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Anarcho-Communism

Now that the New Left has abandoned its earlier loose, flexible non-ideological stance, two ideologies have been adopted as guiding theoretical positions by New Leftists: Marxism-Stalinism, and anarcho-communism. Marxism-Stalinism has unfortunately conquered SDS, but anarcho-communism has attracted many leftists who are looking for a way out of the bureaucratic and statist tyranny that has marked the Stalinist road. And many libertarians, who are looking for forms of action and for allies in such actions, have become attracted by an anarchist creed which seemingly exalts the voluntary way and calls for the abolition of the coercive State. It is fatal, however, to abandon and lose sight of one's own principles in the quest for allies in specific tactical actions. Anarcho-communism, both in its original Bakunin-Kropotkin form and its current irrationalist and "post-scarcity" variety, is poles apart from genuine libertarian principle.

If there is one thing, for example, that anarcho-communism hates and reviles *more* than the State it is the rights of private property; as a matter of fact, the major reason that anarcho-communists oppose the State is because they wrongly believe that it is the creator and protector of private property, and therefore that the only route toward abolition of property is by destruction of the State apparatus. They totally fail to realize that the State has always been the great enemy and invader of the rights of private property. Furthermore, scorning and detesting the free-market, the profit-and-loss economy, private property, and material affluence--all of which are corollaries of each other--anarcho-communists wrongly identify anarchism with communal living, with tribal sharing, and with other aspects of our emerging drug-rock "youth culture".

The only good thing that one might say about anarcho-communism is that, in contrast to Stalinism, its form of communism would, supposedly, be voluntary. Presumably, no one would be forced to join the communes, and those who would continue to live individually, and to engage in market activities, would remain unmolested. Or would they? Anarcho-communists have always been extremely vague and cloudy about the lineaments of their proposed anarchist society of the future. Many of them have been propounding the profoundly *anti*-libertarian doctrine that the anarcho-communist revolution will have to confiscate and abolish all private property, so as to wean everyone from their psychological attachment to the property they own. Furthermore, it is hard to forget the fact that when the Spanish Anarchists (anarcho-communists of the Bakunin-Kropotkin type) took over large sections of Spain during the Civil War of the 1930's, they confiscated and destroyed all the money

in their areas and promptly decreed the death penalty for the use of money. None of this can give one confidence in the good, voluntarist intentions of anarcho-communism.

On all other grounds, anarcho-communism ranges from mischievous to absurd. Philosophically, this creed is an all-out assault on individuality and on reason. The individual's desire for private property, his drive to better himself, to specialize, to accumulate profits and income, are reviled by all branches of communism. Instead, every one is supposed to live in communes, sharing all his meager possessions with his fellows, and each being careful not to advance beyond his communal brothers. At the root of all forms of communism, compulsory or voluntary, lies a profound hatred of individual excellence, a denial of the natural or intellectual superiority of some men over others, and a desire to tear down every individual to the level of a communal ant-heap. In the name of a phony "humanism", an irrational and profoundly anti-human egalitarianism is to rob every individual of his specific and precious humanity.

Furthermore, anarcho-communism scorns reason, and its corollaries long-range purpose, forethought, hard work, and individual achievement; instead, it exalts irrational feelings, whim, and caprice--all this in the name of "freedom". The "freedom" of the anarcho-communist has nothing to do with the genuine libertarian absence of interpersonal invasion or molestation; it is, instead, a "freedom" that means enslavement to unreason, to unexamined whim, and to childish caprice. Socially and philosophically, anarcho-communism is a misfortune.

Economically, anarcho-communism is an absurdity. The anarcho-communist seeks to abolish money, prices, and employment, and proposes to conduct a modern economy purely by the automatic registry of "needs" in some central data bank. No one who has the slightest understanding of economics can trifle with this theory for a single second. Fifty years ago, Ludwig von Mises exposed the total inability of a planned, moneyless economy to operate above the most primitive level. For he showed that money--prices are indispensable for the rational allocation of all of our scarce resources--labor, land, and capital goods--to the fields and the areas where they are most desired by the consumers and where they could operate with greatest efficiency. The socialists conceded the correctness of Mises' challenge, and set about--in vain--to find a way to have a rational, market price system within the context of a socialist planned economy.

The Russians, after trying an approach to the communist moneyless economy in their "War Communism" shortly

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A Comment

The Working Class

The recent *Libertarian Forum* articles on "The Conference" and "Ultra-Leftism" are among the most thought-provoking I have read in a long time. Since I find myself in total and sometimes violent disagreement with about ninety-five per cent of the statements made, I shall confine this rebuttal to a few major points. This does not mean that I concur with any other points made.

Since it is a term that has validity only in retrospect, "ultra-leftism" provides an excellent whipping boy for radical historians. The "ultra-leftist" is the guy that failed; had he succeeded, he would have been a "daring tactician" or a "charismatic figure". While in some cases "ultra-leftism", whatever it really is, may have been the revolution's downfall, in other cases (most notably Spain) it could have saved the day.

At any rate, Murray is wrong to regard "ultra-leftism" as a cause of the decline of SDS; the true lesson for us here is that it was a symptom of the true cause, a far greater danger. Murray states that, "The hysteria, and the pitiful failure, of the Weathermen stem not so much from personal psychosis as from incorrect strategic theory." Exactly the reverse is true since Weatherman's "ultra-left" errors have psychological origins. Upper middle-class and upper-class kids, instead of sticking to their own valid, campus-related issues, feel so hung-up about their soft easy upbringing that they try desperately to attach themselves to someone else's more urgent, "down-to-earth" struggles (e.g. Blacks, rank-and-file unionists, etc.). Furthermore, no longer being "down-to-earth" at all themselves once they leave their own sphere, the campus, they adopt a revolutionary ideology totally alien to the American situation. Finally, rejected by Blacks and workers and community people for being pushy, elitist, scrawny idiots, they set out to prove their manhood after a crash course in karate and get their asses whipped, setting back serious radical organization everywhere they go.

Few people will join a revolution unless it is in their own self-interest. All too much of the Movement consists of people who have arrived at a purely intellectual commitment to a revolution that will bring about the society they visualize. When their appeals in the name of humanity, social justice, freedom, equality, or other vague concepts fail to create a mass movement, they withdraw into their own little self-righteous circles, and put out increasingly sectarian and increasingly unread manifestoes.

Murray, as with so many other radicals, declares that the working class is hopelessly reactionary, racist, etc. OK, make your revolution without them--if you can. And if you can, what will you do with this large, restive, powerful, and hopeless group afterwards--the final solution to the labor problem? Equally valid sweeping criticisms can be directed against the middle class (or any other class)--smugness, reformism, even racism of a more sophisticated and less easily eradicable form. At any rate, if "American Marxists have boxed themselves into a complete dead end in pinning their hopes on the workers," couldn't this be because most American Marxists are declassé middle class with absolutely nothing to offer the working class?

If anyone thinks the role of the working class is irrelevant, he should ask himself a few questions: Who could shut the country down faster, ten million intellectuals or one million dockers and truckers? If labor is hopelessly co-opted, why is the country being swept with wildcat strikes and even with sanctioned strikes for that matter; why are the fat-ass unions plagued with black caucuses, rank-and-file caucuses, etc.? If the workers were not a potential danger, why does the whole system, especially the schools, the press, and

Lurking In The Wings

In the days of the First World War, when governments were wildly stomping out the lives and futures of their people in the name of nationalism and national destiny, one American radical described the process: War is the health of the State. In time of war, the subjects of rulers enthusiastically rally to them--hate the Enemy, volunteer to kill whomever the government wants eliminated, and cheerfully contribute higher taxes. The power and wealth at the command of the state positively swells beyond the peacetime bureaucrat's wildest dreams. But the issuing of commands always requires willing ears to hear and obey them.

Let it never be said that Uncle Sam doesn't plan ahead. In 1961 the Office of Emergency Preparedness sprang up meiotically from the four Civil Defense agencies which have functioned for twenty years. The star program of the O.E.P. is the National Defense Executive Reserve: when the war comes, and the government gets its chance to expand overnight, the personnel problem will be solved--in advance. Just as the army maintains officers in reserve status to fight the Enemy, the bureaucracy has the N.D.E.R. standing like 4,000 minutemen ready to fight on the home front--fighting the people (as it were).

Any agency or department head can establish an N.D.E.R. unit. Units currently exist for the Secretary of Commerce, Business and Defense Services Administration, Office of Oil and Gas, Office of Minerals and Solid Fuels, Bureau of Public Roads, Office of Emergency Transportation, Economic Stabilization Agency, Office of Defense Resources, and others.

In times of national emergency, isn't it curious how the conventional wisdom holds that the spontaneous powers of citizens to organize and bring resources to bear on problems should and must be *constrained* by bureaucratic control? This is the philosophy of the state, of state-socialism and state-capitalism; the philosophy behind the National Defense Executive Reserve. At the very moment when red-tape and bureaucracy should step aside and let people solve the emergency problems, the government plans to step in, reinforced, to strangle the nation! Who can estimate the added cost in wealth and human life which the growth of bureaucracy and bureaucratic inefficiency has imposed in the past, and will impose tenfold in any future war or national emergency? At a time when the mechanisms of trade and decentralized decision-making--the ability to take instant action, at one's own economic risk on the basis of localized, specific information--are more than ever needed, the government has habitually aggrandized its own power and authority by *prohibiting* any activity not first initiated or sanctioned by some bureaucrat's authority.

In cases where a man supplies an urgent demand and makes
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the church, try so determinedly to keep them from thinking for themselves? History shows that workers can act when they see the necessity. And they do ACT. Murray has a distaste for action, but seriously, how else will the Revolution come about?

Aside from the accuracy or error of the articles in question, the articles are a tactical error. *Ad hominem* attacks, and indiscriminate blasts at important segments of the libertarian movement can only serve the purpose of turning the *Libertarian Forum* into a minor sectarian sheet constantly congratulating itself on its own correctness. In its short lifetime the *Forum* has done two difficult jobs: it has demonstrated, in the language of the "rightist" libertarian and to the "rightist" libertarian, the necessity of revolution; and it has called together a lot of people who otherwise would be struggling alone. Is it now to drive them apart?

— Bill Goring

My Loyalty Oath

"GAINESVILLE, FLA.— Three University of Florida professors and one librarian were fired Nov. 26 because they refused to sign the state's loyalty oath. Dismissed were law professor Leroy L. Lamborn, psychology instructor Evan Suits, architecture instructor Jerome Miller, and library clerk Ann Bardsley . . ."

The whole thing is pretty ludicrous, really, and I suppose I should be laughing. But being fired has had an unfortunate effect upon my sense of humor. Last week I was an unoffensive librarian, laboring among my catalog cards and dusty bookshelves. Now I am unemployed and publically branded as an enemy of the state. And all because of a little green IBM card with a seven-line loyalty oath printed on it.

The State of Florida has required a loyalty oath of all recipients of its funds since the early Cold War days back in 1949. When I went to work for the University of Florida a year ago, the oath appeared under my pen between fingerprinting and a form detailing my life history. I signed it with distaste, but I needed the job very badly, and had no choice. The law requires that the oath be notarized. Early this year the university administration decided it had been a bit lax about having the oath notarized--a matter that the Board of Regents and other reactionary politicians consider of utmost importance. So the University's 3,000 fulltime employees and several thousand more part-time student employees, graduate assistants, and others on the state payroll, were ordered to take a little green IBM card with the oath printed on it and sign it before a notary. All, of course, at the taxpayer's expense.

The oath originally had a provision in it stipulating that the signer was not a member of the Communist party. A suit by Stella Connell, an Orlando, Fla., schoolteacher, won a court decision knocking out the clause about being a Communist as unconstitutional, so the signing stopped while the University ran around printing up new oaths without the offending clause. Then they began collecting signatures all over again. We were told that those who refused to sign would not be paid until they did. Most of the employees were irritated from having to chase around notarizing the oath, and several hundred--including two entire departments of the University--were so offended by the principle of the thing that they threatened to refuse to sign. But by the November 26 deadline, almost all had surrendered to economic necessity and signed the oath. The three professors and I who still maintained our refusal to sign, were fired. Since I am not a professional educator, I shall probably be able to find a new job. But the three professors, whose jobs are inextricably tied to the government-dominated field of education, face financial and professional ruin.

Because of the events of the past few weeks I now have a great deal of time to consider not only my own reasons for not signing the oath, but the whole purpose and consequence of this oath.

The oath we refused to sign says:

"I the above-named, a citizen of the State of Florida and the United States of America, and being employed by or an officer of the University of Florida and recipient of public funds as such employee or officer, do hereby swear or affirm that I will support the Constitution of the United States and of the State of Florida; that I do not believe in the overthrow of the United States or of the State of Florida by force or violence."

I refused to sign this oath because it is a piece of pernicious nonsense and an unwarranted invasion by the state into the privacy of the individual. It is nonsense because even if it were desirable to root subversives out of the University, whether they were floor cleaners or professors, no dedicated subversive would blow his cover by signing it. It is per-

nicious for a number of reasons.

On a practical level, it is a waste of the taxpayer's money. On a legal level, the many citizens of other states and countries who had to sign it perjured themselves by doing so. Most of my foreign friends were amused--in a contemptuous sort of way--by having to sign the oath, but several were bitterly resentful. If they had refused to sign, they could have lost their visas and been deported. "If I am forced to sign this," a Persian friend told me, "then the constitution to which I am affirming my support really is not worth the paper it is written on, is it?"

But to me, the worst aspect of being coerced into signing this oath is its effect on individual liberty. What business is it of anyone's what I support or do not support, believe in or do not believe in? As long as I am an efficient and reliable librarian, who cares what I think about the Constitution of the State of Florida? The answer is, of course, that the state is so unsure of the loyalty of its citizens, particularly the more intelligent people that work in universities, that it cannot rest until it has extracted a pledge of fealty from them.

One of the dangers in making people sign these silly things is, of course, that it reminds the individual that the only way to stay safe and secure is by unquestioning obedience to the state. Unquestioning obedience leads to Buchenwald and Song My, and the destruction of all individual initiative and responsibility. In a University, any kind of loyalty requirement strangles the atmosphere of intellectual freedom which is necessary for scholarly inquiry.

Looking back on this, I wonder: was it better to keep quiet, sign, and stay, or get fired, leaving the university to those more reactionary or subservient than I? Either way, it seems to me, we would have a mighty quiet university. If we had backed down on this, Evan Suits, Lee Lamborn, Jerome Miller, and I would be working for the University of Florida today. And perhaps our sensitivity to individual freedom might have served as some kind of good influence. But it also seems that one can surrender a little here, and a little there--always hoping to fight back next time--until the will to resist is gone.

Since I wasn't planning the violent overthrow of the government, etc., I could honestly have signed the oath. But the government that demands loyalty to some constitution or belief today, will tomorrow demand our allegiance to some party, or governor, or religion, or . . . *Fuehrer*. The time to stop the state is now, not when it has become so oppressive that you no longer have the strength or the means to fight.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which is taking our suit for reinstatement through the courts, has a motto: "Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Liberty".

I agree.

— Ann C. Bardsley

ATTENTION, LIBERTARIANS

Many readers of the *Libertarian Forum* have expressed interest in finding other libertarians near them. Therefore, early this year, the *Forum* will begin to publish the names and addresses of people who would like to be contacted by other readers of the *Libertarian Forum*. If you'd like your name to be included, please fill out the coupon on the back of this notice.

ANARCHO-COMMUNISM— (Continued from page 1)

after the Bolshevik Revolution, reacted in horror as they saw the Russian economy heading to disaster. Even Stalin never tried to revive it, and since World War II the East European countries have seen a total abandonment of this communist ideal and a rapid move toward free markets, a free price system, profit-and-loss tests, and a promotion of consumer affluence. It is no accident that it was precisely the *economists* in the Communist countries who led the rush away from communism, socialism, and central planning, and toward free markets. It is no crime to be ignorant of economics, which is, after all, a specialized discipline and one that most people consider to be a "dismal science". But it is totally irresponsible to have a loud and vociferous *opinion* on economic subjects while remaining in this state of ignorance. Yet this sort of aggressive ignorance is inherent in the creed of anarcho-communism.

The same comment can be made on the widespread belief, held by many New Leftists and by all anarcho-communists, that there is no longer need to worry about economics or production because we are supposedly living in a "post-scarcity" world, where such problems do not arise. But while our condition of scarcity is clearly superior to that of the cave-man, we are still living in a world of pervasive economic scarcity. How will we know when the world has achieved "post-scarcity"? Simply, when all the goods and services that we may want have become so superabundant that their prices have fallen to zero; in short, when we can acquire all goods and services as in a Garden of Eden--without effort, without work, without using any scarce resources.

The anti-rational spirit of anarcho-communism was expressed by Norman O. Brown, one of the *gurus* of the new "counter-culture": "The great economist von Mises tried to refute socialism by demonstrating that, in abolishing exchange, socialism made economic calculation, and hence economic rationality, impossible . . . But if von Mises is right, then what he discovered is not a refutation but a psychoanalytical justification of socialism . . . It is one of the sad ironies of contemporary intellectual life that the reply of socialist economists to von Mises' arguments was to attempt to show that socialism was not incompatible with 'rational economic calculation'--that is to say, that it could retain the inhuman principle of economizing." (*Life Against Death*, Random House, paperback, 1959, pp. 238-39.)

The fact that the abandonment of rationality and economics in behalf of "freedom" and whim will lead to the scrapping of modern production and civilization and return us to barbarism does not feaze our anarcho-communists and other exponents of the new "counter-culture". But what they

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a good profit (which should encourage others to watch for similar urgent demands in the future, and supply them in advance), the government makes sure that the is castigated as a "war profiteer", and certainly taxed if not imprisoned or killed! Such activities will be the duty of the expanded bureaucracy, staffed by the National Defense Executive Reserve force. War is the health of the state.

The state is the pathology of modern society. The expanding substitution of Authority for Trade as the proper form of interaction among people is the full-time job of the millions of little statesmen who labor "in the public interest". It is the symbiotic relationship between the Authority-merchants of the state and profit-seeking entrepreneurs which causes the perversion of honest economic activity into the exploitative system of state-capitalism. Amazing is the magic of Authority, so legitimate in the public's mind in contrast to raw, coercive Power; and nothing legitimates the use of Power as well as an Enemy danger. Just like far-sighted land speculators, the bureaucrat Authority-merchants are prepared: the National Defense Executive Reserve awaits their country's call.

— J. M. Cobb

do not seem to realize is that the result of this return to primitivism would be starvation and death for nearly all of mankind and a grinding subsistence for the ones remaining. If they have their way, they will find that it is difficult indeed to be jolly and "unrepressed" while starving to death.

All this brings us back to the wisdom of the great Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset: "In the disturbances caused by scarcity of food, the mob goes in search of bread, and the means it employs is generally to wreck the bakeries. This may serve as a symbol of the attitude adopted, on a greater and more complicated scale, by the masses of today towards the civilization by which they are supported . . . Civilization is not 'just here', it is not self-supporting. It is artificial . . . If you want to make use of the advantages of civilization, but are not prepared to concern yourself with the upholding of civilization--you are done. In a trice you find yourself left without civilization. Just a slip, and when you look everything has vanished into air. The primitive forest appears in its native state, just as if curtains covering pure Nature had been drawn back. The jungle is always primitive and, vice versa, everything primitive is mere jungle." (José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1932, p. 97).

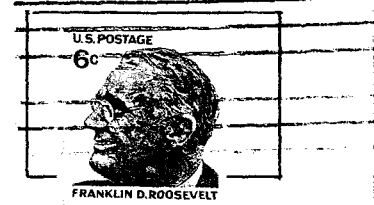
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