector DB locates itself within, should really be seen as a symptom of theoretical poverty. For one thing, it leads too easily to a wholesale rejection of the revolutionary positions and practices which Lenin pioneered along with his many bourgeois positions and practices. For another, it leads too easily to abusive polemic and encourages those unfamiliar with the actual history of the Bolsheviks and of many of the leading varieties of so-called "Leninism" to remain in their state of ignorant bliss.

To get to the point at hand, anyone who is actually familiar with the five publications FG singles out as semi-"Leninist" (and it must be assumed the majority of DB readers are not familiar with them) can only be shocked to 'learn' that they stand for the "dictatorship of the party". The fact is, while the anarchists and other libertarians merely denounced the "dictatorship of the party" in Russia on the grounds that ... it is "authoritarian", and therefore evil, the German and Dutch left communists, right from their beginnings in 1919, developed a thorough marxist critique of the "dictatorship of the party", a doctrine which had previously been

adhered to by the whole Second International, and which was still unquestioned by the vast majority of the working class in the 1920s. And further, the organizations whose publications FG castigates all more or less trace their programmatic origins on the questions of the role of the revolutionary party and of the nature of the proletarian dictatorship to the German and Dutch left communists of the early 20s. (It should be pointed out that the Italian left communist tradition, both the Bordigist and 'Damenist' tendencies, has always held intransigently to the doctrine of the "dictatorship of the party".) Not only that, but each of these publications, whether in recent or not so recent issues, have published texts which develop devastating critiques of the "Leninist" doctrine that the role of the party is to 'organize the working class', 'direct' the overthrow of the capitalist state, and then set up and direct a "workers' state".

So what are we to make of FG's characterization of these publications? If we are to make guesses, which we are forced to since the accusations are not substantiated, then we can only offer the following. First off, we should not preclude the possibility that FG is bowing to the prejudices of the libertarians among DB's readership which can't stomach the language of those revolutionaries who use classical marxist terminology. Prominent among such terminology are to be found "dictatorship of the proletariat", "revolutionary party", and "vanguard of the working class". While the libertarians can only attach a Stalinist content to these terms, the communist left never abandoned them, but rather clarified and deepened their meaning in their struggle, first against the "Leninist" Third International, and then, during the darkest days of the counter-revolution, against Stalinism and Trotskyism. During those bleak years many were led to even renounce "Communism" altogether--ie. both the word and goal itself--in revulsion to the Stalinist content which that term came to acquire (which it acquired due to the mystifying efforts of the bourgeoisie, it should be pointed out) through the 30s, 40s, and 50s. The communist left, on the contrary, though reduced organizationally to a tiny milieu, remained true in every way to marxism and the communist revolution.

Not having any organizational links to the publications FG castigates, I must leave each one to defend its own reputation. However, I wish to very briefly explain the basic content the left communists (in the tradition of the KAPD) attach to the supposedly "Leninist" terms referred to above. The "dictatorship of the proletariat" is the easiest. The dictatorship of the proletariat is nothing more nor less than the international (armed) power of the workers' councils. The workers' councils are councils of delegates elected and at all times revocable by the whole working class as organized at its various places of work in free general assemblies. Ideally--ideally only because reality does not always measure up, but the left communists push tirelessly for the ideal--the council delegates will be fully mandated by decisions reached in the general assemblies. So while the councils will be necessary to unify and coordinate the revolutionary aims and practice of the international proletariat, they will tend to realize the direct democracy which the high points in the history of autonomous working class activity have exemplified. It is by means of the united workers' councils that the

capitalist state is overthrown. The dictatorship of the proletariat is not a bureaucracy or set of institutions based on the workers' councils, and the revolutionary party plays no privileged role in the councils.

The revolutionary party, which is international and centralized(2), is the political or programmatic vanguard of the proletariat insofar as it reflects, and is recognized by the class as reflecting, the clearest understanding, defence, and propagation of "...the line of march, the conditions and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement" (from the Communist Manifesto) towards the world communist revolution and then the communist society itself. Certainly no one individual or group will understand this "line of march" in full. However, the class struggle does give rise to organized minorities which grasp the conditions and the direction of the revolutionary movement more clearly than and before the rest of the class does. As such, these minorities have an active role to play in the movement. They are the organic basis of the revolutionary party. (The real meaning of "vanguard" is 'ahead of' or 'before'.) The party, as political vanguard of the class, is therefore in no way separate from or opposed to the working class itself.

The role of the revolutionary party is of foremost importance and requires the greatest attention by all revolutionaries. Nevertheless, this role can be summed up quite simply as being to accelerate and generalize the revolutionary class consciousness of the whole proletariat. Class consciousness is not a set of abstract ideas, but rather a political perspective to action which best furthers the historical interests of the whole, international working class. As such, it is essentially the fruit of the practical experience of the whole class in permanent struggle against capital. As the organized minority which most clearly understands and defends the content of the revolutionary consciousness of the working class, the revolutionary party has the task of intervening in the most important moments of the class struggle, not to 'take over' control of the struggle, but to contribute as militants and always working primarily to clarify the perspectives of the whole class and thereby advance the movement as a whole towards its revolutionary goals.

The pioneering experience of the Russian revolution taught the left communists, in a negative way, the essentially limited role of the revolutionary party. The lesson of Russia was that:

"As part of the class, revolutionaries can at no time substitute themselves for the class, either in its struggles within capitalism or, still less, in the overthrow of of capitalism and the wielding of political power. Unlike other historical classes, the consciousness of a minority, no matter how enlightened, is not sufficient to accomplish the tasks of the proletariat. These are tasks which demand the constant and creative activity of the entire class at all times." (from the Platform of the International Communist Current, which publishes Internationalism, International Review, and World Revolution)

Do these words--which would be fully supported by all the organizations whose publications FG singles out--sound like those of groups "...infected by the Leninist virus of 'dictatorship of the partyism'?"

I have been able here to only sketchily present, rather than argue for and defend, certain basic positions of the communist left concerning the role of the party and the dictatorship of the proletariat. In conclusion I can only (i) wonder at comrade FG's reasons for making this serious charge against the left communist milieu, (ii) demand that he substantiate this charge, and (iii) urge DB readers to independently investigate the accused publications for themselves.

E.R. (P.O. Box 69804, Station K,
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CANADA)

NOTES

(1) In fact, in the same issue of DB, FG reviews the new English translation of Herman Gorter's "Open Letter to Comrade Lenin", which was a reply on behalf of the KAPD to Lenin's pamphlet, written for discussion at the second Congress of the Third International.

(2) Centralism itself is a reason why some reject the communist left as "Leninist"--this applies particularly to some of the council communists, who originally came out of the communist left. While centralism is a very important question, too often and too easily rejected as inherently 'hierarchical', there is not space to discuss it here.

The Tienanmen Tragedy Repeated

Recent events have compelled me to comment on a subject of personal concern that I wish will interest and motivate all of the anti-statist, non-market socialists. It is the events in state-capitalist China and the U.S. imperialist response.

The imperialistic U.S. government has played with these events in order to win brownie points for the U.S. brand of un-restricted capitalism in the guise of a democracy. Unfortunately, the Chinese students may have completely fallen for it had it not been for a rude reminder by George Bush that America takes care of those regimes that favor our multi-national corporations. This may have led many Chinese students here to question their mistaken notion that America is a popular democracy.

I will not recount here the details of the recent legislation in the U.S. Congress to extend to three years the student visas for Mainland Chinese students studying in the U.S.. I will only comment for our non-U.S. readers that the bill was vetoed by George (the Wimp) Bush and the House overrode the veto without opposition but the Senate was four Republican votes short of overriding the Presidential veto. Instead, President Bush made an intentionally undefined promise to the Chinese students they would not have to return home "until they feel safe".

It should be pretty obvious to anyone in our political sector that the dispute between the U.S. congressmen and the President was set up for the benefit of an outraged American public that does not like to see unarmed civilians run over by Army tanks. But just as the American public has been made to forget the 1970 Kent State University tragedy they can be made to forget what happened in Tienanmen Square. They can also be made to forget the continued arrests, imprisonments, tortures, rapes, and executions just so long as the capitalist media bury such reports somewhere between the sports section and the comics and so long as Bush and the Republicans do not over-play the "major trading partner of the U.S." propaganda.

The Chinese students are now receiving a lesson in how "American democracy" protects tyrants just so long as those tyrants allow U.S. and other foreign owned companies to exploit the labor and the resources of their nation. The students were before the congressional vote on the veto carried away by their supposed understanding of the American political system. Much of this understanding came from reading our Declaration of Independence and the Constitution but not from viewing the everyday realities.

China was completely lacking of even a translation of the Communist Manifesto or any other writings by Marx or Engels before 1920. The sole basis for the Chinese understanding of "socialism" has been the Russian experience, the ramblings of Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and whoever happens to be in power at the moment in China. Even in the years after 1921 and before the Communist Red Army victory over the Nationalists there were no alternative ideas about socialism. The Chinese Trotskyists died on the vine as did all the other parties that Chiang Kai Shek persecuted. The intolerant Chinese Communists were the only party to survive the crucible. No legacy of dissent or an anti-statist vision of socialism was bequeathed to the Chinese. And Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and now Deng and his supporters have all been required reading for millions of Chinese. Everyone who reads Marx reads Marx as just another required reading assignment for which everyone must be able to memorize the words and no one need understand the meaning. It is the exact same way as Eastern Europe and as we can see the workers there now given a choice are opting for private capitalism over state capitalism.

So it should be no surprise that the Chinese attending American institutions of programmed learning do not understand bourgeois "democracy". More than two years ago I discussed politics with a Chinese friend now attending The University of Cincinnati. This student from Shanghai (the largest city in China and heavily industrialized) had once asked me if I had read Marx. Yet this same student elaborated for me what seemed to me at the time the current party line that China had to experiment with both socialist economics and western style capitalist economics. Trying to then explain there could be no compromise between capitalism and socialism was needless to say a fruitless effort.

One in our political sector must hope that if the Chinese students are no longer willing to accept the absolute fairy tales of their government and are disappointed with the American President and his supporters then this may create just the opening that we need to discredit capitalism of either the state form or the private form. Socialists who live near universities or colleges must use whatever opportunities they may have to explain to Chinese students

- 1) State-capitalism is not compatible with socialism.
- 2) There is no democracy worth speaking of in the capitalist nations. Following "the western model" as it is called will be just as tragic as following the state-capitalist model associated with Leninism.

And all of our political sector must hope that these students will some day be able to safely return to China and build their dream of a "democratic China" but one based on real economic democracy and without social classes or capitalists whether native capitalist bureaucrats or private entrepreneurs or foreign capitalists. They are not only able but must create a new society without a "state", a political party elite, or massacring dissidents or going begging for foreign carpet baggers to "help them develop". I would also like to extend these suggestions to the Chinese students from Taiwan, R.O.C. (Nationalist China) in the hope they will one day rejoin a true socialist China.

We must never permit the capitalist politicians or their media and academic hangers-on to have the last word on anything of interest to our class. And China is of interest to our class. Nor should we allow the Maoists or the Trotskyists to try to confuse these students anymore as they no doubt will if we do not speak for anti-state, non-market socialism and an industrial republic of labor. Our message is simple if we can just overcome those problems of language and culture that can often separate us from this large audience.

Remember there are spies among the Chinese students who will report to the government. This is true of the Taiwan students as well. I suggest speaking with no more than three individuals at one time and one may need to repeat nearly everything at least once and to summarize the major points. Keep all your spoken sentences simple or you are less likely to be understood even by PH.D. level students. And above all, use literature! Most of these students can read English far better than they can speak it. Always try to follow up and talk with them after they have read your literature but do not load them down with too much literature. Such methods may not seem to bear immediate fruit but the ideas may become planted in their memory. We may hope that in a generalized collapse of world capitalism the Chinese will be able to march-in-step with the "western" class of toilers. "We have a world to win".

R.S.

ON BOB BLACK'S STALLED ENGINE

Fellow Workers,

It is perhaps somewhat amusing, for readers who share popular misconceptions of Anarchist thought, to read Bob Black's polemics--though not particularly informative. A few examples: Black berates Mike Kolhoff for not being a true Anarchist and at the same time, in the pages of the mistitled Anarchy [March 1990, p. 28], calls for consigning anarchism to the trashcan of history. Black accuses Kolhoff and I of misrepresenting his posturings (I cannot consider them positions) even while circulating a promotional flier for his book, The Abolition of Work, which fraudulently claims my endorsement. And he complains--quite ironically, considering the circumstances under which he fled the Bay area--of someone sending a bomb to his home.

I leave FW Kolhoff to defend himself, addressing myself only to the few paragraphs of Black's "How to Jump-Start the Motor of History" that directly address my ideas and practice. Black's history is quite dubious in its specifics (the Alliance, for example, was founded by Bakunin and his comrades), but especially in its interpretations. Since no serious historian any longer believes the nonsense Black is retailing (essentially Marx's line of the day, abandoned shortly thereafter even by Marx's closest followers as utterly indefensible) about the First International, I will spare DB readers a prolonged refutation. There is, however, a clear distinction between an organization explicitly embracing a wide range of perspectives and seeking to unite all radical (and many not-so-radical) currents in the working-class movement, and groups explicitly organized upon a specific set of beliefs which all prospective members are required to agree upon. The First International was of the first sort, the Anarchist Communist Federation of the second. To join a voluntary organization while disagreeing with its basic principles is clearly unethical behavior. I have no basis for working with--or trusting--anyone who disagrees (There may be cases, such as to defeat employers' blacklisting schemes, where such behaviour may be necessary, but we have then left the world of political activity for intelligence-gathering and warfare.).

It would be easy to dispute Black's claim that I "can't get along with people in ...any... organization [I've] been in." It would also be a waste of time. The fundamental issue in dispute here is Black's inability to comprehend why Anarchists favor organization. We do not form organizations for their own sake, as connoisseurs of well-crafted Bylaws and elegant structures, but rather to promote certain common purposes and goals (and because we recognize that without organization life itself would be impossible). If we form an organization to operate, for example, a radio station to serve Champaign-Urbana's diverse social movements, we will necessarily find ourselves disagreeing with (even fighting) anyone who joins our organization to argue that the radio waves by right belong to the rich and that we should therefore turn our station over to the bankers. If they persist in their disruptive activities we are perfectly justified in tossing them out of our organization and condemning them as lickspittles of the ruling class. (Mr. Black can carp about how disagreeable we are all he wants.)

Black's recommendation that people read our Libertarian Labor Review is, however, welcome, though I question its characterization as my "fanzine." It is true that I--and the other LLR editors--have refused to

seriously engage Black's arguments for abolishing work. Black's argument is a case not for transforming society, but rather for replacing the current batch of parasites (the capitalists and state bureaucrats) with a class of idle no-accounts. Black became quite indignant, in prior correspondence, when I suggested that my fellow workers might well decide to exclude shirkers from the free distribution of the commonly-produced goods and services--compelling them to survive on the product of their (non) labor. The exploiters have always feared being compelled to work for their living.

Those who suggest that we can survive without working have surely forfeited any right to be taken seriously, just as surely as those who argue for maintaining a Money economy and Market-based distribution of necessary goods and services forfeit their right to be considered advocates of socialism and freedom.

Jon Bekken
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ps: I also find Laurens Otter's discussion of Bakunin's positions somewhat misleading. Bakunin did believe, as Sam Dolgoff demonstrates in his anthology Bakunin on Anarchy, that co-operatives, unions and similar organizations were the seeds from which the new society would spring and laid the groundwork for the necessary social revolution. And while Bakunin spoke of the need of a tightknit revolutionary dictatorship (a belief shaped by his years in prison and in the repressive conditions of Czarist Russia), he made it clear that this "dictatorship" would rule not by force or institutional power, but by example. What Bakunin advocated might better be described as a federation of affinity groups, sowing revolutionary propaganda and encouraging the oppressed to rebel. After the Revolution, Bakunin saw this group as continuing--but relying upon its influence and example, rather than force or institutional power, to combat counter-revolutionary tendencies and to encourage the reorganization of society along self-managed lines.

pps: I would be interested to learn whether Bob Black is censoring Ben Perry's impassioned protest of the Bulletin's editorial practices.

A Request For Cmd Larry Gambone

Enjoyed your comments on Axelrod and Martov in DB #38. Your comments were not the first I have heard of these two neglected Russian Marxists. I have read some Russian history but would appreciate knowing what authors have written the best accounts of Axelrod and Martov and also the 1921 Workers' Opposition. I find Leonard Schapiro's account of the Workers' Opposition in his History of The Communist Party of the Soviet Union lacking in details. The Ohioan

March 23rd

Dear DB:

So Frank Girard and friends have come to realize that a transformed world will have to "limit industrial expansion." Not abolish soul-crippling, planet-destroying industrialism, not roll it back some, not even arrest this cancer at its current lethal levels - rather, revolution will include merely limiting its expansion.

Frank admits that neither he nor any of his comrades have thought much about the industrial world per se as a problem. And then, like everyone else who takes industrial production as a given, he proceeds to repeat the dogma that its replacement must mean "a great dying off of the human population." Beside the fact that masses are dying right now and that the death of nature spells death for all of us, we really cannot accept, as another given, that a real transformation is impossible - however much our masters would like us to. If industrialism vanished in an instant that would be one thing, but the "mass death" specter is really, at base, the last, blackmail defense this death culture holds up before us, its final threat against liberation.

I'm no expert on it, but much experimentation by anti-mass production agriculturalists (e.g. in Japan and New Zealand) has shown that great quantities of natural food can be grown in very small spaces. This is one example of possible movement toward a qualitatively different world, perhaps one that wishes to go further to the feral, where, most likely, the compensation of having many children would no longer be needed.

Frank cannot imagine "converts" to the notion of a truly non-alienated life - no freeways, no television, no computers?? My god!! But without a radical break, psychic suffering can only increase and it will be those whose "vision" consists of "socialist" factory managers who may be speaking to no-one.

John Zerzan

Cont'd from p.2

what it sees as theoretical shortcomings of such groups. It also practices the art of prediction as in the following titles "Instability Threatens Western Bloc" and "Malta Summit Marks Defeat of Russian Bloc." One of the real problems I have with the ICC publications is that they seem to be written in a style best understood by people who have degrees in Marxist Philosophy from the University of ICC. While it is true that all organizations seem to develop a vocabulary and set of phrases best understood by the initiated, ICC carries it a bit farther than most. Number 68, Spring 1990, begins with a position statement, "The Historic Choice: Social Decomposition or Revolution," which sees the economic collapse of the Eastern Bloc as a first stage in the collapse of world capitalism. Another article "After Stalinism's Fall: Trotskyism's Identity Crisis/ Confusions in the Milieu" comments on how the collapse of capitalism's eastern branch has affected the thinking of US radicals.

INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE*: P.O. Box 395, Montclair, NJ 07042 or BM Box 8154, London WC1N 3XX; quarterly, 8 by 12, 25pp. One-year sub \$5/L3.50. IP is the publication of the External Fraction of the International Communist Current, which as the name suggests is a split from the ICC. It seems to maintain the same positions as the ICC and the same intense interest in "the milieu." Number 15 contains "The