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Conclusion

> *"Freedom without socialism is privilege and injustice, and socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality."*—Michael Bakunin

In the broadening movement of opposition to the U.S. capitalist attacks on the working population, there is a need **to build a revolutionary libertarian socialist wing of anarchists and other anti-authoritarian socialists**. The evils of capitalism in decline pushes people toward socialism. Its bureaucratic, statist, and centralist history pushes people away from socialism. But a focus on freedom, self-management, and cooperation may attract a layer of workers and youth and other oppressed people to the vision of a truly free, cooperative, democratic, and ecologically balanced community.

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In the United States there has been recently a rise of interest in "socialism," especially among young adults ("millennials"). Different political views have reacted to this rise in various ways. Conservatives are appalled ("Have we forgotten the lessons of the Cold War?"). The leadership of the Democratic Party (the moderate center) is disturbed ("We're for capitalism, after all!") The liberal-left is pleased, so long as "socialism" is interpreted to mean liberal-left politics—not taking away the wealth of the capitalists and creating a democratic, nonprofit, economy.

Anarchists also have various responses. Some hope to create a libertarian (anti-authoritarian) socialist revolutionary wing of a socialist movement. Others see anarchism as different from—even opposed to—socialism of any kind.

To be sure, what most people mean by "socialism" is unclear. I assume that at a minimum they mean opposition to the capitalist status quo and a desire for a better, more just, society (discussed further below).

This is a change in U.S. political culture. For a long time "socialism" (let alone "communism") has been a word on the devil's tongue. During the Cold War, being a socialist was enough to get one fired (and being a communist was even more dangerous). All other industrialized capitalist democracies developed mass parties calling themselves socialist, social democratic, labor, or communist, and many "third world" countries had governments calling themselves African socialist, Arab socialist, etc. This never developed in the U.S. Its main "left" party was the Democratic Party, which was always pro-capitalist (leaving aside its origins as pro-slavery). In the last two periods of radicalization (the '30s and the '60s), there developed minorities which regarded themselves as revolutionary socialist, views which mostly died out in the more conservative periods which followed.

The most obvious sign of this change in politics was the 2016 electoral run of Bernie Sanders in the Democratic Party. He was self-identified as a "democratic socialist" and an advocate of "polit-

ical revolution." While in his past, Sanders had expressed sympathy for state-communist regimes, he currently identifies his "socialism" with the social democratic Nordic (Scandinavian) countries. Sanders' campaign undoubtedly promoted an interest in socialism, but it was also a symptom of that interest, which had been developing for some time.

The Polls Speak

"The anti-Communist Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation was alarmed to find in a recent survey that 44 percent of millennials would prefer to live in a socialist country compared with 42 percent who want to live under capitalism." (Goldberg 2017)

"The American Culture and Faith Institute recently conducted a survey of adults 18 and older.…Most Americans (58 percent) see themselves as politically moderate. … 'The most alarming result… was that four out of every ten adults say they prefer socialism to capitalism.…That is a large minority, and it includes a majority of the liberals.' …40 percent of Americans now prefer socialism to capitalism.…" (Nammo 2017)

"*…An April 2016 study by Harvard University found that 51 percent of millennials —a loosely defined group of people aged between 18 and 29 — reject capitalism and 33 percent support socialism.* " (Strickland 2017)

"In a recent YouGov survey, [Jan. 25–27, 2016] respondents were asked whether they had a 'favorable or unfavorable opinion' of socialism and of capitalism.…Overall, 52 percent expressed a favorable view of capitalism, compared with 29 percent for socialism.…There were just two exceptions to this pattern: Democrats rated socialism and capitalism equally positively (both at 42 percent favorability). And respondents younger than 30 were the only group that rated socialism more favorably than capitalism (43 percent vs. 32 percent, respectively)." (Rampell 2016)

ers occupied workplaces and demanded to take them away from the owners, proposing to federate with each other.

Similarly, among climate justice theorists, there is agreement on the need for coordinated efforts and an overall plan for a transition to renewable energy, on a national and international level. But there is also agreement on the need for more economic, industrial, and urban decentralization and local integration. This would cut down transportation and distribution, make recycling easier, improve democratic participation in planning, bring food production into daily life, and in general create a human scale life style. Such ideas have been raised from writers such as Naomi Klein to Pope Francis, as well as Marxist eco-socialists (see Price 2016).

Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org, wrote a book asserting, "*We need to move decisively to rebuild our local communities.…Community, it turns out, is the key to physical survival in our environmental predicament and also to human satisfaction*." (2007; 2) McKibben is a left liberal (he backed Sanders). But he illustrates how ideas, worked on for generations by anarchists, have become active in the current movement. (Anarchists can also agree with the need for overall democratic planning for a transition to a balanced ecology—but not by the existing institutions of the capitalist states.)

Even in the short run, there are militants who are fed up with approaches based on trying to take over the state—usually through elections, via the Democratic Party or a new-party. They could be open to a strategy based on militant mass actions, demonstrations, union organizing, occupations of workplaces and schools, strikes and general strikes which close down cities until real gains are won. These are the strategy and tactics of a revolutionary anarchism.

pro-capitalism of the majority of the Left since the beginning—it is what anarchism has always been about. But anarchists have not confused "state socialism" with everything which is on the Left. The Left is in opposition to capitalism, the state, and all oppression. As I quoted Kropotkin above, anarchists "are the left wing" of the Left, **the left of the Left**—that is, we are most in opposition to all the evils of capitalist society, the ones really for the "community of free individuals". Anarchists are the authentic socialists.

Popularity of Libertarian Socialist Programs

Due to the collapse of most Communist states and the overall failures of Marxism, there has been an upsurge of interest in anarchism—certainly as compared to the 30s and 60s. Yet "anarchism" is not yet a mass movement or a widely-liked label. Without seeing any polls, I am sure that it is less liked than "socialism" (but perhaps more accepted than "communism"—in the U.S.).

However, there are aspects of anarchism (libertarian socialism) which are relatively popular. For example, the idea of government takeover of industry ("nationalization") is not attractive to many people. Much more attractive is the idea of worker-run enterprises (producer cooperatives), worker's management, consumer cooperatives, government ownership at the local level (city, town, or village), with worker management. Such ideas have become quite widespread on the Left. There is a significant number of writers, not all identified as socialists, who have made workers' self-management central to their programs (see Price 2014).

In themselves, the ideas of producer co-ops and municipalization are not radical—but in certain circumstances they may be revolutionary: such as a program to expropriate the energy industry and turn it over to worker and community control. Or if striking work-

From a Gallup poll: "*Thirty-five percent of Americans have a positive view of the term socialism, similar to what was found in 2012 and 2010. …60%…have a positive view of capitalism.…Young Americans constitute the only age group that does not view the term socialism more negatively than capitalism.*" (Newport 2016)

"*…Last summer Gallup asked survey respondents [for whom] they would be willing to vote.…Just 34 percent of respondents age 65 and older said they would be willing to vote for a socialist, compared with about twice that level [69 percent] among respondents younger than 30.*" (Rampell 2016)

"*….As far back as 2011, a Pew poll revealed, fully 49% of Americans (not just Democrats) under 30 had a positive view of socialism, while just 47% had a favorable opinion of capitalism.…*" (Meyerson 2016)

What the polls reveal, pretty consistently, is that the majority of U.S. people reject socialism and are in favor of capitalism, but that **a notable minority (between 30 to 40 percent) favors socialism**. While this is only a minority, it is about the same proportion of the population as that which supports President Trump! Approximately one in three is a significant number. Importantly, **young adults are most likely to have a positive view of socialism and a negative view of capitalism (from 40 to 50 percent).** *"Bernie Sanders didn't push the young toward socialism. They were already there.*" (Meyerson 2016)

This is part of a general swing among part of the population toward the left. I am not going into the polls which show that a large number of people—often the majority of the U.S. population—agrees with the left on many issues: universal health care, increasing (not decreasing) taxes on the rich, free (or cheap) higher education, providing jobs for all, fighting global warming, raising the minimum wage, supporting unions, etc.

"*…They don't counterpose socialism to a militant liberalism. The rise in the number of people who identify as socialists coincides with a rise in the number who call themselves liberals. Whereas in 2000 only 27% of Democrats told Pew they were liberal, by 2015 that figure*

had risen to 42%, and among millennials, it had increased from 37% in 2004 to 49% today." (Meyerson 2016)

Why the Rise of Socialism?

One factor in the increase of socialist interest is the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellites, the changes in China, and the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, both sides agreed that the "socialism" of the Soviet Union was the only socialism there was or could be. Those repelled by the totalitarian repression of the Soviet Union were led to reject "socialism" in favor of Western "democratic" capitalism ("free enterprise"). Those who rejected the evils of capitalism (poverty, racism, pollution, wars of aggression in Vietnam and elsewhere) were attracted to the statified regime of Stalinist Russia as "really existing socialism." Very few (besides anarchists) rejected both sides in the Cold War and both models of society.

Today the Communist states are no longer available as a bogeyman (the current "enemy" is jihadist terrorism, which is anti-socialist). The right still uses Stalinist Russia as an historical bad example (as it was), but their argument does not have the same bite it once did. Using civilized Sweden's welfare state as an example of socialism hardly raises the same horror as Stalin's gulag. The most the conservatives can say is that centralized, bureaucratic, state economies are inefficient. Which they are, but how efficient is U.S. capitalism?

The main reason for the spread of socialism lies within the United States and its allies. An extended period of relative prosperity followed the Great Depression and the destruction of World War II. This ran out of steam around 1970. The general development since (with ups and downs) has been stagnation, increased poverty, growing inequality, successful attacks on the

1880s, Adolph Fischer, one of the Chicago "Haymarket martyrs," claimed that "*every anarchist is a socialist, but every socialist is not necessarily an anarchist.*" (Guerin 1970; 12) Many anarchists, and others who were close to anarchism, have called themselves "libertarian socialists" or "anti-authoritarian socialists" or "libertarian communists."

I write the last paragraph because many socialists simply do not know that anarchists are, and have always been, socialists. And many anarchists also do not know this. Both groups take for granted that "socialism" means "state socialism." But a view which advocates a cooperative, collectivized, economy, of freely federated associations, which produces for use and not profit, and which is democratically planned from the bottom up—what is this but authentic socialism? It would be a classless, stateless, "community of free individuals" consciously self-managing their collective labor and dividing their products for the good of all: socialism.

There are also anarchists who do not want to use the term "socialist" today because it is so unpopular—whatever its history. As I have demonstrated, however, there is a lot of support for "socialism." It is a more popular term than "anarchism"! (Probably most people see "anarchism" as violence, bomb-throwing, window-smashing, and chaos.) It makes sense for anarchists to show their connection to the more popular term. However, I would agree that "communism," in the U.S. anyway, is still a very negative term (meaning totalitarianism to most people). In other countries (such as France or South Africa) this may not be the case, but in the U.S. it is. I am in the tradition of anarchist-communism, from Kropotkin on, but I rarely use the communist label. (See Price 2008.)

There are also anarchists who deliberately reject the "socialist" label, because they identify as "post-Left," "post-anarchist," "anti-civilizationist," or other views. They often write as if it is a new insight to reject the authoritarianism and pro-capitalism of the Left. Actually anarchists have been opposing the statism and

all the main sources of economic life—the land, the mines, the railways, banking, insurance, and so on—as also the management of all the main branches of industry, in addition to all the functions already accumulated in its hands (education, …defense of the territory, etc.) would mean to create a new instrument of tyranny. State capitalism would only increase the powers of bureaucracy and capitalism." (1975; 109-110)

When we ask, why aren't more people socialists, part of the answer has to do with what socialism has presented itself as: bureaucratic, ineffective, no different from pro-capitalist liberalism, inefficient, or—under certain conditions—monstrously repressive. If people are nevertheless turning to socialism, it is due to the failures of capitalism!

Libertarian Socialism?

From the beginning, anarchists have rejected state socialism (or what they called "authoritarian socialism"). Kropotkin wrote, "*…The anarchists, in common with all socialists, of whom they constitute the left wing…consider the wage-system and capitalist production [for the sake of profits] altogether as an obstacle to progress….While combating…capitalism altogether, the anarchists combat with the same energy the State as the main support of that system.*" (1975; 109)

P.J. Proudhon, the first person to call himself an anarchist, also called himself a "socialist". Michael Bakunin, who was involved in initiating the modern anarchist movement, called himself a "revolutionary socialist", as well as a "collectivist." Kropotkin regarded himself as a "socialist" and a "communist." The dominant tendency in anarchism after Kropotkin was "anarchist-communism." Even Benjamin Tucker, a major individualist-anarchist, called himself a "socialist" (mostly meaning that he was anti-capitalist). In the

unions, revived threats of nuclear war, and movement toward ecological catastrophe.

"*The prime mover of millions of Americans into the socialist column has been the near complete dysfunctionality of contemporary American capitalism. Where once the regulated, unionized and semi-socialized capitalism of the mid-20th century produced a vibrant middle class majority, the deregulated, deunionized and financialized capitalism of the past 35 years has produced record levels of inequality, a shrinking middle class, and scant economic opportunities (along with record economic burdens) for the young.*" (Meyerson 2016)

The lived experience of young people in the working class (as most people are) is no longer one of apparent prosperity. Instead they face limited job opportunities, low wages, mountains of school debt, no union protection, a threat of another economic crash, and a frightening future of climate change. They face the most reactionary government in generations, attacking everything good and decent, while the Democratic alternative remains wishy-washy and inadequate (barely a "lesser evil"). The question is not why are people turning toward socialism but why aren't more people turning into socialists?

The Problem with Socialism

What is "socialism" or "communism" (using them as having similar meanings, as was the case originally)? In Vol. 1 of **Capital,** Karl Marx refers to "*a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common, in which the labor-power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labor-power of the community.*" (1906; 90) Their work would be "*consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan.*" (92) That is, a cooperative, socialized, economy would be "consciously regulated by them," the "free individuals,"

self-organized in their community. This seems like a good enough general definition of socialism/communism.

Unfortunately Marx saw this as being carried out in a centralized manner, through the state. (See the program at the end of Section II of the **Communist Manifesto**, "Proletarians and Communists.") Anarchists point out that the state (according to both anarchist and Marxist analysis) is not a self-organized community of free individuals, but a bureaucratic-military machine standing over and above the rest of society; such an instrument can only serve the interests of a minority ruling class. It can be nothing else. (Anarchists advocate a democratic federation of free associations and workplace and neighborhood assemblies which would be a community of self-organized free individuals—and would not be a state.)

This statist orientation of Marx (and many other socialists) can lead in two main directions—both with roots in Marx. **One statist strategy is to try to take over the existing capitalist state, mostly through elections**. The workers would seek to take over the present bureaucratic-military state, nationalizing most of the economy. (This became the program of the European "social democrats".) But the capitalists and their state agents do not want to let socialist workers take over their state and take away their wealth and power. They have put many roadblocks in the way of the socialist movement, from granting temporary, minimal, reforms to fascist coups.

In the period after World War II, the European social democrats completed their evolution from reformists to mild liberals. They no longer even pretend to advocate a new sort of society. They propose to improve the economy only through government manipulation, such as liberal Keynesian spending, tax changes, and (sometimes) nationalization of failing industries. They have simply become the left wing of capitalist politics. In the prosperity after World War II they could achieve certain gains for working people in the welfare state. Now that the prosperity is over, they are unable to resist capitalism's turn to austerity, its attacks on working people's standard of living.

In Bernie Sanders recent presidential campaign he identified as a "democratic socialist." He did not raise any socialist programs; he did not call for expropriating any of the capitalists or their corporations (such as the oil companies or the banks). He did not raise a vision of a different, better, sort of society. He only proposed to improve society through more government intervention in the capitalist economy. His state programs might provide benefits in this or that area, but are overall ineffective and inadequate for this time of decline and crisis.

The other statist strategy is to overthrow and smash the existing state—but not to create a self-managed "community of free individuals." Rather they aim **to create a new state**, which is ruled by a single party controlled by an individual or small group. Such a program may seem to be revolutionary. In China and other countries, as well as in the satellites of the Soviet Union, the Communists did overturn the old states. They did take away the wealth of the old capitalist class (the stock-owning bourgeoisie). But the bourgeoisie was replaced by a new ruling class, a collectivist bureaucracy. The workers continued to be exploited. The state became the center for capital accumulation, in competition with other states and corporations, with an internal market. These regimes murdered tens of millions of workers, peasants, and others. Rather than a "community of free individuals," this was **state capitalism**. While they had their benefits, overall these states were horribly oppressive and economically inefficient. Eventually most of them collapsed back into traditional capitalism. (There is also **a third, very much minority, trend within Marxism** which bases itself on the radically-democratic, humanist, and proletarian aspects of Marx, with politics which overlap with anarchism.)

Anarchists have always rejected these statist programs, predicting that in practice "state socialism" would result in state capitalism. In 1910, Peter Kropotkin predicted, "*To hand over to the State*