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ROMAN LAW, THE U.S.
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WHAT CAN *SLIME MOLD* TEACH MARXISTS?

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USSR—UTOPIA BETRAYED
OR . . . ?

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Book Reviews

Theorizing Anticapitalism—A Review Essay

Ziarhei Zhmurouskii

An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto. By Alex Callinicos. Cambridge/Oxford, UK: Polity Press; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003. 192 pages, cloth \$57.95, paper \$19.95.

Critiques of the neoliberal economic theories and policies devised by the big three—IMF, World Bank, and WTO—are currently abundant. Such critiques of the world economic order are many-sided and mainly directed at the social consequences of what is vaguely defined as *globalization*. Inefficiency of the world economy, hopelessness of current social relations, and threats to the environment are at the core of the comments from the Left. Rarely does one work explicitly uncover the consequences of globalization and put forward the steps to undo them and build a new social order locally and globally. Among the most radical recent works is the soundly titled *An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto* by Alex Callinicos.

The author's intent is to demonstrate the viability of the Marxist approach for solving the current challenges of world development. These challenges, as Alex Callinicos reiterates, can be settled only by an anticapitalist drive. This Marxist approach should also be used when discussing problems confronting not only left movements as such, but varieties of antisystemic movements. Strict

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Marxist social theory always compels social actions, or at least sets down provocative thoughts. The book considered here will stir readers to action.

An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto contains indispensable parts, each bearing out this characteristic. Three major questions are raised. First, what makes it impossible for all of us to keep on living the way we live? Second, what should we do in order to make the world fairer and more secure? And third, what would be the patterns of such a world order? In what follows, I shall try to review some theses of the author and add my modest arguments to the ones proposed.

How long can the planet survive under capitalism?

Alex Callinicos succeeds in proving the fact that capitalism does work against the survival of our planet. It is next to impossible to deny that neoliberalism has failed to solve the problems confronting the world: (1) fall in economic growth rates, (2) reduction in life expectancy, (3) rise in infant and child mortality, (4) slowing of progress in education and in the eradication of illiteracy. *An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto* richly illustrates these indisputable facts. The point is whether we should restrict the critique of capitalism to illustrating the negative economic consequences of the capitalist system: recession, unemployment, instability for one world coupled with misery and despair for the other. In addition to the problems discussed by Callinicos, other problems are worth considering while corroborating the threats that capitalism poses.

In particular, the psychological impact of capitalism as a social system on public and individual consciousness is important. Put another way, this concerns how people evaluate themselves today and how they perceive impending psychological degradation and threats to their very survival. At least two facts demonstrate this impact: first, psychiatric diseases are growing and tendencies indicate this will continue. Second, the world community has failed to solve environmental problems. Human beings have undeniably answered fewer questions than should have been the case during the last century. A long list of other mounting problems shows that capitalism does indeed work against Earth.

Let us consider the author's premise that "the process of competitive accumulation is responsible for capitalism's chronic tendency towards crises" (65). Does this phenomenon prove the premise? In my opinion the explanation must be broader. Let us take the matter from another angle. Enrollment in the antiglobalization movement is now poor. The effect of this is that the malaise of the public pedals the system, which, as Susan George puts it, is a bicycle "that must always go forwards or fall over . . . before smashing against the wall" (50). It may seem that this race is perpetual, but this is so only at first glance. It is perpetual in the same way that the stock exchange in the United States seemed perpetual until September of 1929. I argue that there is a close link between the fall of economic growth rates and the mounting threat of new crises, which might have far more tragic aftereffects. Moreover, roots of new crises lie in the nature of the modern organization of production based on unrestricted and uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources. Whenever access to resources is hardened for whatever reason—disintegration of the economy caused by social turmoil or increased cost of natural resources—the probability of crises increases.

In considering the failures of capitalism, one must not stop with neoliberal failure to restore the rates of economic growth that the world enjoyed in the fifties, sixties, and seventies of the last century. A logical approach necessitates further theorizing of future developments. The world community must agree to reject the necessity of growth as such. Rates of growth should be defined by demographic and other factors. Economic growth will not always necessarily be a reality. I hypothesize that two points must be added while explaining the causes of declining economic growth in the future: (1) exhaustion of natural resources and the rise of the cost of energy (at least relatively, compared with other goods), and (2) the limit of labor productivity.

Utilization of natural gas, coal, and oil is the cheapest way of getting energy; alternatives will be more expensive. Although we do not confront this trial today, tomorrow's farewell to the habitual burning of natural gas is not only plausible but inevitable. The economic effect of this change may be less economic growth. The

exhaustion of resources does not pose such a threat for human survival if we take into account the feasibility of using alternative sources of energy. But here and now, the time at stake is the key question. It is necessary to win time to make it possible for engineers to discover and implement alternative sources of energy. People must refuse to use natural gas, oil, and other resources to the degree and scope that we do now in the same way that we must not use drugs except in the case of disease. The way natural resources are utilized now is the equivalent of an addiction to drugs. This addiction is like the situation of an addicted person's being doomed to die in his or her thirties or forties. This is a cry to start living a healthy life, to be flexible in using natural resources (even at the price of refusing economic growth) in order to die at eighty or ninety. Nationally and especially globally, capitalism is primarily a system of drug dealers. Dealers clearly intend to involve everyone in the drug business. The system never exposes the drug smuggler from Washington or London, who is always at the top while the seller on the street is always at the bottom. Those who are at the top keep us now in the street; they want us (all of us) to die at thirty or forty.

Is there a limit to labor productivity? Yes, there is. From ancient times until the present, humans have been motivated to productive activity by the desire to attain high living standards. Historically, human society has passed through three stages characterized by different motivations to labor and high productivity. In primitive, classless societies, human motivation was not a result of institutional coercion—the feeling of responsibility and fraternity mainly instigated people. Nor was the motivation to labor merely economic. From the beginning of slavery until early capitalism, the period of noneconomic coercion to labor began; this was institutional coercion. Capitalism ushered in only economic coercion to labor. There was no administrative or institutional coercion.

What will the rejection of capitalism initiate? The new type of motivation will very much resemble the first stage. This has nothing to do with institutional (administrative) and economic coercion, and it is only looming on the horizon. Such speculation is mainly

abstract, but it is not theoretically groundless. Exhaustion of natural resources will force humans to truncate and economize; it will make people aware that many other values besides affluence exist: one, among others, is support of individuals by the society in a way that secures the individual's confidence in the future. The gradual shift from the dominance of individual economic interests to the public interest will be a reality. This last stage will be dictated by the necessity to abandon extreme extravagance; this, in turn, will provide a realistic possibility to distribute values fairly. This is not to say that the average living standard will not be raised. It will rise as a result of a fairer distribution of goods. Significant will be the absence of unproductive expenses, first of all connected with arms production. Nonetheless, a limit is predetermined not only by the rising cost of natural resources but by the fact that the component of human work in the final cost of products is declining or even tending toward zero.

Strategies for world progress beyond capitalism

Possibilities always exist for human madness, but let us leave that scenario aside. The question is how much the strategies of Marxists should be rethought and revised at the beginning of the twenty-first century. A dilemma for revolutionaries today remains much the same as always: revolution or reform. Marx put forward the point-blank solution: revolution. What should Marxism propound today? Alex Callinicos responds to the question of what form revolution may take. The author anticipates that revolution will not be global in scale—not “the accompaniment of the ‘global accident’, a catastrophic economic collapse.” Rather it will be the “extension of democratic processes of self-government” (142).

Indeed, the revolutionary anticapitalist process will not be homogenous. In G7 countries, it will be shaped primarily by the dialogue between labor and employers. In the developing world, it may assume much more diversified forms and even require an armed struggle. An anticapitalist solidarity movement raises the question of winning the workers' consciousness. Ideas are a real force when they become the convictions of masses. In this regard, the question is what should be done in order to expand the ranks of anticapitalist fighters. One way to do this is to reveal the flaws of

capitalism. This task demands an access to media. Followers of the anticapitalist movement must demand that governments deliver alternative views on world developments to the public. This task is one of the most basic for the existence of an anticapitalist world, and this actuality was not mentioned in the transitional program of *An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto*. Understanding the world economy will impel masses to recognize the need to abandon the current social system. The declining rate of economic growth and profitability, as well as the exhaustion of resources, will make people reevaluate their views on social systems, and thus their participation in social transformation will be more feasible.

Less attention in *An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto* is given to the issue of which strata can be moved into the anticapitalist movement. The author suitably stresses that “the organized working class still is the decisive agent of social transformation” (85). The history of the last two centuries has proved this, and it seems that near future will also prove it. On the other hand, the anticapitalist movement will shortly not be so homogenous. Future economic crises will distress many strata. Not all will join the movement at once, but the most affected are likely to expand the ranks of anticapitalist fighters. Accordingly, revolution will attract not only workers but also an absolute majority of the population.

The question of the tactics of the anticapitalist movement is probably the most important for revolutionaries for two reasons. First, the movement must target the financial interests of the transnational corporations and reveal their destructive (for the majority) ideology. Second, the formulation of the tactic should not only correspond psychologically to how humans perceive the challenges today, but also include potential developments that might appear tomorrow. The author defines the tactics of capitalism in the following way: “the established powers can respond to major challenges from below in two ways—repression or incorporation” (86). The anticapitalist movement must also move in the same way: open public dialogue with the governments and exert pressure against them. Dialogue is required not to induce those in power to accept transformation, but to win mass support and unearth the facts that threaten the health of the public, facts that

are so dexterously covered up by the prevailing media. The question of pressure is most sensitive. Pressure and threats of armed force do not seem humanistic tactics. But addiction to power and the maniacal hatred of the lower classes demonstrated by the rulers of the world can only be treated in this way. Can there be another way? History corroborates—no. History proves that a few concessions have so far been achieved, but human patience and natural resources are not limitless. For the majority of the world, the alternatives are to win in struggle or to lose in poverty. There is no other way. Pressure does not necessarily mean the use of arms. It may include rejection, demonstrated in different ways, of government policy. The threat of using arms can be much more practical than the very use of arms. But an empty threat is nonsense. So that is the choice of revolutionaries.

Therefore the new revolution is on the agenda. As always in history, a new revolution will acquire new features. As the revolutions of the last century were different in their forms from those of the nineteenth century, the coming one will acquire new forms and features. But one thing is certain; in the developing countries, the new revolutions will resemble the revolutions of the previous centuries—mass mobilization against the old political regime and a fight for a new regime. They will look a bit different in the G7 countries. There will be demands for the genuine control of state-owned property by the masses—that is, forming bodies that would exert such control, discounting the role of government bureaucracies. They will also include for the masses greater access to the media funded by the governments, or, to be more precise, by taxpayers. Installing the new alternative production with collective ownership and support of this production by consumers may be seen as the main tactic, and as a step toward installing the new anticapitalist system.

Basic principles for a noncapitalist world

Alex Callinicos assumes that four major principles should be the basis of an anticapitalist world: justice, efficiency, democracy, and sustainability. Notwithstanding the fact that his scheme of noncapitalist construction looks detailed, much of what is

propounded proves to be a bit ambiguous. Let us consider justice, for example. Justice is not a mathematically calculated set of proposals. Justice is what the majority agree on, and it cannot be defined once and forever. Still, although justice may clash with the demand for efficiency and sustainability, it cannot be in contradiction to the demand for democracy.

In the nation-state, liberty, equality, and solidarity are all related to justice. Justice in the worldwide context is no more and no less than support of diversity of development. Of course, there must be no denying that distribution of resources should be just; for instance, one-fourth of the world's population should not consume three-fourths of the energy produced. The present world order is a consequence of interference of one-fourth into internal affairs of nations constituting three-fourths of the world's population and a result of a diktat by the former against the latter. Guarantees of noninterference will secure diversity and alter the status quo. Such guarantees will not result in the equal consumption of energy and resources, but will make access and consumption fairer. Significantly, the steps made for installing an equal exchange of goods and resources valued by future long-term worth will establish new ethical standards. One cannot underestimate the importance of the claim put forth by G. A. Cohen: "a just society requires more than a just social structure: it embraces also a social ethos through which individuals are motivated to behave justly towards each other" (108).

The next necessary alternative (and here, in my view, the author comes to the point) is to achieve efficiency.

It *may be* that sustainable development is inconsistent with the existing range of needs that humans have acquired over the past two centuries of industrial capitalism. This is an open question. [This "may be" is crucial. It really *is* an open question.] . . . The right conclusion is that we *should prefer* the economic system that supports the widest extension of human productive capacities—widest over time and not just at any given moment—that is consistent with requirements of justice, democracy, and sustainability. To that extent efficiency matters. (110)

I have added the emphasis on *may be* and *should prefer* to stress the vagueness of the author's thesis. Precisely what does "efficiency" mean? For now and in the near future, an anticapitalist perspective will allow "the broader productive capacity" to make a "greater range of choices available to people." But this "may be" will certainly turn out in time to be inconsistent. I refer again to the stages of human motivation to labor. The future will lay down noneconomic and noninstitutional coercion to labor, new socially ethical rational motivation when "just motivation towards one another will be dominant and will push out all other motivations." Still, we can anticipate both ethical progress of individuals and disappearing abundance of resources. In the same way, primitive people were not able to utilize nuclear energy, the new generations will abandon making use of resources in the way we do now even to the detriment of efficiency and sustainability. The likelihood of the fourth stage will be illustrated by refusal to secure capital that is the basic principle of capitalism. This is not the perspective of tomorrow, but of remote ages. The historical analogue is the way people in primitive societies abandoned piling up necessities. They did not cache the necessities except for their own consumption. Possession of necessities was not a means of distinctive social status in society.

Such logic is grounded on social ethical evolution of individuals, and, secondly, is explained by the fact of an exhaustion of natural resources. However much we try to compensate for nonrenewable resources by alternatives in order to achieve higher productivity, new attitudes and new social relations will, sooner or later, be a reality. Sustainability and efficiency are not the ultimate goals. They are only directions. They cannot be achieved until new sources of energy are discovered, and should not be achieved at the price of destructive climate change and ecological disasters.

As far as democracy is concerned—while installing an anticapitalist order, democracy should be considered as a process, not as a goal. Getting closer to direct democracy, the society attains more accountability of bureaucracy. The more we recognize the necessity of social ethical values, the less society suffers: fewer victims, fewer losses. Democracy is the means that paves the

way to broader participation of people in politics. The slogan of the democratization of the economy must embrace diversity of ownership. Overwhelming participation in decision-making would change the construction of power institutions: direct, not representative, democracy opens the gate to the abolition of division of power. This axiom has no alternative. Otherwise we will have varieties of representative democracy, or varieties of capitalism.

The author says about market socialism and planned economies: "To be effective socialist planning must operate at the international level" and "an alternative economic framework must therefore be constructed on an international scale" (123). There is more truth than falsehood in these statements. But anticapitalists must first define what must be done, and when an economic system can be said to operate properly. A socialist economy at the international level is a utopia. It cannot be installed worldwide in a short time. Planning is needed to demonstrate the efficiency of democratically approved decisions, to determine which result in economic efficiency, and what is partially a result of the absence of nonproductive expenses and the highest productivity of labor. To accept the thesis that a socialist market economy is doubtful means not to see the socialist perspective as feasible at all. Competition under effective control from the society increases productivity and higher individual income for the winners. Socialism presumes effective control of individual incomes, but smoothing inequalities across the economy. It does not contradict what Callinicos says himself:

Economic power would be vested in negotiated coordination bodies for individual production units and sectors on which would sit representatives of the workforce, consumers, suppliers, relevant government bodies, and concerned interest groups. (125)

As for a transitional program, anticapitalism can include all the proposed steps. States are vulnerable to political pressure from below. A transitional program is a list of steps to be implemented first on the national level, and then globally. National pressure weakens the chains of what constructs global capitalism, or global

capitalization of the economy. Nevertheless, deglobalization is on the agenda for anticapitalist movements on the international scale. Globalization transfers the main burden of exploitation to the shoulders of the workforce of the underdeveloped world. It permits higher profits as a result of more added value in the underdeveloped world. Measures aimed at undermining the global economy must be implemented. One of them is installing a new world currency that allows the establishment of fair-trade relationships among nations, and which would be imposed in the interests of those who produce the main part of resources, but not items for excitement of human emotions. That is what globalists should spurn and resist. It might be the first deadly blow against the existing system. The Tobin tax [tax on foreign-currency transactions—Ed.] is a half measure, and even it is a reactionary one, if viewed from the perspective of effectiveness of anticapitalist struggle.

An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto is a provocative polemic. It sets forth the ultimate goal; it proposes ideas for those who are responsible for the future of humankind. The author intends to prove that the anticapitalist movement is resuming in practice. It is no exaggeration to say that anticapitalist theory in a strict Marxist parlance is also resuming. For this, we must thank Alex Callinicos.

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The Need for a Balanced Reappraisal of the USSR—A Review Essay

Erwin Marquit

Socialism Betrayed: Behind the Collapse of the Soviet Union. By Roger Keeran and Thomas Kenny. New York: International Publishers, 2004. 236 pages, cloth \$25.00, paper \$14.00.

The authors of *Socialism Betrayed* state in their introduction: "This book is about the collapse of the Soviet Union and its meaning for the 21st century" (1). Placed in this perspective, the book can be viewed as an effort to use the experiences of the first attempt at socialism as a warning against the current efforts of China, Vietnam, and to a lesser extent Cuba to pursue policies of socioeconomic development within a framework that the Vietnamese call a *market economy with socialist orientation*. "Given the actual history of market socialism under Gorbachev," write Keeran and Kenny in their concluding remarks, "it would seem that the real lesson of the Soviet collapse leads . . . to the conclusion that socialism requires central planning, public ownership, and restricted markets" (194).

The authors open their discussion of the collapse as follows:

The collapse of the Soviet Union did not occur because of an internal economic crisis or popular uprising. It occurred